Research article

Process of career identity formation among adolescents: components and factors

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ABSTRACT

To qualitatively explore the process and factors that influence career identity formation, data were collected from 18 middle adolescents of age ranged between 15 and 17 years. Thematic analysis revealed that the process of career identity comprised exploration, commitment, and reconsideration components. Eight factors (viz., parental influence, peer influence, religious orientation, media, nationalism, economic conditions, teachers' power, and personal preferences) appeared to influence the exploration component of career identity. Exploration of possible careers lead towards commitment after being influenced by expected outcomes (economic benefits, religious benefits, social standards, and functional gains). Satisfaction with the expected outcomes of the explored career help participants to reach at commitment. After being committed to any career, identity appeared to be bifurcated into identity achievement and identity confusion. The adolescents who were contented and consistent appeared to achieve their career identity and identity confusion lead towards the reconsideration of their career plans. Eventually, at one side, reconsideration may lead towards exploration with new choices and opportunities. While on the other hand, as a result of reassurance, individuals may revert back towards their previously committed career identity. This paper provides theoretical and practical implications for the career development of adolescents.

1. Introduction

Identity is a system of thinking about oneself that develops during adolescence [1]. Erikson explains that the period between 12-18 years is important in the process of identity development [2] as during this period adolescents seek to construct their various types of identities [3]. One of the most important identities that starts developing in adolescence is the career identity. Adolescents progressively involved in career development by exploring career-related options and thinking about the career identities to which they will get committed in the future [4].

In a complex and dynamic world in which careers are largely contingent [5], a career plan helps a person defines who s/he is and how s/he should act within a career context [6]. It does so by creating and providing meaning and direction and by constructing a sense of causality and continuity about one's career path [7]. Career identity is dynamic, fluid, and developmental in nature [8]. The importance of career identity for the integrated identity reaches a critical point during adolescence when youth are likely to autonomously project themselves into the future through a feasible occupational path [9]. In a nutshell without any career identity, integrated identity cannot be achieved, and without an achieved integrated identity, psychosocial transition from adolescence into adulthood is not possible [10].

The selection of occupation is necessary to identity achievement during adolescence. The period of adolescence is thus marked by the challenge that adolescents face in regulating their sense of who actually they are and the abilities they have acquired in infancy and childhood [10].

Career identity development can be better explained in the light of Marcia's theory [11], an extension of psychosocial development theory [12]. Marcia proposed four statuses of identity statuses regarding the level of exploration on the one side and the commitment to a particular identity on the other side. According to Marcia, exploration means the process of searching for an identity that makes an individual to get influenced by various factors. Exploration leads an individual to select a meaningful identity after weighing all possible options. Once an individual get connected with any specific type of identity then it would be called commitment [11]. Exploration and commitment are proposed to be independent, which results in four possible identity statuses. Identity

achievement (A) is reached after a thorough exploration of possibilities and a successful resolution of all confusions, resulting in a commitment to a particular identity. This status is therefore marked with high commitment and high exploration. Identity foreclosure (F) is defined as a state in which the commitment to an identity is a result of premature identification with a role model without proper exploration. This status is therefore marked with high commitment, but low exploration. Moratorium (M) is marked with a progressive and active process of exploration and an unwillingness to get committed to a particular identity, explained by high exploration but low commitment. Identity diffusion (D) is a lack of exploration and concern about identity development, represented by low exploration and low commitment.

According to Gottfredson's theory, at the stage of adolescence, career identity development becomes salient [13]. Patton & Porfeli worked on the career identity development of adolescents. They elaborated that how adolescents experience career Identity exploration. Media and parents play a significant role in helping out adolescents to get committed to any career of their own choice. They furthermore extend that after getting information about various career choices, then adolescents take decisions based on their suitability and compatibility with the specific career [14]. Previously is said that Career commitment is comprised of two components: making a decision about a career and then getting identified with it. Commitment is considered as a favorable phase in the life of individuals. It is also seen that some individuals experience the status of foreclosure and ultimately this immature act proves to be unfavorable for the individuals [15]. Furthermore, reconsideration was described a very important phase in the process of career identity. Reconsideration means to reexamine the specified commitments and putting efforts to evaluate other alternatives. Comparative analysis of alternatives helps individuals to remain committed with the career or change the career choices. It is also said that reconsideration is a phase that arises after getting committed to any career identity but this reconsideration is highly flexible. One of the factors that trigger reconsideration might be any self-doubt due to significant life experiences [16].

Researches revealed that various factors influence the process of career identity development. For instance, it is also reported that identity foreclosure is largely determined by parental strong control, and identity achievement is determined by the orientation of parents towards particular values and ideologies [1]. Socioeconomic status (SES) of the family is also found to be positively related to adolescent career identity formation and determines the statuses of identity [17]. School significantly influences adolescents' career identity formation [18]. The availability of opportunities in different economic scenarios portrays a picture of possible career opportunities and expected barriers [19], which leads an individual to amend his or her personal career goals in light of possible opportunities and barriers [17]. It is also reported that the specific cultural values of a society influence the process of career decision-making, For instance, researchers compared identity processing styles and career identities of young people from the United States and Turkey. Their results described that authoritarian culture in Turkey is not supportive for the young people's independent decision about their career commitment and due to the Turkish economic structure, there are limited career opportunities for young individuals [20].

