Studying Students’ Tendency towards Multiple Identities and Related Factors in Islamic Azad University of Tabriz

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Abstract
This study investigated the tendency of students of Islamic Azad University of Tabriz towards multiple identities (ethnic, national, religious, global) and its related factors. In other words, the combined entity (unlike the theory of "Single identity") is studied. The study method is a survey and the statistical population includes the students of Tabriz University in the academic year 2012-2013. We chose the study sample, 310 students, using Cochran Formula and proportional stratified sampling method. The measurement tool was a questionnaire. For data analysis, Pearson correlation test, F, t-test, ANOVA and LSD post hoc test were used. Results indicated that global identity with the mean 79.55 has the top orientation and ethnic, national, and religious identities follow it, respectively. The results also showed a direct relationship exists between the use of information technology and the tendency towards universal identity, but no significant correlation exists between the other three dimensions. In addition, no significant relationship exists between the age of students and their residence (urban or rural), and living or not living in dormitories, as well as educational level and tendency towards multiple identities. The relationship between moderate social class and religious identity was significant, but no significant correlation existed with other aspects of identity. The tendency towards religious identity among married students was significantly more than in single students. The tendency towards ethnic identity among male students was significantly more than in female students.

Keywords: Multiple Identities, Ethnic Identity, National Identity, Religious Identity, Global Identity, Social Class, Information Technology
**Problem Statement**

Since the beginning of human life, the most important concern and perhaps philosophy has been to choose our own "becoming" of our choices and understanding it. Identity is in the same form that we give it to our own “being”. That is an answer to “Who are we?” and “How are we created?”; an answer, which includes different terms and concepts in different situations. Several factors are involved in the endless creation, which all of them rely on a common principle and that is what Maulana says:

*Anyone who becomes away from his origin*

*He retires to find his old days*

The forms and means of achieving this goal have been and will be different among individuals and societies. An individual was on a search to find his origin in different historical periods through cultural exchanges. He gave a special color to his “becoming”. Cultural relations between societies and civilizations over time have been the best way to form the identity characteristics. The effect of cultural ties increased with the development of technology and communication technology and became a social problem interesting for various scholars. The importance of this effect is extremely serious concerning the identity and in experts’ view, it is known as the "identity crisis".

Today, in both developed and developing countries, various cultural elements are observed in their social and political life. The highlighted culture not only is extremely common and wide, but also has many manifestations and meanings. In general, they can be divided into several categories: ethnic rises and conflicts, as well as nationalist movements, which are called “third wave of nationalism". Religious fundamentalism is another form of cultural particularism. Furthermore, other forms of cultural particularism exist, which occur in different forms such as radical social movements, new racism, and hate groups (Gol Mohammadi, 2004: 135).

With the onset of globalization process, which started with the spread of industrial modernity and the process of industrialization, the cultural, social, economic and political patterns were widely transferred from the central countries (Europe and America) to the periphery countries (Asia, Africa, Central America, and South). During the transition, a number of mechanisms occurred, which are often referred to as “Cultural Lag", representing the beginning of a wide range of social problems reflected in behavioral and ideological disorders and inconsistency. These inconsistencies are especially reinforced, since they are citation patterns in the local community and form the basis of behaviors, which changed in composition with new models or patterns of urban life, including the new forms of both material culture (leisure, clothing and nutrition) and the new social values (industry and speech freedom). In many cases, they can be observed as social ill effects (Fakouhi, 2012: 96).

Globalization, with desmating the conventional guards of identity and making inefficient the mobilizing factors, underlying mass-producing resources and materials, and the meaning of identity, prepared a bed for the mass production and distribution as well as the identity and meaning elements. The process of globalization, by releasing the
social affairs from different restrictions, especially nation-state ones and offering the mass cultural resources, shows capabilities and endless possibilities to develop identities. In today's world, identity development is "numerous" and "plural". In the present world, the realm of human social relations is highly spacious and individuals are associated with various communities and groups. These wide relations and group belongings are the basis for the production and reproduction of plural identities. "Multiple" or "hybrid" or "composite" are other attributes of the present identities. In traditional societies, various factors tried to maintain their identity. The modern pure identity sources were not only so limited or even available and in the case of availability, connecting them was illegal and illegitimate, but also the process of globalization, by removing these obstacles, prepared a suitable bed to produce multiple identities and a mixture of them (Gol Mohammadi, 2004: 253).

