

IDENTITY FORMATION: ROLE OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND GENDER AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS.

Navneet Kaur and Kulwinder Singh

Erikson's work on identity development focused on the question, 'who am I'? As in society, identity formation is argued to be one of the key developmental tasks. This study aims to explore identity formation among undergraduate college students of Punjab across gender and achievement. The study was carried out on 200 undergraduate students (80 males and 120 females) from colleges under Punjab University, Chandigarh. The objective was to measure the Ego Identity Status which was done by using a tool developed by Bennion and Adams (1986). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to test the hypothesis formulated for the study. It was found that majority of undergraduate college students are in diffusion and achievement identity status. Female students outnumbered the male students in 'Identity Achievement', 'Foreclosure' and 'Moratorium' status. There were no significant gender differences in the academic achievement of undergraduate college students. There was an interaction effect of gender and identity formation on achievement. It was found that among males identity achievement and foreclosure identity status groups performed better than moratorium and diffusion groups of undergraduate college.

KEYWORDS: Identity Formation, Academic Achievement

Navneet Kaur ✉
Research Scholar
Punjabi University Patiala, India
Email: ninubti@gmail.com

Kulwinder Singh
Professor, Department of Education and Community Service,
Punjabi University, Patiala.
Email: drkulwinder60@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

Identity – a broader concept than the self-terms such as self-concept, self-esteem or self-actualization etc., includes people's general sense of themselves along with all their beliefs and attitudes. With early adulthood on horizon, eventually identity questions emerges “who I am all about?”, “what is my place in this society?”, “what am I going to do with my life?” and “what is different about me?” Adolescents look for a solution to the questions of identity. When the individual is able to explore their personal attributes and commit these with outlets for expression available in the environment, identity is formed.

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (specifically the “identity versus role confusion” stage of his theory), Marcia's identity status theory and Berzonsky's identity styles, are the major postulates of identity formation. The 'Identity versus Role Confusion' is the fifth stage of ego in Erikson's theory among adolescents trying to figure out who they are in order to form a basic identity of self, especially concerning social and occupational identities. Erikson said this crisis is resolved with identity achievement, the point at which an individual has extensively considered various future goals, values and past experiences, accepting some and rejecting others, and understands who they are as a unique person. Once an adolescent has attained identity achievement, they are ready to enter the next stage of Erikson's theory "Intimacy versus Isolation" where they will form strong friendships and a sense of companionship with others. If the "Identity versus Role Confusion" crisis is not solved, an adolescent will face confusion about future plans, particularly their roles in adulthood. It is argued that failure to form one's own identity could lead to instability in many areas (social, psychological, personal, etc.) as an adult.

Marcia expanded on Erikson's theory of identity formation. He focused on two essential processes in achieving a mature identity: Exploration and Commitment. In Marcia's theory, the operational definition of identity is whether an individual has explored various alternatives and made firm commitments to: an occupation, religion and sexual orientation and a set of political values in terms of crisis vis-a-vis commitment. He created a structural interview designed to classify adolescents into one of four statuses of identity. These are given in Table 1.

Table 1
Marcia's Identity Status Paradigm (1966).

		<u>Crisis</u>	
		<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<u>Commitment</u>	<i>Low</i>	Diffusion	Moratorium
	<i>High</i>	Foreclosure	Achievement

In the context of identity formation, Bosma (1985) and Meeus (1996) underlined the importance of studying the intensity of commitment and exploration rather than the presence or absence of these processes. Thus, they differentiated two forms of commitment—commitment making and identification with commitment—and two forms of exploration—past exploration (needed to find new commitments) and present exploration (necessary to validate existing commitments). These contributions represented the starting point for the development of the dual-cycle models: the three-factor model and the five-dimensional model. The three-factor model can be used to classify individuals into different identity statuses, based on specific combinations of high or low levels of commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment. Five statuses: achievement, early closure, moratorium, searching moratorium, and diffusion have been identified.

Berzonsky's identity styles refer to differences in the way individuals construct and maintain their sense of identity. An informational style involves actively seeking out, evaluating, and utilizing self-relevant information. A normative style highlights the expectations and standards of significant others. A diffused/avoidant style is characterized as procrastination and situation-specific reactions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study of identity formation among adolescents is very important as the primary psychological task of adolescence is the formation of identity. The adolescent crisis of ego identity verses role confusion, when resolved, enables individuals to integrate all the images about oneself into a personal identity and consolidate various roles one has to play. The content of identity comprises

ideological and interpersonal domain. The findings of the study would have the foundations for evaluating the identity formation of college students and would infer about the effect of academic achievement and gender. It will provide a reliable and valid database with regard to identity formation status of late adolescents entering into adulthood vis-à-vis their academic achievement. These findings will be helpful to policy makers and administrators for guiding the youth undergoing higher education to be better citizens of the nation and contributing to national development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are:

1. To study identity formation among undergraduate college students in terms of identity moratorium, identity diffusion, identity foreclosure and identity achievement.
2. To study gender differences among undergraduate college students in terms of identity moratorium, identity diffusion, identity foreclosure and identity achievement.
3. To study identity formation in relation to academic achievement of undergraduate college students.
4. To study academic achievement of undergraduate college students across gender and identity formation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

For the present study 200 undergraduate college students (under Punjab University Chandigarh) were selected randomly. The data was collected from the students of different faculties namely literature, commerce, law, education, life science, physical science and social science. There were total 80 male and 120 female students.

