Identity Crisis among Adolescents in India: A Study

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Abstract

Adolescent is a period of growth and development between childhood to adulthood. It is a phase of rapid development of physical, emotional, social development and mental functions such as abstract and concrete thinking, decision making and problem-solving skills, creativity is also developed fully during this adolescent period. But in some point of life adolescents passes through different stages and got stuck of their own identity and arise the confusion which termed as Identity Crisis or Role Confusion. Identity crisis means an identity to identify one's self or personality and one's social role how an individual performs in the society. Role confusion can also be said as personal, psychological and social conflict which occurs by different factors. To overcome various factors, there should have a proper guidance, open communication with the parents, teachers and dear ones. So that an individual would not find confusion about one's self. In this research paper the researcher will discuss the fifth stage of Identity Crisis or Role Confusion of psychosocial development given by Erik Erikson and how role confusion arises in human being's life and what are the solution to overcome role confusion and become a healthy personality. The data is collected through secondary sources i.e., research paper, article, thesis, journal, books etc.

Key words: Role Confusion, Identity Crisis, Adolescence

1.1. Introduction

The concept of Identity Crisis vs. Role Confusion has given by Erik Erikson in his eight Stages of Psychosocial Development. The eight stages are Trust vs. Mistrust (0-1½), Autonomy vs. Shame (1½-3), Initiative vs. Guilt (3-5), Industry vs. Inferiority (5-12), Identity vs. Role Confusion (12-18), Intimacy vs. Isolation (18-40), Generativity vs. Stagnation (40-65) and Ego Integrity vs Despair (65+) which starts from infancy to adulthood.

Erik Erikson describes that human being experiences psychosocial crisis during his life and give a positive and negative effect for personality development. Erikson (1958, 1963), these crises are of a psychosocial nature because they involve psychological needs of the individual conflicting with the needs of society. According to Erikson, successfully completion of eight stages of psychosocial development leads to healthy personality and also can acquire the basic virtues. But, failure to successfully completion of eight stages of psychosocial development leads to unhealthy personality.

Identity Crisis or Role Confusion starts from the age of 12-18 years which is also known as adolescence period. Adolescence is a period of growth and development between childhood and adulthood. During this stage, adolescence faces identity crisis of sense of self, personal identity, unsure about who they are, where they fit, feeling disappointed, confused, lack of confidence and difficulties with commitment etc. According to Erikson, the main social task of the adolescent is the search for a unique identity, the ability to answer the question "Who am I?" In the search for identity, the adolescent may experience role confusion in which he or she is balancing or choosing among identities, taking on negative or undesirable identities, or temporarily giving up looking for an identity altogether if things are not going well. Role confusion in adolescents means confused or insecure about themselves and feeling of how to fit themselves into society. Adolescents also try to understand and invent who they are by testing out different versions of themselves in different social situations. They struggle with the questions like "Who am I? What career do I want? What do I believe in? How should I dress today? Whom will I hang out with**?**" The questions include regarding their appearance, relationships, sexuality, political and social views, personality, interests, vocational choices, career aspirations and education**.** Identity crisis of adolescents is a developmental event where they question about their sense of self or place in the universe. Adolescent begins to develop and explores greater autonomy, make own choices about their career, values, beliefs, and goals**.** Self-confidence is occurred when a person belief in themselves and act on beliefs and experiences gained through by facing and overcoming new challenges of life**.** when an adolescent is not competent, cannot able to manage and struggle with feelings of identity then role confusion occurs. (Sokol, 2009), "the individual experiences extreme doubt regarding the meaning and purpose of their existence, leading to a sense of loss and confusion". During this stage of identity vs role confusion, adolescents become more curious to know about the world around them and ask many questions to their parents and sometimes parents may also feel lack of ability to command their child and also, they question to their parents repeatedly with "Why? Why? Why?". After being questioning repeatedly by their children, parents become frustrated and answer them in a rude way and go through various confusion

