

## Social Alienation and identity Status of university youths in Iran

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**Abstract:** Aim of this paper is to study relationship between social alienation and identity status of university students. Methodology of this study is survey. In order to measure social alienation, we use Melvin Seeman's scale including feelings of powerlessness, social anomie, social isolation, meaninglessness, and Estrangement. We also use identity status EIS2-EOM Test provided by Adams and Benion (1989) to measure identity status. Statistical population of this study includes students of Islamic Azad University. The sample includes 380 students chosen through proportional stratified sampling method based on student's gender and faculty. Findings of this study show that there is significant correlation between social alienation and identity status of subjects. Average of alienation among males is 48.5 and females' average is 49.3. This relation is statistically meaningful. Test  $\chi^2$  shows that there is significant correlation between identity status and faculty. Rate of this relation in Phi test is 0.38. People with successful identity status who have passed the crisis and got some commitments, they rarely confront with social alienation, they use influential social skills and behave appropriately in anomie situation.

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### 1. Introduction

Social alienation is one of prominent concepts of social thoughts. Some scholars call it an especial phenomenon of modern societies and some believe that it roots in Egypt Literature and Old Age. Social and psychological scholars have different perspectives about social alienation. Marx stated that social alienation means power weakness. Weber calls it "Bureaucratic Rationality" and Durkheim believes that it is synonym of anomie. Manheim states that professionalism and bureaucracy are factors leading to alienation (Mohseni Tabrizi, 1991). Some scholars believe that there is relationship between of social alienation and identity. Identity is formed unconsciously in the society. The most important event of adulthood is formation of identity because it is a time which is placed between two periods: Childhood from one hand and adulthood from the other hand. Transformation from childhood to adulthood requires two items: one is to overcome the childhood deficiencies and the other is being ready to enter the adulthood. Teenager faces identity crisis when he/she can not solve the identity problems in childhood in the way that they are not ready to accept the adulthood responsibilities. Some teenagers do not this period and remain suspended. Therefore, at the end of this period there will be an identity crisis which is called "Normal" by Erickson but inability to solve this problem is called "Abnormal", because it deprives the teenagers from having strong identity which leads to role chaos. Identity is person's definition from themselves and the others. Using this definition,

person can answer questions such as "what am I?" and "what do I want? Which help person to clarify different aspects of personality and manage them? It directs people in different places, times, psychologically and mentally. Marcia talks about two exploration and identity status variables. Erikson believes that identity is a balance between commitment and role confusion. Marcia operationalizes identity status and identifies four kinds of them: achievement identity, Moratorium Identity, Foreclosure Identity, Diffusion Identity. Adolescence includes some changes such as friendly behaviors with others and capabilities of recognition. These changes forces adults to think deeply about more stability in their definition and try to form their personality independent from the others. Social alienation and identity crisis is a problem in every country. Social problems resulting fro these situations lead to some problems and issues in society. Since that the youth are placed in center of this crisis, they try to form their identity and are led towards social pathologies. They mainly lose irreparable opportunities such as education and employment. They are mainly considered as marginalized class in society. Their family problems and time of costs spend by government and organizations to solve the problems are considerable. Youth vulnerability against social, economical and political pressures may harm the formation and evolution of identity and lead to lack of confidence, stability, insecurity and social alienation. Speed of changes in developing countries, social anomie, fading compulsory identity has led to

alienation and identity crisis. According to Feuerbach and Marx, human being is the main creature of the world whose alienation is reflected in alienation from work and deprivation from their own rights and properties. From Marx point of view, human alienation concept can be seen in alienation from work. He writes: relations in contradictory and conflicting situation, working class knows work as a force and then loses his/her spirit (Enayat, 1975:55). Max Weber studies capitalism as alienation and power weak of modern person. He believes that it is the result of rigid and harsh rationality whose symbols are capitalism and socialism (Ebrahimi, 1985:65).