Multiple identities are identities whose resources and components belong to different cultures. For example, those, who live at least in two cultures, have such identities (Bhabhu, 1994: 253, quoted by Gol Mohammadi, 253). Multiple cultures are the product of the concise and special combination of general and particular issue. These identities are made in circumstances in which people while appealing to local resources were committed to general principles and values (Pieterse, 2000, quoted by Gol Mohammadi, 253). Today, using the power that communication technology has offered to man, we can have discourses with other people through a virtual space without the need for a shared place and time with different identities. In these circumstances, the struggle of "becoming" has been challenged. In the infinite becoming and among different identities, should we choose one of them or with interaction between different identities, can we live in the present world at a high and civilized level? Multiple identity is an issue, which has been proposed along with the historical evolution of the universe and the transformation of communities and their path towards globalization. Therefore, the main question of this paper is that which factors have been linked with the multiple identities of people.

**Theoretical Foundations**

Identity was first presented by Erickson. He describes identity as an overall internal feeling including a sense of identity and unity of the personality. It is felt by the person and others and is fixed from time to time (Alikhani, 2004: 184).

According to Althusser, in the new era, the social cohesion is preserved through the combined relations of cultural practices in shaping identity. Combined relations are similar to a fist of the hand in which each part has its own identity and freedom from the palm, while they are interrelated at the same time. However, the independent parts do not mean that they do not have interfered relationship and the first part leads to the weakness of the second part and finally its collapse, but the different methods can be observed close to and interacting with each other. In other words, today's identity is a combination of a
few different interests and is present in identity formation (Abdollahian, 1999: 54).

Theories of Multiple Identities
The concept of “combination” the social science primarily refers to the dynamic creation of different cultures. In fact, it means combining different cultures due to immigration, new and old traditions and modern (colonial) culture. This term was first introduced by Homi Baba in 1968 that means the aggressive actions to integrate different values and cultures (Cohen & Kennedy, 2007, 17; quoted by Hajiani, 2011: 192). In the multiple identity systems that any person or group acquires and absorbs, a combination of several cultures and subcultures have different sources and origins. Many societies encompass individuals and groups, who are still committed to their ancestral religion, but in their leisure time, they are severely affected by other cultures; although Buddhists may be extremely strict in performing its religious ceremony, they prefer the American pop music to their native one. Theses cases refer to the plurality and diversity of sources in cultural life and the interaction of people. They are the result of the separation of culture from national and land structure so that people’s identity sources increase (Albrow, 1996; quoted by Gol Mohammadi, 2004: 163-167).

George Herbert Mead and His Followers:
Mead principally believed in the diversity selves (Kuser, 1999: 499) since he has consistently focused on the nature of identity process. Thus, he inevitably had to accept the possibility of adaptation and compromise between different dimensions of identity. Mead’s thoughts seem highly rational, since he starts with the biological and physical approaches (and to some extent cognitive), and finally reaches the social sphere. In reviewing Charles Darwin’s theories, Mead perceives the need for consistency in animals and human’s life. According to Mead's theory, "self" can be multiple, nested, multi-centered, multi-layered, multi-dimensional and diverse (not hierarchical). Therefore, social identity is not unique, coherent, and integrated, but identity or self is fragmented, plural, complex, multi-layered and multi-dimensional. It means that self is not a constant and uniform phenomenon, but it has the ability to change and evolve.
Based on Mead and his followers’ theory, self or identity has several levels and types of belonging and all of them are present with each other in the formation of one's identity. Each person is naturally placed among several types of “symbolized self” that according to time and place, type, composition and contribution of each source, identity will be changed (Hajiani, 2011: 205-208 and 101-104). Mead’s main idea is that personality (self or identity) arises in the process of social change and grows in the life whose main manifestation is the major life activities in the local community (Tavassoli, 2012: 306).

Pierre Bourdieu’s Theory
Pierre Bourdieu's theory of dialectical character and the field, according to the concept of the field and variety of environmental fields for the agent, states that the process of being
different or the creation of an independent world leads to fundamental laws so that different basic laws are non-reducible in each field (Bourdieu, 2005: 210). In other words, the differentiation process has led to the formation of different social fields. In addition, the position of agents in the hierarchy of capital distribution leads to the formation of distinct identities; identities, which correspond to the position of actors in social space. Therefore, the actor is in different areas or fields. For Bourdieu, the field is relatively independent from the identity and considered as the place of identity evolution in habitus form. The effect of the field on the habitus is uncertain and depends on the situation and contextualization (Jamshidiha, 2006: 21).

