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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### COMPARATIVE NORMATIVE STUDY OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN EGO IDENTITY STATUS OF ADOLESCENT STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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#### ABSTRACT

The current study seeks to investigate the gender differences in ego identity status of adolescents' students' in secondary schools in Enugu State. The normative survey design has been adopted for the present study. The population of the adolescents' students in secondary schools in the SSIII in the six education zones in Enugu State was 2,000. The samples of the study were 800 adolescents' students randomly selected from one education zone. The sample includes 410 boys and 390 girls. The ego identity scales was constructed by the researcher, and validated by experts. This scale includes four identity status namely, identity achievement, identity moratorium, identity diffusion and identity foreclosure. It consists of 40 items, 10 items in each identity status. It is a four point scale. The findings of the study indicate that the means scores of both boys and girls is very high in identity achievement rather than other statuses such as identity moratorium, identity foreclosure and identity diffusion it further indicates that the overall identity status of girls is higher than the boys. The boys and girls differ significantly only in the identity foreclosure and identity diffusion, they do not differ significantly in other states. The mean score of girls is higher than the boys with respect to identity foreclosure and identity diffusion.

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## INTRODUCTION

All schooling adolescents in senior secondary three (i.e. SSIII) are belongs to adolescence stage. Adolescence is a period of time to sum up one's past and current experience to arrive at a sense of identity, which in turn will guide one, future plans. According to Erikson (1968), asserts that identity as the central developmental task of adolescents and its resolutions set the social-cognitive structure of individuality. He viewed identity as a life-long process, and emphasized that the process has its normative crisis in adolescent with increasing cognitive capacities, physical maturation, and the imminence of taking on adult roles in society; adolescents are confronted with the task of searching for a meaningful sense of self. This task is called "identity crisis". It is a time of intensive analysis and exploration of different way of looking at oneself. It is a psychosocial state or condition of disorientation and role confusion occurring especially in adolescents as a result of conflicting internal and external experiences, pressures, and expectations and often producing acute anxiety among adolescents Students.

Erikson described identity as a subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some belief in the sameness and continuity of some shared world image. As a quality of unself-conscious living, this can be gloriously obvious in a young person (adolescents females and males) who has found himself or herself as he/she has found his/her communality. In him was see emerge a unique unification of what is irreversibly given-that is, body type and temperament, giftedness and vulnerability, infantile models and acquired ideals-with the open choices provided in available roles, occupational possibilities, values offered, mentors met, friendships made, and first sexual encounter (Erikson, 1970). Addressing Erikson's notion of identity crisis, Marcia posited that the adolescent stage consists neither of identity resolution nor identity confusion, but rather the degree to which one has explored and committed to an identity in a variety of life domains from vocation religion, relational choices, gender roles, and so on. Marcia's theory of identity achievement argues that two distinct parts from an adolescent's identity crisis (i.e. time when one's values and choices are being reevaluated) and commitment among adolescents students.

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He defined a crisis as a time of upheaval where old values of choices are being reexamined. The end outcome of a crisis leads to a commitment made to a certain role or value.

### What is Identity

Erikson adopted a psychosocial approach to understanding identity by describing the interplay between the individual biology, psychology, and social recognition and response within an historical context. He gave equal emphasis to these elements, also stressing the importance of historical context for their definition. Later theorists, however, have differentially emphasized these particular elements both in defining identity and in researching its parameters: Historical, structural stage, socio cultural, and narrative models have all offered alternative to a psychosocial definition of identity. These approaches, respectively, emphasize the overarching role of historical epoch in giving rise to identity questions developmentally different ways in which individuals construct meaning and identity, social and cultural forces that create and shape identity, and the narrative of one's own life story as the creation and foundation of identity.

James Marcia argued that identity could be viewed as a structure of beliefs, abilities and past experiences regarding the self. "Then better developed this structure is, the more confused individuals seem to be about their own distinctiveness from others and the more they have to rely on external sources to evaluate themselves" (Marcia, 1980). Identity is a dynamic, not static psychological structure. The formation of identity in adolescence sets the stage for continual changes in the content of identity through the adult years. Finally according to Erikson's psychosocial model of development, identity must be perceived by the individual, but also recognized and confirmed by others. Thus, the process of establishing an identity involves "Integrating into a coherent whole one's past experiences, ongoing personal changes, and society's demands and expectations for one's future (Sprinthal and Collins 1984).

