Comparison of Ethnic and Religious Identity based on Socio-Cultural Variables among the Middle School Students in District 17 of Tehran

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Abstract: *Social identity is a constant and permanent process that changes social situations based on individual experiences in these situations. Religious and ethnic identities are two dimensions of social identity that are of great importance in Iranian society. Due to the ethnic diversity in Iran and the proximity of ethnic cultures through migration, ethnic identity is noticeable. Religious identity also is important on account of the scope that covers social, cultural, and political spheres. The results which are profited from symbolic co-activation indicated that religious and ethnic identities had different averages among students based on variables of civil disobedience, the influence of mass media, and cultural components, such as values and norms. Since student's social status was identical, the average ethnic and religious identities didn't show any significant difference at the 95% confidence level. Religious identity didn't have different averages based on the degree of compliance concerning individual expectations and demands with social opportunity; this is due to the sphere in which religion is influential. However, ethnic identity has secured different averages based on these variables. Therefore, although religious identity, like ethnic identity, considers as one of the dimensions of social identity, its influence on identification based on role-taking is greater than other dimensions of social identity.*

Keywords: *Religious Identity, Ethnic Identity, Students, Secondary School, Symbolic Co-activation.*

Introduction

Identity has a direct relationship and relatively comprehensive compliance with the culture of individuals and society. Identity is a definition of individuality that can be provided based on person or society values, beliefs, etiquettes, traditions, norms, etc. Identity means "who being is", how an individual or group knows their individuality, and how they want to know themselves. Identity is a response to the natural requirement in humans to familiarize them with a series of cultural, historical, and geographical components and phenomena (Malayev et al, 2014: 206). Social identity is recognizable in the classification of different types such as religious identity, ethnic identity, modern identity, national identity, etc. Interaction of these different types based on their characteristics can reinforce each other, conflict with different instructions of each other, or even don't have much influence on each other. This paper investigates the relationship between ethnic and religious identities. These two types of social identities were chosen based on many similarities and dissimilarities. On the other hand, ethnic and religious identities play an important role in forming human ontology in various social groups, and affect their social and cultural beliefs; to the extent that many of individual teachings arising from an ethnic and religious culture have the potential to change into fanaticism and provide the aspects of separation of one group from another. Another point is the potential of ethnic and religious identities in creating and increasing in-group coherence which strongly converts components of ethnic and religious culture to a fundamental basis in the epistemological process of individuals. On the other hand, extensive

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migration from towns to cities and metropolises contribute to the effectiveness of these identities on social identity and also affects their relationship.

Religious identity is one of the most important elements that lead to social homogeneity and solidarity at the society's level. It plays an essential role in creating and forming social identity through developing a sense of belonging to religion among the society members during a process. In other words, it carries out the operation of simulation and differentiation. For example, Islam and Shia Islam, while creating simultaneously religious similarities among Iranian society, separate them from followers of other religions. Contrary to other societies (which seek to marginalize religion and extinguish religious people from the throne of power and isolate them), Iranian society has organized at least three revolutions using the power of religion in the last five centuries. The first, second, and last movements were formed through Safavid Revolution based on Shia Islam in 880 SH, Persian Constitutional Revolution with the leadership of Shiite scholars in 1285 SH, and Iranian Revolution with the leadership and guidance of Shiite Marja' in 1357 SH, respectively (Goudarzi, 2008: 50). In a social context, the religious identity which is also based on ethnic and cultural diversity consistently acts as an effective and transformational element and has the potential to create social dynamism. This type of social identity in a social context during the Safavid era led to the national coherence in Iran, but also the presence of other religious identities continued in Iran. Therefore, religious identity, like ethnic identity, possesses plurality and diversity among social groups. The standpoint of cultural pluralism believes in multi-ethnic and multi-culture societies. This perspective design pluralistic plans to retain multi-cultural and multi-ethnic characteristic in the societies. Generally, due to this fact that many societies in the world are multi-cultural and multi-ethnic, and on the other hand, replication policies in various countries such as Iran have failed, the tendency to ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as their preservation has increased (Ahmadlou, 2002: 91). This point of view which is based on cultural democracy tendencies is expanding. It also can be considered contrary to globalization; since globalization resolves the social subculture in a cultural totality, and pluralism while maintenance coherence and solidarity based on relationships among various cultures, helps the survival of subcultures. One of the social actions that provide individuals with a context for such approaches is migration.