Previously researchers concluded that career identity was a process influenced by multiple contextual factors and internal subjective processes. Family influence the process of career identity development by providing role models and by providing various opportunities that may facilitate the exploration process. Furthermore, school helps adolescents in critical thinking about their career-related goals and social values attached to these goals [15].

It was also suggested that in families with low support, adolescents have no perception of their parents' influence on their professional planning, and on the contrary, it stresses the valued perception of the influence of their peer group. socioeconomic levels (SEL) also influenced the process of identity formation. The students of the average SEL may

experience higher expectations and better career-related exploration [21]. Chávez reported that peer group membership, integrated self-knowledge, and decision-making abilities play vital roles in the career identity development of individuals [10].

In recent years, studies have been conducted in Pakistan on qualitative exploration regarding the teaching of national identity in schools of Punjab [22], religious identity in the context of coal development [23], cultural identity in animations [24], writers' identity in Pakistani theses [25], and identity styles regarding social norms [26]. Although previous research has already examined many aspects of identity development, there is lacking of knowledge regarding the contextual and social influences on adolescents' choices to accept one career identity in comparison with others. Furthermore, none of the studies qualitatively explored the indigenous components and factors influencing the process of career identity development of Pakistani adolescents in particular. Keeping in view the importance of career identity development in the life of adolescents, the current study aimed to fill this gap so that the findings would help in the development of certain plans to guide the adolescents to take wise career-related decisions that would ultimately lead towards strong career identity.

1.1. Research question

The study addressed the following research questions:

What is the process of career identity formation of adolescents in Pakistan?

What are the factors which influence the career identity development of adolescents in Pakistan?

2. Material and method

2.1. Participants

The participants were purposively selected from the capital cities of all provinces of Pakistan (Lahore, Peshawar, Gilgit Baltistan, Quetta, and Karachi), the capital of Pakistan (Islamabad), and rural areas of the country for the optimal representation of Pakistani adolescents. The participants comprised of 18 middle adolescents of age between 15- 17 years. Students of the 9th ($n = 8$) and 10th ($n = 10$) classes were approached due to the reason that they were about to complete their school education and planning to enter college with future career plans and choices. Equal representation was given to boys and girls. As anticipated parents play a significant role in adolescents' career development. Families today are very heterogeneous and also in Pakistani society, there are adolescents with separated, divorced, and widow/widower parents as well as whose fathers are living away from home due to job commitments. Nevertheless in this study, due to the small sample and to reduce the effect of differences in parenting, it was chosen to include only adolescents with both parents in the family. Moreover adolescents whose fathers were living away from home due to job commitments were not included in the study. The majority of the people in Pakistan are Muslims, therefore all the participants were selected from Muslim families to control the minorities' issues of religious discrimination. The adolescents with any type of psychiatric history or suffering from any severe medical illness and with disabilities were not included in the study. Most of the people living in Pakistan belong to the middle socioeconomic status therefore in the current study adolescents belonging to the only the middle class were included.

2.2. Instrument

To collect the data, questions were selected from Marcia's s interview protocol [27]. After the opinion of experts, twenty questions were finalized with certain prompts and probes. The interview questions focused on the process and factors associated with decision-making while choosing a career (i.e., what inspires you in making educational choices

and career orientation, what do you think what is the role of your parents in taking career related decisions). Permission was sought from Marcia to use his interview protocol.

2.3. Procedure

To conduct the current research, first of all, the topic was approved by Punjab higher education commission. The ethical review board of Punjab Higher education allowed to conduct the research. Before starting data collection from the adolescents, permission was sought from students and their parents as well because the age range of our participants was between 15 and 17 years (below 18 years). Copies of the interview protocol were provided to the parents on their demand. After taking the informed consent, the participants were approached at the places and timings that suited the participants. Participants were briefed about the purpose of the interview. Confidentiality and privacy of data were ensured to the participants. After obtaining permission for the audio recording of interviews, rapport was developed with the participants before starting the interviews. There was a margin for social desirability in the response of participants therefore full attention was paid on rapport building with the participants and they were ensured that their provided information will be kept completely confidential. Marcia's guidelines [27] described in his book were consulted to understand and to get trained in the process of interviewing. One to one interviews were conducted by the researcher in a comfortable environment. Probing was used to explore the in-depth information where it was required. Participants showed no hesitation to answer any question as they perceived the topic of study interesting and related to the major issues of their lives. Interviews were recorded with a mobile voice recorder. Data collection took three months (April to June 2019). The average time for the interviews was 30 min. Participants were asked at the end of the interview to share their experience being interviewed. They reported that it was a good experience for them to express their opinions about their career plans. In the end, participants were thanked for their participation in the study.

