

The Differences in Ego Identity Statuses Between Religious and Non-religious Adolescents of Albania

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Abstract

Religion plays an important role in the creation of identity among adolescents. The influence of religion is also reflected in the phases of identity creation in adolescence. The purpose of this study is the identification of identity differences among adolescents who are believers of a religion and those who are not religious. The methodology of this study is divided into 3 steps. In the first step we have identified the religious and non-religious adolescents through CRS questionnaire. The sample contains 160 teens from six cities of Albania, 63 males and 87 females. The second step is focused on measuring the identity statuses of adolescents who have agreed to continue testing for the purpose of the study (N 150). The third step of the study is focused in analyzing through SPSS 20, the differences of identity statuses between adolescents who are religious and those who are not. The analysis of differences is made from the test scores of Layne Bennion and Gerald Adams' Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status and according to the fourth identity's statuses of the test. The analyzed components are: identity achievement IA, identity diffusion ID, moratorium MO, foreclosure FO. It has been found that there are some differences in the Ego Identity statuses of Moratorium and Foreclosure, but these findings did not make big differences to the way of Identity achievement. The results of this study will clarify the impact of religion in ego identity statuses of Albanian adolescents.

Keywords: identity; religious adolescents; non-religious adolescents.

1. Introduction

Identity is defined as the internal organization of individual's motives, abilities and beliefs. Crisis and devotion are important in the formation of identity. The creation of identity in adolescents is impacted by family and social circle in which the individual interacts. This interaction often brings barricades that block the natural tendency to achieve identity [1].

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These obstacles may be related to a kind of family-friendly behavior, that forces and makes the individual to not overcome the childhood phases of identification. Blocking at these levels and not exploring alternatives makes the teenager create a shared or self-contained identity where the family and the social circle through introjective mechanisms denounces all the teenager norms and values without chewing the teenager himself. Paradoxically, the same happens when the individual lives in very poor and when is exposed to stimulated environment. This condition makes the individual not easily detached from the environment. Under these conditions, the teenager creates his / her identity completely dependent on the conditions and the poor stimulation surrounding him. Identity achievements have crossed some crises and have reviewed and re-evaluated their thoughts and beliefs by engaging in professional, political, and religious choices that may be consistent or contrary to their parents. Individuals with identity diffusion may have gone through a crisis or not, but have not yet considered their possible alternatives and have not committed themselves to being attached to a structure that they will follow consistently. Individuals with Moratorium identity have remained in the identity crisis, despite having faced some confrontations of family beliefs and opinions and social demands. Individuals with self-imposed identity (foreclosure identity) have not undergone any crisis but have swallowed up the demands and expectations of the family and the social circle. One cannot clearly distinguish a difference between the attitudes of these individuals in society.

The identity in adolescents is formed by engagement and the overcome of crises, which means that the individual should create a structure about thoughts and emotions in the professional field, political beliefs, and religious commitments. Engaging in a religious belief has a strong impact on identity creation because it causes the teenager to get involved and experience crises in coping with religious doctrines. Previous studies show that religion has a strong influence to the social development of adolescents [2]. The influence of religion on the creation of adolescent identity appears in: social relationships, values that are created, pro social behaviors, or misconceptions. The main conclusions of the study show that religion has a positive effect on the sphere of pro social behavior, vitality goals and emotional regulation [3]. According to Marcia-s, to achieve identity, the teenager should experience some crisis and commit to ideologies. Two components of mature identity are the crisis and devotion. The crisis refers to the period when adolescents engage in choice among important alternatives; while engagement has to do with the degree of personal investment in the choice of the most appropriate alternative [4]. Marcia has developed four basic identity statuses: the diffusion identity, foreclosure, moratorium and the achieved identity. His paradigm assumes that identity formation is a personal issue of the adolescent [5]. This means that adolescents should choose to identify with a particular status in the fields of profession, sexual orientation, political ideas and religious affiliation.

