

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT: AN OVERVIEW OF ADOLESCENTS

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The present study explored the identity development process of adolescents in a collectivistic cultural background of Pakistan. The sample consisted of 80 boys and girls, 40 each from urban and rural settings. A convenient sample was selected from 10 different colleges and higher secondary schools of Multan and its suburbs. Ego-Identity Interview was used to assess the identity level of adolescents. It was a semi structured interview (Marcia, 1966) and assesses identity in six domains on the basis of the level of exploration and commitment of individuals. Four statuses were assigned after careful analysis of the data including identity achieved, moratorium, foreclosed, and diffused. An open-ended questionnaire was also used to see the orientation of adolescents towards individualism or collectivism at personal level. Results indicated that majority of adolescents were foreclosed in the domains of occupation (31%), religion (81%), politics (47%), and sex roles (64%). Large numbers of adolescents were identity achieved in the domain of friendship (65%) whereas a large number of adolescents were diffused in the domain of dating (77%). Results also showed that adolescents had collectivistic orientation at personal level. Data were analyzed on the basis of the cultural variability dimensions of individualism/collectivism.

Identity gives a sense of knowing, who we are and how we fit into the rest of the society. It includes the impact of early childhood identification with important individuals in our lives as well as our personal experience regarding the development of self. Thus, the construct of identity stands at the interface of individual personality, social relationships, and external context, and has major implications for optimal adolescent development. Development of identity is a life-long process, characterized by cycle of exploration and consolidation as well as

experiences of competence and vulnerability.

Erikson (1968) has written comprehensively about the search for identity as a primary task, and the crisis that adolescents face. He emphasize that the young persons try to integrate a quest for a conscious sense of individual uniqueness with an unconscious striving for a continuity of experience and solidarity with the group's ideals (Berger, 1983).

Erikson (1968) viewed life as a series of stages, each having a particular developmental task of a psychological nature associated with it. Erikson (1968) emphasized the importance of the socio-cultural context as a determining factor in the process of ego identity formation. He also stressed the importance of adapting to one's society, of conforming to social expectations as indicative of optimal functioning. He believed that societal

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expectations require a selection from available choices, with the individual, in turn, needing confirmation of choices and community acceptance.

Marcia (1980) construes identity as a reflective self-structure. He states that identity is an internal, self-constructed organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history. He conceptualized identity formation in terms of two orthogonal dimensions including self exploration and commitment. Commitment refers to the possession of a firm and stable set of convictions, values and goals. Self-exploration refers to the level of deliberate effort and self-examination one has expended in an attempt to determine these commitments. Within the Marcia paradigm, levels of self-reported commitment and personal exploration are used to operationally define four identity classifications: identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion. Individuals who have resolved an active period of self-exploration by forming personal commitments are classified as identity achieved. The moratorium category includes individuals who also lack stable commitments, but who are currently in the process of attempting to formulate them. Foreclosed individuals hold firm conviction, but those ones which they have prematurely co-opted from significant others without personal self-exploration. In contrast, diffused individuals lack firm convictions and are not inclined to engage in a process of self-exploration. Working on the same lines, Marcia (1966) developed an interview schedule to measure level of identity of an individual.

Erikson (1968) stated that socio-cultural context is very important in ones' identity formation. Pakistani culture is a collectivistic culture (Hofstede, 1980) where people have very strong bonds with their families or in-groups. There are different types of cultures. Hofstede (1980) is most well known for his work on the dimensions of cultural variability, commonly referred to as Hofstede's Dimensions. These include: Uncertainty /Avoidance, Power/Distance, Masculinity/Femininity and Individualism/Collectivism.

According to Hofstede (1991), individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose; everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism, on the other hand, pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

In Hofstede's (1980) opinion, individualist societies emphasize "I" consciousness, autonomy, emotional independence, individual initiative, right to privacy, pleasure seeking, financial security, need for specific friendship and universalism. Collectivist societies, on the other hand, stress solidarity, sharing, duties and obligation, need for stable and predetermined friendship, group decision and particularism. Similar definitions are given by Hui and Triandis (1986) and Sinha and Verma (1987).

