

A Study of the Relationships between the Family Performance and Ego Identity Status with Academic Achievement in Students

Maryam Shoja Heidary¹, Omolbanin Roodbari², Mahin Naderi³,
Omid Isanezhad⁴, Mohammad Reza Jalilvand⁵

^{1,2,3,4}Department of Education University of Isfahan

⁵Department of New Sciences and Technologies, University of Tehran

ABSTRACT

One of the most important problems which challenge researchers and educational programmers is understanding factors which affect academic performance and the role of family and development-identity factors. The present study aims at examining the relationships between the family functioning and disorders and the ego identity status and academic functioning. The sample consists of 250 student selected using random sampling among high school students. The instruments employed in this study include the ego identity questionnaire and the family assessment device. Data were analyzed using a Pearson correlation test and stepwise multiple regression analysis. The findings showed a significant correlation between family functioning and identity status. Disorders in the functions of family are positively correlated with premature and confused identity. Furthermore, there is a negative correlation between disorders in the performance of family with academic functioning, forming identification, and successful identification. Regression model revealed that the relationship, problem solving, general performance of the family, premature identity and successful interpersonal identity are determining factors of academic functioning. The findings of this study have implications for educational programmers, consultants, and psychologists in understanding factors affecting the academic functioning and in developing plans which fit these factors.

Key words: ego identity status, family functioning, academic performance.

INTRODUCTION

By academic improvement, it was meant any achievement in education which might result in gaining expertise in a field of knowledge or learning a special skill. In other words, academic achievement is reaching specified objectives in each academic period. During the past century, psychologists have extensively focused on identifying factors predicting the academic improvement (Hein and Hagger, 2007).

One of the most important factors which affect academic achievement is the individuals' psychological traits. Danielson believe that individuals are equipped with resources such as psychological structures and personality traits to deal with different people and situations (Dermitzaki, Leondari, Goudas, 2009). Researchers have always focused on the influence of psychological features on different life variables such as occupational, academic, and interpersonal performance (Hein, Hagger, 2007). Therefore, it should be concluded that academic improvement is not only a result of individual intelligence or hardware facilities in the environment, but psychological aspects of people like personality also play an important role in this respect. Moreover, the findings of previous research demonstrate the significant relationship between realized identity styles and academic development (Abdi, Agha Youssefi, Qaed Amini, Mohammadian, 2010).

According to Brozensky's process or cognitive-social model, identity means: the way people perceive themselves and also the way they perceive people around them (Brozenski, 1993). Individual identity helps people separate themselves from others and includes a set of beliefs, values and objectives which a person holds and is not hidden from others (Jokar, 2006). The formation of identity is one of the most significant stages in an adolescent's development and reaching a stable identity not only results in a sense of individuality and uniqueness, but also facilitates improvements in future and adaptability in life. (Erickson, 1968)

Erickson considers adolescence as the beginning of identity crisis and believes that when identity crisis is resolved, individuals reach their integrated identity. (Hosseinzadeh, 2008). Therefore, the formation of identity is a voluntary process which takes place on the basis of the individuals' preferences and judgments through consolidating and integrating a set of ideals and objectives and through integrating different roles of individuals.

According to Erickson, during the process of identity crisis, every person will act in one of these ways: obtaining identity, or a sparseness of roles (Nadjafi, 2006). He contends that the most important job of an adolescent is to resolve the conflict between identity crisis and sparseness of roles. In order to develop a relatively stable identity, adolescents must re-organize their needs, desires and abilities so that they can cope with current criticizing views in society (Ahadi & Jamhari, 2006).

Marcia defines premature identity, sparse identity, realized identity and suspension in identity, using Erikson's theoretical model (Marcia, 1966). Realized identity defines those people who have passed identity crisis which is the active stage of questioning about their own selves and have developed specific and stable viewpoints and have made firm decisions about their occupations (Atkinson, 2001). Suspension in identity includes a period of experience and investigation during which an individual has experienced different roles but has not formed any stability and commitment to a special role (Carlson, 2006).