and adolescents do whatever they want. Adolescents may experience role confusion at various points in life which may cause due to getting divorced or separated of their parents, beginning of a new relationship, experiencing a traumatic event, losing a loved one, health issues etc. In India, the process of identity formation among adolescents is influenced by cultural, social, and familial factors. According to Bhatia (2018), adolescents often navigate between traditional Indian values and global influences, which can lead to conflicts and identity crises. The complex cultural landscape of India significantly impacts adolescent identity formation. Mishra and Mohanty (2019) argue that rapid socio-economic changes, coupled with diverse cultural practices across regions, pose challenges to adolescents in constructing their identities. Family dynamics play a crucial role in shaping adolescent identity. According to Patel (2020), the intergenerational conflict and changing family structures in urban India contribute significantly to identity crises among adolescents.

1.2. Significance of the study

Identity crisis among adolescents in India holds significant implications for various stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, psychologists, counsellors and parents. This study aims to contribute valuable insights by identifying the factors contributing to identity crises, this study can also inform educators about the specific needs of adolescents in terms of cultural sensitivity and psychological support (Smith & Jones, 2021). The study can guide policymakers in developing interventions that address identity-related issues among adolescents, thus promoting mental well-being and social harmony (Brown et al., 2019). The study can also assist parents in understanding the challenges their children face in identity formation, enabling them to provide appropriate support and guidance during this crucial developmental stage (Robinson & White, 2018). This research will help to understand how cultural, social and familial influences shape adolescent identity formation. By addressing these issues, it can promote mental health, social integration and overall well-being among Indian youth.

1.3. Objectives
1.   To explore why adolescents faces identity crisis or role confusion.
2.   To identify the different factors and solution to overcome role confusion.

1.4. Research method used in this study

In this study, an internet-based research method was adopted to achieve its aims. The research design involves gathering and analysing information available on the internet, including academic databases, websites, online journals and other digital repositories.

2.1. Analysis and findings of the study

Objectives 1: To explore why adolescents faces identity crisis or role confusion.

Adolescents often face identity crisis or role confusion as they navigate the transition from childhood to adulthood. This concept was notably explored by Erik Erikson, a prominent developmental psychologist. Erikson proposed that during adolescence, individuals undergo a psychosocial stage characterized by the conflict between identity versus role confusion. According to Erikson's theory, adolescents strive to establish a sense of personal identity while struggling with various social roles and expectations. This period is marked by intense exploration and experimentation in different roles, values, and beliefs, which can lead to confusion and uncertainty about one's self-concept and future direction. Erikson believed that successfully resolving this identity crisis involves integrating various personal experiences, values and roles into a cohesive sense of self. Failure to do so may result in ongoing identity confusion and difficulty in forming meaningful relationships and commitments. As, adolescents face identity crisis or role confusion because they are in a critical stage of development where they are exploring and defining their personal identities amidst societal expectations and influences.

Objectives 2: To identify the different factors and solution to overcome role confusion.

Factors affecting identity crisis

Identity Crisis is affected by various internal and external factors. Some of the factors are as follows-

i.   **Society:** Society plays a major role in building a nation. Our identity is speculated even before we born in the society either positively or negatively. Some of the factors where adolescents find confused about their role are peer groups, bullying, academic problems, drug use, depression, social media, digital communication etc. During, adolescent period peers usually have a close relationship with their friends whom they trust more than parents. Adolescents get attracted more in unwanted things and spending much

time in social media where they cannot define which is right or wrong. Today, people mostly experience FOMO i.e., Fear of missing out. Due to all this reason adult cannot decide the right path and they got confused.

ii.   **Culture:** Culture may affect the life of the individuals. Culture defines the societal norms, belief system, social responsibility and also culture can be learned. Individuals belongs from different culture identifies their personality, attitude, their living style and interaction with different cultures makes an individual understand and develop their belief system. Due to different cultural norms, an individual believed that their passion of what he thinks to be is wrong and develop role confusion.

