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Self-efficacy and identity statuses in students of Iran

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to analyse the relationship between identity status and self-efficacy. The statistical population included all graduate students employed at the Training Centre of Ayatollah Khatami in the city of Yazd in 2009. The sample consisted of 122 students who were selected by convenience sampling. The chosen research method is descriptive correlational. Bennion and Adams' Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status and the Self-Efficacy Scale were used for measuring the identity statuses and self-efficacy. The results of this study show that there is a positive significant relationship between achieved identity status, self-efficacy (p < 0.01) and diffused identity; there is a negative significant relationship between diffused identity status and self-efficacy (p < 0.01). According to this study, for providing qualified forces, the training centres can employ forces by detecting identity statuses and self-efficacy of volunteers.

Keywords: Identity, identity status, students, self-efficacy.

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1. Introduction

Today, the role and significance of manpower is well known. Considering the factors of production (land, manpower, capital and technology), the most valuable and rarest factor is manpower. Indifference to manpower productivity and mere emphasis on other factors not only disturbs the efficiency of the organisation but leads to increased damages and discontent among employees (Sahay, 2005).

A key group within the society that significantly contributes to scientific growth and a brighter future of the country are students. Their efficiency in their field of study can be important for the construction of the country. Paying considerable attention to their behaviour and self-efficacy plays a key role in this domain.

Canadian psychologist Albert Bandura began developing the concept of self-efficacy as a mechanism inhuman agency in the late 1960s, and he has since become the world's leading self-efficacy theorist. In Bandura's view, human achievement and well-being require an optimistic sense of personal efficacy. Furthermore, a vigorous sense of personal efficacy is needed to sustain the persistent effort required to be successful; in fact, setbacks and difficulties in human pursuits serve a useful purpose in teaching, determining that success usually requires sustained effort. And, having successfully coped under difficult circumstances, individuals emerge from adversity with a stronger sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1991; Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Luthans, 2002); hence self-efficacy may also serve as an important and self-reinforcing motivational construct (Wood & Bandura, 1989).

According to Bandura (1997) 'perceived self-efficacy is concerned with people's beliefs in their capabilities to produce given attainment'. One may feel different capabilities in different areas. For example, one may feel more able to make an excellent record in math but feel moderately in science. Perceived self-efficacy is developed based on mastery, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and somatic and emotional states (Bandura, 2004).

In the other words, self-efficacy is the perception of one's own ability to reach a goal. In behavioural psychology, the general concept of self-efficacy refers to an individual's sense of self-agency, borne out in a belief that they can accomplish a given task and, more broadly, cope with life's challenges (Bandura, 1994, 2006a, 2006b; Gecas, 1989).

Bandura (1986, 1997) suggests that our predictions about the possible outcomes of behaviour are remarkably affected by self-efficacy. In fact, we imagine future consequences by relying on our past experiences and our observations of others (Woolfolk, Winne & Perry, 2003).

High self-efficacy leads to applying and low self-efficacy leads to avoiding. When one feels able to do something, there is high probability of applying to do that, and when one does not feel able, there is low probability to do that (Karbasi & Samani, 2016).

Self-efficacy is different from self-esteem. Self-efficacy is an evaluation of capability and self-esteem is a judgement of self-worth. As self-concept is one's attributes, self-efficacy refers to the belief of what a person can do (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006).

Self-efficacy can be manifested through various elements of personal behaviour, such as how well a person perseveres in the face of adversity, whether they have an optimistic or pessimistic attitude about their future and whether they think in self-enhancing or self-debilitating ways (Bandura, 2006). If we are to apply the concept of self-efficacy to the context of personal finance management, it could be reasoned that individuals who have a greater sense of self-assuredness in their financial management capacities are more likely to approach any financial difficulties they encounter as 'challenges to be mastered, rather than as threats to be avoided' (Bandura, 1994, p. 71).

Self-efficacy affects every area of human endeavour. By determining the beliefs a person holds regarding his or her power to affect situations, it strongly influences both the challenges a person actually has to face competently and the choices a person is most likely to make. These effects are

particularly apparent and compelling, with regard to behaviours affecting health (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005).

