Evaluation of the State of National Identity among Female Students of Ahwaz Islamic Azad University and Exploring the Social Factors Affecting upon it

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Abstract: *The present study is aimed at assessing the state of national identity among female students of Ahwaz Islamic Azad University and explores the social factors affecting upon it. The statistical society consisted of 8532 students at the three levels of associate diploma undergraduate and master degrees. The research method in this study is a "survey" and collection of data has been carried out by a questionnaire devised by the researchers. The sample size included 368 people based on Cochran formula who were selected by stratified sampling method. SPSS software was also utilized. Results of the research are examined in two categories: descriptive and explanatory sections. In the descriptive section the findings indicate that national identity among the statistical population is good and desirable. In other words, respondents enjoyed a strong identity. In the explanatory section, to test the hypotheses, Pearson statistical correlation coefficient and ANOVA test were used and following results were obtained:*

a- *There is a relationship between national identity and deprivation variable. This relationship is reversed, that means by increasing deprivation, national identity decreases while, reducing deprivation, national identity increases.*

b- *There is also a significant and reversed relationship between discrimination variable and national identity, which means increase or decrease of discrimination, weakens or enhances national identity respectively.*

c- *There is a positive relationship between satisfaction variable and national identity, which means that increase or decrease of people's satisfaction from the society, enhances or weakens the national identity.*

d- *There is no meaningful relationship between family socio-economic status and national identity.*

e- *There is no significant difference in national identity among the three group; associate diploma, undergraduate and master degree students.*

Among the various social factors that affect the national identity, satisfaction from society is more effective, than any other variables.

Keywords: *Identity, National identity, Student, Female.*

Introduction

Nowadays national identity as one of the most important issues of human beings has attracted many social thinkers and researchers attention. In today's world, due to the expansion of mass media, cultural diffusion is taking place at a more rapid and extensive level, in such a way that has accelerated the process of change in human life.

Aside the positive scientific and technological consequences, this process could endanger these societies in different ways, as well. Through elimination of cultural boundaries, people's national identity will be affected in different ways. Of course the youths are more venerable comparing to other groups and among them the students, who are the future investment of a country, should be taken care from more seriously. Therefore through strategic and careful planning and scientific studies, a situation should be provided so, that the youths can achieve a correct image of their own identities, in order to resolve their own and their society's problems with more rational approach and inner insights.

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Problem statement

Identity issue has always been one of the most important worries of human life. Having a glance at past, we will clearly find out that human beings from long time ago have been eagerly looking for a suitable and reasonable answer to this question "who am I"

Today with regard to all changes and developments which have taken place in the world, human beings are still trying to resolve this subjective engagement and find a strict answer to it.

Achieving a proper and satisfactory answer to the above, while increasing self-confidence of individuals, provides the society with an atmosphere to enhance its main objectives. Scientists of various majors especially sociologists were engaged in searching and reevaluating identity, particularly national identity from various point of views. In spite of these efforts and studies, the subject of identity and national identity still remains, one of the most important issues of today's societies.

As we know, we have a country, that the majority of its population is young. Therefore it is necessary to pay more attention to youths, their needs and requirements through different programming including innovative and systematic research and studies. From the other side, with the advance of technology and rapid expansion of communication systems and mass production of all kind of in formations and ideas and exchange of cultural entities, young people have somehow been under cultural invasion in different ways, which could undermine their cultural and national identities and would confront them with identity crisis. No doubt, the investigation and recognition of youth's needs and resolving their problems, not only save them from a meaningless living and identity crisis, but strengthen their health and safety, and provides prosperity and joyful living for the society as well.

In this endeavor the researchers are trying to examine the issue of national identity among female students in Ahwaz city. As we know, in Ahwaz due to the existence of Arab people, the issue of national identity has become somehow problematic. Besides Arabs, There are other ethnicities such as Lors. For some of these people, group (ethnic) identity might be more important or stronger than national identity. This research will be examining the social factors affecting on national identity, tries also to illuminate the importance of national identity as well.

Research Questions

The researchers hope to be able to answer these two questions in the final stage:

1- How is the state of national identity among female students of Ahwaz Islamic Azad University?
2- What are the affective social factors for strengthening or weakening national identity?

Conceptual definition of national identity

National identity is the collection of tendencies and positive attitudes (conceptions) to the factors, elements and identification patterns which integrates a country as a political unit. According to this definition, national identity is considered as a compound and complex concept with different aspects, which are visible and sensible at the level of mentality and behavior of each citizen.