Amartya Sen’s Views

The new approach proposed in the field of social science is Amartya Sen’s perceptive. In his last work as a book entitled “Identity and Violence”, published in 2006, with emphasis on socialistic theories and also his experiences in the Indian subcontinent, stresses that each person in normal life knows himself as a member of different groups. People’s attachments and dependencies on where they were born, the city where stayed, ancestry, gender, class affiliation, religious beliefs, political views, jobs, sports, music are all part of forming their identity. Therefore and definitely, the identity of each person is unique (certainly at both individual and collective levels) and identity is the sum of his belongings and dependency. He clearly opposes the idea of "single identity". Sociologically, he does not regard this idea completely new and believes that none of the identities of the individual should be considered as the main identity or his particular affiliation and emphasized it. While, the "single identity" is similar to a trap and false theory, it introduces a false identity as a true one. Rejecting the idea of cultural conflict, it calls it the culturalization theory guilt since it does not refer to the major differences in the culture, and relationships between them. He cited many examples of different cultural associations and correlations. He emphasized that "identity crisis" is a misconception of the fact that human beings have a unique and individual identity and can be calm only by the self-independence. This belief leads to violence (Hajiani, 2013: 187).

Research Hypothesis

1. The tendency of students at Islamic Azad University of Tabriz towards multiple identities are higher than average.
2. There is a relationship between the use of information technology and the tendency of students towards the multiple identities.
3. There is a relationship between the students’ social class and their tendency towards multiple identities.
4. There is a relationship between the students’ age and their tendency towards multiple identities.
5. The tendency of female and male students to multiple identities is different.
from each other.
6. The students’ tendency towards multiple identities based on academic disciplines is different from each other.

Methodology
In terms of data collection, this is a survey study and in terms of objective, it is an applied one. Based on the level of observation, it is a micro study and finally in terms of the time, it is a cross sectional study.

Definition of Variables
Multiple Identities: Identity means what and who a human being is, which are constantly formed and transformed by the surrounding cultural systems. As the semantic systems and cultural reproduction representations vary, we face many conflicting identities as well as the multiplicity of the sources of identification and belonging resulting in a plurality of group identity (Hall, 1992:277, quoted by Gol Mohammadi, 2004: 250).

Operational Definition: In this study, multiple identities include ethnic, national, religious and global identities, which were operationalized by calculating the mean for each set of identities.

Ethnic Identity: Two concepts of “ethnic identity” and “ethnicity” are closely tied with each other, even in the prestigious Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences and Humanities; ethnicity is discussed like ethnic identity (Keyes, 1998: 237). Ethnicity is a social and psychological process by which people are linked to a group of people or some aspects of its culture and identity. In other words, ethnicity is considered as a characteristic and the group membership. This group membership is based on the knowledge of group belonging. The group differentiation is conducted based on the cultural representatives of the territories and cultural life and also a common past and interests (Burgess, 1978:270).

Operational Definition: The ethnic identity in this study is operationalized based on four aspects: a) ethnic identity achievement, b) a sense of belonging to an ethnic subculture, c) a commitment to the ethnic community, and d) the political one (Hajiani, 2009: 433).

National Identity: It is a sense of belonging to a particular nation: a nation, which has its symbols, traditions, sacred places, rituals, heroes, history, culture and specific territory (Guibernau, 2001: 243).

Operational Definition: National identity is operationalized based on three aspects, including: a) cultural b) civil c) political ones.


Operational Definition: Global identity has operated in the following dimensions: a) Tendency towards the fundamental values of modernity b) Willingness to modernity and Westernism c) Cultural universals.
Religious Identity: It is considered as the human relationship with religion and its aspects, identity of its components, belonging and trends based on individual values and religious norms and their impact on life. It has dimensions such as the relationship with self, relationship with God, relationship with the universe and the relationship with society (Hajiani, 2009: 437).

Operational Definition: Religious identity is operationalized with the following aspects:
a) Belonging to religious beliefs
b) The level of religious commitment.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT): It means distributing and storing information by computer

Operational Definition: In this study, the subjects’ use of satellite, internal and external media were operationalized through ranking options.

Social Class
Social class means a part of the community, which is different from other parts of society in terms of shared values, certain social status, group activities, wealth and other personal assets (Sarookhani, 2011:342-343).

Operational Definition: Social class was operationalized through students’ self-report from the following six options: Low, low medium, medium, medium-high and high.