iii.   **Family:** Family plays an important role in developing child's personality. A family can help a child to establish an identity and shape the future. They are often the first people that a child interacts with and learn from. Sometimes, due to strict rules and regulations of the family, adolescents find most difficult to choose their passion. A supportive and nurturing family environment can boost confidence and self-esteem, providing a strong foundation for personal growth and identity development. On the other hand, a family environment that lacks support, is overly critical, or imposes unrealistic expectations can hinder a person's self-confidence. Negative experiences within the family, such as conflicts, neglect or abuse, can profoundly impact how individuals see themselves and their place in the world. These early experiences with family members can shape our perceptions of ourselves and others, influencing our ability to form a stable and positive identity.

iv.   **Parental attitude:** Parents are the backbone of every child; some parents parental attitude may affect the children identity. Due to differentiation of the job role like higher and lower job, prestige of family, maintaining the status of parents etc, all this factor affects the identity of a child. That type of child who cannot fulfil their dream may find very aggressive towards their parents, hate their parents and find difficulty to adjust in their life.

v.   **Peers:** Peers play a great role in an adolescent life both in a positive or negative way. Peers may help their friends not to be confused in choosing what they want to be in life the most, they encourage them not to be confused related to their goal. But sometimes peers demotivate their friends, make feel that they cannot fulfil their gaols, also often tease them for all this reasons adolescent finds difficult to express what actually they want to be.

vi.   **Lack of confidence:** Confidence is one of the powerful tools of an individual's life. Confidence helps an individual to perform anything in life. A lack of confidence can lead to an identity crisis because individuals who don't believe in themselves often struggle to make decisions and doubt their own abilities.

This indecision and self-doubt make it hard to set goals or pursue ambitions, as they may fear failure or not feel capable of succeeding. Additionally, low confidence can cause insecurity in social situations, making it difficult to form and maintain relationships that are crucial for building a sense of identity. This constant feeling of not being sure about themselves and lacking confidence stops people from figuring out clearly who they are, which can cause an identity crisis.

vii. **Negative attitude:** A negative attitude can significantly impact one's identity. According to research, individuals with a negative outlook on life often experience a greater degree of self-doubt and uncertainty about their place in the world (Erikson, 1968). This negativity can come from various sources such as personal failures, traumatic experiences or always being around negative people living in the society. When a person always experience negativity can lower self-confidence and a sense of purpose, making it difficult to establish a strong and positive identity.

viii. **Doubtful in selecting vacation:** Choosing a career is very important aspect for figuring out own identity formation. Erikson (1968) says that what job a person pick is a big part of adult identity. If a person is unsure or can't decide on a career, he might feel confused about who they are for a long time. This doubt may arise from a lack of clear interests, conflicting advice from influential figures or societal pressures to choose a certain path. This uncertainty can stop a person from settling on a career and they remain unsettled.

ix. **Social networking sites:** Social networking sites (SNS) strongly influence how young people see themselves. Studies show that the perfect-looking lives shown on these platforms can make people compare themselves and feel bad about who they are (Vogel et al., 2014). The pressure of young children to be like the online images and the fear of missing out (FOMO) can cause people to feel confused about their true identity, as they struggle to match their online persona with their real-life experiences.

x. **Information and communication technology:** The rise of information and communication technology (ICT) has both positive and negative impacts on identity formation. On the positive side, ICT provides access to lots of information and different communities, allowing individuals to explore diverse aspects of their identity. On the other hand, the overwhelming amount of information and constant connectivity can lead to information overload and decision paralysis (Turkle, 2011). The digital world can sometimes make it hard to think deeply about own selves because adults are always distracted by things happening around.