It is also known that national identity is some kind of commitment and emotional belonging towards national gathering, which causes unity and integration of the society and forms some kind of individual identity. (Razifar, 1379, 106)

National identity is shaped, while the individuals who are physically and legally members of the same political entity are subjected to its laws, and psychologically know themselves as members of that society. Therefore the national identity concept is a combination of different effective elements of individuals and group life. More than anything else, this belonging is the feeling that people are trying to achieve it. In fact national identity is the product of voluntary generalization of loyalty and belonging to the home, family, tribe … in a satisfactory and meaningful manner. Finally, national identity is the collection of signs (symbols) material, physical, cultural and psychological, subsistence which differentiates societies from each other (shaykhavandi, 1379, 25-6)

Theoretical Framework

In this section the researchers are trying to present, a suitable theoretical framework, with the emphasis on the theoretical discussions which explains the relationship between independent variable and the dependent variables.

Deprivation, discrimination and national identity

Hashter and Brass indicate that factors such as internal colonization, discrimination and deprivation to some groups and ethnicities are the major impediments for establishment of national identity.

In this study the relationship between national identity and citizenship rights are examined. Citizenship here is considered as a dignity which implicitly emphasizes equality for all the people who are members of one national government. These citizenship rights include formally all the members of the nation, regardless of racial, language and ethnicity distinctions. From the national identity view point, It is important that the members of one nation psychologically feel that they have equal rights and position and that they are not subjected to any discrimination and cruelty. (Katam, 1378, 56-61). Whatever one national system sustains and performs more successful function for securing equality, the national identity will be confronted with fewer crises.

Deprivation of some groups from citizenship rights, makes them as marginal groups, and while weakening national identity altogether, provides the grounds for growth of subordinate identities such as race, ethnicity, neighborhood orientation (Ghanbari barziy'an, 1387, 367-9). Thus, deprivation and discrimination can be considered as two major factors that are weakening the national identity.

Satisfaction and national identity

For establishment and learning of national identity in a country, it is necessary that individuals form a positive attitude towards national identity (Ghanbori and barziyan 1386). According to Kerthch, Kerachfield, and Balanchi views, attitude is a combination of perceptions, towards a certain subject. According to them, the most important effective factors for formation of an attitude are as the following:

1- Whatever that provides individual's needs.
2- To get information about a subject, object or special person.
3- Group belonging
4- Individual personality.

From the other side, according to Rozen Ashtail and Hershko views, factors such as enjoyment and satisfaction are effective in the formation of identity and its relative change "as an attitude". They confirmed that gratification of needs and access to the objectives through national identity, provides satisfaction and a positive experience for the individuals, thus as a result, establishes a positive attitude towards national identity (katem, 1378, 107-110). Therefore satisfaction from the society as a variable can reinforce national identity.

Socio- economic status of the family and national identity

In Cooley's ideas, the concepts "looking glass- self" and "primary group" are integrated, sensitivity to others can only occur through mutual interaction and by intimate and face to face relations, of the primary groups. (Koser, 1383, 444)

Cooley, when talking about the primary and secondary groups, indicates that the family is one of the most important of the primary groups, which play a major role in the formation of human societal values and individual objectives. He also indicated that due to intimate and face to face relations, the family plays the most important role in the development of identity, which can at later stages be extended to communities. (Safari and Ghafouri, 1388, 5)

Bloomer also in discussing socialization and interaction has paid special attention to the role of family and identity. The reason behind this fact is that children learn most and greatest experiences of their life from parents in the shortest possible time. (Azad Armaky, 1379, 273) Vine and White believed that social identity, in the context of life experiences, first is formed by the local and living place, family and social sources, the place that the individuals live and grow there. Family background also affects individual attitudes towards one self and to

the surrounding environment and social experiences play a very important role in the formation of individuals identity and social compatibilities (vine and white 1997)

Thus according to the above mentioned views and symbolic interaction theory, the family plays a considerable role in the formation of individual identity, family characteristics such as, education, occupation, income or socio-economic status, as a whole have a determining impact on the individual identity, particularly on national identity (Abdulahi and Husseinbar, 1385,12)