TOOL USED FOR THE STUDY

The Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status was used in the present study. This tool comprised of 32 items on a 6 point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) developed by Bennion and Adams (1986). The present tool is an improvised version of the original Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status-Omeis (1979). There are 16 items each of commitment and exploration. In each

dimension, there are 10 positively and 6 negatively worded statements.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Classification of Undergraduate Students Across Four Types of Identity Formation

On the basis of median split of commitment (median=60.30) and exploration (median=60.20) scores, the undergraduate college students were classified into following four categories of identity formation:

- 1. Identity Achievement (above the median on both dimensions)
- 2. Identity Moratorium (Above the median on exploration, but below the median on commitment).
- 3. Identity Foreclosure (Above the median on commitment, but below the median on exploration.)
- 4. Identity Diffusion (below the median on both dimensions)

The distribution of undergraduate college students in these four types of identity formation groups is given in Table 2.

Table 2
Distribution of Undergraduate College Students in Categories of Identity Formation.

	Identity Achievement	Moratorium	Foreclosure	Diffusion	Total
N	42	35	32	54	163
%	21.00	17.50	16.00	27.00	100.00*
Chi -square = 6.70 p< .05			df=3 Table values : 7.81(0.05), 11.34(0.01)		

Results in Table 2 show that 37 (18.50%) students could not be classified being on the median score of commitment /exploration scale of identify formation. There were only 42 undergraduate college students (21 %) who were classified into 'Identity Achievement' status and 35 (17.50%) were found in 'Moratorium' status. 32 (16.00%) undergraduate college students were put in 'Foreclosure' status and 54 of them (27.00%) were in 'Diffusion' status of identity formation. The chi-square value, testing the equal distribution came out to be 6.70 which was not significant that 0.05 level of significance.

Identity Formation and Gender

The four categories of undergraduate college students in terms of identity

formation groups across gender were prepared and chi-square test was used to test significance of association between identity formation and gender. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Gender Wise Distribution of Undergraduate College Students in Identity Formation Categories.

Gender		Identity Achievement	Moratorium	Foreclosure	Diffusion	Total
Male	N	14	14	10	31	69
	%	20.28	20.28	14.49	44.92	
Female	N	28	21	22	23	94
	%	29.78	22.34	23.40	24.46	
Chi-square =7.81; p<0.05				df = 3 Table values:7.81 (0.05), 11.34(0.01)		

As seen from Table 3 only 14 (20.28%) undergraduate male college students and 28 (29.78%) females have been categorised into 'Identity Achievement' status of identity formation. Further 14 (20.28%) male and 21(22.34%) female undergraduate college students have been classified into 'Moratorium' status of identity formation. There are 10(14.49%) male and 22(23.40%) female undergraduate college students who were classified in 'Foreclosure' status and the comparative figures for 'Diffusion' status of identity formation are 31(44.92%) and 23(24.46%) respectively for male and female undergraduate college students.

The chi-square value for testing the significance of association between gender and identity formation among undergraduate college students turned out to be 7.81. It was found to be significant at 0.05 level. It may be concluded that female college students outnumber male college students in 'Identity Achievement', 'Identity Moratorium' and 'Identity Foreclosure' status. On the other hand, male undergraduate college students outnumber female undergraduate college students in 'Identity Diffusion' status which is the lowest level in the hierarchy of identity status.

Identity Formation and Academic Achievement

The undergraduate college students were classified as high and low achievers. Further they were classified into identity formation and academic achievement crosstab for finding out association between the variables. The results are given in Table 4.

Table 4
Academic Achievement v/s Identity Formation Among Undergraduate College Students.

		Identity Achievement	Moratorium	Foreclosure	Diffusion	Total
High Achievers	N	10	3	7	8	28
	%	35.71	10.71	25.00	28.57	
Low Achievers	N	7	5	4	10	26
	%	26.92	19.23	15.38	38.46	
Total	N	17	8	11	18	54
	%	31.48	14.81	20.37	33.33	
Chi-square = 1.99, p>.05			df = 3 Table values = 7.81(.05), 11.34(.01)			

The data in Table 4 shows that 28 and 26 undergraduate college students were classified as high achievers and low achievers respectively. Looking into distribution of undergraduate college students in 4 kinds of identity formation (Table 2) and numbers in Table 4, it may be noted that only 10(23.80%) out of 42 identity achievement status undergraduate college student turned out to be high achievers and 7(16.66%) students were in low achievers group. Further 3(8.57%) out of 35 students were high achievers and 5(14.28%) were low achievers who have been classified into 'Moratorium' status of identity formation. Further 7(21.87%) out of 32 as high achievers and 4(12.50%) as low achievers have been classified into 'Foreclosure'. The comparative figure for 'Diffusion' identity groups are 8(14.81%) and 10(18.51%) out of 54 students respectively as high achievers and low achievers undergraduate college students.

