

## Assessing Identity in Adolescence: A Psychometric Study

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Identity is one the most critical concepts of the developmental psychology, yet it is quite elusive. This paper explores the structure of identity in a sample of adolescents from a collectivistic culture. The construct of identity was explored from 30 adolescents (15 Boys and 15 Girls) with the age range of 13-18 years through open-ended interviews. A final list of 39 items was piloted on the 20 adolescents. Finally, 400 (50% Boys and 50% Girls) with the age range of 13-18 years ( $M=14.37$ ,  $SD=1.23$ ) adolescents were selected through a stratified sampling and the Identity Scale for Adolescents (ISA), Demographic Performa, the School Children Problem Scale (Saleem & Mahmood, 2011) and the Identity Scale Inventory-V (ISI-V, Berzonsky et al., 2013) were given to them. Exploratory Factor analysis of ISA yielded three factors *Positive Self Identity*, *Negative Self Identity*, and *Arrogant Self Identity*. Confirmatory Factor Analysis confirmed the 3 factor solution with 17 items. ISA was found to have a high internal consistency, convergent validity, discriminant validity and split half reliability. Results are discussed in terms of cultural and counseling implications of the construct of identity.

**Keywords.** adolescents, identity, reliability, counseling, culture.

Human life goes through various ages and stages of development in which adolescence period is considered to be very crucial and critical (Rodriquez & Lamm, 2016). Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood where individual went through many developmental tasks including biological, emotional and social (Schwartz, 2005). This transition poses a great deal of challenges, constant adjustment and learning of new skills to cope with expanding psychosocial world (Arnett, 2004). Indeed, adolescence period brings new challenges, many ambiguities, conflicts and crisis in life where the individual tends to demand more autonomy, new attributes to social relationships and a new meaning to self (Onetti, García, & Rodríguez, 2019).

Identity formation is considered as one of the most essential developmental task of adolescents (Erikson, 1950). According to Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory, during adolescence years, individual strives for the development of a stable identity formation that helps in self-awareness and healthy growth and development. During this period, one questions one's own existence, how does one view oneself consistently and cohesively depends on how one like to explore and understand himself or herself with relation to personal and social reality. A wealth of

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Contribution of Authors:

1. Sadia Saleem: Supervised the project, she has designed the study and prepared the manuscript.
2. Shumaiza Iqbal: She has collected the data and prepared the initial draft.
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literature shows that an individual who is able to define and resolve his identity, able to view oneself consistently tend to have better psychological consequences including high well-being (Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008), emotional regularity (Dumas, Lawford, Tieu, & Pratt, 2009), satisfaction in relationship (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010), positive body image, self-image and self-acceptance and so on (Luyckx, Lens, Smits, & Goossens, 2010).

Adams and Marshall (1996) proposed five important functions of identity. First identity is closely connoted with the development of self-concept, self-respect, self-confidence, adjustment and self-consciousness (Stapleton, 2015). Second, identity, through commitment, values and goals provides the meaning and direction about life (Alrakaf, Sainsbury, Rose, & Smith, 2014). Third, identity is the sense of own control and will power (Daniel, Uusberg, & Gross, 2017). Fourth function of identity is that it provides a sense of uniformity, consistency, and harmony among beliefs, values, and commitments (Crocetti, Sica, Schwartz, Serafini, & Meeus, 2010). The fifth function of identity is to provide the ability to recognize potential in the form of future possibilities and alternative choices (Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005). These are all the functions of those adolescents who have a well-defined identity and also distinguish them from those who active constructed identity to passive constructed identity (Serafini, 2007).

The concept of identity has attained a lot of psychological research partly due to its scope and partly due to conceptual controversies and conflicts (Clarke, 2008). The important conceptual issue is the operational definition and the very nature of the concept of identity. Erikson (1968) conceptualized identity both as a conscious sense of individual's uniqueness and as an unconscious striving for continuity of experience. Marcia (1980) explained identity as a dynamic process, as an association of the personal experiences, beliefs and abilities. Berzonsky (1989) denoted identity formation as a cognitive and social process that helps an individual to make personal decision and better social adjustment. Identity is also said to be contextual, multidimensional, age specific and dynamic process (Phinney & Baldelomar, 2011). In literature, there is no cohesive view on the classification of the identity e.g. Goffman (1968) described three types of identity that are the *social identity*, *personal identity* and *ego identity*. Still others classified identity as *role identity* and *type identity* (Arnett, 2004). Another classification of identity is firstly ideological domain comprising religion, ethnicity, career and vocational choice (Crocetti et al., 2017; Negru-Subtirica, Pop, & Crocetti, 2015). Secondly, an interpersonal domain, that include family, friendship and gender role (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995).