Education and national identity

Most of the psychologists specially behaviorists believe that learning and education and other early experiences of the individual, play a central role in the formation and development of personality, which will be determining in the development of later stages as well. Golner refers to general educational system as an integrative cultural cause, which provides common values for social interaction through which nationalism and general national commitment will be obtained. (Razaifar, 1379, 112)
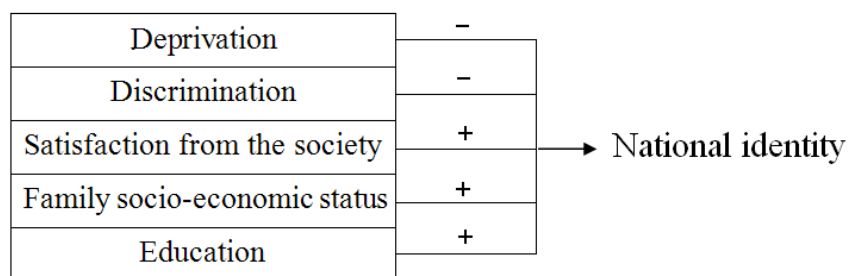
From the other side, as already explained, according to Keretch et al awareness "consciousness" has a major role in the formation of attitudes. (Karimi, 1377, 275-6) As we know part of individual's awareness is acquired in the family environment. But educational settings, especially schools and universities, besides, providing an effective environment for social interaction particularly with peer- groups and fellow students, play an outstanding role in acquiring individual's consciousness. Therefore we can state that education has a major role, in the formation of individual's identity especially their national identity. (Abdullahi and Hussin bar, 1385, 12)

Research Hypotheses

On the basis of the above mentioned discussions, we can draw five hypotheses from the theoretical frame-work as follows:

1- There is a meaningful relationship between students feeling of deprivation and their national identity.
2- There is a meaningful relationship between students felling of discrimination and their national identity.
3- There is a meaningful relationship between student's satisfaction from the society and their national identity.
4- There is a meaningful relationship between student's family socio-economic status and their national identity.
5- There is a significant difference between the national identities of the three groups of students. Associated degree, undergraduate and master degree.

Research Theoretical Model

Research Methodology

The present research is of quantitative nature, based on "Survey" research method. The statistical population consisted of 8532 female students, studying at Ahwaz Islamic Azad University during 1389-1390: from which 3042 students were at the level of associate diploma, 5261 students at undergraduate and 229 students at master degree.

The method of gathering data is based on closed questionnaire which was designed for the assessment of dependent and independent variables. Classification of responses, most of which were ordinal, thus Likert scale

was utilized. The method of sampling was stratified sampling and the sample size according to Cokrun formula was 368. SPSS software was also utilized.

To obtain validity of questionnaire, face validity was used. α-Koronbach was also utilized for evaluation of reliability. The following table shows the result of reliability of the independent and dependent variables.

Table (1): Results of reliability analysis of independent and dependent variables.

Variables	Number of options	Koronbach
National identity	30	0.89
Socio-economic status of the family	5	0.72
Satisfaction from the society	6	0.81
Deprivation	8	0.64
Discrimination	8	0.67

Research Findings

The findings are provided in tow sections: the descriptive and analytical. In descriptive section the findings indicate that:

From the total of 368 respondents, 131 of students were at the level of associate diploma (35.6%), 227 (61.7%) at the bachelor degree and lo students (2.7%) at master degree.

The socio–economic statuses of family members indicate that 31.3% were at a very low status, 50% were at low level and 17.1% were at middle and only 1.6% were at upper status, which indicates the majority belong to low family socio economic status.

Regarding the variable of deprivation, 68.4% of respondents had reported that their deprivation to be at low or very low level, so the majority of statistical population felt a very low level of deprivation. Similar results were obtained for discrimination variable, where as 67.41% of respondents felt low or very low level of discrimination.

As far as satisfaction from the society is concerned again more than half of the respondents (56.5%) were much or very much satisfied from their society. The findings regarding national identity (dependent variable) indicated that 26.41% felt a very strong identity, 48.9% had strong identity, 22% medium and only 27% had a very weak identity, which altogether and we can state the national identity is strong in the statistical population.

Table (2): State of national identity among respondents

Percentage	Frequency	National identity	range
26.4	97	Very strong	30-53
48.9	180	Strong	54-77
22.0	81	Medium	78-102
2.7	10	Weak	103-126
0.0	0	Very weak	127-150

Regarding the seven dimensions of national identity, similar results were obtained. In other words, in accordance to respondents reply, national identity was strong in all of its dimensions, for majority of the respondents. It is also necessary to mention that historical dimension of national identity was stronger than other aspects among the statistical society. Other dimensions are respectively, language and literary aspects of national identity, cultural geographical, religious and lastly, political aspects of national identity.

As far as analytical section is considered, four of the hypotheses used in the research, being correlative hypotheses, where the evaluation of dependent and independent variable were interval scale, Pearson correlation coefficient was used, the result of which are illustrated in the following table.