Methodology
The statistical population of students at Islamic Azad University of Tabriz in 2012-2013 was 25,974, of which 11,535 were males and 14,439 were females. The sample size, which was 310 students, was determined using the Cochran Formula with 95% confidence level and stratified random sampling method for each of the faculties. Questionnaire was used as the data collection tool. The content validity was investigated via the teachers and experts’ views. Questionnaires were given to seven faculty members and researchers and were asked to write their opinion on the validity of each item. Respondents gave to each of the items –1-10 scores that were finally converted to percentage. The accuracy of each item was reported 70%. To test the reliability, Cronbach's alpha was used. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the use of information technology, ethnic identity, national identity, religious identity, and global identity was 0.704, 0.729, 0.819, 0.789 and 0.813, respectively. Since the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were greater than 0.7 as the standard score, it is concluded that the questionnaire has good internal reliability. The data collected analysis was performed in two sections: descriptive and inferential statistical tests through the SPSS Software.
Findings
The study is conducted with the title of "the tendency towards multiple identities among the students of Islamic Azad University of Tabriz". Out of the total sample, 40.1% were female and 59.9% were male; 82.6% were single and 17.4% married; 4.4% lived in rural areas and 95.6% lived in cities; 10.10% lived in dormitories and 36.3% did not live in dormitories; 36.3% studied humanities, 5.9% basic science, 42% engineering, and 12% medical science; 72.9% of the respondents were undergraduate, 18% were graduate and 9.1% had Ph.D. The results indicated that 90.20% of them were Turk, 5% Kurd and 4.7% were Persian. In terms of social class, 18.0% were in lower class, 47.9% in the medium one and 34.1% were in the higher class. The age average was 23.29 in which the minimum was 18 and the maximum was 36 years; Use of information technology average was 33.62, the minimum value was zero and a maximum value was 68.75. Ethnic identity mean was 7.32, the lowest value was 28.23 and a maximum value was 100.0. The national identity average was 55.99 in which the lowest value was zero and the highest value was 100.0. Global identity mean was 79.55, the lowest value was zero and the maximum value was 100.0. The multiple identity mean was 68.57.

Hypothesis Testing
Hypothesis 1: The amount of Tabriz University Students’ tendency towards multiple identities:
To test this hypothesis, one-sample t test was used. Table (1) shows one-sample test results and the significance level of each identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Numb er</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Degre e of freedo m</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>The mean difference between the value of the test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic identity</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>68.4148</td>
<td>16.98674</td>
<td>19.301</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>18.41483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National identity</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>70.3207</td>
<td>18.97220</td>
<td>19.070</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>20.32072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Identity</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>55.9937</td>
<td>25.87096</td>
<td>4.125</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>5.99369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>79.5465</td>
<td>10.71820</td>
<td>49.081</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>29.54653</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesis 2: The use of information technology and students’ tendency towards multiple identities:
Pearson correlation test was used to test this hypothesis. According to Table 2, a significant direct relationship existed between the use of information technology and tendency of students towards global identity. However, no significant relationship existed between other identities and use of technology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of information technology</th>
<th>Multiple identity</th>
<th>Ethnical identity</th>
<th>National identity</th>
<th>Religious identity</th>
<th>Global identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correlation coefficient</td>
<td>-0.068</td>
<td>-0.032</td>
<td>-0.089</td>
<td>-0.071</td>
<td>0.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0.225</td>
<td>0.567</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>0.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 3: Social class and tendency towards multiple identities:
To test this hypothesis, an ANOVA was used; the significant level of variance analysis in religious identity was 0.029. Since the level of significance in the variance analysis was smaller than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. As a result, we can mention that a significant relationship exists between the students’ social class and their tendency towards religious identity. The results of the LSD post hoc test indicated that the tendency towards religious identity of middle-class students was more than students’ in the higher class. The ANOVA results also showed that no significant correlation existed between the students' social class and level of ethnic identity, national identity and global identity (significance level of the test was more than 0.05).

Hypothesis 4: Age and the tendency towards multiple identities:
To test this hypothesis, the Pearson correlation test was used. The test results show that the correlation between age and ethnic identity, national identity, religious identity and global identity is not significant (Pearson test significance level is higher than 0.05).
Hypothesis 5: The level of students' tendency towards multiple identities in terms of gender:
T-tests were used to test the hypothesis. Female students’ tendency towards ethnic identity was 66.09 and male students’ tendency was 69.97 and its significance level was 0.046. According to the t-test significance level, which was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. As a result, the tendency of male students towards ethnic identity is significantly more than of female students. The t-test results also show that the national identity, religious identity and global identity of males and females were not significantly different (its significance level was higher than 0.05).