2.4. Data analysis

Data were analyzed by using the standardized guidelines for thematic analysis [28] to generate themes and illustrate the process of career identity formation of adolescents in the indigenous cultural context of Pakistan. We have chosen this analytical approach, because it gives the researcher flexibility to draw the process of the phenomenon being studied, and determine the factors that contribute to the specific dimension of the phenomenon. The thematic analysis "aims to explore the understanding of an issue or the signification of an idea" [29] and allows for flexibility in the analysis of data provides a structure for the organization of themes and assists in interpreting the research topic. The use of thematic analysis allows us to capture and organize the data into patterns that provide meaning and answer to the research questions [28].

Keeping in view the guidelines in the first phase, interviews were transcribed and transcripts were read multiple times before identifying patterns and meaning. The anonymity of participants was maintained during transcription. The second phase was focused on reducing the data and the production of initial codes. The data were coded into "meaningful and manageable chunks of text, such as passages, quotations, single words. In the third phase, potential themes were identified. Furthermore, themes were rechecked in relation to the extracted quotes and as a result, themes were refined. A thematic map of analysis was generated. Defining and naming themes were the part of phase V. At the end of this phase, the essence of the theme was identified and determining what aspect of the data and research questions the theme fits under. The last phase was the production of the report. Pseudonyms are being given instead of real names in the participants' accounts to maintain the confidentiality of the data.

2.5. Credibility of research

It is important to ensure the credibility of qualitative research. Validity and reliability are the terms particularly attached to quantitative studies, therefore in order to measure and ensure the credibility of qualitative research, various alternative terms and strategies should be employed [30]. According to them, truth value should be used as an alternative of validity, consistency should be used as an alternative of reliability and applicability should be replaced with generalizability. In the current study in order to ensure the truth value, it was ensured that no personal bias should interfere with the data analysis, and participants' points of view are presented in the writeup. Data were revisited to ensure the themes were extracted through the interviews. Rich verbatims were quoted to increase the truth value of findings. In order to ensure consistency in the research, emergent themes, cluster, and final themes were discussed with the group of researchers. Only those researchers were included who were having expertise in qualitative research. Themes were discussed, amended, discarded, and finalized by the help of an expert panel, comprised of faculty from the Department of Psychology (GCU Lahore) fulfilling the criteria of expertise in qualitative research (One Professor, two associate Professors). Rich details of context are provided in the description of the sample and discussion so that the reader may understand the applicability of findings in similar contexts.

3. Results and interpretation

The thematic analysis enabled a methodological systematization of data. The analysis revealed that the process of career identity formation is comprised of three important components; which are exploration, commitment, and reconsideration. Moreover, the analysis also revealed that various factors influence the career identity development process. Frequency and percentage of recurrent themes (factors) reflect that certain factors are influencing all the participants while on the other hand, certain factors are influencing few participants.

Figure 1 explains the whole process of career identity formation. Explanation of components and factors are given below:

3.1. Exploration

When participants were asked regarding their career plans, nearly all participants were aware of their career plans, and their narrations depicted that the majority of them were undergoing the exploration phase. Analysis of data revealed that adolescents were involved in various levels of exploration, which is a central phase during this particular stage of life. In the present study, exploration is marked with the engagement of adolescents in choosing among significant and meaningful career alternatives. At this stage, they appeared to be influenced by many factors that triggered and facilitated the process of exploration. It appears that the content and quality of exploration depend upon the information-laden factors which provide career-related options. Narratives of participants revealed that various factors triggered and inspired the process of exploration. The participants reported to be influenced by multiple factors (Parental influence, Peer influence, Religious orientation, Media, Nationalism, Economic conditions, Teachers' power, Personal preferences), and there were individual differences in the response of participants to various inspiring and exciting influential factors.

3.1.1. Parental influence

Narratives of participants revealed that almost all participants were being influenced by their parent's choices and dream for the career of their children. The participants deemed that parents were influencing their career choices in different capacities. For example, some of the participants were planning their careers in the light of parent's advice as they considered their parents as a reliable and wiser authority upon whom they could rely. They did not appear to follow the advice of
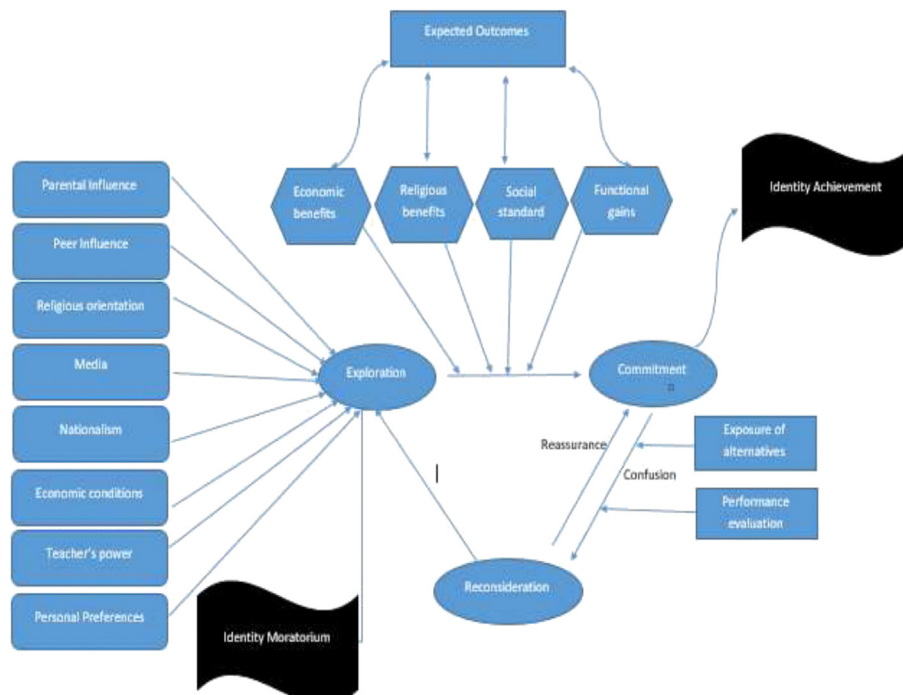
Figure 1. Components and Factors influencing Career Identity Formation.