Premature identity describes a group of people who feel committed toward their professions and ideologies, but they have reached this level of stability and commitment without having experienced the identity crisis (Farzaneh khoo, Yarmohammadian, and Molavi, 2009). In other words, they have a predetermined identity which is determined for them by such dominating people as parents or teachers (Lotf Abadi, 2001, *Marcynyszyn, L. A., Evans, G. W., & Eckenrode, J(2008).*). This group of adolescents cannot distinguish between their parents' goals and their own goals. They are so strongly dependent on their families that seem to be more of a captive than have an emotional family relationship (Carlson, 2006). They set goals on the basis of their parents' wishes, without further investigations. Sparseness in identity takes place when an adolescent fails to form a set of individual ideals which function as the basis of their adult lives. Identity sparseness is resulted from lack of commitment and makes the individuals turn into a carefree and unambitious person who might go further to develop severe psychological disorders (Dallaire, Cole, Smith, Ciesla, LaGrange, et al. 2008).

Berzonski defines three major styles for identity which include informational, normal, and evader confused styles (Berzonsky, 2008). People with the informational style, deal with identity problems in an active way. In the normal style, people deal with problems in a reactive manner, and people with the evader confused style are neglectful. The findings of his study on the relationships between identity styles with psychological maturity and academic improvement revealed that students with the informational style had better performances in their education. They had a self-leading learning style and they had a clear understanding of academic objectives (Berzonsky, 2008).

According to Erikson's theory, if the individual identity of adolescents forms through time and is based on proper social experiences and they can know themselves. They can develop psychological balance. However, if they develop ambiguity in their roles instead of self-awareness and positive formation of identity, they will lose their psychological balance and develop identity crisis. In identity crisis, the adolescent is highly distressed which in turn leads to an uncertainty in setting long term goals such as their field of study or profession (Ahmadi, 1994). Therefore, under current conditions in which academic success and improvement is of high importance both for students and families and also for society, investigating and focusing on psychological factors of academic development can function as a strong academic tool (Chadhoori & Amin, 2006).

Accordingly, it could be concluded that the family and its functioning is considered to be one of those aforementioned factors which undoubtedly will affect individuals' academic improvement. The function of the family means its ability to adapt to changes developed during life, resolving conflicts, solidarity between the members and succeeding in disciplinary models, observing the boundaries between people, enforcing laws and principles in order to save the whole family system (Davis-Kean, 2005).

In a study, McClend found that developing motivation for progress in people is only based on their parents raising methods. Highly ambitious people are raised in families which expect them to be highly competent and qualified, which give them independence from childhood, in which fathers have limited power and mothers have no domination (Ball, 1994). In a study which was conducted on families by Ginsberg and Bornstein, it was revealed that children raised in families with supportive and independence giving styles enjoyed a higher level of intrinsic motivation and academic performance. On the other hand, the family functions as an open system the members of which are emotionally connected, yet are motivated to develop their own individual identities (Peikarestan, 2001). In his psychological approach and method for identity, Erikson emphasized the role of people surrounding the adolescent in recognizing, supporting and forming his or her identity. Accordingly, the studies conducted on finding individuality also agree that the formation of identity takes place in a favorable way as a result of being independent and separate from the rest of the family. (Davis-Kean, 2005; Eppler, & Weir, 2009). Theories of the family system emphasize that affection and individuality must be regarded equally in the development of adolescents. The findings of a study conducted by Rabiei on the interactions between the functions of family and the students' identity status confirmed that there was a significant correlation between the general performance of the family and confused identity, premature identity and delayed identity. The results also showed that there was a significant correlation between the scores of two subscales, emotional intercourse, and the general performance of the family and the scores for identity in general (Rabiei, 2008). Therefore, based on the current theories and researches and since people have the closest and the most relationship with their families during adolescence, this study focuses on the interaction between the performance of the family and formation of identity as well as academic improvement and eventually the influence of the family and identity styles on the students' academic improvements.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The method applied in this study is descriptive-correlative. The sample consisted of 250 students selected using . The average age of the respondents was 17.19 with the standard deviation of 3.06 for men and 16.97 with the standard deviation of 3.11 for women. Data were collected using questionnaires including:

Revised Version of the Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status(EOM-EIS2): this questionnaire was developed by Bennion and Adams (1989) and has two parts including ideology and interpersonal identity. It consists of 64 questions and subscales of confused and premature identity, forming identity, successful identity and interpersonal identity and is graded on the 6-degree continuum of likert with absolutely agree on one end and absolutely disagree on the other. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.66 to 0.76.

This measure was translated for an Iranian population and its psychometrics were measured and confirmed. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Iranian population was 0.70 to 0.81 (Aghamohammadian and Sheikh Roohani, 2009) and in this study for the early sample of 30 people, it was 0.71 to 0.76.

Family Assessment Device (FAD): this measure was developed by Epstein, Bishop, Baldwin (1983) to describe the structural and organizational features of the family and was derived from McMaster's model. It shows 6 specific and one general aspect of family performance including: problem solving, relationship, roles, emotional support, emotional conflict, controlling behavior, and general performance. This questionnaire consists of 60 questions which are graded on a 4-degree continuum from absolutely agree to absolutely disagree. Higher scores in any aspect of family performance indicate higher degrees of disorder in that respect. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was estimated 0.83 to 0.90 by the developers.

This measure was translated for an Iranian population and its psychometrics were measured and confirmed. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Iranian population was 0.71 to 0.77 (Kajbaf M, Keshavarz A, Nouri A, Lali M, Soltanzadeh, 2011) and in this study for the early sample of 30 people it was 0.69 to 0.78.

Academic performance: this variable was measured by the students' average grade at the end of the term.

Findings

The findings are presented in two sections: descriptive and deductive. First the descriptive findings are presented.

Table1. Descriptive statistics of variables

Ego Status	M	SD	Family Performance	M	SD	Academic Performance	M	SD
confused ideology	20.84	5.07	general performance	17.77	1.22	average grade	16.53	3.22
premature ideology	21.97	7.07	problem solving	11.62	5.41			
forming ideology	24.50	5.57	communication	14.24	2.61			
successful ideology	27.70	5.39	role	14.46	3.71			
confused interpersonal identity	20.82	5.93	emotional support	12.59	3.34			
premature interpersonal identity	20.99	6.58	emotional conflict	11.83	3.44			
forming interpersonal identity	25.68	5.66	behavior control	15.28	4.71			
successful interpersonal identity	26.89	5.60						

Table 1 shows the median and standard deviation of the respondents' grades in each aspect of family functioning, identity status, and academic performance.

Table2. Correlations between family performance, identity status and academic performance

variables	average grade	behavior control	emotional conflict	emotional support	role	communication	problem solving	general performance
confused ideology	-.01	.27**	.27**	.09	.22**	.09	.12*	.32**
premature ideology	-.06	.23**	.21**	.43**	.13*	.41**	.23**	.20**
forming ideology	-.01	.03	.06	-.12*	-.09	.04	-.14*	.01
successful ideology	-.06	-.20**	-.11*	-.18**	-.13*	-.18**	-.26**	-.10
confused interpersonal identity	-.04	.20**	.23**	.08	.20**	.13*	.10	.28**
premature interpersonal identity	.11*	.17**	.10	.16**	.06	.14*	.20**	.09
forming interpersonal identity	-.15**	-.28**	-.20**	-.22**	-.28**	-.19**	-.12*	-.05
successful interpersonal identity	-.16**	-.15**	-.14*	-.23**	-.14*	-.15**	-.17**	-.12*
average grade	-	-.14*	-.24**	-.14*	-.21**	-.28**	.06	-.27**