### Identity Statuses

Marcia refined and extended Erikson's work on identity. In Marcia's model identity involves the adoption of (1) a sexual orientation (2) a set of values and ideals and (3) a vocational direction. A well-developed identity gives one a sense of one's strengths, weaknesses, and individual uniqueness. A person with a less well developed identity is not able to define his/her personal strengths and weaknesses, and does not have a well articulated sense of self. To better understand the identity and identity statuses and identity formation process, Marcia conducted interviews with young people. He asked whether the participants in his study (1) had established a commitment to an occupation and ideology and (2) had experienced, or were presently experiencing, a decision making period (adolescent identity crisis). Erikson developed a framework for thinking about identity in terms of two exploration and commitment, while Marcia develops four identity statuses. It is important to note that these are not stages. Identity statuses should not be viewed as sub stages in a sequential or linear process. The identity statuses interview assessed the depth and breadth of exploration and the extent of commitment in the areas of

academics, occupation and ideology (religion and plus politics).

Marcia (1966, 1976; 1980) has expanded upon Erikson's initial theory. According to Marcia and his colleagues; the balance between identity and confusion lies in making a commitment to an identity. Marcia also developed an interview method to measure identity as well as four different identity statuses. It is important to note that these are not stages. Identity statuses should not be viewed as sub stages in a sequential or linear process. Marcia (1966) draw on two dimensions of identity formation such as, crisis/exploration and commitment. Exploration refers to an examination of alternations with the intention to make a commitment. Commitment refers to dedicating oneself to an action, goals, ideal, value or belief. She proposed four identity statuses such as, (1) Adolescents who have experienced a period of crisis and made firm commitments to a set of values and goals they adopted during the period of exploration are the identity achievers. (2) Adolescent students who are actively exploring alternatives, but have not yet made firm commitment called identity moratorium. (3) Adolescents students find their identity through the adoption of parental (or others) standards and values without examining the nature, quality, or personal fit of such commitments are called identity foreclosure. (4) Finally Adolescents students who are neither exploring nor feeling the compulsion to find a self-defined identity are called identity diffusion majority of our schooling adolescents falls in one of the above mentioned identity statuses. Many studies have been conducted to know the identity status of adolescents, students. Examination of identity development by gender has received increased attention. Nevertheless, gender difference in identity status of adolescents, students, have yield inconsistent results. Some of these studies will also be cited below.

Erikson's (1968) discussions of gender and identity suggested that women may follow different developmental pathway in the identity formation process as compared to men and a number of investigations began focusing on possible gender difference in overall identity status distributions as well as on the relevance of various domains used to assess identity status. Goossens (2001) arguing that women's earlier physical maturation might be associated with more advanced identity development compared to men Thorbecke (2002) found gender differences in identity development within the more traditional Eriksonian Framework. However, some studies have shown no significant difference in identity statuses by gender (Archer, 2008). While research has revealed adolescent boys and girls to be similar in few identity statuses, such as, in identity achievement and identity foreclosure (Cramer, 2006). On the other hand, research also showed no significant difference found between adolescent's boys and girls in any of the four identity statuses Streitmatter (2003). Erikson (1968) belief that successful identity development goes beyond the temporal; past, present and future must be considered. Therefore, due to inconsistencies in findings with respect to gender differences identity statuses, more empirical enquiry is needed for clarification. As far as the researcher knows only very studies have been conducted in India and other countries. It then follows that the researcher felt it necessary to investigate the

gender difference in identity status of adolescents students schooling in Enugu State, Nigeria.

### Statement of the Problem

The problem of the study is that there is inconsistency in the results of the previous studies on adolescents' identity statuses. Another problem is to the establishment whether there is presence or absence of identity exploration or alternatives and commitments in different domain the adolescents' students in secondary schools in Enugu State.