parents uncritically, but seemed to be logical in following the advice of parents:

> *My mother is a teacher and she thinks that the scope of biology is very wide, so I opted for biology in the 9th class. (Nimra) [Extract 1]*

Some of the participants reported that they wanted to choose a certain career because it was the unfulfilled career dream and wish of their parents. The participants were aware of the fact that they were aspired to choose some particular career just to pay off the unmet desires of their parents. In some cases, the participants reflected submission to the career choices chosen by parents and in some other cases, parents were aspired by the glory of some careers and left no other choice for the participants, except to pursue what they had decided for them.

> *I want to become a doctor as it is a dream of my mother…My mother strived to be a doctor but she could not, so now she wants me to fulfill her dreams. (Zain) [Extract 2]*

> *One of my cousins is in the Navy and everyone in the family admires him… My parents try to inculcate in my mind that I should also join the Navy as they want to feel the same pride as the parents of my cousin are experiencing. (Ahmad) [Extract 3]*

The participants appeared to be driven to choose a certain career not only to fulfill the unmet desires of parents but also to enhance the social status of parents and making them proud of them like their cousins. In some cases, participants think that professions should run in families, so they were aspired to pursue the career of their parents.

> *My father is a doctor and I love my father and always aspired to be a doctor just like him. (Zartasha) [Extract 4]*

The narration reflects that the father is a role model in career selection. Most of the time when children have a warm attachment with their parents, they start identifying themselves with their parents and aspire to opt for the profession of their parents.

3.1.2. Economic conditions

The economic conditions of the country appear to diminish the career aspirations of some male participants. Participants seem to be hopeless

about the economic conditions of Pakistan, therefore they were at the diffusion status of career identity formation.

> *The conditions of our country are getting worse and I think the conditions of this country are not going to be better in the next one hundred years. Keeping in view the economic scenario of our country I don't plan any career. Lets the time come. Once I will be grown up then I will think about my career. At this point in time, I don't know what is better as getting a job is a big issue and businessman is suffering from financial problems. (Hashir) [Extract 16]*

> *Keeping in view the current conditions of Pakistan, I think if a person is interested in a better life then he must leave this country. (Waqar) [Extract 17]*

Narratives of the participants reflect that their hopelessness is due to the economic conditions of the country. They did not yet embark on practical life but they were able to observe that economic conditions in Pakistan were getting worse and uncertain, and this uncertain situation has stopped them to plan their career. The participants who were uncertain of their future career appeared to escape from this situation by moving to any other country.

3.1.3. Personal preferences

The personal preferences of participants also play an important part in the career identity formation. Personal preferences are basically the personal likings and interests of participants.

> *I like the business. Business does not run in my family but I personally believe that I cannot do any job under any authority. So the job does not suit me". (Sahil) [Extract 20]*

> *"I will go abroad and prefer to do a job in Mcdolands or any other restaurant. I will have my own small personal apartment and my own earnings. I will be free. I will live alone and my life will be based upon me and my earnings only. (Hashir) [Extract 21]*

> *I want to repair small household electronic devices. I am interested in doing engineering as it's my passion. I think one should pursue the career of his/ her interest. (Ahad) [Extract 22]*

Some of the participants have developed their career plans in light of their interests and their priorities. The participants reported that their own interests and likings were very important in the development of career plans as they had this realization that a person can perform any task in a better way if he/she has an aptitude for that. Participants were aware of their temperament and they knew the type of career that may suit them.

3.1.4. Teachers' power

Teachers and school systems appeared very important in the development of the career identity of adolescents. Students sometimes consider their teachers as role models and the comments and remarks of teachers determine their career paths and future destiny.

Once there was a time when I used to think of myself as good for nothing… A new bio teacher came who made me realized that nothing is impossible for an individual. After that, there was a real change in myself. Now I have decided that I will be a teacher like her. (Haya) [Extract 18]

I want to be a biochemist and conduct researches on genes and genes related behavior… My interest in biology is because of my biology teachers' competence. She taught me biology very well. (Nimra) [Extract `19]

At all stages of life teachers impart a very significant role in the lives of students, so is in the case of these two participants, whose career plans are mainly determined by the encouragement, motivation, and competence of teachers. Participants assigned credit to their teachers for their career aspirations and future plans. It reflects that a teacher holds a very powerful role in the career plans of students, where they are a source of inspiration and guide their students.