*p < 0.05

**p < 0.01

N = 250

Table 2 shows the simple correlation (Pearson) shows the aspects of family performance, identity status and average grade. As it can be seen, the correlation between problem solving of the family with the average grade is not significant ($p>0.05$). The correlation between the other aspects of the family performance is significant and reverse with the average grade ($p<0.05$). The relationship between the premature interpersonal identity with the average grade of 0.11 is ($p<0.05$) and the relationship between forming interpersonal identity and successful interpersonal identity with the average grades of -0.15 and -0.16, respectively, was ($p<0.01$). The relationship between the other aspects of the identity status with the average grade is not significant ($p>0.05$). Since a high score in the aspects of family performance indicates disorder in that aspect, a reverse relationship between the average grade and the family performance shows that the higher the disorders in the family, the lower the academic performance. The relationship between the aspects of family performance with the forming identity and the successful identity was reverse. This means that as the malfunctioning increases in of the aspects of family performance, the forming identity and the successful identity will decline. Confused ideology and premature ideology have a positive relationship with family functioning and with increased disorders in any of the aspects of family functioning, the premature and confused identities will raise.

Table 3. Results of stepwise regression model to prediction of academic performance

Predictors*	R	R ²	ΔR ²	S.S.E	F	p
Communication	.28	.08	.07	1.17	20.98	.001
Communication, problem solving, general performance,	.35	.12	.12	1.15	17.97	.001
Communication, problem solving, general performance,	.39	.14	.14	1.13	14.79	.001
Communication, problem solving, general performance, premature interpersonal identity	.41	.16	.16	.12	12.67	.001
Communication, problem solving, general performance, premature interpersonal identity, successful interpersonal identity	.44	.18	.18	1.11	11.99	.001

*Dependent variable: Academic performance

In order to investigate the multiple relationships between the family performance and the identity status with the average grade, multiple regression analysis was applied.

As it can be seen from table 3, the aspects of family functioning were integrated into the regression equation in the first steps and they are better predictors of the average grade than the aspects of identity status. The factors of problem solving, relationship, and the family's general performance were integrated into the equation in the first to the third steps, respectively and explained 15% of the whole variance of the average grade. Premature identity and successful identity were integrated into the equation, respectively, and in sum (with the other three factors) explained only 5% of the whole variance of the average grade. The other aspects of the family functioning and the identity status were excluded from the equation. All values of VIF for the variables outside the equation were below 5 (1.5 to 2.57), which shows they are non-linear.

Table 4. Regression coefficients to estimate of academic performance

predictors	Unstandardized Coefficients		standardized Coefficients	t	p
	B	S.E	b		
Constant value	19.69	.49	-	40.44	.001
communication	-.10	.02	-.31	-4.66	.001
problem solving	-.09	.03	-.20	-3.15	.001
general performance	-.04	.01	-.17	-2.79	.001
premature interpersonal identity	.03	.01	.17	2.90	.001
successful interpersonal identity	.03	.01	.17	2.80	.001

Table 4 shows the nonstandard regression coefficients (B) and standard ones (b) for the regression of the family functioning aspects and the identity status on the average grade in the last step. The standard regression weight for the premature identity and the successful identity on the average grade was positive and the one for the family functioning aspects and the identity status which remained in the equation was negative. ($p<0.01$)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study showed that there is a negative correlation between the forming and successful identity with the aspects of family functioning (table 2). This means that as the malfunctioning in one of these aspects increases, the successful and forming identities will decline. These findings are in line with some of the findings from previous researches (Akhtar Ebrahimhi, 2007; lyndsey, 2010). It seems that disorder and confusion in any aspects of the family functioning can result in the distortion of the successful identity mode, which in turn will lead to a malformation of identity. It could be expected that as the efficiency of the relationships inside the family system declines, and as the subsystems inside the family fail to fulfill their

duties, individuals will develop more conflicts with the environment and the processes of adjustment and transition to other stages will be more difficult.

