



Research Article

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Formation of Cultural Identity of Adolescents in High School in Azerbaijan

Abbasov K.Y¹, Aslanova R.N.^{2,*}

¹Professor, Department of Sociology. Baku State University, Baku, Azerbaijan.

²Professor, Head of the Department of History of Philosophy and Cultural Studies, Baku State University, Baku, Azerbaijan.

**Corresponding Author*

ABSTRACT

The article reviews characteristic peculiarities of the cultural identity of the Azerbaijani youth. Research revealed the impact of the place of residence (city, village, suburban town, living standards, traditionalism in the home and family life), family relationships, gender identity, school community, including the quality and level of teaching of a particular subject, personality of the teacher on this process. It revealed the destruction of the traditional system of spiritual values of the eastern way of life, and the introduction of the system of cultural values and norms of behavior characteristic mainly of Western civilization. The role of globalization is doubtless. The leading power of cultural identity of regular adolescents is desire to work and express themselves through business, communication, social and political activities. Volitional area is formed mildly; there is low need to satisfy aesthetic needs. The desire to get rich, i.e., the material side of life is in the foreground at 5% of the respondents, both girls and boys. The desire to move abroad to live, or at least to study is very extensive, however, there are serious financial obstacles marked by girls and boys equally. However, the attachment to the native land and love to parents, relatives and friends remains strong. It is clear that these teens, along with an age crisis, experience the crisis of an ethnic, spiritual and moral identity.

Keywords: *Cultural identity, National identity, Adolescents, Psychological basis of cultural identity in adolescents.*

INTRODUCTION

The notion of identity, or self-consciousness

The issue of self-consciousness at the level of identity, including that at adolescents, have attracted attention of researchers from various fields, like historians, ethnographers, sociologists, philosophers and psychologists. A proper understanding of teenagers' consciousness has important value in the learning process at school, i.e., the question of identity; including cultural one is of interest to the representatives of pedagogical science as well.

However, since this issue is related to a whole set of cognitive and socio-psychological problems of the human mind, it is natural that it is mostly researched by representatives of psychological science.

It is well-known that Erikson [1] was the first one to define identity as an ego-identity – personal integrity; the identity and continuity of the self, in spite of the changes that happen to us in the process of growth and development (I am – the same). Identity is formed according to all spheres of social life, that is, it can be national, socio-political, cultural, household, religion, gender, etc. Erickson paid great attention to the issue of identity of teenagers, and even introduced the concept of crisis of identity. Like many age development researchers, Erikson believed that the "three directions of development lead to this crisis: it is a rapid physical growth and sexual maturation ("physiological revolution"); concern about "how do I look in the eyes of others," "what I am"; the need to find their professional calling, which will meet acquired skills, individual abilities and needs of the society» [2].

This idea was also addressed by Kurt Levine [3]. He emphasized that there in psychology should be noted two areas related to the process of identity formation: the processes by which the identity is formed ("I"), as well as the actual content of schemes, constituting identity ("I"). He was also interested in the relationship between these organizational principles and information processing [3]. His point of view that man lives and develops in the psychological field is also relevant.

Issue of identity, national or ethnic, were actively addressed by representatives of the Soviet school of psychology. On the basis of these ideas, the Russian researcher [4] concluded that "ethnic identity means not reckoning oneself to a specific ethnic community as much as the real emotional, cognitive and behavioral mechanism of realization and manifestation of oneself as a representative of this community, a certain degree of identity with it, and separation from other communities".

In general, issues of identity within the frames of emerging consciousness, "I" were analyzed in details by many of the classics of personal psychology, representatives of Neo-Freudianism, behaviorism, dynamic, cognitive psychology, interactionism, etc. It should be noted that different types of identity can be combined in one junction – the cultural identity. The concept of culture includes everything that is related to human activity, in contrast to natural phenomena and facts. That is why we believe that the word "cultural identity" can be expressed in the diversity of manifestations of personal identity. If we look at the definition of cultural identity, it is a conscious acceptance by the individual of the cultural norms and patterns of behavior, values and language, understanding of the self from the standpoint of the cultural characteristics that are accepted in a given society, self-identification of oneself with the cultural patterns of this particular society.