Few systematic attempts have been made to attain an empirical evidence of Erikson's (1968) conceptualization of identity including Marcia's identity status (1968) and other is Berzonsky's identity-processing orientation (1989). Marcia extracted four dimensions of identity based on exploration and commitment, the first is diffusion comprised low exploration and low commitment denoted to lack of interest in identity formation, secondly, foreclosure comprised low exploration and high commitment denotes to a rigid and conformist view in identity formation, thirdly, moratorium include high exploration and low commitment represents an active approach to search the meaning of self and lastly, achievement that comprise high exploration and high commitment denotes to an integrated view about self and identity. If we look closely at Marcia's contribution, identity achievement and diffusion is similar to what Erikson proposed as identity and confusion. Berzonsky also proposed three distinct identity orientation styles people use to handle identity related issues. Firstly, informational orientation in which individuals consider various options to resolve identity issues, normative style where an individual tend to show more conformity to social and family

expectations. Diffuses/ avoidant identity tend to delay in handling identity related crisis. Researchers have not provided conclusive evidence on gender difference with relation to identity styles. Some reported that boys score higher on diffused/avoidant identity styles as compared to girls (e.g. Berzonsky & Kinney, 2008) and other reported that girls have more diffused/avoidant identity, normative and informational identity than boys (Imtaiz & Naqvi, 2012).

The above approaches of identity highlighted the role of personal, social and environmental factors that help in identity formation (Mayes, Cutri, Goslin, & Montero, 2016). Among other factors, culture plays a very vital role in the identity development (Côté & Levine, 2014). The individualistic and collectivistic cultures have distinct patterns of meaning to self and identity (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Rodriguez, & Wang, 2007). In individualistic cultures, emphasis is given on individual's strengths, achievements and individualized meanings of life where self-reliance, autonomy and independence are promoted (Chan, 2000). In traditional collectivistic cultures, group harmony, cohesion, connectedness and interdependence is valued (Harrington & Liu, 2002). Culture promotes distinct meaning of self which eventually influences identity formation. Individualistic culture promotes individualized identity, retaining the originality of an individual (Jenkins, 2008) whereas in collectivistic culture, conformist identity and self is seen with relation to others (Kappeler, 2003). Also, identity is a combination of two components Internal; denotes to person's own abilities, strengths and skills and the External, according to the society and the culture to which person belongs (Hartland, 2018).

To conclude the above literature, one can say that identity is a crucial task of adolescence period which brings meaning and recognition of the self for an individual. Despite of the fact of its crucial role, this very construct has many controversies that make difficult to measure and assess identity (Schwartz, 2001). Firstly, the construct lacks comprehensive operational definition that makes it more difficult to measure it. Secondly, research on identity based on either Marcia's (1968) conceptualization of identity styles or Berzonsky's identity-processing orientation (1989). Both theories largely ignore cultural and contextual influence of the formation of identity. Thirdly, most of the researches on identity has focused on university students and ignored other segments of the populations. Keeping in view these limitations, the current research is an attempt to focus on a cohesive definition of identity by using a sample of Pakistani adolescents. Moreover, this research would be an attempt to integrate some of the key components into uniform concept of the identity. The aim of the current research is to explore the phenomenology of identity in a sample of Pakistani adolescents also to develop a valid and reliable scale for measuring identity.

## Method

### Phase I. Item generation.

**Participants and procedure.** In the first phase, face to face interviews were conducted to explore the phenomena of Identity. In the current research, identity was operationally defined as "*a unique configuration of attributes with which one describes the self*". 50 participants were selected through purposive sampling from 8<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> class both boys and girls with the age range of 13 to 18 years ( $M, 14.37, SD, 1.24$ ) from two government and two private schools of Lahore. A phenomenological approach was used and participants were asked to describe "*What kind of attributes you use to describe yourself*". Participants were interviewed individually through an open-ended approach. After close examination of each interview, separate list of items were developed followed by merging of all lists into one composite list. After excluding repetition and ambiguous words, a list of 43 attributes was finalized for further item analysis.

