

# Turkish Emerging Adults' Identity Statuses with respect to Marital and Parental Statuses and SES

Sevgi Birsnel Nemlioğlu, Hasan Atak

**Abstract**—Emerging adulthood, between the ages of 18 and 25, as a new developmental stage extending from adolescence to young adulthood. According to Arnett [2004], there are experiments related to identity in three basic fields which are love, work and view of the world in emerging adulthood. When the literature related to identity is examined, it is seen that identity has been studied more with adolescent, and studies were concentrated on the relationship of identity with many demographic variables neglecting important variables such as marital status, parental status and SES. Thus, the main aim of this study is to determine whether identity statuses differentiate with marital status, parental status and SES. A total of 700 emerging adults participated in this study, and the mean age was 22,45 years [SD = 3.76]. The sample was made up of 347 female and 353 male. All participants in the study were students from colleges. Student responses to the Extended Version of the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status [EOM-EIS-2] used to classify students into one of the four identity statuses. SPSS 15.00 program was used to analyse data. Percentage, frequency and X<sup>2</sup> analysis were used in the analysis of data. When the findings of the study is viewed as a whole, the most frequently observed identity status in the group is found to be moratorium. Also, identity statuses differentiate with marital status, parental status and SES. Findings were discussed in the context of emerging adulthood.

**Keywords**—Identity statuses, Emerging adulthood, Turkey.

## I. INTRODUCTION

HUMAN beings change and develop continuously throughout their life. One of the periods that these changes occur is the adolescent period. It has been assumed that the basic characteristic that needs to be gained during adolescent is “identity acquisition”. The question “Who am I?” is asked over and over throughout adolescent period. Adolescents who make functional decisions related to this question start to integrate previous experiences with an identity. Adolescents who cannot make functional decisions face dealing with questions such as “Who am I?”, “What do I expect from life?” [1]. However, developmental psychology research done in recent years show that although identity development starts at adolescent, it becomes dense at

emerging adulthood which is the beginning of twenties and middle of twenties [2]. Since love, work and worldview of life are seen as the most basic elements [3], it is necessary to evaluate identity exploration process in terms of love, work and worldview of life. In this context, it is seen that identity development research have been conducted more in emerging adults than in adolescents.

Marcia [4] and Berzonsky [5] tried to extend Erikson's view of identity development. Marcia [1966] proposed four identity statuses of Diffusion identity, Foreclosure identity, Identity Achievement identity and moratorium. Diffusion identity [low exploration, high involvement] represents disinterest with identity matters; Foreclosure identity [low exploration, high involvement] represents consistency and compliance in identity formation; successful identity [high exploration, high involvement] represents formation of a consistent identity which contains various parts; and moratorium [high exploration, low involvement] represents a powerful search for identity. Successful identity and Diffusion identity represent Erikson's identity chaos against identity.

When research in Turkey and abroad are examined; it is seen that the relationship of age, SES and gender with identity development are the most researched demographic variables. It can be concluded from the findings of research that the feeling of identity develops toward a more integrated structure with ageing. When viewed from gender terms, male and female follow similar identity development processes. In terms of research on relationship of family and socio-cultural environment with identity, there are higher number of research showing that environment in which the individual grows up, family, social structures and culture are important variables that affect identity development. In the research examining relationships between family quality and identity statuses, results related to the education of parents are inconsistent. The subject of identity has been considered together with many other variables such as drug use, orientation, suicide, weight problems and intimacy. There is little research done on identity, and there is no research on the relationship between identity statuses and marital status, parental status, SES and work status. Thus, this study aims at examining whether identity statuses change with marital status, parental status, SES and work status. Following hypotheses were constructed;

- a. There is a significant difference between identity statuses and marital status.

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- b. There is a significant difference between identity statuses and parental status.
- c. There is a significant difference between identity statuses and SES.