Problems of Cultural Identity

The process of identity formation is closely linked to the main stages of life and society. Cultural identity today is influenced by globalization processes. There is the process of unification of life. The younger generation is exposed to globalization in a greater degree, as they perceive the changes more actively, including the usage of technologies. In addition, there is increased social mobility, including that between countries. Opportunities to study abroad, change of place of residence, place of employment, tourism – all of this gives rise to a change of values and spiritual and moral guidelines, codes of conduct and way of life.

Developing countries, including Azerbaijan and other CIS countries, have their own peculiarities related to the above spoken processes. As a country with rich deposits of oil and gas, Azerbaijan has all conditions for the successful development and integration into the world community as an equal partner. However, regional development contradictions, as a legacy of the Soviet era, prevail over the country, the result of which is the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. For more than 20 years the country is developing as an independent, sovereign state, and several generations have grown up and built their life goals and careers in these conditions.

Presently accepted norms and values, combine the remains of past performances of the society and continuously emerging new ideas, under the influence of spiritual and cultural impact of external factors. There are contradicting processes of co-existence and suppression of one system of values by the other. There is also a factor of the rights and freedoms of citizens, the coexistence of individuals in relatively equal social, political and economic conditions. There are relatively equal conditions for social and psychological development and formation of personality, but a lot depends on education, standard of living, historical family relations, etc.

Issues of Adolescent Identity

Adolescence plays an important role in the formation of human personality. Environment, surrounding the teenager, including family, school and social environment have positive influence on the formation of his personality characteristics equally with the healthy genetics and good well-being. It is known that the state of empathy or frustration as well as rigidity to a large extent depends on the social well-being of a teenager, his inner self and motivational structure. It is clear that in the case of some "inferiority" for health reasons this structure of relationships is broken and requires expert help, including that of the social worker. In modern society, the figure of the social worker comes to the fore. This is due to the increased opportunities in the field of social assistance, as well as infrastructure improvement, service, etc.

Adolescence, according to E. Erikson, is built around the crisis of identity, consisting of a series of social and individual personal choices, identification and self-determination. If the teenager cannot solve these problems, the blurred identity is formed, the development of which can follow four main paths:

1. Getting away from psychological intimacy, avoidance of close interpersonal relationships;
2. Blurred sense of time, inability to build life plans, fear of growing up and change;
3. Blurred productive and creative abilities, inability to mobilize inner resources and to focus on priority activities;
4. Formation of a "negative identity", rejection of self-determination and selection of negative examples of behavior.

The term of "mature identity" and its criteria are ambiguous, as peculiarities of individual development depend on many factors. Social environment is equally important for the formation of the identity. In our country, the sharp change in the social situation in the last few decades violated the identity of adults that had an impact on the younger generation.

As such, in Russian schools, the majority of adolescents with normal development positive personal identity, a high degree of self-understanding, indicators of the average level of self-identity, which indicates a higher sensitivity of adolescents with normal development and better understanding of their wishes and needs [5].

METHODOLOGY

We have been interested in the problem of formation of teenage cultural identity due to a number of reasons. Those who are enrolled in high school have to make choices in life, focus on professional benchmarks and define their career. What is the value system that has formed them? What is contributed by traditional values and norms of social life, and what by external influences in the face of Western civilization? With this purpose, we have conducted a survey among students aged 15 to 17 years enrolled in the senior classes of different regions of Azerbaijan, from large cities to rural schools.

A total of 188 people took part in the survey. The survey was conducted by students enrolled in the "social work" faculty at Baku State University, in March-May 2016. The ratio of girls and boys was equal, making 50% of each group. M. Rokeach's method of studying value orientations, Rokeach Value Survey (RVS), was used for this survey, which is based on the direct ranking list of values (in addition, we have carried out additional studies to determine the adequacy of respondent's self-assessment). It is known that M. Rokeach distinguishes between two classes of values:

- Terminal – the belief that the ultimate goal of individual existence is to strive for it;
- Instrumental – the belief that a certain course of action or property of the person is preferred in any situation [6].

In addition to the Rokeach methodology, we asked questions regarding further choice of profession, possible emigration, value of the motherland, i.e., attachment to ethnic values.

Results

In April-May 2016, with the help of the Baku State University students we conducted a special survey in grades 9-11. We were interested in values which prevailed during their preparation to future life. Survey takers included school students from Baku, Ganja, Sumgayit, Gabala, Mingachevir and other regions. We have grouped the answers and received the following results. First of all, let's review the results of a survey from Baku and its settlements. There were 20 students studying at 9-10th grade at school No. 240 in Nasimi district who participated in the survey. The results of the survey are shown in the table below.