The chi-square value testing the significance of association between academic achievement and identity formation among undergraduate college students turned out at to be 1.990. It was not significant at 0.05 level. It may be concluded that there is no significant association between identity formation and academic achievement of undergraduate college students. However, it may be noted that higher achiever undergraduate students outnumber their low achiever counterparts in identity achievement and 'foreclosure' statuses. On the other hand, low achievers outnumber high achievers in 'diffusion' and 'moratorium' status.

Achievement of Undergraduate College Students Across Identity Formation and Gender

The mean achievement scores of undergraduate college students in gender and identity formation through a factorial design (4×2) are given in Table 5.

Table 5
The Means and SDs of Achievement Scores of Undergraduate College Students in Gender and Identity Formation.

Gender		Identity Achievement	Moratorium	Foreclosure	Diffusion	Total
Male	N	14	14	10	31	69
	M	84.92	79.57	81.10	78.40	79.99
Female	N	28	21	22	23	94
	M	80.86	79.90	81.42	77.91	80.02
Total	N	42	35	32	54	163
	M	82.89	79.73	81.26	78.15	80.00

The results in Table 5 indicate the mean achievement scores of undergraduate college students in gender and identity formation. It may be noted that 42 undergraduate college students have been classified into 'identity achievement' status with their mean score is 82.89 in identity formation. Further 35 undergraduate college students have been categories into 'moratorium' with their mean score being 79.73 and 32 undergraduate college students have been classified into foreclosure group with their mean score being 81.26 and 54 undergraduate college students have been classified into diffusion group with a mean score of 78.15. The Summary of Two way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is given in Table 6.

Table 6
Summary of ANOVA : Identity Formation and Gender.

Source of Variance	SS	Df	MS	F
Main Effects				
Identity Formation (A)		3	148.80	1.80
Gender(B)	446.50			
Interaction Effect	9.00	1	9.00	
Identity Formation ×Gender (A×B)	1566.91	3	522.30	0.10
Error/within				6.28**
Total	12991.40	156	83.28	
		163	-	
df = 1/156 Table values : 3.90(.05),6.80(.01)				
df = 3/156 Table values : 2.66(.05), 3.91(.01)				

**Significant at 0.01 level*

Main Effects

i. Identity Formation

The F value for the main effect of identity formation came out to be 1.80. It is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. This means that achievement of undergraduate college students does not vary significantly across identity formation groups. However, it may be seen from the mean value that identity achievement is better than foreclosure, moratorium and diffusion.

ii. Gender

The F value for the main effect of gender on achievement of undergraduate college students came out to be 0.10. It is also not significant at 0.05 level. This indicates that male and female undergraduate college students do not differ significantly in their achievement.

Interaction Effect

The F value for the interaction effect of identity formation and gender came out to be 6.28. It is significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the academic achievement of undergraduate college students will differ significantly across identity formation status and gender groups, either independently or conjointly. It may be seen from the mean values in Table 5 that male undergraduate college students perform better than female undergraduate college students in identity achievement and only are nearly same for other identity formation groups. In other words, 'identity achievement> foreclosure>moratorium> diffusion' seems to be true for male undergraduate college students, and it is not same for female undergraduate college students. In case of undergraduate female college students 'foreclosure> achievement> moratorium> diffusion' seems to be true.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that there are more undergraduate college students in diffusion identity status, which is lowest in the hierarchy of the four statuses of identity formation. Therefore, the students are still struggling or are in the crisis for making their identity-what to be and how to be? It is only through guidance and counselling, that these adolescents can be facilitated to have a career choice of their own -- based on aptitude, interest and motivation. There are substantial differences between boys and girls career performances. The girl students in undergraduate classes have shown a better picture being more on identity achievement and moratorium status than boys. Undergraduate college male students outnumber undergraduate college

female students in diffusion identity status. These results see support from a study in which men scored higher in levels of identity diffusion whereas women scored higher than men in identity achievement (Lewis, 2003). Girls have better performance on higher identity statuses (Achievement and Moratorium), whereas boys outscore girls on diffusion (Sandhu and Tung, 2006; Kim, 1991). It is more satisfying in Indian conditions where girls face difficulty in completion of school education. It is a good sign for girls' education that needs to be taken care of by bringing those who are in poor and illiterate homes, especially in rural areas. On the other hand, the male population in colleges needs to be counselled and given training to be goal oriented along with having achievement motivation and being active and explorers. Academic achievement which is an indicator of success of schooling does not relate significantly with identity formation and gender, though their interaction effect was seen in the results to be significant. To sum up it can be said that all the four objectives have been attained and the corresponding proposed hypotheses have also been empirically tested.

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