1.1. Statuses of identity

Diffuse Identity. Identity beginnings relate to choice in a variety of alternatives. They engage in some of them with diligence, then decide to follow another alternative. They are characterized by a great desire to explore different alternatives and little desire to dedicate what they do best. They avoid challenges and refuse to undertake a commitment [6]. These individuals, teenagers confused, are weak and may be subject to negative influences or are at risk of being isolated from society. Confused teenager has not committed to values or personal goals and has no interest in exploring opportunities to stabilize these values. He has not undertaken any

engagement with regard to religion, sexual function, political attitudes or any occupation. Many adolescents are characterized by this status. They may have explored a bit, but these explorations have been more intentional than intentional explorations. However, over time, the pressure of parents, peers, and society helps many teens by pulling them out of this "crisis of decisions". These often have low self-esteem, low autonomy, and suggestive external orientation (their behavior is overseas). We should be aware that if a teenager passes prolonged time to the confused identity stage without further development, this can "lead to personal disintegration" [7]. Individuals with confused identities are without a direction in life, with no purpose, follow the direction that others offer and which are easier to accomplish. These individuals are highly influential from others and aim for a lifelong life style without long-term goals.

Foreclosure Identity. Adolescents at this stage of development are more likely to have not experienced a crisis. However, they may have already made commitments to the profession and the ideologies that have been implemented by parents, society, or any other power outside, besides them. An example of an individual at this stage may say that they want to become teachers because their mother is a teacher. For this reason, adolescents at this stage are not able to distinguish between their goals and their parent's interests. Individuals who remain in the foreclosure phase for a long period of time often make choices without much thought about them. As a result, they can marry at an early age, and make hasty decisions without using the right thinking process.

Moratorium. Moratorium means a delay period that adolescents exhibit to make decisions [8]. Teenagers at this stage are experiencing the crisis, but at the same time without undertaking commitments. Consequently, they often feel confused, unbalanced and unhappy. These teenagers often act as rebellious. This inappropriate behavior is one way of avoiding the anxiety that causes indecision. They have not yet found an acceptable identity and are still investigating their opportunities.

Archived Identity. These individuals have experienced and resolved the crisis carefully and have evaluated all their options. They have come to these conclusions by making decisions themselves. Once identity is achieved, the adolescent has clear gender roles, political ideas, gender and occupation that will develop in the future [9]. However, there is still anxiety in these individuals as they have set goals for themselves, but are still concerned about their achievement. Many individuals do not reach this stage before graduating from high school mainly because they still live with their parents and are under their rules. Even after entering the university, they still do not develop the identity they have achieved. Eighty percent of students change their diplomas during their four-year college [10]. A religious identity consists of the beliefs of the adolescent, the rituals he carries out, and the answer to mystical dilemmas. The term "religious" refers to personal practices related to religious belief and the rituals that derive from such conviction. This identity formation begins with beliefs that have parents and continues with the efforts the adolescent undertakes to create the form of his faith. Since religion is a source of responses to adolescent questions, it plays an important role in solving teenage crises. Under these conditions, its role is not as direct as the parents or the social circle, but is very important in the identity of adolescents. Although religious practices differ from culture, political system, local community and individual, religion has a central role in the worldview of many adolescents. Religion is an important context for development because it provides a means of socialization in areas such as moral behavior and provides emotional support to individuals from cradle to grave [11]. Given the cognitive advances in adolescence, including abstraction thinking skills and

understanding of symbolism, religion plays an important role in their lives. Over 80% of American teenagers aged 13-17 expressed the importance of trust in everyday life and decision-making processes, and about 90% reported to have a kind of trust in God [12]. Religion also plays an important role for young people everywhere in the world. The Lippman & Keith Institute reported that 82% of 20,000 teenagers and youths from 41 countries showed a belief in God. In addition, there is much support for the role of the protector of religion in relation to various aspects of youth in social, psychological and professional outcomes. In Albanian culture, the development of religions has found a breeze of tolerance, but also a denial ground during the years of communism. During the years of pluralism religion had a revival in the territory of Albania, but again maintaining the values of harmony and tolerance, except in some sporadic cases.