Self-efficacy is very important in adolescence, and identification in adolescence is one of the subjects that may have a relationship with self-efficacy.

Adolescence is an important period for the development of strategies for coping and responding to environmental needs. Due to rapid physical, psychological, social, cultural and cognitive changes, this period of life is associated with a host of problems (Vojoodi, Hashemi, Abdolpour & Mashinchi-Abbasi, 2015). One of the developmental tasks in adolescence is identification (Berk, 2007). Identification deals with the philosophy and meaning of life, which is an issue that all human beings have to face. The issue of identity has risen since the primitive man felt that he should respond to nature about who/what he is. Identity is a response that distinguishes a human being from his or her fellows, separates his or her values from the values of others and shows the belonging of a person to a specific group. In fact, one of the major developmental tasks of young people in society is to form their identity and consolidate it (Rothearam-Borus et al., 2011). According to Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development, a new cognitive structure has emerged in adolescence that makes the adolescent feel he/she is a unique person. In this period of life, the adolescent seeks inner knowledge or understanding of self and tries to accumulate a collection of personal values.

The process of identity-finding in adolescents begins with withdrawing from anonymity and entering the field of presence through confrontation and conflicting with the fundamental context of identity. This confrontation provides a general early self-image for a person. When the stream of identity comes to a stand and establishes in a person, he/she finds himself/herself immersed in that context and understands it (Zakeri, Shamshiri & Khormaei, 2015).

Erikson's (1968) studies show that many of the adolescence problems are rooted in the way that a person passes through the identity crisis. If an adolescent passes this period with full knowledge and understanding, his/her immunity against problems and harms will increase and he/she can easily acquire a successful identity (Ghasemi, Arefi & Sheykholeslami, 2003). Among several studies conducted on Erikson's ideas, Marcia's (1993, 1987) studies have greatly influenced others in this field (Rice, 2001).

Marcia's model, which is developed based on Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, consists of three basic principles. Firstly, personal identity formation requires the stabilising of commitment and lack of indecision. This commitment should exist in the main areas of identity, such as profession or the selection of a spouse (Ansari & Oskoei, 2001). Secondly, identification is based on exploration, inquiry and decision-making. Finally, during a particular period, the adolescents may experience various roles and have different experiences in order to form a coherent personal identity. In Western societies, this period is well-recognised and defined as the late psychosocial period (Blisker, 1992; quoted in Rice, 2001).

Marcia proposes four identity statuses based on the models facing identity. According to Marcia (1980), these statuses, which come one after another, are different from each other, depending on the fact that they lead to commitment or to a period of exploration and decision-making. The first status is the late or moratorium identity that occurs before acquisition of identity. The objective of this period is to get prepared for commitments and to create an opportunity for further self-recognition in terms of concrete and mental facts (Feiz-Dargah, 1995). The second status, termed foreclosure identity, refers to individuals who have a very little exploration status and mostly remain committed to the values of their childhood. They remain committed to the ideology or profession which has not been found and had been already prepared and recommended by parents to them and, therefore, do not experience the identity crisis. Some of the characteristics of these people include a high respect for authorities, conformity with peers, low independence of opinion, low self-esteem and avoidance to introduce themselves as independent individuals (Iran far, 1999). In the third status, which is role confusion or diffused identity, regardless of exploring or not exploring different alternatives, a person

is not committed to following a particular path in life. In Marcia's (1987) view, these people do not experience the critical period and do not feel any adherence to a religion, political philosophy, gender roles, career and personal beliefs and standards (Archer &Waterman, 1990; quoted in Rice, 2001). In fact, diffused identity refers to a status of a deadlock in life (Feiz-Dargah, 1995). From a developmental perspective, diffusion is the most irrational and difficult status of identity. The fourth status, which is called successful identity or achieved identity, is the final step in the formation of identity. In this status, people who pass through a period of exploring various ways reach a sustainable commitment. Independence of opinion, creativity, complex thinking, high level of moral judgement, flexibility, low anxiety and authoritarianism, internal control and high self-esteem are some of the characteristics of these people (Iran far, 1999).