One of the major consequences of migration is acquaintance with different cultures and civilizations. The role of migration in the interference of cultures and cultural dynamism within the societies cannot be ignored. According to the cultural perspective, the integrated culture of origin and destination is important in all migrations. If there are Cultural differences between the origin and destination in a migration, the susceptibility of the migrants from the destination culture or their effects on destination culture will be considered. While immigrants typically adopt some of the cultural characteristics in the destination, they preserve some of the cultural characteristics arising from the origin. Thus, after a long-term, their cultural characteristics make a combination of origin and destination culture. Then, in their next generations, the characteristics of destination culture gradually become more prevalent. If a group of immigrants possesses rich and strong cultural characteristics, they can create a cultural minority in the destination and perhaps affect the culture of the destination (Foroutan, 2012: 74). Culture benefits from various components and elements, including norms, values, beliefs, and religious and ethnic traditions. It also leads to cultural exchange among the societies in the process of migration and immigrant's adaptation with the destination which is one of the strengths of cultural migration and results in cultural percolation.

Statistics indicate that the population of Tehran Province in 2016 has reached more than 13 million. The noticeable point is that the Tehran metropolis has the highest amount of migration among all the Iranian provinces and cities (Statistical Centre of Iran, 2016). This increasing trend in Tehran metropolis which is primarily due to the migration of people with different cultures and ethnicities leads to the challenge of ethnic and cultural diversity. According to the report of the General Culture Council of Iran (2010), Tehran metropolis is one of the most diverse Iranian metropolises in terms of ethnic and cultural diversity. Due to the specific characteristics of Tehran (being the capital city, more opportunities, and attractions, the concentration of facilities, etc.), these metropolises have a high capacity for adopting immigrants. This indicates an increasing level of ethnic and cultural diversity that is challenging; since

ethnicities are common in their major national heritage. On the other hand, they have many different aspects concerning local and ethnic levels. This leads to various social and cultural damages in the Tehran metropolis and affects ethnic subcultures in the social context of metropolises such as Tehran. Complexities within the relationship between religious and ethnic identity create some similarities and dissimilarities in the in-group coherence and out-group opposition. It can be integrated into the cultural totality and be considered as a part of the social culture. Therefore, the researcher conducted comparative research concerning religious and ethnic identity to analyze the identities and their status in a cultural totality.

Research Objectives

Adolescents are the dynamic forces of social mobility in societies. They are the most acceptor class of any society in terms of global innovations and diversities. In this regard, it is obvious that something which is known as culture included youths as a coherent and systematic totality and creates their behavioral attitudes. The cultural substances of adolescents that give meaning to their life can be considered as global, national, or ethnic values and norms (Samani and foolad Chang; 2006: 22). Despite the diversity of ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups, Iranian society can be considered as a manifestation of pluralism societies. Regardless of the diversity and plurality, these groups have preserved Iranian national identity in the vicissitudes of historical changes and have exhibited the case in point along with plurality. The sensitivity of demographic profile in adolescents who recognize various layers of culture through the process of social identification and review their identity to create an independent and unique identity, consider as one of the necessities to conduct this research. Other reasons for conducting this study include the diversity of social groups in Iran which have stabilized their presence in social situations during the social history, and despite retaining social differences, consider themselves as a part of Iran. Comparative comparison of these two dimensions concerning social identity is necessary; since due to independency in the form of subculture and containing special cultural components religious and ethnic identities have played an effective role in retaining and surviving the cultural totality and have helped to the reinforcement of social coherence. Accordingly, this study is aimed at comparative research of ethnic and religious identity using independent variables.

Literature Review

Various researches have been carried out to compare ethnic and national identities or religious and national identities. All of these studies deal with the relationship of ethnic identity to create social coherence along with national identity. However, researches have rarely been carried out a comparison among the dimensions of social identity based on social subcultures. For example,

- Qaderzadeh (2014) after evaluating the role of education in developing religious and national identities in middle school students located in Baneh, positively predicted religious and national orientation of teachers, membership in student associations, participation in extracurricular activities, interaction with staffs, interactive learning, and growth of religious and national identities. Among all the independent variables, the "religious and national orientation of teachers" had the most significant and positive predictive power in religious and national identities. This makes more than 60% of the changes in students' religious and national identities understandable and predictable.

- Seyfollahi and Morovat (2013) examined the formation of ethnic and national identity and the social factors affecting it in the residents of Karaj. Results indicate some similarities among ethnic and national identities. It shows that national identity is stronger than ethnic identity in individuals, but this does not indicate the weakness of ethnic identity in ethnic groups. Also, the sphere of relationships, the degree of using media and cultural capital have a direct and increasing effect on the forming ethnic and national identities. On the other hand, increasing the feeling of relative deprivation in individuals has harmed the formation of these identities.