3.1.5. Peer influence

Narratives of participants depicted that the peer group influenced the exploration of career identity. Peer influence appeared a significant factor solely in male participants, no female participant reported peer influence.

My best friend use to tell me about his uncles who are businessmen, they earn a lot and living a very luxurious life… I want to become a businessman because there is no other way to pass a lavished life. (Salaar) [Extract 5]

The Uncle of my friend is living in America and my friend tells me that they earn a lot and even they are not very educated but their salary is very good… My father scolds me on my low grade and I use to tell him that it's useless to focus on studies as ultimately I will go abroad and will be settled there. (Waqar) [Extract 6]

It appears that peers had inspired their career identity, as they guided the participants to choose a career that would help them to earn a handsome amount of money. The participant seems to adopt a career that may help him to earn lots of money and aspire to live a life full of luxuries, his friend directs him that business as a career will help him to gratify his needs.

The narration of participants reflects their reliance on the peer group and depicts that not only the career directions are being determined by his friend but his disinterest in studies is also reinforced by the company of his friend. The participants under the influence of their friends, appear to undermine the value of education in comparison to money in career persuasion, and in their opinion, money over-weighs the prestige earned due to education in career.

3.1.6. Religious orientation

Religious ideology emerged as an important factor that influences the exploration of career identity formation. This factor revealed that religious ideology influenced the participants' career decision making by providing a parameter for acceptable careers in Islam.

I love music and if it would have been allowed in Islam then I would surely opt field of music. But as it is not acceptable in Islam, so I am thinking of becoming a biochemist. I can compromise on my interests but cannot compromise on my religious ideology. (Nimra) [Extract 7]

The narration of the participant reflects that she undermines her interest because of religious ideology as a filter for her choices. It reflects that the participant can go beyond her interest just because of her strong religious ideology. Her account reflects how religious identity and exploration of career identity are entwined, and how religious identity develops earlier to other identities and direct the achievement of other identities.

Most of my relatives are doing jobs in banks but I don't want to opt for the bank job as my career… I have heard that banks deal with interest and it is not allowed in Islam and if they are earning Haram (prohibited) profit, the salaries these banks give to their employees are also Haram… I didn't explore by myself, but I heard it from various sources, so if there is doubt in any career, why should I take a risk. (Sahil) [Extract 8]

The narration of the participant reflects that as a Muslim, he is quite conscious and vigilant in picking any career. He is quite clear that he will not adopt any career which is against the teachings of Islam.

"I am much impressed by Indian movies. If being film star had not been prohibited in Islam, I would certainly prefer to be an actor in Indian movies". (Zain) [Extract]

An account of the participant reflects that even he is much confident of his acting talent and he aspires to work in Indian movies but he does not want to choose it as a career because his Islamic ideology does not allow and he does not want to earn money via a career which is not HALAAL (acceptable) in Islam. It reflects the mature religious identity of the participant, even at a stage of initial career exploration.

3.1.7. Media

Media appeared as a very important factor in determining and influencing the exploration of career identity formation in adolescents. Narratives of almost half of the participants reflect the significance of media in the exploration of their career identity.

Whenever I see any doctor on TV, I feel more motivated and increase my focus on studies…I want to be a good doctor. (Ali) [Extract 10]

Whenever I see armed forces in national songs, I feel the passion to join armed forces. (Sana) [Extract 11]

I like CID drama and I like the characters of detectors… How adventurous their life is… I want to be a detector like the CID team. (Ahad) [Extract 12]

I want to be a CSP officer. I have seen multiple dramas about CSP officers and dramas portray how luxurious lives they pass. After completing CSS, a poor man can become a very rich man. (kamal) [Extract 13]

Narrations of participants reflect that media is playing a vital role in the life of adolescents. Media portrays a glamorous picture of different careers and it influences the career preferences of adolescents at various levels. Adolescents seem to identify themselves with the characters in different career roles.

3.1.8. Nationalism

Nationalism is a unique theme that emerged as influencing the career identity formation of adolescents. Narrations of the two participants reflected how their level of patriotism influenced their career goals as they wanted to do something for the welfare of their country.

I love my country. Our forefathers sacrificed their lives and their wealth for the sake of this country so I want to serve this country. I want to do a job

that can help me to contribute something to the betterment of this country. (Sana) [Extract 14]

If I will be offered a very lucrative job in any other country even then I will not go abroad. I want to develop my career here in Pakistan. Whatever we are, it's just because of our country so now it's our turn to play our role for the betterment of the country. (Iqra) [Extract 15]

A deep sense of attachment with the country is reflected through the participant's account. They seem to realize and value the sacrifices of their forefathers for their homeland and aspired to do something through their future career for the country, so that they may put their share in the welfare of their country. They are conscious of the fact that choosing a career is linked with the prosperity of their country. The participants are motivated to serve their country by opting for a career that ultimately benefits their country.