Main emphasis on alienation theory as a role played by rationality in different aspects of social behavior. Rationality-related problems refers to disorder in people's behavior and actions. In the way that, in order-based, harsh and spiritless action which roots in rationality, people experience separation from many characteristics and life qualities such as love, interests and sympathy and feels alienation (Nisbet, 1973:294). Durkheim calls alienation synonym with anomie. He believes that anomie shows the abnormal situation of society and lack of consensus between individuals and the society about social goals, collective expectations and accepted patterns. Each society values some goals and expects the society members to behave in accordance with socially accepted norms. It can lead them towards their goals and aims (Mohseni Tabrizi, 1991: 57). Merton studies two aspects of social and cultural system: firstly, goals, desires, expectations and cultural values. Secondly, instruments and ways which lead to pre identified aims. Deviated behavior and consequently, anomie happens only when there is no harmony between instruments and goals (Rushing, 1972:107). When a society completely controls the members, people will feel powerlessness, social isolation and anomie in society (Mohseni Tabrizi, 1991:61). Merton looks for the roots of alienation in anomic situation of society and believes that social anomie has different effects on members making structure of society. Manheim says that one of the main functions of productive-social relations in capitalism is centralization of instrument property, political will, force instruments, violence ad control in minority hands called Elite. He believes that industrialization, rationality, bureaucracy, professionalism are chains made by modern civilization for human being which lead to human alienation in different forms such as feeling loneliness, hopelessness, and depression (Ghadimi, 2001:162). Seeman states that bureaucratic structure of modern society has provided a situation in which people are not able to control or manage the consequences of their actions. Social management and control on social

rewards are in the way that members cannot make relationship between their own behaviors and rewards given by society. In this situation, people will be dominated by alienation feeling and finally will show destructive and incompatible behavior in society.

Studying the background of this issue show that there have been some researches on alienation, identity status and the influential factors which focused on these issues separately. Rabbani Khoorasghani (1993) studied social alienation among Tehran students. Results of his studies show that there was correlation between family type and social alienation. Ghadimi (2001) studied the rate of work alienation in administrative system and show that alienation among state employees was considerable. There were some factors such as organizational, individual, management and motivational factors which affected the alienation rate. Rostami (2001) in a study among directors of Iran came to this conclusion that when they have high education and more experience, their work alienation is less than the others. Share and Agha Mohammadian (2007) in a study show that effects of Moratorium identity Status in runaway girls are significantly higher than normal girls. Javadi in a study came to this conclusion that scores of Moratorium and Diffusion identity status among addicted group were significantly higher than non addicted group. He also found that scores of achievement identity among non addicted group was higher than the scores of addicted group. Aim of this study is to identify the relationship between social alienation of university students and their identity status based on their faculty, gender and marital status. Research questions are as follows:

- What is student's identity status based on their demographic variables?
- How much is social alienation of students based on their demographic variables?
- There is difference between student's social alienation and their social status
- There is difference between student's social alienation and demographic variables(faculty, gender, marital status)

There is difference between student's social identity status and demographic variables (faculty, gender, marital status).

#### **Social Alienation**

It is a state in which person feels strange and never know him/herself as the center of the world. He/she never thinks that goods are made and created by them. On the whole, they are dominated by the works and results and worship them (Forum, 1981:147). In order to measure the social alienation we used Melvin Seeman's scale (1975).

### **Powerlessness**

Powerlessness is a kind of social alienation in which person feels that he/she cannot manage or control expected results and is not able to reinforce the presupposed aims and goals. Hegel, Marx and Weber studied powerlessness about workers belonging to a period in which they did not have dominance on their economical fate, powerlessness (Seeman, 1975:85).

### **Normlessness**

It is kind of alienation during that person with high rate of expectations assumes that getting closer to their aims is only limited to behaviors and actions which are not socially accepted. These people think that in order to achieve their valuable goals, they need illegitimate means or actions which are not accepted in the society (Seeman, 1975: 786). Losing or lack of social norms leads to lack of personal security and losing the innate values which may show the life direction. Leo Sorrel measures this variable with 5 – scale feeling belongingness. That is, social norms lose autocratic authority and desirable forms in the way that they cannot have ethical management dominance. In this situation, people cannot direct their behaviors (Mohseni Tabrizi, 1991:23).

### **Social Isolation**

It is a situation in which we face absolute separation from socially accepted values. People do not believe the system which values and rewards the works. They do not see their beliefs in harmony with what are considered valuable and valid in society. In other words, a person or group cultural, social and economical isolation and also less interaction between them may be result of persons' rejection by society, because he/she does not accept and observe the socially accepted norms and there may be other norms such as political, economical and social factors affecting this issue (Saroukhani, 1994:380).