## II. METHOD

### A. Procedure and Participants

A total of 700 emerging adults participated in this study, and the mean age was 22,45 years [ $SD = 3.76$ ]. The sample was made up of 347 female and 353 male. All participants in the study were students from colleges. Participation was voluntary and anonymous; only the ID number of each participant was recorded in order to be able to provide the participants with the results of their questionnaires. Questionnaires lacking a response or that having more than one response marked were eliminated.

This study examines how demographic factors influence emerging adults identity statuses. All the inventories that had items with no response or more than one response to the same item were rejected. Participants were ensured of confidentiality. Questionnaires were presented by a single researcher in counter balanced order to classes of undergraduates. Administration lasted about 40 minutes for the undergraduate students. SPSS 15.00 program was used to analyse data. Percentage, frequency and  $X^2$  analysis were used in the analysis of data.

### B. Instrument

Extended Version of the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status [EOMEIS-2]. The EOM-EIS-2 which was developed by Grotevant and Adams [6], and validated into Turkish Culture by Eryüksel and Varan [7] was used to classify emerging adults into one of the four identity statuses. The scale consisted of 64 items measuring the presence or absence of crisis and commitment in both the Ideological Domain and the Interpersonal Domain via a six point Likert-type response format. The Turkish version of the EOM-EIS-2 has reliability estimates between .64 and .89 for the high school sample [Varan, 1990] and above .84 for undergraduate students [Eryüksel, 1987].

## III. RESULTS

In this section, findings and discussions obtained from the study are presented.

First, identity diffusion among the group is presented. According to the results of the analysis, 8.4% of the group is in Diffusion identity status, 27.4% is in Foreclosure, 50.6% Moratorium, and 13.6% were in Identity Achievement status. Identity diffusion among the group is shown in the Table-1 below.

In the group, the most frequently observed identity status was Moratorium, and second was Foreclosure status. The least frequently observed identity status within the group was found as Diffusion identity status. Below, identity diffusion according to marital status and whether they differentiate are presented.

TABLE 1. IDENTITY STATUSES AMONG THE GROUP [N=700]

Identity Status	N	%
Diffusion	59	8.4
Foreclosure	192	27.4
Moratorium	354	50.6
Identity Achievement	95	13.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>100</b>

It was found in  $X^2$  analysis that identity statuses differ according to marital status [65,87,  $p < .001$ ]. As seen in Table-2, the most observed status was moratorium in both married and single participants, whereas the least observed identity status in single participants was Identity Achievement, and the least observed identity status in married participants was

TABLE II IDENTITY STATUSES ACCORDING TO MARITAL STATUS

		STATUS			
		Diffusion	Foreclosure	Moratorium	Identity Achievement
Single	Count	53	168	277	45
	%	9.8%	30.9%	51.0%	8.3%
Married	Count	6	24	77	50
	%	3.8%	15.3%	49.0%	31.8%
Total	Count	59	192	354	95
	%	8.4%	27.4%	50.6%	13.6%

Diffusion identity status. While the second most observed identity status in married participants was Identity Achievement identity status, the second most observed identity status in single participants was Foreclosure identity status.

Below, identity diffusion according to parental status and whether they differentiate are presented.

It was found in  $X^2$  analysis that identity statuses differ according to parental status [ $X^2=21,93, p < .001$ ]. As seen in Table-3, the most frequently observed status in both parents and non-parents was moratorium, whereas the least frequently observed status in both groups was Diffusion identity status. While the second most frequently observed identity status in parent participants was Foreclosure identity status, second

most frequently observed identity status in non-parent participants was Identity Achievement.

Below, identity diffusion according to SES and whether they differentiate or not are presented.

In the results of X<sup>2</sup> analysis, it was found that identity statuses differ according to SES [X<sup>2</sup> = 49,66, p < .001]. As seen in Table-4, the most frequently observed status in all three SES was moratorium, whereas the second most frequently observed status in medium and high SES both groups was Foreclosure identity status; and in low SES, the second most frequently observed status was Identity Achievement identity status. While the least frequently observed identity status in low SES was Diffusion identity status, the least frequently observed identity status in medium and high SES was Identity Achievement identity status.