### **Phase II: Empirical validation.**

**Participants and procedure.** After exploring phenomenology, list of 43 items was further rated by five experts who had minimum five years of experience in the field of clinical psychology. Participants were asked to rate each items to the extent to which it reflects the operational definition of identity. All those items which obtained 50% agreement from the experts were retained. Four items were scored below 50% and were excluded from the final list. A final list of 39 items was retained and converted into a self-report measure (Identity Scale for Adolescents, ISA).

**Phase III: Adaptation of Identity Styles Inventory (ISI-V).** Identity Styles Inventory (ISI-V; Berzonsky et al., 2013)) was adapted for establishing concurrent validity of the newly developed Identity Scale for Adolescents (ISA).this scale comprised three identity styles namely Informational-style, Normative-style scale; and Diffuse-avoidant style containing 9 items each. For the purpose of adaptation, permission from the author was taken. After permission, a standard procedure of translation and adaptation was used. One bilingual expert and two clinical psychologists evaluated the translation for linguistic and cultural equivalence.

### **Phase IV: Pilot study of the Measures.**

**Participants and procedure.** A pilot study was carried out before calculating the psychometric properties of the ISA. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine user-friendliness, comprehensions of items and instructions. A sample of 30 adolescents (15 boys and 15 girls) 5 from each 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> class with the age range of 13-18( $M=14.37$ ,  $SD$ , 1.24) was selected through purposive sampling. All participants were given Identity Scale for Adolescents (ISA) and Identity Style Inventory- V (ISI-V). The results of this phase revealed that participants reported no ambiguity and difficulty in comprehension of items and instructions of both scales.

### **Main Study**

**Participants.** 400 participants were selected with an equal proportion of 200 boys and 200 girls from 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> within the age of 13-18 ( $M=14.37$ ,  $SD$ , 1.24) from four Government schools and two private schools. Multi stage sampling was used as sample was firstly divided in strata according to sector, class and gender.

### **Measures.**

**Demographic Proforma.** A Demographic Proforma was developed comprising basic information such as age, gender, class and school.

**Identity Scale for Adolescents (ISA).** ISA consisted of 39 items with a 4 point (0-3) Likert type rating scale 0 (never), 1 (rarely), 2(sometimes) and 3 (often). Instructions that were given to the adolescents were: "Following are some statements that reflects how children of your age thinks about themselves. Rate each item to the extent to which it applies to you. High score reflects higher sense of identity.

**Identity Style Inventory-V.** ISI-V (Berzonsky et al. 2013) was used in the study for concurrent validity for this purpose permission from the author was obtained. ISI-V was the 4 point Likert scale where 0 stands for "Never" and 3 stands for "Often" comprising three distinct identity Informative Style, Normative Style and Diffuse Avoidant Style with each consist 9 items.

**School Children’s Problem Scale** To measure discriminant validity of the Identity Scale for Adolescents (ISA), SCPS was used. It is a self-report measure consists of 44 items problem expressed and experienced by school children. It is 4 point rating scale (0-3) was used to rate each problem options like “Never, Rarely, Sometimes, and often. SCPS comprised six factors namely, Anxiousness, Academic Problems, Aggression, Social Withdrawal, Feelings of Rejection and Psychosomatic Problems. SCPS was found to have acceptable psychometric properties (for more details see Saleem & Mahmood, 2011).

**Procedure**

For the data collection total eight schools four Government and four private schools of Lahore were visited for permission of the data collection. In order to seek the permission ethical considerations were explained to the authoritative person. From eight schools six schools four government and two private allowed the data collection for the current study. Before collecting the data, all participants assured about the ethical considerations like their information was only used for research purposes and all the information a=would be kept confidential. All participants were assured about the anonymity and give the right to withdraw from research at any time. All participants were tested in small groups averaging 25 each. All participants were given the final protocol comprised a demographic form, ISA, ISI.V and SCPS. A deferring session was also carried out.