In the present research, it is intended to explore the identity development process among the adoles-

cents of collectivistic culture in Pakistan.

Method

Sample

The sample for this study was taken from Multan city and its suburbs. Eighty individuals were interviewed including 40 from rural and 40 from urban areas. Both of these groups were further divided into two subgroups on the basis of gender. The sample of the rural area was chosen from four rural areas. Sample included 50% adolescent boys and 50% girls from different colleges from Multan and its surrounding areas. These rural areas were selected on the basis of union councils, which were demarcated by Election Commission of Pakistan for recent elections. About half an hour was required for rapport development. Average interview took about 90 to 100 minutes.

Instruments

In this study, two instruments were used, namely, Ego-Identity Interview and an Open-ended Questionnaire to assess individualism/collectivism at personal level.

1. Ego-Identity Interview

The Ego-Identity Interview is a semi-structured interview and was first developed by Marcia (1966). It is congruent with Erikson's (1968) idea of the identity crisis as a psychosocial task during adolescence. This interview schedule is based on the same principles of identity formation i.e., exploration and commitment in spe-

cific domains of life. The way adolescents integrate elements of exploration and commitment in responding to the interview determines their identity status. Marcia (1966) suggested four clearly differentiated identity statuses in the three domains of 'Occupation', 'Politics' and 'Religion'. Four statuses of identity development were given by Marcia (1966); these are identity achievement, foreclosure, moratorium and diffusion. This interview was later on modified and extended by Grotevant and Cooper (1981). They added three more domains to Marcia's (1966) original interview that were 'Occupation', 'Politics' and 'Religion'. The three additional domains were related to the interpersonal or relational components of identity that included 'Friendship', 'Dating' and 'Sex-Roles'. In the present research, the modified version of the interview (Grotevant & Cooper, 1981) was used. In addition, four concentrating points along a continuum of identity achievement were proposed.

2. Open-ended Questionnaire

This open-ended questionnaire developed by Gillani (1994) was used to assess the individualism / collectivism at personal level. The purpose of using this questionnaire was to assess the orientation of each individual at personal level. This questionnaire consisted of twelve open-ended questions.

Procedure

A pilot study was done to refine interview skills and gain experience in analyzing the data. Before starting the

pilot project, the researchers were trained by the supervisor to conduct a semi-structured interview from both urban and rural respondents. The pilot study was conducted with 20 individuals from urban and rural settings. The sample consisted of 80 individuals for the main study. Forty boys and girls were selected from Multan city and forty from its suburbs. On the basis of the findings of the pilot study the demographic variable of education was controlled and all the respondents were taken from intermediate levels. Interviews were recorded for which a tape recorder was set before hand. All adolescents were interviewed following basically the same standardized outline, though some of them needed more probing and exploration. In the interview, questions were asked relating to the six domains, i.e., occupation, religion, politics, friendship, dating and gender-roles. Each of these domains or sections was rated separately to determine adolescents' amount of exploration and commitment in that area. Exploration and commitment scales were designed to capture two types of information only; first, how much exploration has the adolescent made into each domain, and second, what is the strength of his/her commitment to any decision made regarding that domain. Four basic questions underlay the rating scale: first, has the adolescent actively considered any options in the domain being discussed, and if so, how many? This question applies to exploration, and indicates breadth, or lack of breadth, of exploration. Second, to what degree has he or she considered each of the options discussed? This question also applies to exploration

and will give indications of depth. Third, has he or she decided which option is best? This applies to commitment, and will indicate the strength of the commitment. Finally, how open he or she is to alternatives for the future? This question also applies to the commitment and suggests that rigidity or dogmatism is not necessary for the commitment. Adolescents have to be prepared to take other options into consideration. Every adolescent was rated accordingly on a separate identity interview note sheet, which comes with the manual.

