

## Identity Processing Styles of Adolescents During Pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine the Identity formation processes of the adolescents during the situation of lockdown due to COVID-19 Pandemic. 400 Adolescents (Males 200 and Females 200) in the age of 15-18 were given the Identity Style Inventory over the online platform. The results show that males and females do not differ significantly in the process of Identity formation in all the four categories. The results are inconsistent with the literature reviews and thus the causes can be explained by the situation of Pandemic.

**Keywords:** *Identity Formation Styles, Gender Difference, Adolescents*

WHO defines adolescence as a period in human growth and development that comes after childhood and before adulthood, 10 to 19 years of age. Adolescence is one of the most sensitive periods of one's life. It is a period of transition and exploration. Along with process of maturation an adolescent undergoes many other processes such as identity formation, exploration of self, acquiring skills for taking up the adult roles, psychosocial development. Psychosocial development includes exploration of societal roles, developing relationships with peers and other people in society, getting approval and acceptance, maintaining a particular position in society etc.

According to Erickson, Identity is formed through Identity crisis. It is a period when one is trying different roles, values, interests, academic fields, occupations, and sexual preferences etc that suit him the best and eventually give him a sense of who he is. Adolescents grow more autonomous and dependency on parents decreases. Society has a great impact on the development of an adolescent. Within the society, peers play extremely vital role in a life of an adolescent. Friends tend to gain more importance than the family or parents at this particular stage of life. As most of the time is spent with peers, they become the center of the lives of adolescents (Buhmester & Furman, 1987; Ellis, Rogoff, & Cromer, 1981; Larson & Richards, 1991).

Marcia (1976) stated that there are four statuses of identity namely Identity achievement, identity moratorium, identity foreclosure, and identity diffusion. Identity achievement is when an adolescent explores the most meaningful alternatives and made a commitment to his or her identity. Moratorium is when an adolescent explores meaningful alternatives but

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has made no commitment to anything s particular. Identity foreclosure is the status of an adolescent who has made a commitment, but has not been through any kind of exploration. Finally, identity diffusion is the status of an adolescent who has neither explores nor made a commitment towards an identity (Santrock, 2007; Santrock, 2008; Arnett, 2009)

Sandhu, Damanjit & Tung, Suninder (2006) found that the Girls were higher than boys on achievement and moratorium and lower than boys on diffusion. Hejazi, E., & Fartash, S. (2006) concluded that the females use informational identity style more than male and there is no significant gender difference in normative, diffuse/avoidant, and commitment identity styles.

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Sample*

In the resent study, sample size was N= 400. Out of which 200 were males and 200 were females. The sample is collected using the convenient sampling method. Males and females in the age group of 15 to 18 studying in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> standards of science stream are included in this study. The test was given to students over the online platform.

Gender	No. of students	Total
Males	200	200
Females	200	200
Total		400

#### *Instruments*

**Identity Styles Inventory (ISI-3) Berzonsky (1989,1992):** To evaluation identity styles and identity commitment, Identity Styles Inventory was used this study. This inventory was made by Berzonsky (1989, 1992) based on the Erickson’s stages of development and James Marcia’s phases of Identity formation. The four types of processes in which an adolescent may set out to look for his/her Identity are categorized by James marcia and accordingly tested in this inventory. Berzonsky revised the inventory twice and thus, this is 3<sup>rd</sup> version that has been used in this study. The questionnaire has 40 items that 12 items was in connection with informational style, 10 items related to diffuse/avoidant identity style and 9 questions was about the normative identity style. 9 items related to identity commitment. Responses were on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate stronger use of a given identity style and stronger identity commitment.

The reliability was established by Ghazanfari (2008), inventory’s’ consistency coefficient 0.67 for informational style, 0.52 for normative style, 0.62 for diffuse/avoidant style and 0.57 for identity commitment. The alpha coefficient reported for informational, normative and diffuse/avoidant identity styles, respectively, 0.58, 0.50 and 0.67 by Piri et al (2005).

The example of the item in the test is as follows:

*“Regarding religious beliefs, I know basically what I believe and don't believe”.*

#### *Procedure*

In the present study, sample was collected in the form of online testing. The test was sent to students via different social media platforms and was received through the same. Students were initially given information about the purpose and use of this particular study. Students also filled the personal data sheet that included the name, age, gender, class and activities the spent time on during the lockdown.

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The instructions about solving the test were given in the beginning of the test in written format.

### RESULTS

*Table No. 1 t-test of gender difference on all four Identity Styles*

Identity Style	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
I	Males	200	38.08	7.273	1.34	.179
	Females	200	39.02	6.760		
N	Males	200	31.8	5.496	.226	.822
	Females	200	31.7	5.134		
D	Males	200	31.44	5.863	2.205	.028
	Females	200	30.12	6.154		
C	Males	200	34.3	5.580	1.568	.118
	Females	200	35.2	5.454		

t-test results show no significant difference in the Identity Processing styles of girls and boys.

### DISCUSSION

Pandemic being a situation of uncertainty and confusion, created a very different and unusual mindset within each strata of the society. And adolescents are no exception to this consequence. With sudden lockdown and shutting down of schools and work places, the scary environment of change was created all over the world. Coping with sudden change of the routine caused the hustle in the minds.

Adolescents had a different experience altogether as staying at home constantly for a very long period of time under the surveillance of parents has been a major task for them and secondly the constant exposure to screen devices and social media with nothing else available to spend their time. Adolescents could see nothing concrete in their present and future as a part of their identity processing. Life seemed to have stagnated.

Many of them state that they were able to do different activities and get various experiences throughout the period of lockdown. Some adolescents were actively trying to do different things and explore their skills and qualities such as cooking, baking, learning new languages, exercising with different techniques etc. They surely fell into the category of Moratorium or the Informative Identity processing Style. While some of them majorly passed their time following the trends of watching the movies and series on Amazon Prime or Netflix. Those who followed the trends blindly without giving much of a thought are choosing the Normative style of Identity formation and are following the peers or parents in choosing the activities to pass their time. On other side there also exists a set of people who have done absolutely nothing productive in this lockdown period and have abused their physical and mental health. This category of adolescents fall under the diffused state of identity processing and are not willing to take any kind of action voluntarily to explore their identity.

As earlier proven by Sandhu, Damanjit & Tung, Suninder (2006) that generally girls are significantly high on Informative style of Identity processing than the boys and Boys are significantly high on diffusion than the girls, but this study shows no difference in any of the identity processing styles of the adolescents as the situation of pandemic has let to neutralize

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the difference and created equal amount of confusion and disorientation within the adolescents.

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### Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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