### **Meaninglessness**

Meaninglessness is a kind of alienation in which person feels absurdity, confusion, doubt and cannot believe the current issues in society. They cannot adopt their decisions with society standards (Mohseni Tabrizi, 1991:68).

### **Estrangement**

Estrangement is a state in social alienation in which people feel hatred powerless about their lives, goals and rewards in their works and activities. Seeman measure the people's behaviors based on the expected rewards and like Marx believes that rewards are not only limited to actions but refers to outside affairs (Mohseni Tabrizi, 1991:68).

Table 1: measurement process of Social Alienation variable

Social Alienation	Powerlessness	Lack of control on life, inability to overcome the problems, believe to fate, lack of participation
	Normlessness	Deviation from rules, observing rule only because of being punished
	Social isolation	Lack of participation, preferring loneliness, avoiding friends
	Estrangement	Hating him/herself, feeling unsuccessful, not accepting him/herself
	Meaninglessness	Feeling meaninglessness towards life, world and being pessimist towards future and confusion about employment future

### **Identity Status**

Following identity theory of Erikson, Marcia offers identity definition with two crisis and commitment items. In order to operationalize the Identity process, he got 4 items of identity based on two former cases:

Rate of Crises + -		Rate of Commitment
Achievement	Foreclosure	+
Moratorium	Diffusion	-

## **2. Material and Methods**

This study is a cross-sectional one whose population includes Islamic Azad University student of Tabriz .they were 26000 in 2010-2011. Through a pre- test with 95% confidence level and 5% confidential level and also Cochran Formula, we chose our sample. They were 380 students. Sampling method was stratified method based on the number of

samples. We had two measurement tools: in order to measure social alienation we used Melvin Seeman's scale including powerlessness, Normlessness, social isolation, meaningfulness and Estrangement. In order to identify the identity status, we used EIS2-EOM Scale of Benion and Adams (1989). To measure the validity and reliability of measurement tools we used Alpha Cronbach test. We analyzed the data through T, F, X2 and LSD tests.

### **Results**

According to the goals of this study which was relationship between social alienation and identity status of university students, hypothesis tests show that there is significant correlation between these two variables. That is, people who have diffusion identity status, their social isolation is higher vice versa.(Table 8and 9) .Average of social isolation among students was 48.8 % (48.5% males and 49.3%females).(Table 2). This relation is statistically meaningful. Among students with

diffusion identity status, this rate was 52.1% and in achievement identity it was 54.4%. The highest rate of achievement identity belongs to students of Theology faculty and the highest rate of diffusion identity belongs to medicines students. Test  $\chi^2$  indicates that this difference is meaningful (Table 6and 7). Architecture and Art Faculty students had the highest rate of alienation (average 54.7%) and Literature faculty students had the lowest rate of alienation (average 44.5%). However, it is not verified by F-test (Table 10and11). According to identity status, males include 22.5% diffusion identity, 48% foreclosure identity, 13.7% achievement identity and among , ales we had 28.4, 51.1, 10.2 and 10.2, respectively. F- Test does not accept it as meaningful difference (Table 4). Marital

status variable test also show that married students have 25.8% of diffusion identity, 48.7% foreclosure identity, 13.5% Moratorium identity and 12% achievement identity. Among single students this was 24.2, 50.5, 12.6 and 12.6, respectively. T-test does not accept this difference as meaningful one (Table 5). We used T independent test to find out the difference of gender and social alienation. Results of this study show that there was significant difference between these two variables. Among female students the average of social alienation was lower than male students (Table 2). Findings also show that married students include 47.9% of social alienation while single students had 49.7% social alienation. It should be mentioned that T- test shows that this difference was not significant, too (Table 3).