Strong exploration and strong commitment was given the status of 'identity achieved', weak exploration and strong commitment was assigned the 'foreclosed' status, strong exploration and weak commitment was rated as 'moratorium' and weak exploration and weak commitment was given the status of 'diffused' identity. After completion of the interviews, authorities were thanked in writing. It was a time consuming task to record eighty interviews. It took approximately three months to complete the data collection.

Inter-Rater Reliability

Twenty of the interviews (10 from each group) were chosen randomly for the purpose of obtaining inter-rater reliability between the ratings by the researchers and an independent judge. A judge, who was Ph.D. in Psychology, rated these interviews independently which was matched with the ratings done by the researchers to establish the inter-rater reliability procedure. He was familiar with the identity interview schedule. After a prelimi-

nary discussion about the scoring procedure with the researchers, he rated the selected interviews, which was again followed by a discussion with researchers.

Content Analysis

Content analysis of answers of open-ended questions was done. As already stated, the main aim of using an open-ended questionnaire was to determine the individualistic / collectivistic orientation of the sample. After careful analysis of text/content of the interviews, two broad categories were developed:

- a. Statements directed towards self.
- b. Statements directed towards family/in-groups.

It was decided that response or answer to each item of open-ended questionnaire would serve as a unit of analysis. To be more specific, each individual response to the twelve items was divided into twelve units for analysis.

After analyzing responses of the whole sample, two kinds of statements were derived / separated from the content/ data as categorized earlier. Following the enumeration system, frequencies of the statements indicating self/family orientation was noted.

Results

Interviews data were analyzed on the basis of objectives of the study to get the percentage values and to see the difference (if any). The perspective through which the results were analyzed was to see the percentage values of the whole sample in six domains on identity status. It was to as-

sess the overall picture of adolescents regarding their identity status.

Table 1 indicates the percentage values of the whole sample on identity status in six domains. The percentage values of identity achievement, foreclosed and diffused are very close to each other in the domain of occupation, which shows that overall around 27% of adolescents explored different fields and chose the one that they felt was most suitable for them. While around 31% of the adolescents did not explore the domain and followed the wishes of their elders. Whereas, overall 32% adolescents have left their self to the circumstances and did not explore the domain of occupation.

The results in Table 1 show that in the domain of religion, the foreclosed status of adolescents has been seen. It indicates that the large numbers of adolescents (81%) were following religion as their parents or elders did. They did not explore it by themselves. Similar results are in the domain of politics. Around 47% of adolescents are foreclosed. Their political interests are similar to their parents or elders.

Interestingly, 65% of the whole sample is identity achieved in friendship, which is a relationship domain. This shows that most of our adolescents have the freedom of making friends and they exercise their own will in this regard.

Dating is a phenomenon that is common in Western culture. But in our culture it is not encouraged by other people. Results show that our adolescents did not explore this domain properly and 77% of the whole sample was diffused in it. They showed a lack of exploration and commitment in this domain. Though a

small number of adolescents (13%) still exploring it and did not show any commitment.
did have some experience but they are

Table 1

Percentages of the Participants on Identity Status in Six Domains

	Score	%
Occupation		
Identity Achievement	21	27
Moratorium	8	10
Foreclosure	25	31
Diffusion	26	32
Religion		
Identity Achievement	13	16
Moratorium	0	0
Foreclosure	65	81
Diffusion	2	3
Politics		
Identity Achievement	7	9
Moratorium	11	14
Foreclosure	37	47
Diffusion	25	30
Friendship		
Identity Achievement	52	65
Moratorium	17	22
Foreclosure	6	7
Diffusion	5	6
Dating		
Identity Achievement	2	3
Moratorium	10	13
Foreclosure	6	7
Diffusion	62	77
Sex-Role		
Identity Achievement	8	10
Moratorium	7	8
Foreclosure	51	64
Diffusion	14	18