Table No1: Focusing on resources and achieving life goals (school No. 240).

| | Student, number of the questionnaire | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| Life Goal | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.Focusing on labor | 27 | 33 | 31 | 35 | 4 | 32 | 16 | 25 | 28 | 29 |
| 2.Focusing on relationships | 25 | 33 | 35 | 30 | 38 | 33 | 32 | 26 | 23 | 34 |
| 3.Focusing on understanding | 25 | 20 | 31 | 24 | 28 | 20 | 15 | 8 | 26 | 25 |
| 4.Focusing on socio-political values | 10 | 28 | 30 | 25 | 24 | 20 | 15 | 14 | 21 | 29 |
| 5. Focusing on material resources | 27 | 40 | 30 | 44 | 32 | 37 | 31 | 22 | 30 | 37 |
| Achieving life goals | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| Achieving the development of moral qualities | 30 | 30 | 29 | 23 | 19 | 32 | 15 | 14 | 24 | 24 |
| Achieving the development of business qualities | 27 | 23 | 28 | 28 | 38 | 35 | 30 | 18 | 22 | 28 |
| Achieving the development of volitional qualities | 19 | 24 | 25 | 30 | 28 | 27 | 13 | 15 | 22 | 28 |
| Achieving the development of aesthetic qualities | 26 | 24 | 23 | 31 | 19 | 27 | 14 | 20 | 29 | 30 |

In Sumgait, the survey was conducted among 10th graders in the school No. 28. 6 girls and 4 boys took part. It turned out that leading trends for the purpose of life are labour and material and financial resources. In fact, it can be stated that material resources took 1st place. Main activities to focus when achieving the goals are development of business qualities (6 votes, 2 of which together with business qualities praise highly moral qualities as well), moral and volitional qualities orientation.

We can say that in all other schools, including Nos. 162, 51, 171, 265 of Baku, No. 31 of Sumgait, No. 248 of Binagadi, Baku's settlement, No. 248 of Surakhani, No.1 of Masazir, orientations mentioned above constitute the majority of the responses. Socio-political and volitional orientation constituted an advantage in some answers.

It should be noted that regional schools, such as No.3 of Khachmaz, No. 1 of Samukh, No. 3 of Siyazan, schools in Julian village of Ismayilli region, Zardabi village of Guba region, Sheki, OghuzShamakhi, number 9, defined basic qualities and values in almost the same order. The last ones are values associated with the formation of business qualities.

In order to systematize and to check the answers we asked the respondents additional questions. If these young people give priority to material resources, they should think of ways to achieve them in the future. It was revealed that 97.3% of respondents plan to continue their studies in universities, while 67% of respondents plan to study abroad, they want to study and live there. There is high commitment to the motherland. Only 12 people out of 188 people noted that nothing connects them to their homeland.

From psychological point of view, a number of social and psychological characteristics should be taken into account here. The survey should consider the sense of solidarity among the respondents of one group. It was found out that the nature of interpersonal relationships is impacted by both the education and extracurricular activities. The role of teachers and parents should be taken into account as well. Cultural and psychological qualities also affect current and future motivation. These qualities were presented at a high level enough at all students who took part in the survey. Taking into account the structure of relations existing inside the group, we can distinguish among formed mental characteristics, differently based (terminal) and socially important (instrumental) qualities. Based on this, it becomes possible to plan adolescent development, forecasting and correction.

We have found confirmation that communication is a very important skill for teenagers. It is important due to the fact that at this period of their development there are being formed such processes as self-confirmation and self-assessment. Every student has some place in the formal and informal status hierarchy, and his personality forming process defines his self-confirmation. If an adolescent is satisfied with his or her status, it is revealed in his attitude towards life and his values system. For example, as seen in research material, focusing on materials resources is connected with focusing on labor and other work-related qualities. In practice focusing on these values helps develop career and socio-political spheres. Even though there is a variety of factors that affect the need for self-expression, the leading role belongs to the relationships inside the group.