### Purpose of the Study

- To find out the differences in ego identity status of adolescents students in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.
- To determine whether there is any significant difference between boys and girls in the different identity status such as identity achievement, identity moratorium, identity diffusion, identity foreclosure and overall identity status.

### Significance of the Study

The following groups will benefit from the result of the student such people include, all the adolescents students in Enugu State secondary schools, the teachers, government the parents. All will benefit through workshops to organized by the government, the adolescent students will through seminar to be organized by the school administrators and to parents through workshop. The parents will be in the position to adjust the attitude applied in the training of their children within the period in the school.

### Scope of the study

This study will be carried out in the six education zones, made of 17 local government areas in Enugu State, Nigerian. The study will be limited to adolescents' students in SSIII in the secondary schools.

### Research Questions

- (a) Are there difference in ego identity statuses among adolescent students in secondary schools in Enugu State?
- (b) Are their differences among adolescent identity status in the various identity status such as achievement, moratorium, diffusion, foreclosure and overall identity status between boys and girls?

### Research Hypotheses

- There are no significant differences in ego identity statuses among the adolescent students in secondary schools in Enugu State.
- There are no significant difference between boys and girls in the various identity statuses, such as identity achievement, moratorium, diffusion, and foreclosure and overall identity statuses among adolescent students in secondary schools in Enugu State.

### Research Method

The study will adopt the descriptive normative survey design. The design will enable the researcher to find out the ego identity statuses difference among the adolescent students in secondary schools in Enugu state, and the difference in boys and girls identity statuses. According to Enyi (2010) normative survey method is sometimes referred to as descriptive research as well. All of the information gathered in this type of survey should always be compared to the social norms for the group being surveyed and tested.

### Population

The population consisted of 8000, adolescent students in SSIII classes in secondary schools in Enugu State. Enugu state has six education zones covered in seventeen 17 local government areas.

### Sample size and sampling techniques

The researcher adopted the random sampling techniques for the study. The sample size for study was 800 adolescents' students in secondary schools in SS111Classes in one zone randomly selected. Also ten 10 secondary schools were randomly selected in the zone. The sample includes 410 boys and 390 girls. The age range of the students varied from 15 to 19 years. The majority of the students were from middle and low socio-economic status.

### Instruments for Data Collection

The researcher developed one measures and Adams measures were used for data collection: Namely, Adolescents' students identity statuses and the extended measure of Ego identity status (Adams 1989) was used to examine adolescents' students personal identity status" This scale attempted to determine the presence of absence of exploration and commitment in academics, the area of vocation, occupation, politics, life styles recreational choices, friendship and gender roles. Exploration of identity requires adolescents to struggle or actively question so as to arrive at a decision about goals, values and beliefs on domains of identity status. Commitment, on the other side, involves making choice about identity domains or elements and engaging in implementation of already chosen components (vocational choice, religious beliefs, gender role attitudes family roles and sexual expressions).

It consisted of a total of 40 items that required participants to rate themselves on a four point scale. (Strongly agree = 4, and strongly disagree = 1) regarding the extent to which they possessed the qualities expressed. Each identity statuses have 10 items. The instruments were checked by experts in measurement and evaluation for face and content relevance and cultural sensitivity, translated in to the native language of respondents, and then pretested. Some defective items were discarded; few other items that lacked in clarity were rewritten. The final questionnaire was administered separately at each secondary school, selected for the study and sample participants.

**Reliability of Study Instruments**

Reliability coefficients for all scales used were calculated through two different methods. Alpha Cronbach method and test-retest method. The internal consistency coefficient of the scales were 0.64 and 0-94.

**Data Analysis**

Each item was written in a way to assess out status in content area. Row scale scores for identity achievement, identity moratorium, and identity foreclosure and identity diffusion are calculated and identity status can be assigned for the four domains. The total score indicates the overall identity status: the data collected from the sample has been subjected to descriptive and differential analysis.