TABLE III IDENTITY STATUSES ACCORDING TO PARENTAL STATUS

		STATUS				
		Diffusion	Foreclosure	Moratorium	Identity Achievement	
<b>Parental Status</b>	<b>Yes</b>	Count	51	168	288	62
		%	9.0%	29.5%	50.6%	10.9%
	<b>No</b>	Count	8	24	66	33
		%	6.1%	18.3%	50.4%	25.2%
<b>Total</b>	Count	59	192	354	95	
	%	8.4%	27.4%	50.6%	13.6%	

When the findings of the study are examined, it can be seen that the most frequently observed identity status in the group was moratorium. Also, identity diffusion change according to marital status, parental status and SES. Findings have been discussed in the following section.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

In this section, findings obtained as a result of the study have been discussed in the context of theoretical explanations and empirical studies.

When we look at the identity diffusion, the most frequently observed identity status is the Foreclosure identity status. The least observed identity status in the whole group is the Diffusion identity status. From the literature, it is seen that there are not any research examining the identity diffusion in the context of "emerging adulthood", but there are some studies examining the identity diffusion in adolescent and in university students. When those studies are examined, it is seen that the most frequently observed identity status is the Foreclosure identity status in both adolescent [8, 9] and in university years [10, 11]. Also, from the examination of these research, it is seen that there are studies showing that the

TABLE IV IDENTITY STATUSES ACCORDING TO SES

		STATUS			
		Diffusion	Foreclosure	Moratorium	Identity Achievement
<b>Low</b>	Count	22	52	135	66
	%	8.0%	18.9%	49.1%	24.0%
<b>Medium</b>	Count	25	94	157	21
	%	8.4%	31.6%	52.9%	7.1%
<b>High</b>	Count	12	46	62	8
	%	9.4%	35.9%	48.4%	6.3%
<b>Total</b>	Count	59	192	354	95
	%	8.4%	27.4%	50.6%	13.6%

least observed identity status in adolescent as Foreclosure identity status [8,9], and studies showing the least observed identity status as Diffusion identity status [12]. In the studies conducted with university students, identity diffusion are similar in general. In these studies, the most frequently observed identity status is the Moratorium identity status, whereas the second status is the Identity Achievement identity status. Similar to the studies conducted with adolescents, there are studies showing that the least frequently observed identity status in university students are Diffusion identity status [10, 11], and studies showing that the least frequently observed identity status is encumbered identity status [13]. Considering this information, it can be stated that this study is compatible with the literature.

When identity diffusion is examined, in the whole group, the most frequently observed identity status is Moratorium identity status in married and single participants, in both parent and non-parent participants, and all three SES. Among the possible reasons of these results one could be the characteristics of the period the participants were in.

In the theoretical explanations related to passing to adolescent [14] and in emerging adulthood theory [2], it has been suggested that individuals in emerging adulthood evaluate the choices in identity matters of love, work and view of the world, and do not have an absolute intimation until determining the most uygun for themselves and therefore they are in Moratorium identity status. Also, in these theoretical explanations and in Marcia's identity statuses approach, it has been suggested that individuals in Moratorium identity status would mostly pass to Identity Achievement identity status after experiencing new roles.

In whole group, Moratorium identity status being found as the most frequently observed identity status in single and married participants, in both parent and non-parent participants, and in all three SES could come from the measurement tool used to determine the identity statuses. As

mentioned in Methods section, when determining the identity status, if one of the four identity status points passes its cutting point and the other three remain below the cutting point, decision related to identity status is taken towards the identity status that passes the cutting point. Moratorium identity status in the results obtained by this method is accepted as “pure Moratorium”. Also, if the points a participant obtains from each of the four identity statuses are below their own cutting points, participant is accepted as in Moratorium identity status [7]. Group named as Moratorium by this method is named as low profile. When deciding statuses with EOMEIS-2, these two rules are considered together and therefore there are two approaches for Moratorium identity status. This increases the percentage of individuals of Moratorium identity status in the studies conducted. In this study, about half of the individuals of Moratorium identity status are from the group named as low profile. Thus, the reason for majority of the group being in Moratorium identity status could be because of the point of EOMEIS-2. Although distribution of identity statuses was found as explained above, it should be bare in mind that there is a continuous passing between identity statuses and identity statuses of individuals may change in time [15, 16].