- Rørbeck Nørreby (2019) studied the degree of belonging, social, and ethnic identity in students living in Copenhagen. He has concluded that ethnic identity has less credibility than social identity. Students believe that the lack of self-confidence is an important factor in the relationship between ethnic identity and school connectedness.

▪ Feinauer et al. (2018) also focused on the evaluation of national and ethnic identities of students in Utah State, USA. They concluded that there is no significant relationship between ethnic identity and a sense of belonging to the school. Also, the results emphasize the role of self-esteem in national identity. Therefore, researchers have achieved a common perspective through comparison; it approves that identities that are based on subcultural identities affect the identities derived from cultural totality. This perspective is accepted in terms of functionalism. However, the comparisons of identities arising from subcultures that could explain dominant of these identities were not included in the research objectives.

Theoretical Framework

Meed also considered the process of his formation. He believes that individual achieves meanings in the process of socialization by internalizing the concepts of reality using symbols. People can learn these meanings through interaction, in a general manner, and socialization in a specific manner. Therefore, with an increase in the complexity of the social relationships and expanding meanings and symbols, individuals will be able to move from a collective specific local identity to a socialist social identity in the social process. This means that in the process of socializing, more interaction with others makes broader choices. It also increases the tendency towards social identity. If interaction with others is limited, i.e. a person who is only communicated with his relatives and has limited access to social facilities, resources, and mass media, then, the circle of selection is limited and his identity is formed in a localized and specific framework (Rafiei Jirdehi et al. 2013). The selection of social actors in organized and structural relationships regulates various forms through finding common ways and goals. Self-ethnic and self-religious are two types of choices that allow the actor to choose in a context of ethnic and religious symbols and meanings. According to Meed, role-playing will require the perception and learning of common cultural symbols. The actor can choose the action by understanding the cultural symbols in the context of the social work division.

According to Meed's theory, individuals are implicitly recognized with the same identities which have common characteristics. An individual with consciousness, as the subject of social affairs, only is achievable through social experience. Therefore, the individual is not only as a mental and internal existence but as an "object" of external reality. This person must also be built on social experience. Self-knowledge and self-awareness are created in a social process in which the role of people and others has considerable weight in the social structure (Tanhaie, 2017: 112). In this regard, ethnic and religious identity have been studied based on Meed's theory and in the form of self-ethnic and self-religious. Therefore, the framework in which the actor chooses considers the ethnic and religious structure of society.

Religious identity indicates a kind of collective human identity. It includes an individual's religious beliefs, values, and opinions; so that the individual achieves the religious principles and beliefs that become part of his personality and provides the basis for action. Religious identity shows an individual's reliance on a belief system that affects his orientation in various contexts of the philosophy of life and his livelihood (vadiyeh and Kangarloou Haghighi, 2013: 10). In other words, religious identity is a part of an individual common identity in which the religious beliefs, emotions, and practices can be understood (Eskandari, 2012: 115). Religious identity describes the sense of dependence and commitment in a person to religious beliefs, rules, and values. On the other hand, ethnic identity is highly dependent on cultural specificity. There are several prominent approaches concerning the subject of ethnic identity:

1. Ethnic self-identification, self-definition or self-labeling with a specific ethnic group; or self-classification itself with the ethnic group.
2. A sense of belonging that is measurable in comparison to other groups.
3. Positive and negative attitudes toward one's ethnic group; pride, acceptance, satisfaction, and a sense of pride concerning one's ethnic group.

4. Ethic involvement, social participation, and cultural behavior (participation in social life and cultural behaviors of one's ethnic group. Its characteristics include language, friends, social organization, religion, cultural traditions, and politics. Additionally, cultural behaviors such as music, dance, veil, newspapers, magazines, books, literature, food, cooking, leisure time, family and relative traditions, another role within the family, in-group marriage, knowledge about ethnic culture and history are considered as important criteria in ethnic identity (Darayandeh, 2011: 105).

All the characteristics of ethnic and religious identity are presented within the framework of Meed's approach toward symbolic collaboration based on pragmatism. In the process of role-playing, which is resulted from the turning point of Kooli's Theory, the practical review and calculation of pragmatism in the context of the social labor division is the most important key concept in Meed's theory. In this process, ethnic and religious feelings, participation, in-group and out-group oppositions, coherencies, etc. play an essential role in the choice of action by the actors.

Research Hypotheses

First Hypothesis: The average of national, religious, and ethnic identities show a significant difference in comparison to the average of other dimensions in social identity based on the degree of adherence to the cultural components, values, and norms.

Second Hypothesis: The average of national, religious, and ethnic identities show a significant difference in comparison to the average of other dimensions in social identity based on family social status.