**RESULTS**

The means and standard deviation has been calculated to find out the overall ego identity status and its various dimensions such as identity foreclosure, identity diffusion, I identity moratorium, and identity achievement of all adolescents' students in SSSII in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1 below:

status scores of boys and girls. It indicates that the mean score of both boys and girls is higher in identity achievement rather than other statuses such as moratorium, foreclosure and identity diffusion. That "t" test has been calculated to find out whether there is any significant difference between boys and girls in their identity status. The result of the analysis is presented in table 2. It indicates that the 't' values of identity achievement and identity moratorium is found to be 1.34 and 0.42 respectively, which is not significant at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence, it is concluded that the boys and girls studying, higher in secondary do not differ significantly in the identity achievement and identity moratorium.

Table -2 further indicates that the 't' value of identity is found to be 3.05, 2.07 and 2.83 respectively, which is significant at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence, it is concluded that the boys and girls diffusion and overall identity status. The mean score of girls is higher than the body with respect to identity foreclosure, identity diffusion and overall identity status. According to Enyi (2015). The core idea is that one's sense of identity is determined largely by the choices and commitments made regarding certain personal and social traits. The work done in this paradigm consider shown much one has made certain choices, and how much he or she displays a commitment to

**Table 1. Mean and standard deviation for Ego Identity status scores of Adolescents, students in secondary school**

		Ego identity status.				
Sub samples	Measures	Identity foreclosure	Identity diffusion	Identity moratorium	Identity achievement	Overall identity status
Boys N = 410	Mean X	28.3537	22.2244	33.0746	26.0537	119.6463
	SD	7.12750	7.05434	6.97216	6.23,45	16.63926
Girls=N= 390	Means X	30.0026	23.3000	33.2231	36.6513	123.1769
	SD	8.12736	7.62352	6.75034	6.30799	18.54979
Entire sample N = 800	Means X	29.1575	22.7488	33.1162	36.3450	121.3675
	SD	7.67097	7.35243	6.86142	6.27157	17.67393

**Comparison of Boys and Girls in the Ego identity status**

Identity status	Gender	Number	Means-X	Standard deviation	't' value
Identity achievement	Boys	410	36.0537	6.23046	1.34
	Girls	390	36.6513	6.30799	
Identity moratorium	Boys	410	33.0146	6.97216	0.42
	Girls	390	33.22231	6.75034	
Identity foreclosure	Boys	410	28.3537	7.12750	3.05
	Girls	390	30.0026	8.12736	
Identity diffusion	Boys	410	22.2244	7.05434	2.07
	Girls	390	23.3000	7.62352	
Overall identity status	Boys	410	119.6463	16.639	2.83
	Girls	390	123.1769	18.54978	

Table -1 indicates that the mean score of overall ego identity status for the entire sample is found to be 121.36. The maximum score for the ego identity scale is found to be 200. The means core is high than the mid score of 100. Hence, it is inferred that the ego identity status of adolescents' students in secondary schools is high. The Table 1 further indicates that the mean score is high in identity achievement (X = 36.34) rather than other three statuses such as moratorium (X = 33.11), foreclosure (X = 29.15), and diffusion (X = 22.74) with respect to entire sample. A more detailed analysis of the ego identity status has been made with respect to gender by calculating the mean and standard deviation of the ego identity

those choices. Identity status involves the adoption of (1) A sexual orientation (2) A set of values and ideals and (3) A vocational direction. A well-developed identity gives on a sense of one's strengths, weaknesses, and individual uniqueness. A person with a less well-developed identity is not able to define his or her personal strengths and weakness, and does not have a well articulated sense of self.

**Conclusion**

The findings of the study indicate that the mean score of boys and girls is higher in identity achievement rather than other

statuses such as moratorium, foreclosure and identity diffusion. Hence, it is inferred that the majority of the Adolescents students in secondary schools were high in commitment.

They have experienced a period of crisis and made firm commitments to set of values and goals they adopted during this period. They are not easily swayed by external influences and pressures in their chosen life direction. The current study further indicates that the overall identity status of girls is higher than the boys because women's earlier physical maturation might be associated with more advanced identity development compared to men. The boys and girls differ significantly only in the identity foreclosure and identity diffusion. The mean score of girls is higher than the boys with respect to identity foreclosure, identity diffusion, because, the girls were relatively unconcerned about their lack of commitment and easily swayed by external influences.

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