3.2. Commitment

A second important element of career identity formation appeared to be committed. Adolescents explore various alternative career plans in the presence of various attractions. After rigorous exploration, a person develops commitment with certain career-related goals and identifies himself/herself with the specified career and ultimately reaches the status of identity achievement. Commitment comes after exploration and further anticipating various outcomes. Expected outcomes are marked with the beliefs of individuals about the consequences of their actions [31]. The outcome can be of any type, it varies from individual to individual. The perception of expected outcomes are largely determined by interpersonal, personal, and environmental factors.

During the exploration, adolescents may develop certain priorities for their career goals and commitment depends upon the evaluation of significance related to their specific career. The participants appeared to report expected outcomes as motivating factors (social standards, religious benefits, economic benefits, and functional gains) leading to career commitment.

3.2.1. Economic benefits

During the exploration, a career is assessed in the light of financial stability that it can provide to any individual. Analysis of data revealed that while evaluating various career alternatives, adolescents assigned a weight to the career which had more economic benefits.

I want to be a businessman and want to earn a lot of money. I will never face any financial problems. I think only business can give me a financially strong life. (Salaar) [Extract 26]

A lot of factors are important in the evaluation of any job but I think the most important factor is salary. I think if the salary is good then a person can perform a better job. (Adila) [Extract 27]

The life of CSP officers is best. They enjoy a lot of fringe benefits. They get a good home, car, and a lot of other allowances. Therefore I want to be a CSP officer, so that I may pass a peaceful life. (Kamal) [Extract 28]

I heard that chartered accountants earn a lot of money so I have decided that I will do CA. (Mavra) [Extract 29]

I will go abroad and will earn a lot of money. (Waqar) [Extract 30]

The majority of the participants assigned a weight to the material benefits of any profession. It appears that participants have a profound understanding that salary, profit, and fringe benefits are very important in life. Furthermore, they have a complete realization that their future socioeconomic status will be determined by their career choice, so they appeared to be committed to the careers that are lucrative.

3.2.2. Social standards

Social factors are very important which assigns meaning to different career choices. Human beings sometimes evaluate their own choices by using the yardstick of their society. Adolescents foresee the status of their preferred career in the light of social values and ideals like; rank, prestige, desirability, and reverence assigned to the specified career.

I like comic writings but mama says that on the basis of comic writings you can't get any respectable and prestigious job, therefore, I will not go for any career related to comic writings…(Nimra) [Extract 23]

I want to be a good doctor because it is considered a prestigious job. (Zartasha) [Extract 24]

I want to be a CSP officer because it is considered the most influential and respectable job in our society. (Kamal) [Extract 25]

Narrations of participants reflect that social norms and values are the touchstones of gauging the importance and worth of a career. It is so important for the adolescents that they even compromise on their interests. It reflects that middle adolescents can develop a sense of social desirability and they give so much importance to the standards and values of their society that helps them to stick to those career plans that society adores. No matter which factors influenced the individuals during the stage of career exploration, social standards are among the factors that strengthen the career commitment. A socially desirable career seems to enhance the self-esteem of individuals.

3.2.3. Religious benefits

Analysis of data revealed that participants evaluated their career alternatives (exploration) on the basis of religious standards and religion also plays a key role in their career commitment. Religious benefits of any career are marked by pleasing Allah (God). They preferred the career through which they can have fair earnings

I want to be a doctor so that I may help people and resultantly Allah Tala will be pleased. (Ali) [Extract 31]

I will choose a job, which will have no margin of financial dishonesty… I want to earn Halal Rizq as Allah Tala will be happy and will add Barkat in my earnings. (Nimra) [Extract 32]

A deep sense of religious identity is being reflected in the career commitment of participants through their narratives. These participants believe that the will of Allah is important for them in the selection of careers. It shows their mature approach towards career commitment. They are able to understand that career selection is not a trivial/worldly issue rather it should be assessed in the light of religious values and teachings.

3.2.4. Functional gains

Another important factor contributing to career commitment was the expected functional benefits. It is mainly marked with the subjective benefits which an individual can experience for example; joy, pleasure, and satisfaction, etc. [32].

I would love to be a teacher as I know I will really enjoy my job. (Haya) [Extract 33]

I will move abroad and will do a job at any fast food point…… I can anticipate that my life would be very satisfied and I would be very happy. (Hashir) [Extract 34]

I am satisfied with the selection of my career goals as I know after becoming a doctor, I will be very satisfied because I will be helping a lot of people. (Amna) [Extract 35]

Whenever I repair any electronic device I feel very happy and sense of achievement therefore, I want to be an engineer, so that I may experience this feeling every day. (Ahmad) [Extract 36]

If I will fulfill the dreams of my parents then I will feel very proud and will consider myself a successful person. (Zain) [Extract 37]

Almost all participants seem to identify themselves with a career that gives them positive feelings. Apart from the material, social and religious factors, it appeared that adolescents considered it very important that how they will feel in any career. They are giving worth to their subjective experience and it reflects that in the life of adolescents, a subjective positive feeling is so important that they even try to find this element in their career-related goals. Functional value is very important as it is not only involved in the selection of any career but also influences the persistence and commitment to any profession or job.