**Results**

The cross-validation procedure was used to determine the factorial structure of ISA by splitting the data into two halves for exploratory and confirmatory analysis. The first half( $n =200$ ) of the data was used for exploratory factor analysis and second half ( $n=200$ ) was used for confirmatory analysis. Exploratory factor analysis was carried out using principal axis factoring with varimax rotation to obtain an undying clear factor structure of ISA. Scree plot was used to determine number of items A three factor solution was retained that gave a clearer factor structure with less dubious items. All those items having factor loading of .40 or above were retained (Kline, 1993).A total 30 items comprised the final scale. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value for sample adequacy was.83 and the Bartlett test for Sphericity were also found significant ( $p < .001$ ).

**Table 1**

*Factor Structure of Identity Scale for Adolescents (ISA) with Varimax Rotation*

Items	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Items	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III
1	<b>.44</b>	.02	-.01	29	<b>.41</b>	.08	-.12
9	<b>.47</b>	.21	.11	2	.19	<b>.43</b>	.11
10	<b>.48</b>	-.14	-.07	3	-.08	<b>.64</b>	.06
11	<b>.44</b>	-.14	-.14	4	.03	<b>.57</b>	.11
12	<b>.53</b>	-.11	-.24	5	.04	<b>.52</b>	.20
14	<b>.44</b>	-.25	.04	6	-.23	<b>.42</b>	.09
16	<b>.50</b>	-.05	-.09	7	-.14	<b>.46</b>	.22
19	<b>.41</b>	-.05	.09	8	-.06	<b>.49</b>	.07
20	<b>.57</b>	-.02	-.05	13	.13	.07	<b>.45</b>
21	<b>.41</b>	-.13	-.29	15	-.17	.24	<b>.40</b>
22	<b>.40</b>	-.10	-.22	17	-.14	.04	<b>.54</b>
23	<b>.52</b>	.01	-.33	18	-.04	.05	<b>.60</b>
24	<b>.47</b>	.03	-.11	25	-.08	-.03	<b>.41</b>
26	<b>.47</b>	-.06	.09	28	.09	-.03	<b>.45</b>

27	<b>.45</b>	.11	.01	30	-.05	.25	<b>.42</b>
Eigen Value	3.98	7.68	7.38	Cum %	12.25	20.93	28.31

Note: factor loadings > .40 have been boldfaced and scoring polarity was reversed of all those items with negative loading

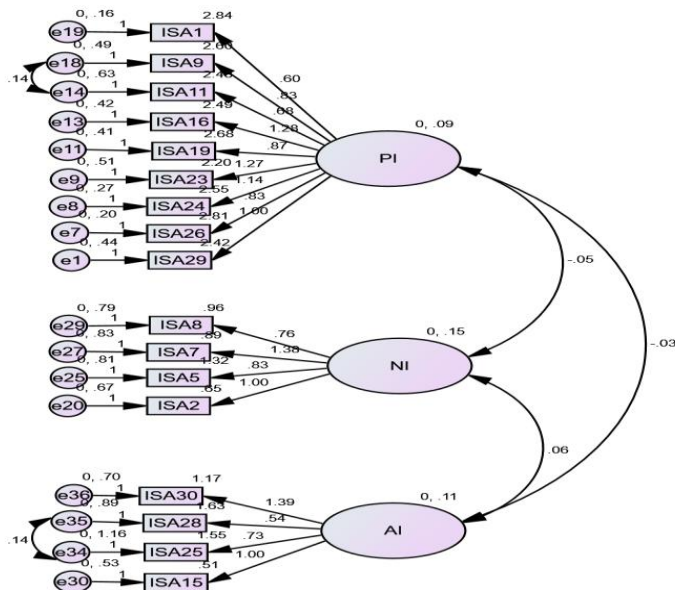
**Factor Description**

In exploratory factor the first factor comprising 16 items related to positive self-image and termed as *Positive Self-Identity*. Examples included being sociable, being respectful, being courageous, optimistic, committed and so on. The second factor comprising 7 items related to *Negative self-Identity*. Sample items of this factor included lack of initiative, inability to communicate, lack of confidence, over-dependence, over-dependence and being indecisive. The third factor denotes to *Arrogant Self-Identity* and sample items include egoistic, feeling superior, controlling and so on.