Third Hypothesis: The average of national, religious, and ethnic identities show a significant difference in comparison to the average of other dimensions in social identity based on civil disobedience.

Fourth Hypothesis: The average of national, religious, and ethnic identities show a significant difference in comparison to the average of other dimensions in social identity based on the effect of mass media.

Fifth Hypothesis: The average of national, religious, and ethnic identities show a significant difference in comparison to the average of other dimensions in social identity based on the degree of compliance concerning individual expectations and demands with social opportunity.

Research Methodology

This survey research carried out intending to compare ethnic and religious identity. Since the statistical population within this survey research is comprehensive, the questionnaire tool was chosen for collecting data. This was a researcher-made questionnaire. The validity of the questionnaire was obtained using Cronbach's alpha and after confirmation of formal validity by relevant experts, which is presented in the table below:

Table (1): Assessing Questionnaire Validity

Variable Type	Variable Name	Early Cronbach's Alpha	Final Cronbach's Alpha
Independent	Religious Identity	0.845	0.845
	Ethnic Identity	0.798	0.810
Dependent	Values and Norms	0.830	0.830
	Social Status	0.755	0.782
	Civil Disobedience	0.811	0.811
	Mass Media	0.697	0.758
	Individual and Group Demands	0.759	0.791

The statistical population was chosen from middle school students in the 17 district of Tehran and was equal to 10634 people. The number of samples was 370 cases which were estimated through Cochran's formula at a 95% confidence level. Eventually, the T-test was used to compare ethnic and religious identity.

Findings
First Hypothesis: The average of national, religious, and ethnic identities show a significant difference based on the degree of adherence to the cultural components, values, and norms.

Table (2): Compression of the averages based on adherence to the cultural components, values, and norms

	Within Group Means	F	Degrees of Freedom	Statistical Significance
Religious Identity	30.040	7.504	63	0.000
Ethnic Identity	32.144	7.459	61	0.000

Hypothesis H₀: The average of the dual dimensions of national, religious, and ethnic identities doesn't show a significant difference based on the degree of adherence to the cultural components.
Hypothesis H₁: The average of religious, and ethnic identities shows a significant difference based on the cultural components.
The average dimensions of social, ethnic, religious identities show a significant difference based on the degree of student's adherence to the cultural components such as values, and norms, mores, and regulations at a 95% confidence level. Therefore, Hypothesis H₁ is accepted in both dimensions of social identity.

Second Hypothesis: The average of religious, and ethnic identities show a significant difference based on family social status.

Table (3): Compression of the averages based on social status

	Within Group Means	F	Degrees of Freedom	Statistical Significance
Religious Identity	59.254	0.908	29	0.606
Ethnic Identity	60.528	0.877	28	0.646

Hypothesis H₀: The average of the dual dimensions of religious, and ethnic identities doesn't show a significant difference based on family social status.
Hypothesis H₁: The average of religious, and ethnic identities show a significant difference based on family social status.
Comparing the averages of religious and ethnic identity based on social status indicated that there was no significant difference between students with various statuses. Therefore, the H₀ hypothesis is accepted. It should be noted that all students who answered the questionnaire were selected from the same district in Tehran, and due to the social classification, the probability of equality in families' social status among the respondents was very high.

Third Hypothesis: The average of religious, and ethnic identities show a significant difference based on civil disobedience.

Table (4): Compression of the means based on civil disobedience

	Within Group Means	F	Degrees of Freedom	Statistical Significance
Religious Identity	48.177	3.470	49	0.000
Ethnic Identity	50.174	3.501	48	0.000

Hypothesis H₀: The average of religious, and ethnic identities does not show a significant difference based on civil disobedience.
Hypothesis H₁: The minimum average concerning one of the national, religious, and ethnic identities shows a significant difference based on civil disobedience.
Comparing the averages of the dual dimensions in social, religious and ethnic identities based on the degree of civil disobedience in middle school students at 95% confidence level indicated that the average religious and ethnic identity based on very low to very high civil disobedience had different averages in various dimensions of social identity. Therefore, the H₁ hypothesis is accepted.

Fourth Hypothesis: The average of religious, and ethnic identities show a significant difference based on the effect of mass media.