Table 2*Statements Directed towards Self*

S.No.	Statements	<i>f</i>
1.	It is my life.	3
2.	My choice is important for me.	4
3.	I don't think I can exercise my choice.	6
4.	One should have freedom to do the things one wants to do.	9
5.	Me as a youngster knows more about the outside world as compared to my parents/elders.	11
6.	I have more advanced/latest knowledge of the world around us.	11
7.	I can't bear interference in my life.	3
8.	One knows what is best for one's self.	9
9.	Most of the important decisions regarding my life are taken by myself.	8
10.	It's difficult for me to comply with what my family members say or want me to do.	7
11.	It's not necessary for one to abide by the rules/norm of the society.	7
12.	People who are independent in their affairs are more successful.	5

Table 3*Statements Directed towards Family/In-Group*

S.No.	Statements	<i>f</i>
1.	It is our duty to obey our parents.	45
2.	I will choose my family over my personal interest/gains.	33
3.	Parents' decision should be final.	27
4.	Parents know what is best for their children.	45
5.	Most of the important decisions regarding my life are taken by my parents.	29
6.	In the end, their (parents) decision proves to be the right one.	30
7.	Parents are older and are more experienced than us.	31
8.	Families that are together in thick and thin are happy families.	35
9.	We must follow the norms/values of our society to survive.	33
10.	We should take into account our elders' opinions while taking decisions.	37
11.	We should explore the world, within the limits of family rules.	40
12.	I tried my best to fulfill the expectations of my elders.	29

It is interesting to note that most of the adolescents, around 64% in our sample, expressed a foreclosed attitude in the domain of sex role. They expressed lack of exploration but strong commitment towards traditional family structure of our culture.

Content Analysis

A content analysis of the responses to those questions was conducted separately. Two groups of statements were categorized, i.e., (a) statements directed towards the self, (b) statements directed towards the family or in-group. Twelve statements falling into each category were identified from the interviews of the whole sample. Frequencies on each category were obtained (Tables 2 & 3).

Discussion

If we look at the frequencies of both statements, results show that the frequencies of respondents' statements directed towards family/in-group are more in number than the statements directed towards self. It shows that most of respondents are more concerned about their families than their personal wishes and opinions, and have collectivistic approach. These results indicate that most of adolescents included in this study have collectivistic orientation at their personal level.

The results of open-ended questionnaire that was developed to see the individual's orientations towards individualism / collectivism at personal level supported that most of the adolescents in our sample had collectivistic orientations. These results indi-

cate that most of the adolescents scored more on the statements directed towards their family and in-group compared with the statements directed towards the self (83 vs 414, respectively). Adolescents of our sample preferred their family/in-group's opinion on their personal matters. They gave ample importance to close relationships especially to their parents and used statements like "My family is everything for me", and "I can sacrifice my personal desires for my family". The results clearly show that adolescents of our sample had collectivistic orientation in their personal lives.

Achieving a suitable occupation is considered an important task for the youth of today. It is a platform for the utilization of one's potentials. In the present research, it is noticed that 32% adolescents from the total sample were diffused in this domain. Apparently these adolescents did not explore this domain properly. They were not clear about their future occupation. They did not explore their inner abilities, interests and potentials in this regard. The possibility could be that their home environment is such that it does not encourage exploration in this regard. Generally speaking, lack of resources and exposure could also be possible reason for this diffusion. Youngsters generally have very few sources of information about the job market and available opportunities. It is either by word of mouth or personal contacts that persons know about the available opportunities. This situation can be a contributing factor for their disinterest in knowing about the occupation that they can get into in future.