Table 2. T- Test Social Alienation and Sex

T-test for equality of means			Levene test for equality of variances			Standard Error Mean	Sstandard Deviation	Mean	N	Sex
Sig	df	t	sig	F						
0/575	378	-0/561	0/018	5/60	0/81	11/65	48/46	207	Male	
0/582	328	-0/551								

(Table 3) T- Test Social Alienation and Marital Status

T-test for equality of means			Levene test for equality of variances			Standard Error Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	N	Marital Status
Sig	df	t	Sig	F						
0/074	368	1/79	0/740	0/110	0/817	13/55	49/69	275	Single	
0/062	178/875									

(Table 4) Test  $\chi^2$  Sex and Identity Status

N	Sig	df	$\chi^2$	variable
380	0/207	3	4/563	Identity status

(Table 5) Test  $\chi^2$  Marital Status and Identity Status

N	Sig	df	$\chi^2$	Variable
370	0/981	3	0/178	Identity status

Table 6. Descriptive statistics Identity Status for Faculties

Faculty													Identity Status	
Total	ENGINEERI NG	Pour Science	Social Sciences and Education	Management and Accounting	Foreign Language and Literature	Theology and Political Science	Mechanical	Medicine	Architecture and Art	P	N			
25/3	96	15/3	11	30/3	23	20/8	10	36/8	14	28/6	8	20/7	6	diffusion
39/3	188	38/6	35	50	38	52/1	25	44/7	17	53/6	15	24/1	7	Foreclosure
13/2	50	38/6	35	9/2	7	20/8	10	13/2	5	0	0	20/7	6	Moratorium
12	36	16/7	12	10/5	8	6/3	3	5/3	2	17/9	5	34/5	10	Achievement
100	380	100	72	100	76	100	38	100	38	100	28	100	29	Total

(Table 7) Test  $\chi^2$  Faculty and Identity Status

N	Sig	df	$\chi^2$	Phi	Variable
380	0/000	24	54/23	0/378	Identity Status

(Table 8) F Test Social Alienation and Identity Status

Sig	F	Mean of squares	df	Sum of squares	Source of variation	Variable
0/022	3/234	559/557	3	1678/672	Between group	Social Alienation
		173/.24	376	65057/161	Within group	
			379	66735/83	Total	

(Table 9) LSD test for significant differences to distinguish Identity Status and Social Alienation

Achievement Identity	Moratorium Identity	Foreclosure Identity	Diffusion Identity	Identity Status
*	-	*	-	Diffusion Identity
-	-	-	*	Foreclosure Identity
-	-	-	-	Moratorium Identity
-	-	-	*	Achievement Identity

(Table 10) Descriptive statistics for each Faculty and Social Alienation

Max	Min	Standard Error Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	N	Faculty
80/24	26/30	2/50	14/20	54/62	32	Architecture and Art
84/25	28	2/91	13/66	51/33	22	Medicine
86/27	28	2/41	14/24	49/92	35	Mechanical
66/86	15/71	2/38	12/82	47/92	29	Theology and Political Science
65/71	23/43	2/42	11/87	44/98	28	Foreign Language and Literature
70/29	27/14	1/65	10/22	47/58	38	Management and Accounting
65/12	14/12	1/49	10/34	45/61	48	Social Sciences and Education
92/25	22/86	1/80	15/68	48/95	76	Pour Science
91/43	20/14	1/51	12/82	49/42	72	ENGINEERING
92/25	14/12	0/68	13/27	48/82	380	Total

(Table 11) F Test Social Alienation and Faculty

sig	F	Mean of squares	df	Sum of squares	Source of variation	variable
0/114	1/63	283/83	8	2270/67	Between group	Social alienation
		173/76	371	64465/15	Within group	
			379	66735/83	Total	

#### 4. Discussions

Basic need of person is identity. According to successful and unsuccessful forms of identity, people with successful identity know themselves as capable, valuable and powerful person while people with unsuccessful identity know themselves as alone, sad, anxious and miserable one. Young people who are not able to find out sustainable values in their culture, religion and beliefs, they will suffer from diffusion. Insecurity in society and inability to predict the future of society causes some problems in employment, using the youth talents and exploitation from their potential abilities and lead them towards

hopelessness and diffusion and give them negative identity. People who have diffusion identity status, they will never suffer from identity crisis; do not have especial programs and goals in life. People with alienation can not overcome the crisis successfully. People with successful identity status has passed the crisis and achieved their commitments. They rarely face social alienation, because they are able to overcome the problems successfully and have appropriate behavior in anomie situation. Commitment to religious, family and job skills also do as protective factors.

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