Another part of the findings revealed that there is a relationship between the aspects of family functioning and the confused and premature identities. This means that the higher the disorders in any of these aspects, the higher the levels of premature and confused identities. These findings are in line with those of Lindsey's study (2010). It seems that the relationship between the family's malfunctioning and the premature identity is connected to the family's failure in defining and setting boundaries, the quality of the individuals' relationships with their families and environments (outside family) and inefficient parenting styles. In these conditions, immediately after facing with new ideas, values and behaviors, rather than analyzing and investigating them, the individuals will try to internalize them; hence the premature identity will form. On the other hand, if the functions of the family inside the parental system are conflicting and contrast each other, and if the roles are not clearly defined, individuals are likely to fail to choose proper standards for analyzing behavioral patterns, so they are more likely to develop internal conflicts in their behaviors and beliefs; hence a confused identity.

The findings revealed that different aspects of family functioning are negatively related to academic performance and relationship, problem solving and the family's general performance are the best predictors of decline in academic performance.

Therefore, as disorders in any of these aspects increase, there will be a decline in academic performance. In this respect, the findings of this study are in line with the ones from Lindsey's study on the family atmosphere and the quality of family relationships and academic performance. However, the authors of this study did not find any research investigating the relationship between the malfunctioning of any aspects of family and academic performance. Theoretically, it could be concluded that the quality of the relationships inside the family has a significant role in determining the emotional environment, psychological security and the self-esteem of students and forms the context of the individual. On this basis, it could be expected that with tension and malfunctions in the relationships inside the family, the individuals' psychological wellbeing will decline and the problems inside the family will result in poor academic performances.

Another part of the findings showed that in addition to the family aspects, the premature identity and the successful identity are positively related to academic performance. In this respect, the findings are in line with those of previous studies (Huang, 2010; Jones, 2011). Theoretically, it could be concluded that with premature and successful identities, the transition from identity crisis will take place sooner and it is accompanied by fewer mental tensions and ideological and behavioral challenges between the individual, family, and the academic environment. This general compatibility with the context results in better exerting attempts for academic and educational purposes and hence a better academic performance. Since both of these aspects are considered as the interpersonal aspects of identity, it could be concluded that in explaining the students' academic performance, the interpersonal and relational aspects, especially social adaptation, require special consideration.

Taking everything into consideration, the findings indicate the influence of family functioning and identity status on academic performance. These findings have implications for educational planners, consultants, and psychologists in clarifying factors influencing academic performance and developing plans which correspond to these factors. It is suggested that in future studies, the role of intercultural and contextual issues be investigated in understanding the relationship between family functioning, identity and academic performance.

REFERENCES

- Hojat, M., Gonnella, J. S., Erdmann, J. B., & Vogel, W. H. (2003). Medical students' cognitive appraisal of stressful life events as related to personality, physical well-being, and academic performance: A longitudinal study. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 35: 219-235.
- Conard, M. A. (2006). Aptitude is not enough: How personality and behavior predict academic performance. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 4: 339-346.
- Diseth, A. (2003). Personality and approaches to learning as predictors of academic achievement. *European Journal of Personality*, 17, 143-155.
- Akgun, S., & Ciarrochi, J. (2003). Learned resourcefulness moderates the relationship between academic stress and academic performance. *Educational Psychology*, 23(3), 287-294.
- Eremsoy, C. E., Celimli, S., & Gencoz, T. (2005). Students under academic stress in a Turkish university: Variables associated with symptoms of depression and anxiety. *Current Psychology*, 24(2): 123-133.
- Misra, R. & Castillo, L. (2004). Academic Stress among College Students: Comparison of American and International Students. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 11: 132-148