It is interesting to note that 31% of adolescents in our sample were at foreclosure in the same domain, meaning that they had decided to go in the profession wished or chosen by their elders. They did not explore their areas of interest properly and focused their attentions and potentials to achieve that goal which is wished by their significant others. A probable explanation for such results could be that our culture is a hierarchal culture, where family bonds are very strong, and people prefer to adopt the way of life chosen by their elders. It is noticed that these adolescents have decided to go in the professions chosen by their parents. They gave importance to the wishes of their parents over their own. They did not have the courage to deviate from their familial orientation or directions because of the fear of family's rejection or disappointment. It is a sign of family cohesion that they did not want to do anything without their family's support. Most of these adolescents stated that parents have rights to guide their children, because parents are well wishers of their children. They felt that it's their duty to fulfill their parents' wishes. Adolescents on foreclosure status believed that by adopting the profession chosen by their parents, and conforming to the family's desires, they are proving to be good and obedient children. As is evident from the previous researches that children of a collectivistic culture are taught from the beginning to respect and obey their parents and elders (Mills & Clark, 1982), they concluded in their study that in the collectivist culture people are interdependent with their in-groups (family, tribe, nation, etc.),

give priority to the goals of their in-groups, shape their behavior primarily on the basis of in-group norms, and behave in a communal way. It seems that adolescents in our sample had also internalized such ideas.

In the same domain, i.e., occupation, a small number (27%) of adolescents were identity achieved. These teenagers knew what their interests are and how to go about it. They analyzed different aspects and alternatives regarding their future profession and took a firm decision for it. They also expressed that their parents gave them freedom to choose for whatever they want to do in future. They also supported and encouraged them to explore the domain on their own.

As mentioned above, those who were at the level of identity achievement were small in number. Only very few who have opportunities, exposure and resources explored this domain properly. Majority of the adolescents were either diffused or foreclosed. A common theme in all the interviews of these adolescents was (no matter what their level of identity was) the recognition of parental support. The probable explanation of these results could be that in Pakistani culture, which is a collectivistic culture, family and family opinion is very important regarding the future of their children. Profession of the youngsters is not their personal matter like the West. Rather it usually is a matter of family tradition, pride and/or desires of the elders in the family.

Very interesting results were seen in the domain of religion. Eighty one percent of the adolescents were foreclosed in this domain. This suggests that the majority of the adolescents

were very committed to the religion of their forefathers i.e., Islam, without exploring it or studying it in depth. A common observation is that people adopt the religion of their parents and keep it as an unchangeable thing. Another factor in this regard could be that from the very beginning child is not encouraged to question religious teachings and ideas. That could be the reason that youngsters in our culture usually suppress the curiosities about religion and take it for granted. They are born in a Muslim family so they are Muslims, no need to explore their own or others' religion deeply. It was apparent from the interviews of the adolescents that they are rigid Muslims but do not know the basics of their religion. They do not explore it by themselves (except very few).

Another ideological domain i.e., politics also showed similar results. There were 47% of the adolescents who were foreclosed and 30% had diffused identities. This was a sign that large number of adolescents had either the same political preferences as their parents' or did not have any preference at all. They expressed lack of exploration as well as lack of commitment in this domain. The possibility is that because of the system of hierarchy and strong in-group bonding, adolescents may not feel the need to go through the process of analyzing each and every party's manifesto, observing the leaders and then making up their minds about it. It was observed in most of the interviews that they did not invest their energies in this domain.

It was interesting to observe that in both the ideological domains i.e., religion and politics, most of our ado-

lescents were at foreclosure. However, if we take the relationship domain i.e., friendship, it shows that 65% of adolescents were identity achieved. This is the only domain in which most of the adolescents are at the identity-achieved level. It shows that in our culture ample importance is given to relationships rather than ideologies and occupations. There seems to be a freedom to explore and invest in close relationships and commitment to different in-groups.

Another domain in which most of our adolescents foreclosed was "dating". Results showed that on the whole 77% adolescents were diffused in this domain. Dating is a cultural phenomenon, which is very common in the Western countries. It is the relationship between male and female members of a society before marriage. The purpose is to understand the person of the opposite gender and after exploration choose a life partner. In Pakistani cultural context, it is something that is considered as taboo. Despite that there are youngsters who date, owing to lack of social acceptance they don't share it with their parents.

As mentioned earlier, people from collectivistic cultures are more concerned about social acceptance and conformity compared with the people from individualistic cultures. Adolescents are usually not encouraged to date. A common observation is that family/parents are given importance in choosing the life partner. Most adolescents in our sample stated that their parents will select life partner for them and that is why they do not feel the need to explore this domain.