Suggestions to cope up with identity crisis

i.   **Read books:** Reading books as a strategy to cope with an identity crisis. It involves engaging with literature in a deliberate and thoughtful manner to gain insights, perspectives and knowledge that can aid in self-discovery and understanding. Books offer a vast repository of narratives, experiences and ideas that can resonate with and illuminate aspects of one's own identity. They provide an opportunity to explore different identities, cultures and human experiences, which can be particularly valuable when questioning or redefining one's sense of self.

ii. **Set goals:** Setting goals is an important decision when an individual feel unsure about who they are or where they are heading. Goals give an individual something to aim for and a clear path to follow during the time of confusion. They help to focus on what is important for an individual and what they want to achieve. Whether learning new things, building relationships or exploring different parts of oneself. Every individual must have some goals in their life so that it can help to make progress and feel good about what they are doing. When an individual reach the goals, it feels like he accomplished something meaningful and boost more confidence in life. Overall, setting goals helps to figure out who an individual want to be and gives the right direction and motivation to get there.

iii. **Seeking support**: Strong family and social support make an individual mentally healthy person. Seeking support means asking for help whom a person trust, like family, friends or a counsellor. It is important when an individual going through a tough time or feeling confused about oneself, getting support can make things clearer and give them someone to talk to who can listen and understand. It is like having someone on the team to help him figure things out. Therefore, an individual or a person always seek support when they got confused about their role.

iv. **Strong commitment:** Strong commitment means being dedicated and determined to stick with something even when it is challenging. It is about making a promise to oneself to keep going, no matter what obstacles a person may face. When an individual has a strong commitment, he stays focused on the goals and push through challenges with determination and persistence. It is all about a mindset that helps to stay focused and motivated, no matter what obstacles come on the way.

v.   **Explore yourself:** A person must explore oneself; it means taking the time to learn about who you are as a person, your interests, strengths, weaknesses and what makes you unique. It involves asking questions like what you enjoy doing, what makes you happy and what values are important to you. By exploring oneself, a person can gain a better understanding of own identity and understand what matter is more important in life.

vi. **Explore your interest field:** Every individual must explore their field of interest that means trying out different things that may find interesting or enjoyable. It is about discovering new hobbies, activities or subjects that grab the attention and make an individual what they want to learn more. When an individual explores their field of interest, he might find passions that didn't know he had and learn more about what makes him excited and engaged.

vii. **Accept feelings**: Every social being has emotions and feelings. Some people find difficult to express and some doesn't. Accepting feelings means acknowledging and allowing oneself to experience emotions without judging them as good or bad. It is about being okay with whatever he or she feels, whether it is happiness, sadness, anger or confusion. Accepting the feelings helps a person understand oneself better and can lead to more peace of mind and emotional well-being.

viii. **Mental health:** Mental health refers to how a person feel and think and how to handle different situations in life. It is about staying emotionally balanced and coping well with stress and challenges. When a person mental health is good, he feels confident, enjoy things to do and can handle any difficult times more easily. Taking care of mental health is just as important as taking care of physical health. It helps a person to live a happier and more fulfilling life.

ix. **Make decision:** To make a decision means choosing what a person want to do or how he wants to handle a situation. It is about picking between different options and taking responsibility for the choice he makes. When a person makes a decision, he decide on a course of action that what he think is best or right for him at that time. Making decisions helps a person to take control of his life and move forward towards his goals.

x. **Strong sense of self:** Having a strong sense of self means knowing about oneself as a person. It is about understanding the values, beliefs, strengths and weaknesses. When a person has a strong sense of self, he feels confident in the decisions and actions. This self-awareness helps a person to make choices that align with the values and goals and navigate relationships and challenges with authenticity and resilience.

3.1. Conclusion

The study of identity crisis among adolescents in India shows that their sense of self is shaped by many different cultural, social and psychological factors. It highlights the importance of understanding the unique

challenges face by young people as they grow up in a rapidly changing world. The findings of the studsy revealed that traditional family values in Indian society, combined with modern influences and globalization, create a complex identity crisis. Adolescents often struggle between meeting family expectations and pursuing their own dreams, leading to internal conflicts and stress. Education, friends and media also play important roles, often make the identity crisis worse. This crisis can have serious psychological effects, causing higher levels of anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. The study emphasizes the need for support, such as counselling and mental health services, to help adolescents develop a healthy sense of identity.

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