3.3. Reconsideration

Reconsideration refers to the component of the career identity formation process, where adolescents meet some new avenues in their life and compare their present career commitments with possible career alternatives. Sometimes reconsideration occurs as a result of uncertainty attached to the career they are committed with, as a result, an individual re-evaluates or even changes the old commitments. The analysis reflects that after committed to any identity, adolescents may get diverted and attracted to alternative options. When adolescents are exposed to various options or career alternatives, it either leads them towards other career choice or after reconsideration, they may cling back to their previous career choices.

When my younger brother opted computer in the 9th class, at that moment I realized that the computer was a good subject and computer-related fields could be very interesting. Ultimately I realized that my choice is good and it suits me, so I stopped thinking about computer science. (Nimra) [Extract 38]

The narration of the participant reflects a slight confusion about her career decision due to the exposure of a new subject and it leads her towards reconsideration but once she found justification for her previous career selection, she again committed back to her previous career identity.

I intended to be a doctor and it was my dream since childhood... I never looked for any other career... after the poor result of 9th class, I changed my mind as I cannot get admission in MBBS on the basis of poor grades. (Sara) [Extract 39]

The narration of the participant reflects her rational and logical grounds for the reconsideration of her career identity. Though the participant was very passionate to become a doctor but after the assessment of her academic performance in 9th grade, she anticipated that she could not fulfill her dream, so better to think about any other career option.

Reconsideration is a two-dimensional component. It may either lead towards the exploration or it may lead back towards commitment.

Joining the armed forces was my dream but now I heard that there is a high probability of death for soldiers. Therefore I don't want to join the army now but still thinking about some other career. (Salaar) [Extract 40].

I want to be a chartered accountant. I heard from many people that CA is so difficult and it almost impossible to complete CA. I became confused and then started reconsidering. A few months back I met my uncle and he is a chartered accountant. He told me that it requires efforts but it's too interesting and its scope is so wide and it will lead towards very lucrative jobs so I determined that I will prove myself and will be a chartered accountant one day. (Mavra) [Extract 41]

Narrations reflect that in case of confusion, an individual re-explores the career opportunities and lies on moratorium status, on the other hand, he may revert back to the career identity an individual was previously committed with, which commonly leads to the achievement of career identity (i.e., identity achievement). The narration reflects that reverting back requires reassurance from any authentic source.

4. Discussion

The objective of the current study was to explore the process of career identity formation and factors which influence this process and its components. Results revealed that the process of career identity formation comprised exploration, commitment, and reconsideration components. Literature reflects that initially identity formation process was bifurcated in two components (viz., exploration, and commitments) [33]. The results of the current study are in line with the previous work [4], who extended the model into three components exploration, commitment, and reconsideration of commitment. The results are also in line with a study carried out on the students of Hong Kong that also revealed that the process of career identity formation is comprised of exploration, commitment, and reconsideration [15]. Data also revealed that participants were actively engaged in the exploration of various career-related options. Career identity formation is actually in its infancy period during middle adolescence, as adolescents are not mature enough and they are influenced by multiple factors. That is the reason that they start reconsidering their career even after they reach identity achievement status because they are being influenced by multiple factors that diverts their choices by creating confusion.

Results revealed that the process of career identify formation operates in a similar fashion as it is reported by previous research [4], but the uniqueness of the current study is the indigenous factors that influence the whole process. The factors which appeared to influence the exploration component and facilitate the moratorium status of career identity were, parental influence, peer influence, religious orientation, media, nationalism, economic conditions, Teacher's power, and personal preferences.

In line with the findings of the current study previous literature also reveals that parental influence on adolescent identity formation and literature mainly reflects how controlling attitudes of parents influence career-related choices [16]. It has been reported in the last decade of the 20th century that less flexible parents block the process of exploration among individuals, while parents with balanced control help the process of exploration and in the achievement of career identity [34]. Similarly, the results of the current study revealed that parents play a vital role in career exploration. In certain cases, parents try to persuade their children to pursue some specific careers to compensate for their own deprivations of losing that career or to attain prestigious status in the society via job status of their offspring. Interestingly none of the participants shared any kind of annoyance regarding the influence of their parents rather some participants show that they are lying on foreclosure state as thy are passionately striving just to fulfill their parents' wishes. In Pakistani culture obedience to the parents is considered as the central code of life and it is perceived that fulfilling the dreams of parents is one of the gestures of obedience.

The results of the current study revealed that the socioeconomic scenario of the country appeared to have a strong negative impact on the career identity of adolescents as it induced hopelessness and demotivated them which proved a hindrance in the achievement of career identity. Moreover results also revealed that personal preferences play a very important role in the career exploration of adolescents.

The results of the current study also revealed that peers had a significant influence on the career exploration of participants. The result is in line with the previous studies that reported peer group as having a marvelous influence on the career and vocational identity of the individuals [35]. Interestingly in the current study, career choices of boys appeared to be influenced by peers but girls appeared to be more influenced by other factors (Table 1).