- Delkhamoush, M. T. (2008). Developing a scale for measuring ego identity. *Journal of Iranian Psychologists*, 5(17): 43-52.
- Berzonsky, M. D. (2008). Identity Formation: The role of identity processing style and cognitive processes. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 44: 645-655.
- Kroger, J. (2007). *Identity Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Berzonsky, M. D. (1989). Identity style: Conceptualization and measurement. *Journal of Adolescence Research*, 4: 267-281.
- Schwartz, S. J. (2001). The evolution of Eriksonian and Neo-Eriksonian identity theory and research: A review and integration. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 1: 7-58.
- Akgun, S., & Ciarrochi, J. (2003). Learned resourcefulness moderates the relationship between academic stress and academic performance. *Educational Psychology*, 23: 287-294.
- Struthers, C.W., Perry, R. P., & Menec, V. H. (2000). An examination of the relationships among academic stress, coping motivation, and performance in college. *Research in Higher Education*, 41: 581-592.
- Ang, R. P and Huan, S. V. (2006). Academic Expectations Stress Inventory: Development, Factor Analysis, Reliability, and Validity. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 66: 522-539.
- Sun, J., Dunne, M. P., Hou, X, and Xu, A. (2011). Educational Stress Scale for adolescents : Development, Validity, and Reliability With Chinese Students, *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 29: 534-546.
- Bjorkman, S. M. (2007). Relationships among academic stress, social support, and internalizing and externalizing behavior in adolescence (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Northern Illinois University, DeKalb.
- Lakaev, N. (2009). Validation of an Australian Academic Stress Questionnaire. *Australian Journal of Guidance & Counselling*: 19, 56-70.
- Tang, N. Y., & Westwood, P. (2007). Worry, general self-efficacy and school achievement: An exploratory study with Chinese adolescents. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counseling*, 17: 68-80.
- Good, M., & Adams, G. R. (2008). Linking academic social environments, ego-identity formation, ego virtues, and academic success. *Adolescence*, 43(170): 221-236.
- Leung, K., Lau, S., & Lam, W. L. (1998). Parenting styles and achievement: A cross-cultural study. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 44: 157-172.
- Maccoby, E. E., Martin, J. A. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child interaction. In P. H. Mussen (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology* (Vol. 4, pp. 1-101). New York: Wiley.
- Ginsburg, G. S., & Bronstein, P. (1993). Family factors related to children's intrinsic/extrinsic motivational orientation and academic performance. *Child Development*, 64: 1461-1474.
- Besharat, M. A., Azizi, K., Poursharifi, H. (2011). The relationship between parenting styles and children's academic achievement in a sample of Iranian families. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 15: 1280-1283.
- Syed, M., Azmitia, M., and Cooper, Catherine. R. (2011). Identity and Academic Success among Underrepresented Ethnic Minorities: An Interdisciplinary Review and Integration. *Journal of Social Issue*, 67(3): 442-468.
- Blackson, T. C. (1995). Temperament and IQ mediate the effects of family history of substance abuse and family dysfunction on academic achievement. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 51(1): 113-122.
- Benion, L. D., & Adams, G. R. (1986). A revision of the Extended Version of the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status: An identity instrument for use with late adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 1: 183-198.
- Aghamohammadian, S. H., and Roohani, S. S. (2009). Investigating the Relationship between Identity Status and Anxiety. *Daneshvar rafter*, 1(37): 9-20.
- Kajbaf M, Keshavarz A, Nouri A, Lali M, Soltanzadeh M(2011). A comparison of family performance and mental health status in pet keeping and non-pet keeping individuals in Isfahan in 2009. *Arak Medical University Journal*, 13(4): 83-94.

- Epstein, N.B., Baldwin, L.M., & Bishop, D.S. (1983). The McMaster family assessment device. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 9: 171-180.
- Carlson, M. (2006). Family structure, father involvement, and adolescent behavioral outcomes. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 68(1), 137-154.
- Dallaire, D. H., Cole, D. A., Smith, T. M., Ciesla, J. A., LaGrange, B., Jacquez, F. M., et al. (2008). Predicting children's depressive symptoms from community and individual risk factors. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 37(7), 830-846.
- Eppler, C., & Weir, S. (2009). Family assessment in K-12 settings: Understanding family systems to provide effective, collaborative services. *Psychology in the Schools*, 46(60), 501-514.
- Marcynyszyn, L. A., Evans, G. W., & Eckenrode, J. (2008). Family instability during early and middle adolescence. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 29(5), 380-392.