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

With data from the second half-sample, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in AMOS, to determine whether the results from the EFA were replicated. The first factor resulted into 9 items, second and third factors comprised 4 factors each. The results showed that the chi-square/degrees of freedom index was 187.92. The CFI (Comparative Fit Index) shows a value of .87; the TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index) gives a value of .83, which is a moderately good explanation of the covariance matrix. Similarly, the RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) show values of .04. Therefore, the data showed a *moderately* fit of the theoretical model to empirical data on Identity Scale of Adolescents (ISA).

**Figure 1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis**



**Psychometric Properties of ISA**

**Validity.** ISA has a significant correlation with total score of SCPS (Table 2) indicating the reasonably satisfactory discriminant validity. Also the Cronbach’s Alpha showing that scale is found to have high internal consistency. In order to establish concurrent validity of the ISA, ISA-V was used. Results indicated that significant correlation was found between the factors of both scales (Table 2).

**Reliability.** Split half reliability was established indicating  $r=.73$ . Test retest reliability was also established. A sample of 50 participants was retested with one week interval. Test-retest reliability of ISA showed  $r=.84$  ( $p<0.001$ ) indicating very highly significant test retest reliability.

**Concurrent and Discriminant validity of the Identity Scale for Adolescents**

Table 2

*Summary of Inter Correlation, Means, and Standard Deviations for Scores on ISA and factors of SCPS*

Factors	1	2	3	DAS	IS	NS	SCPS- Total
1 Positive Self-Identity	---	-.24**	-.30***	.04	.39***	.16*	-.33***
2 Negative Self-Identity	---	---	-.29**	.21**	-.15*	-.04	.61***
3 Arrogant Self-Identity	---	---	---	.06	-.06	.01	.31***
DAS	---	---	---	---	.41***	.31***	---
IS	---	---	---	---	---	.33***	---
NS	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
SCPS-Total	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
<i>M</i>	51.98	12.12	9.37	14.66	18.29	15.56	45.49
<i>SD</i>	6.74	5.63	4.35	3.52	4.74	3.50	19.98
<i>A</i>	.81	.79	.76	.71	.64	.69	.91

Note. DAS= Diffuse Avoidant Style, IS=Informative Style, NS=Normative Style, SCPS=School Children Problems Scale

\* $p<.05$ , \*\*  $p<.01$ , \*\*\* $p<.001$

Table 2 reveals that ISA found to have significant correlation with ISI-V showing high concurrent validity. Table 2 further reveals that Negative Self-Identity, and Arrogant Self-Identity has significant high positive correlation with SCPS and there were high negative correlation between Positive Self-Identity indicating that ISA has significant discriminant validity.

**Gender and Identity Scale for Adolescents factors**

Table 3

*Means, Standard Deviations *t* and *p*- values of Boys and Girls on Three Factors Score on ISA*

Scales	Boys <i>n</i> =206		Girls <i>n</i> =194		<i>t</i> (398)	95%CI		Cohn’s <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
Positive	51.66	7.21	50.52	6.85	1.62	-.24	2.52	.16
Negative	21.61	7.36	21.73	8.65	.15	-1.62	1.47	.01
Arrogant	13.73	4.41	10.42	4.34	2.98***	.82	2.51	.76

*df* = 398, \*\*\* $p<0.001$

Table 3 boys and girls were found significantly different on Arrogant Self-Identity. Boys scored significantly higher than girls. No significant difference was found between boys and girls on Positive and negative self-identity.

### Discussion

Identity formation has been an important developmental task of adolescents. Identity help an individual to define his self, place oneself in a world that is full of challenges and ever changing demands. A great deal of value is attached with identity that brings positive outcomes in an individual's life. Besides, the fact that identity brings a new meaning and distinct identification of an individual, the concept remains complex and debatable. Identity is not always a conscious deliberate, attempt to determine, define and understand oneself as some achieve it as a conflict resolution like ethnic and social differences. There are number of theoretical and practical issues involved that make the measurement and assessment of the concept of the identity even more difficult. One of the challenges are the narrowness in the definition of the concept of identity. Many researchers have been extensive studied identity with reference to Marcia's (1968) conceptualization of identity paradigm in which the four combinations of exploration and commitment have been used. Schwartz (2001), highlighted that this paradigm largely ignores the contextual influence on identity which Erikson (1968) himself emphasized in terms of Ego, Personal and Social Identity. Still others explain identity in terms of ethnic identity by using Erikson's social identity model (Phinney, 1990). This ethnic identity conceptualization emphasis that national affiliation sometimes over rules individual's self-identity. Therefore, they tend to interact with social world through their ethnic belongingness. Marcia's conceptualization of identity, on the other hand, largely ignores the social and cultural influence on the development and formation of identity.