In reality, some people never reach the moratorium and advanced identity and remain in the foreclosure status. In addition, a large number of adolescents remain in the stage of diffusion. Moreover, certain people who achieve the advanced status may return to previous statuses in the following years (Marcia, 1989).

Since self-efficacy is very important in adolescence, and identification in adolescence is one of the subjects that may have a relationship with self-efficacy, studying the relationship between self-efficacy and identity is, therefore, of special importance. But few studies have been conducted on this; the main objective of the present research is to study the relationship between self-efficacy and identity in adolescents.

2. Method

The current study is a correlational descriptive research. The statistical population included are all graduate students employed at the Training Centre of Ayatollah Khatami in the city of Yazd in 2009. The sample consisted of 122 students (male) who were selected by convenience sampling. The chosen research method is descriptive correlational.

2.1. Tools

Bennion and Adams' Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (EOM-EIS) (1989) and self-efficacy questionnaire (SES) (1998) were used for measuring the identity statuses and self-efficacy.

2.1.1. The self-efficacy scale (SES)

Scherer et al. (1982) based their Self-Efficacy Scale (SES) on Bandura's research, which differentiated between self-efficacy expectancies. The original version of the SES consisted of 36 items, which was subsequently reduced to 23 items across two subscales, namely the General Self-Efficacy Subscale (GSESS) (17 items) and Social Self-Efficacy Subscale (6 items), with a reported reliability of 0.86. These items were rated on a 14-point Likert scale, with the GSESS (factor 1) accounting for 26.5% of the total variance. The various items focused on three areas, namely the willingness to initiate behaviour; the willingness to expend effort in completing the behaviour; and persistence in the face of adversity.

2.1.2. Bennion and Adams' objective measure of ego identity status

The questionnaire was developed based on the theory of Erikson and Marcia on identity, and it comprises 64 items and four sub-scales (EOM-EIS, 1989). The subscales are as follows: (1) diffused identity; (2) foreclosure identity; (3) moratorium identity; and (4) achieved identity. The scale had adequate validity (Shekarkan and Omidian, 2001). Agha Soltani (1999) assessed the reliability of the scale using Cronbach's alpha and obtained the following coefficients: 72% for diffused identity, 86% for foreclosure identity, 67% for moratorium identity and 76% for achieved identity. Rohani (1999) obtained Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the total scale as 78%, showing internal consistency.

3. Findings

3.1. Descriptive findings

The descriptive statistics for the identity status variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics relevant to identity status scores by gender

Variables	Frequency	Mean	S. deviation
Diffused identity	122	65.50	9.74
Foreclosure identity	122	65.27	10.46
Moratorium identity	122	55.64	12.42
Achieved identity	122	40.43	10.03
Self-efficacy	122	37.64	10.43

3.2. Inferential findings

The research question was: Is there a significant relationship between identity status and self-efficacy? To answer this question, Pearson's correlations were calculated and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlations between identity statuses and self-efficacy

Diffused	Foreclosure	Moratorium	Achieved	Self-efficacy	
identity	identity	identity	identity		
 -/23 [*]	0/15-	/33**-	0/26**	1	
/07-	0/10	0/08	1	0/26**	
0/57**	0/33**	1	0/08	/33**-	
0/36**	1	0/33**	0/10	0/15-	
 1	0/36**	0/57**	/07-	/23*-	Diffused identity

^{**}p < 0/01.

As shown in Table 2, the following relationships were found between the research variables: there was a positive relationship between achieved identity status and self-efficacy (p < 0/01); a negative relationship between moratorium identity status and self-efficacy (p < 0/01); and a negative relationship between diffused identity status and self-efficacy (p < 0/05).