According to the results of the study, identity statuses vary according to marital status, parental status and SES.

While the most frequently observed status in both single and married participants was moratorium, the least observed identity status in single participants was Identity Achievement, and the least observed identity status in married participants was Diffusion identity status. The second most frequently observed identity status in married participants was Identity Achievement identity status while the second most frequently observed identity status in single participants was Foreclosure identity status. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are no studies examining whether identity statuses in emerging adulthood period changes according to the marital status. Still, there are theoretical explanations to explain these results. For example, Arnett [2] suggests that there is experimenting period, in other words moratorium period, in three sub-field of identity of emerging adulthood. Marriage brings with it the feeling of responsibility, and this feeling can affect the direction of the identity formation. The reason for the least frequently observed status and the second least frequently observed status being Identity Achievement status might result from that. The least frequently observed status in single participants is Identity Achievement identity status. The main reason for that might be the age difference rather than the marital status. Age ortalamı of married participants are hagher than the single participants and there are findings in literature about changing of identity statuses towards Identity Achievement with ageing [17, 18, 19]. In this context, it can be stated that the findings related to of identity statuses of this study is compatible with the literature.

When the relationship between identity status and parental status is examined, the most frequently observed status in both parent and non-parent participants was moratorium, whereas the least observed identity status in both groups was Diffusion

identity status. The second most frequently observed identity status in parent participants was Foreclosure identity status while the second most frequently observed identity status in non-parents was Identity Achievement identity status. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are no studies examining whether identity statuses in emerging adulthood period changes according to the parental status. However, there are theoretical explanations related to the relationship between parenthood and identity development. For example, according to Bosma [20], main gain of being a parent is concentrating on somebody else and this situation may affect the direction of the identity formation. In this study, the second most frequently observed identity status in parent participants was Foreclosure identity status while the second most frequently observed identity status in non-parents was Identity Achievement identity status. The reason for this could be parents' feelings of “concentrating somebody else” towards their children, and this feeling might have changed the identity status from Identity Achievement to Foreclosure.

When the relationship between identity status and SES is examined, the most frequently observed status in all three SES was moratorium, whereas the second most observed identity status in medium and high SES was Foreclosure identity status, and in low SES it was Identity Achievement identity status. While the least observed identity status in low SES was Diffusion identity status, the least observed identity status in medium and high SES was Identity Achievement identity status.

When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are no studies examining the identity diffusion in terms of “emerging adulthood”, but there are studies examining the identity diffusion in adolescent. For example, according to Varan [21] examined whether identity statuses of adolescent change in terms of socio-economic level [SES] using Extended Version of the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status [EOMEIS-2]. According to the results of the study conducted with 638 adolescent, identity statuses vary according to SES. It was found that students at high socio-economic level are more at Identity Achievement identity status. However, the opposite of that findings was obtained in his study. For example, whereas the second most observed identity status was Identity Achievement, it was Foreclosure identity status in medium and high SES. When viewed as a whole, because the identity formation of participants from low SES were healthier than the others, it can be concluded that the results of this study is in reverse direction.

In this study, identity diffusion in emerging adulthood period, and relationships between identity statuses with marital status, parental status and SES. New studies could be conducted with both adolescents and emerging adults, and they could be comervative and multi-variable. Extended Version of the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status [EOMEIS-2] was used in this study to determine the identity statuses. Because of the problems this scale has with atama of individuals to statuses, other scales could be used in other studies.

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