Keeping in view the limitations in the operationalization of the construct of identity, the current research used Erikson's conceptualization; a holistic approach to define identity was used. Identity was defined as a unique configuration of attributes with which one describes the self". A phenomenological approach was used to elicit the attributes of identity from the adolescents. Results revealed a three factor solution namely Positive Identity, Negative Identity and Arrogant Identity. Positive Identity comprised a positive evaluation of individual's attributes and also the person values those attributes, where an individual has a sense of worthiness. This identity helps an individual to explain the personal characteristics with relation to positive communication, valuing others around and seeking social approval from others. This positive evaluation about the self is consistent with the self-identity of Erikson (1968). According to Erikson, this aspect of self is describe as a social representation of the personal values, aspirations and attributes. If we look at the relationship of Positive identity with emotional behavioral problems, an inverse relationship indicates that it guards an individual against the emotional and social pressures of the adolescent years. These findings also indicates that Positive Identity may serve a role of protective factor against mental health problems (McMahon & Watts, 2002).

The second factor denotes to the Negative identity where an individual tend to negatively evaluates himself or herself that results into a lack of self –worth and self -respect. In this type of identity, individual lacks social skills, unable to handle others, inability to take initiatives and tend to feel inferior with relation to others. This type of identity marks itself a great sense or worthlessness and a significant positive correlation with emotional and behavioral problems shows that negative self-identity becomes a risk factor for growing individual for mental health concerns. The last factor emerged was an Arrogant Self-Identity, where an individual overly and superficially evaluates himself without necessarily having valuable attributes. This type of identity seems an over compensation and defense against the storm and stress of adolescence age. The Arrogant self-identity encompasses pseudo self- worth. This may play a role of a guard against the crisis individual faces in terms of existence with relation to expanding and challenging emotional and social world. It is also very



important to note that there is a clear and subtle difference exists in Negative and Arrogant Self Identity. Negative Self Identity is the one where an individual might have competencies and abilities yet unable to give value and to those abilities and unable to utilize them completely. Arrogant Self-Identity on the other hand denotes to only positive self-evaluation where individual might not have those abilities and skills.

The results of the current research further shows that ISA was found to have acceptable level of psychometric properties. The Cronbach Alpha is acceptable for three subscales. ISA further found to have good test-retest reliability indicating that identity is relatively a stable phenomenon. The concurrent validity was established by using Identity Style Inventory (ISI-V Berzonsky et al, 2013). The results indicate that Positive Identity has a positive correlation with Informative Style. This shows that an adolescent with Positive Identity tend to indulge more in multiple choices to resolve identity related decisions. Negative identity was found to be associated with Diffuse Avoidant Identity.

As far as the gender differences are concerned, only difference exists in arrogant self-identity where boys scored higher than girls. This may be because, in typical collectivistic culture which is a male dominant society boys have more social demands and responsibilities, therefore in order to cope with external challenges and gain conformity from social world, and they might show arrogant tendencies. Yet, it is interesting to note that arrogant identity is found to have a positive relationship with the mental health problems of adolescents. It may be because arrogant identity may protect for short time but in the long run it may create a dissonance for an individual between real self and deal self.

### **Limitations and Future Suggestions**

The findings of the current study reveal that Identity Scale for Adolescents is found to be psychometrically sound measure. Yet the results of the present study should be interpreted in the light of some limitations. The current study focused only on urbanized sample of adolescents. In future, rural and marginalized populations should also be taken into account for future research.

Despite these limitations, the current paper is an attempt to resolve the mystery of identity in a collectivistic cultural perspective where family cohesion, conformity to others given more importance than the individual. We have used a cohesive, holistic and functional approach to define and describe identity. Following a rigorous and systematic procedure of scale development, three distinct types of identity has been identified through exploratory factor analysis and confirmed through confirmatory factor analysis. It is also important to note that individual identity may be universal but culture influence the experience and expression of identity and it does have differential impact on the mental health functioning of an individual.

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Received: Feb 12, 2018

Revisions Received: July 20, 2019