4. Discussion

As mentioned earlier, identification is a developmental task in adolescence. In many cases, identity is directly linked to an individual's efficacy. Therefore, it is essential to explore the concept of identity and its relationship with self-efficacy among adolescents. The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between identity status and self-efficacy. An individual's cognitive development stage determines how s/he thinks about ethical issues and decides what is right or wrong in a given situation. Individual and situational variables interact with the cognitive component to determine how an individual is likely to behave with regard to ethical issues. It is proposed that self-efficacy influences the way in which individuals act on cognitions of what is right or wrong and whether they believe in their own abilities (Swanepoel, Botha & Rose-Innes, 2015).

The results showed that there is a positive relationship between achieved identity status and self-efficacy, a negative relationship between moratorium identity status and self-efficacy, and a negative relationship between diffused identity status and self-efficacy. These findings are consistent with the findings of some previous studies (Berzonsky, 2003; Berzonsky & Niemeyer, 1994; Farsinejad, 2004; Hejazi, Farsinejad & Asgari, 2007; Pajares, 2002).

One of the findings of the study is the direct and significant relationship between identity and self-efficacy. Farsinejad (2004) also reported that 'commitment' plays an intermediary role between 'identity styles' and 'educational self-efficacy' beliefs. One may attribute this finding to features of commitment that includes control, appraisal and self-regulation. Moreover, commitment is a reference framework which influences one's orientations. As Bandura (1997) mentioned, people with high self-efficacy are purposeful and show effort and perseverance to reach their desirable objectives and criteria. Such effort and perseverance are also observed in performing educational assignments. They try more and devote more time to learning (Bandura, 1997). In other words, they are committed to their educational objectives and rigorously attempt to achieve them. Therefore, the presence of a purposeful reference framework to regulate educational behaviours seems to be the main factor contributing to one's increased positive evaluation of his/her educational capabilities (Hejazi, Borjalilu & Naghsh, 2010).

Berzonsky (2003) believes that 'commitment' plays a critical role in distinguishing identity processing styles. According to Berzonsky, commitment is a purposeful reference framework which acts as a source to control, appraise and regulate behaviours and feedbacks. Hence, commitment leads to a feeling of purposefulness in people.

Commitment along with exploration provides a framework whereby people decide their beliefs and viewpoints and utilise them in solving their problems. People committed to their own predetermined objectives are ready to spare no effort and face any problem in this way. Such characteristics can be deemed associated with 'self-efficacy' (Hejazi et al., 2010).

People with stronger self-efficacy beliefs tend to show more effort and perseverance and so would exhibit a better performance in their assignments. For such people, assignments are challenges that should be overcome. Therefore, they become deeply engaged in activities and show more effort to compensate for failure. In the eyes of people with weak self-efficacy beliefs, assignments appear to be more difficult, which would bring about stress, depression and a limited problem-solving vision. Along these lines, people with 'strong educational self-efficacy' beliefs possess an intrinsic motivation for action and are more successful in the face of difficult and in challenging educational assignments (Hejazi et al., 2010; Pajares, 2002).

Diffused identity status also has a reverse significant relationship with self-efficacy because, as mentioned earlier, people with diffused identity status lack constant clear educational goals and show low levels of educational skills, self-control and educational self-efficacy. Their commitment to life, professional and educational programmes is also low (Nurmi, Berzonsky, Tammy & Kinney, 1997).

The quality of an individual's self-efficacy originating from their families, society and culture plays an important role in the development of their identity. From psychological and sociological perspectives, it can be stated that negligence in the education of individuals and perseverance of the values and abilities in them may change and distort the individual and social identity and lead to self-alienation, especially in an era of cultural influences and transformations. In education, it is essential to train individuals, so that they can internalise their national and religious values for the development of national and cultural identities. Therefore, the education system, higher education, families and media should design a consistent and purposeful programme in this area.

5. Limitations

The limitations of the study are as follows:

The small size of the sample population limits its generalisability.

Lack of control of periphery variables, emotions and personal problems in the participants.

6. Further studies

The following are recommended:

Carrying out research on other communities (non-student societies).

Determining the relationship between the variables of this research with other psychological variables.

To achieve more precise data, we propose further studies with wider samples and use of stratified cluster sampling.

It is proposed to first carry out the study within different cultural groups and then consider intercultural comparison.

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