Table (3): Relationship of national identity with independent variables

Pearson coefficient correlation	Sig	Independent variable
-0.55	0.003	deprivation
-0.152	0.004	discrimination
0.471	0.000	Satisfaction from society
0.102	0.052	Family socio-economic status

As the above table indicates, there is a relationship between national identity and deprivation, discrimination and satisfaction from the society, since the significance level is less than 0.05. Of course this relationship for deprivation and discrimination is reversed, whereas for satisfaction from the society, there is a direct positive relationship, which means by increasing deprivation and discrimination, national identity decreases and by reducing deprivation and discrimination, national identity strengthens. In the meantime by increasing satisfaction from the society, national identity, weakens. In other words three of the hypotheses are accepted. But the relationship between socio-economic status of the family with national identity, as the significance level is more than. 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected. For the evaluation of the fifth hypothesis (the relationship between educational level with national identity) the ANOVA test was utilized, the result of which is illustrated in the following table.

Table (4): ANOVA test for education and national identity variables

Sig	ANOVA test	variables
0.137	2.002	Education and national identity

The above table indicates that the level of ANOVA test for variable "education" and "national identity" is equal to 2 (f= 2.002) and the significance level at confidence interval 95% is equal to 0.13(sig= 0.137) and since the significance level is more than 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected.

In the continuation of the inferential statistics, the theoretical model of the research is investigated through multiple regression analysis by "Enter" model, so that the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable will be entirely and simultaneously examined.

Table (5): Multiple regression analysis

R	R^2	F	sig
1452	0.232	27.213	0.000

As the results of multiple regression analysis indicates, independent variables have the ability to explain 23% of changes on the dependent variable. (R^2= 23%). The ANOVA test is equal to 24.21 (F= 27.21), and the significance level at confidential interval 95% is equal to. 0.00 (sig= 0.00). In other words, the regression linear explains the dependent variable, more than waste variance.

Table (6): Multiple regression analysis of variables

Sig	T	β	Standard error	B	variables
0.001	3.459		6.527	22.574	Constant equation
0.747	0.322	0.021	0.221	0.071	Deprivation
0.757	0.310	0.019	0.213	0.066	Discrimination
0.000	9.385	0.486	0.171	1.603	Satisfaction from society
0.049	1.976	0.093	0.263	0.520	

After, the entrance of all of the independent variables, it was found that the significance level of "deprivation" and "discrimination" variables at confidential interval of 95% was more than 0.05. Therefore we deleted these variables from the regression equation. But the significance level of "satisfaction from society" is equal to 0.00(sig=0.00) and significance level of "socio- economic status of the family" is equal to 0.049 (sig= the family 0.049). and as the significance level of these two variables at the confidential interval of 95% are less than 0.05, therefore these two variables are meaningful, and we can enter them in the equation of the linear regression, forecasting the dependent variable

$Y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2$

National identity = 22.57+1.6 (satisfaction from society) + 0.52 (Socio-economic status of family)

The equation shows that in lieu of 1.6 "satisfaction from society" and 0.52 Socio-economic status of the family" The dependent variable (NI) is predictable for one unit, in the meantime the linear regression equation for comparing independent variable is as follow.

$$Y = B_1 X_1 + B_2 X_2$$

National identity= 0.48 (satisfaction from society) + 0.09 (Socio-economic status of the family). From the above equation it is deducted that "satisfaction from society" is more effective than variable "Socio-economic status of the family" on the dependent variable (national identity)

Conclusion and Suggestion

As we know, the issue of identity has always been one of the most important and the oldest issues of human's life and human beings have always been searching for a decisive answer for the basic question of "who am I ".

Among different aspects of identity, national identity, as one of the most important aspect, has attracted many scientists and researcher's concern.

As a whole, the formation of positive attitudes towards national identity and reinforcement of it can lead to cultural dynamic and provide necessary grounds for growth and development of the society. From the other side, strengthening national identity in a country such as Iran which is consisted of different ethnic groups can bring national unity and social consensus. In This way the individuals can maintain their own identity and adopt themselves better with surrounding environment.

Aside these, taking into consideration that national identity can challenge cultural invasion and the phenomenon of brain drain; it can improve and more and more enhance society's development. In accordance to the results obtained in this research, it is suggested that responsible authorities to take necessary actions for reducing deprivation and discrimination with in different sectors, groups and social classes of people in the larger society. This attempt although improves self- sufficiency and self-confidence of the individuals, it can increases satisfaction from the society which ultimately strengthens different aspects of national identity. It is also suggested that the interested researchers in this field of study focus on other variables that affect national identity. Finally the issue of national identity can be studied from a comparative point of view i.e., among students of state universities with that of Azad universities.

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