Hypothesis 6: Different disciplines and tendency towards multiple identities:
To test this hypothesis, an ANOVA was used. Null hypothesis in variance analysis shows the equal mean in the dependent variable at all levels of the independent variable. If the significance level of the test is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis will be rejected. The variance significance in the global identity was 0.017. Due to the fact that variance analysis level was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. It means that the tendency of students in different academic disciplines towards global identity was significantly different. LSD test results indicate that the tendency towards the global identity of the students in basic science was lower than in other fields. The analysis of variance also shows that the level of ethnic identity, national identity and religious identity among students of different academic disciplines is not significantly different (significance level of the test is higher than 0.05).

Discussion and Conclusion
The average of every four dimensions (ethnic, national, religious and global) was higher than the average. The results of this hypothesis are consistent with the results of research conducted by Shalfroush, Ramin Radeghan, Hajiani, Abdollahi, Morovat and Nakamura. Shalfroush showed that the dominant form of identity among the students was religious identity and national, global and ethnicity identities follow it in the order of priority. Ramin Radeghan showed that a correlation exists between religious identity and student’s ethnic identity. Hajiani in a study showed an inherent and fundamental conflict did not existed between dimensions of identity (ethnic, national, religious and modern). In other words, a kind of consistency exists among all types of identity. Abdollahi and Morovat indicated that students had three ethnic, national and global identities. Nakamura showed that European identity does not match their national identity since he refers to the presence of modern multicultural society and attention to human rights and democracy (Nakamura, 2007: 1-28; quoted by Hajiani, 2011: 158).
A significant direct relationship existed between the use of information technology and the tendency of students towards the global, while a significant relationship did not exist between the other three dimensions. This hypothesis is consistent with the research results of Khaja Gharib. He indicated that a consistency exists between the students’
globalization tendency and their attitudes toward satellite. The use of information technology leads to their high compliance with international human knowledge. Giddens argues that since selection is possible in this era, therefore, the nature of daily life is continually influenced and changed by the alliance between local and global elements. A significant correlation existed between social class of students and their tendency towards religious identity, but between social class and the students' ethnic identity, national identity and global identity, no significant relationship was observed. The result of this hypothesis is consistent with the results of a study by R Radeghan. He suggests that the relationship between social statuses of students with ethnic identity was significant.

Findings also show that the male students’ tendency towards ethnic identity is significantly more than female students’ one. The t-test results show that the national identity, religious identity and global identity in males and females were not significantly different (P > 0.05). The result of this hypothesis was consistent with the result of Ramin Radeghan and Rashidi. They were not in harmony with the results of Abdullahi and Morovat. Ramin Radeghan showed that a significant relationship exists between gender and ethnic identity. Abdullahi and Morovat also showed that a significant difference did not exist between males and females in terms of the dominant identity. Moreover, Rashidi showed that a significant relationship exists between gender and collective identity. Since the identification process is dialectical and mutual, in the identity analysis, it is essential to consider the micro-level factors along with ranging, institutional groupings and assigning identities to people and know how to interpret authoritarian, as well as people’s confrontational with these affairs. According to Jenkins, social ranging and institutional identities constantly face different level of resistance. Their resistance depends on their capitals and their available material and cultural resources (Jenkins, 2012:289). On the other hand, women have less resistance to the identities imposed by the institutions and mainly influenced by propaganda and official bodies so that their tendency towards national identity (in other words the formal identity) is higher and attract the globalization and global identity.

Suggestions
- Emphasis on the combination of identity through schools, universities and mass media reduces the internal tensions and social conflicts, which provides social adjustment.
- The high level of global identity in this study indicates the influence of globalization on all aspects of life. Therefore, conformity with the international community can have positive effects of globalization and put it in line with the ethnic, national, and religious identity, not against them.
- The results showed that a direct relationship exists between the use of information technology and tendency of students towards global identity. It is suggested to spread the use of information technology that provides a necessary bed for higher compatibility with the global community.
- The study of multiple identities among twins with the aim of stabilizing the effects of personality and character is recommended.
- The study of the effect of modern media, especially the media and social networking on the identity and the tendency of people towards it is suggested.
- The comparison of multiple identities in different age classes is recommended.
References


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