Table 4. Compression of the averages based on the effect of mass media

	Within Group Means	F	Degrees of Freedom	Statistical Significance
Religious Identity	62.221	1.819	35	0.004
Ethnic Identity	67.053	1.513	35	0.037

Hypothesis H_0: The average of dual dimensions of religious, and ethnic identities does not show a significant difference based on the effect of mass media.
Hypothesis H_1: The average of religious, and ethnic identities shows a significant difference based on the effect of mass media.
Comparing the averages concerning religious and ethnic identity based on the impact of mass media showed that the H_1 hypothesis is accepted. In other words, the average religious and ethnic identities concerning the impact of the media, which was in a very small to very large range, showed a significant difference at the 95% confidence level. This result approves both dimensions of social identity.

Fifth Hypothesis: The average of religious, and ethnic identities show a significant difference based on the degree of coincidence concerning individual expectations and demands with social opportunity.

Table (5): Compression of the averages based on the degree of coincidence concerning individual expectation and demands

	Within Group Means	F	Degrees of Freedom	Statistical Significance
Religious Identity	68.702	1.195	26	0.237
Ethnic Identity	69.692	1.546	27	0.044

Hypothesis H_0: The average of dual dimensions concerning religious, and ethnic identities does not show a significant difference based on the degree of coincidence in individual expectations and demands with social opportunity.
Hypothesis H_1: The average of religious, and ethnic identities show a significant difference based on the degree of coincidence concerning individual expectation and demands with social opportunity.

Here, the H_1 hypothesis is accepted. The comparison of the average ethnic identity based on the degree of coincidence concerning individual demands shows that this average will be changed through decreases or increases in the degree of coincidence concerning individual expectations and demands with social opportunity. However, this relationship didn't approve of religious identity. Therefore, the H_0 hypothesis was accepted. In other words, the degree of coincidence concerning individual expectations and demands with social opportunity at the 95% confidence level did not change the average religious identity. Since in Iran, religion as a cohesive factor has entered various aspects of Iranian social life, and cultural elements have been defined based on religion in various social institutions, coincidence with religious-based social opportunities is essential for individuals within the society. On the other hand, students are still in the space of religious teachings, which is defined through textbooks, teachers, and the school environment. The coincidence educational environment and the teachings in it are inevitable for using these teaching. This leads to equality among students and prevents the change concerning the average religious identity based on individual and group demands.

Discussion and Conclusion
Identification is a process that is dynamics throughout human life. This dynamism can be changed due to the presence of an individual in different social situations and gaining various experiences. The pragmatic attitude which is implemented in the theoretical framework of this article arising from the standpoint that individuals do not have any imitative act in their formation process. They not only participating in socio-cultural situations, rather, but they are also acted consciously and based on their

choices. According to the above-mentioned subjects, the average of religious and ethnic identities among students did not show many changes based on social status. Because the statistical population was chosen from students living in the same district with similar facilities. Living in an equal environment and access to similar opportunities lead to the same level of social status. Eventually, this cause similar choices in the formation process.

In this process, students understand the role of all the opposing actors in the context of social work division and act based on pragmatic values. According to social status, these choices were similar. The same result was repeated on the average of religious identity based on the degree of compliance concerning individual and group demands with social opportunities. Social opportunities were the same for students. On the other hand, their individual and group demands, which are affected by religious teachings in the social, cultural, political, and economic spheres, have not provided any different conditions for them. Therefore, religious identity did not show any significant difference based on this variable. Ethnic identity showed a significant difference based on the average degree of compliance concerning individual and group demands with social opportunities. Different ethnicities have changed social opportunities for students. On the other hand, students who live in Tehran, have come to Tehran due to migration, and some of them living in Tehran due to born in Tehran because of their parents' migration. The difference in implementing ethnic culture teachings results in a significant difference in the average ethnic identity based on the average degree of compliance concerning individual and group demands with social opportunities. On the other hand, the degree of student's communication with their origin ethnicity affects their identification.

Religious and ethnic identity showed different averages among students based on the variables of civil disobedience, the effect of mass media, and the influence of cultural elements. Therefore, for adolescence, which the emergence of individuality plays an important role in finding identity, is manifested in civil disobedience. The ability to change in ethnic and religious identities results from this civil disobedience in social requirements. Mass media use different programs with various orientations to affect the mindsets of the audiences. These enable students to choose their favorite programs. Also, the expansion of media in recent years indicates that in a networking society, ignoring the media is not possible. Cultural elements such as values and norms also differ based on the culture of origin, ethnicity, religiosity, and the proportion of actors' interactions with each other in families. This has affected the average ethnic and religious identities. The effectiveness and function of ethnic and religious identities as two dimensions of social identity are relatively similar. Religious identity can affect ethnic identity due to its entry into various spheres and dominance in social, cultural, and political programs. Many ethnic teachings are affected by religious beliefs. Therefore, religion as a cohesive factor in Iranian society can affect various aspects of social identity.

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