1.2. Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to find the differences in the creation of the identity between adolescents who have engagements in a religious belief and those who have no engagement in religious beliefs. Second, the objective of this study is that the findings and conclusions drawn from this study may be in the service of many specialists who during their work face problems that originate from adolescent identity. So this study can serve to all people or specialists who may face identity creation problems, also giving psychological, physical, social factors that create security or insecurity to adolescent identity. Third, providing an answer to the influence of religion in the creation of adolescence's identity.

2. Material and methods

In this study a quantitative methodology has been followed and divided into three phases. The first phase of this study is to identify through a pilot questionnaire, the teenagers who are believers and those who are not believers. The age of the participants is 15-18 years old. The religion of the participants is Islamic, Catholic and Orthodox, but this article will not be subject to religious analysis, as the purpose is the influence of religious belief and not the kind of religion. The second phase consists in measuring the states of the Ego Identity of 150-teens who have accepted to be part of this study. In this champion are 63-boys and 87-girls. The third stage consists in comparing data between adolescents resulting in believers and non-believers. Measurement of identity states was carried out with Layne Bennion and Gerald Adams' Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status.

Hypothesis

Starting from the theoretical basis and reference studies we have built this hypothesis:

“Religious adolescents tend to be in foreclosure status of identity, more than non-religious teenagers”.

3. Results

The analysis of results is divided into two steps that relate to the descriptive analysis of the distribution of religious beliefs in statues of the identity ego, where interesting results are noted. In the status of achieved

identity, there is no difference between teenagers who believe or disbelievers. Major differences are observed in diffuse identity and foreclosure identity. There are also visible changes during Moratorium status. More detailed results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Religious and Non Religious

		Identity_Status				Total
		Identity Achievement	Identity Diffusion	Moratorium	Foreclosure	
Religious_nonReligious	Religious	23	24	35	35	117
	Non Religious	5	7	19	2	33
Total		28	31	54	37	150

As can be seen from the above tables in Identity, there is no quantitative difference between adolescents who believe and those who do not believe. The main difference is observed in the foreclosure status of identity, where adolescents who are believers have a few times higher percentages. This makes sense to the fact that religious doctrine does not allow adolescents to spend many Moratorium duties but receive answers from religion without crossing the crisis. They engage in its pursuit without having touched upon a misunderstanding and ideological crisis. Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that, even in the status of diffusive identity, adolescents dealing with religion are far fewer of the fact that religion is orientated in adolescent duties and crises, while adolescents who do not dealing with religion have fewer structures to follow, which makes them more scattered.

4. Conclusions

At the end of this study we arrived in these conclusions:

- Religious teenagers tend to have foreclosure identity more than non religious teenagers.
- Religious teenagers pass the diffusive status of ego identity faster than non religious adolescents.
- Non religious adolescents tend to stay more time at diffusive status than religious adolescents. This happened because the religion plays a strong role as a model of orientation for adolescents.
- At the achievement status of identity, there is no difference between teenagers believing in a religion and those who do not engage in religious.

At the end of this study, the elevated hypothesis is verified.

4.1. Limitations of the study

The study has its own limits which are:

- The study sample is too small to produce data that can be generalized for the entire population of

adolescents in the Albania

- Identity is an individual structure, which is very dynamic. Identity may change over the time, so the time when the testing is done, may have effects in the extracted data.
- Many factors may contribute in the identity formation, so these factors may compromise the extracted data.
- Identity testing should have been done at different times (at least two times) to understand how stable their identity status is.

4.2. Recommendations

- This study may be in initiator for other studies in this field, because there aren't similar studies in Albania.
- This study may help schools and families to better understand the identity formation of the adolescents.
- New researchers must enlarge the sample so that the data could be generalized for the entire population of Albania.
- New researchers must take in consideration some factors that may contribute in the formation of identity (such as: personal and social factors and testing time).

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