In the current study, the influence of teachers' power on the identity development of adolescents is also identified and these results are in line with the previous research [35]. The impact of personal characteristics

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of recurrent themes (N = 18).

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Factors influencing exploration		
Parental influence	17 (9 girls, 8 boys)	94.4
Peer influence	9 (2 girls, 7 boys)	50
Religious orientation	7 (3 girls, 4 boys)	38.8
Media	7 (3 girls, 4 boys)	38.8
Nationalism	6 (2 girls, 4 boys)	33.3
Economic conditions	10 (3 girls, 7 boys)	77.7
Teachers power	6 (4 girls, 2 boys)	33.3
Personal preferences	8 (3 girls, 5 boys)	66.6
Expected outcomes		
Economic benefits	17 (8 girls, 9 boys)	94.4
Religious benefits	7 (4 girls, 3 boys)	38.8
Social standards	8 (2 girls, 6 boys)	66.6
Functional gains	10 (4 girls, 6 boys)	55.5
Factors leading to Reconsideration		
Exposure of alternatives	14 (7 girls, 7 boys)	77.7
Performance evaluation	10 (7girls, 3 boys)	55.5

on adolescent career identity development is also operating almost in a similar manner as in other cultures [15,36–38]. The influence of media appeared to be one of the frequently reported factors which influence the identity development of adolescents [39,40], but previous literature does not discuss the influence of media particularly on career identity development. Adolescents spend a lot of time on media and the use of technology which influences their integrated identity development.

Religious orientation appeared to be a unique factor that influenced the career identity process, which was not reported in any previous studies conducted on adolescents. This factor portrays that Pakistani adolescents are having a deep sense of understanding that religion is the code of ethics for all aspects of life and therefore they prioritize their career plans by checking its compatibility with Islam. It reflects that adolescents in Pakistan achieve strong religious identity even in middle adolescence that influences the formation of their other identities.

Nationalism is also one of the unique factors, which influence the exploration of career identity development of adolescents from the indigenous perspective of Pakistan. Adolescents appeared to have a strong sense of attachment with their country, which cropped a sense of responsibility in them and they considered it their responsibility to pursue a career through which they may contribute to the prosperity of the country.

The analysis reflected that there were multiple factors that influenced the career identity at the exploration component but a commitment to any career was conditioned with the significance attached to the expected outcomes. Another unique feature of the current study is the evaluation of the expected consequences of the aspired career. Results revealed that the most important factor that helps individuals to get committed to any career identity is the anticipated economic benefit. The importance of economic benefits is natural especial in this era of materialism. Secondly, individuals appeared to assign significance to the functional gains. It reflects that there is a strong role of personal values that students develop and that makes them experience positive emotions and ultimately made them committed to any career identity. Likely social, material and functional benefits attached to the desired career in the current study are consistent with the previous findings [41], but in the current study, religious approval and gratification appeared as the unique expected outcome of any particular career. Expected outcomes appeared as the most important factors that help in maintaining the career choices of adolescents. On the basis of a satisfactory evaluation of expected outcomes, individuals decide to retain their career choices. On the other hand, if an individual finds that the explored career does not suit him financially, socially, religiously or any other way then he does

not get committed to the particular career rather he remains in search of an appropriate career.

In line with the previous findings [39], data of the current study revealed that after being committed to any career and achievement of identity, an individual may step back towards the reconsideration. The current study highlighted certain factors, which lead towards the reconsideration. For instance, performance evaluation of adolescents excited them to think about any alternate career because they felt that their grades were not up to the mark, and furthermore marks in various subjects reflected their incapacities in that particular field in which they were pursuing their career. The analysis revealed that reconsideration under the influence of discouraging factors may either lead back towards the exploration phase or it may lead adolescents to stay committed to their career choices, for instance in case of reassurance from others.

4.1. Conclusion

On the basis of current research, it can be concluded that Marcia's theoretical; grounds are completely supported by the findings of current research. Findings validated the proponents of Marcia's theory furthermore study also provided extensive knowledge about the factors that influence the process of career identity.

4.2. Limitation and suggestions

The sample of the current study is small and comprised of only middle adolescents but early and late adolescents were not included in the study. Future researchers can take a larger sample comprised of early middle and late adolescents and they can find out differences among different age groups. The current study is completely qualitative research, it is recommended that future researches should be conducted to validate the model quantitatively.

4.3. Practical implications

Career identity is an educationally and clinically valuable concept and the current study helped in the construction of the indigenous model of career identity formation. It helped in the exploration of personal, social, and contextual factors, which are crucial for the identity formation of adolescents in the context of Pakistan. Based on these findings, certain career counseling programs should be launched at school and community levels to facilitate the students' career identity formation in the light of student's personal preferences and available opportunities. Furthermore,

by resolving confusion about various career options, it would be possible to help individuals to develop career plans. Certain informative and training programs can be launched for the parents to inculcate this realization that they play a vital role in the career identity development of adolescents and they can be guided/trained in how they can play their positive roles. Successful career identity development is linked with the wellbeing of adolescents.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

S. S. Batool: Conceived and designed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data.

S. Ghayas: Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Wrote the paper.

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