Regarding the domain of sex-

roles, 64% of adolescents were foreclosed. We understand that societies generally assign gender specific roles to both men and women and expect them to perform those roles accordingly. Some societies are more specific about it and are also quite rigid in this regard. In our culture, a common observation is that typical roles are assigned to men and women and it is expected from them to behave accordingly. It is observed that most men and women have accepted and adopted those role assignments.

The results of the present study revealed that a large number of adolescents in our sample did not explore this domain and had accepted the typical family system. They saw their parents to behave in a specific way and they also adopted, learned and accepted that. We are the members of a patriarchal society where men are considered as superior than women and their decisions are considered as significant and ultimate. The youngsters of this environment seem to have internalized that hierarchy within the family system.

The results mentioned above were of the total sample that gave us an overall picture of adolescents' identity development in six domains belonging to both urban and rural areas. Overall, the results of the present research indicate that both boys and girls were not encouraged to explore the important domains of life. Their identity process is mainly associated with their family and in-groups' understanding and belongingness. It is the larger cultural surroundings that influence the youngsters' personality and thereby influence their process of identity development.

Conclusions

Hofstede (1980) examined people in a large variety of different cultures and found that there are different dimensions of cultures. One important dimension from his given dimensions is individualism-collectivism. According to the findings of his study, Pakistanis scored high on the scale of collectivism.

On the basis of the findings of the present research, we could conclude that the large number of adolescents included in the sample were on the status of foreclosure in all domains except for one i.e. Friendship. It means that large number of adolescents did not explore the important domains of life themselves. They showed strong commitment but very weak exploration in all the domains. On the basis of these results, it was concluded that most adolescents of our sample were foreclosed in these domains. These findings are similar to the findings of Gillani (1994) in which there were more identity achieved girls in the sample of British (white) females as compared to Pakistani girls. It was found that there was a need to explore some of the domains which are more appropriate to our cultural and societal norms. In the present research, it is noticed that most of the adolescents scored high on foreclosure that could be an indication that we might include those domains in which our adolescents like to investigate/explore. Their results on friendship were different than the other domains, which is purely a relationship domain. Therefore, it was felt that more research is needed to

assess the significant domains, which are specific to our culture only.

Another conclusion drawn from the present research is that adolescents of collectivistic cultures have different definition of identity achievement. What is unhealthy for Western adolescents might be considered healthy for our adolescents. There is a possibility that our teenagers had explored the domain of family hierarchy and had committed themselves to the family values. So what is considered foreclosed by the Western standards might be identity achieved for our standards. The results also indicated a significant difference between the urban and rural adolescents on identity achievement. It showed that urban group was more identity achieved than the rural group. So it was concluded that rural adolescents need more exposure and awareness. It was also observed that there was no significant difference between boys and girls on the levels of identity achievement. It shows that both boys and girls are equally influenced by the norms and values of our society. Relationship is important for both of them and that influenced their process of identity development.

Limitations and Suggestions

This study was a baseline study. Like all other studies this also had some limitations. The construct of identity is a very complex phenomenon. As interview technique was used in this study to assess the identity level of adolescents. It was a time consuming task because of which a large sample could not be taken.

Instrument used in this study had some specific domains in which identity achievement was assessed. These domains were more suitable for educated adolescents so we had to ignore the uneducated adolescents. It was also considered the limitation of the instrument.

This study was the first study of its kind in Pakistan. Before starting this study, researchers had a lot of questions in their mind. Though this study answered some questions but it raised many more. A lot of work is yet needed to understand the construct of identity in our culture. This is suggested that future researches should explore more domains of identity, which are more suitable for adolescents of collectivistic culture. Our socialization process emphasizes collectivity and respect for authority very strongly. The domains given by the Western researchers may not be suitable for the adolescents of our culture. If we talk about personal identity then we need to explore it in our own cultural context. We have to develop our own definitions of identity and self to get our own identity.

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