Among the factors that are important here is the ability of self-consciousness, development of a sense of responsibility to work towards the elimination of the most polar feelings and values. The role of focusing on required values is very important for self-consciousness and self-expression. In particular, we need to mark the role of apperception, the role of addiction in perception of new information based on the individual's previous experience. In this practice, during the formation of the individual's conscious stereotypes his attitude towards himself and others is formed. Stereotypes (views, opinions, reasoning and perception) common sense, social norms, fundamentally affect the formation of public opinion. Among the factors that affect teens' perceptions about themselves and the world are modern society development peculiarities, regional, national and ethnic characteristics. Apperception and features of consciousness greatly impact formed group psychology and emulate its tendencies.

As we mentioned above, key factors for the development in adolescence are family, school and social environment. Recently, in accordance with the concepts put forward in relation to personality typology (E. Fromm and others), every period up brings the type of personality relevant to itself. Generated ideas or consciousness stereotypes are reflected in human thinking and on mental level. While playing a big role, taken separately, each individual chooses his own style, his own physical, physiological, mental, social, spiritual and emotional development and behavior. When trying to receive any kind of information from the person, one should apply extra effort, because it is in the human nature to hide something about himself or herself, and try to look better than he is. These peculiarities are taken into account during psychological surveys and extra adjustments take place to adjust this "lying" percentage. We have taken this factor into account when conducting our survey as well.

During the evaluation and weighting the responses, we also beard in mind that people sometimes tend to give illogical, emotional, irrational or even foolish answer when asked to evaluate themselves. It is known that every person's mind consists of thought, understood and intuitive areas. It should be taken into account that at the examined issue, the answers of the adolescents are not always adequate. It is important to consider all those factors during evaluation to be able to evaluate the results correctly.

The findings suggest a strong influence of cultural values globalizing world. Notable ideas on the Eastern and Western world, leading values of each of them, by the example of the cultural identities of the post-Soviet

generation of teenagers, are not supported in practice. At least, in some respects. Let us review statement on the basis of the research results.

The structure and content of the received replies are affected by the self-assessment of the individual. When trying to evaluate oneself the individual faces various obstacles. Some of them are connected with the aforementioned stereotypes, and some with lack of the knowledge (in the area). It would be wrong to expect a completely adequate response from the teenager (and, in general, from any of us). However, the geographical location and diversity of participants allows us to state that we have been able to provide representation at this survey. One of the factors that affects the content and quality of responses was protecting their dignity. It is more evident in teenagers than in adults. To be like everybody else is expressed very strongly in this age group. Taking this into account, we need to review the responses with a somewhat critical approach.

Self-esteem plays vital role in values formation in adolescence. If the self-esteem is low, all other areas development starts to slow down. It is no coincidence that both boys and girls gave high rate to focusing on communication. It can be concluded that those adolescents who gave high rates to communication skills fall behind in achieving their life goals, because they are still in the lookout for themselves, for they are, and haven't fully realized their self-expression potential. During education and upbringing children need to be reassured of their strengths, they should feel confident in their skills and capabilities, and know what they are capable of. Adolescents approach the adults in a more critical way, they start to doubt everything what they say. During this period, the "I" image is formed, and it is meant to regulate the system of self-impression. The conducted survey was connected with the idea of ideal "I" of every participant. We can conclude there are some tangible differences between the real "I" and the ideal "I". Both "I"s affect the self-esteem of the individual. We believe that those teenagers who gave high rates to volitional qualities will be more successful in reaching their life goals. It should also be noted that those students who placed high the understanding qualities have shown good results in achieving the goals.

Those who preferred focusing on material resources are in their majority who are striving to develop their working skills. To them, moral and aesthetic qualities were of lower value. High demands and expectations may create conflict with reality, and cause these people experience some stress in the future. Both teachers and parents should gradually help to correct the in-adequate self-assessment and to explain the reality to those adolescents. In general, social prioritization of the adolescents should be properly analyzed with the consideration of his or her personal qualities, social environment, cultural and psychological atmosphere formed in the family, and school activity.

It should also be noted that every adolescent forms the image of himself based on the images of other adolescents.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Internet and other modern technologies play important role in forming of values at teenagers nowadays. There are more opportunities to make choices, and more activities for self-confirmation. One of the problems experienced by the young generation is being deprived of nature, therefore it is advised to use every opportunity to travel outside of the city and to spend more time outside. Studies show that artificial food, video games and commercials are very harmful for teenagers. There are also other real dangers for them in the modern world. However, the pace of life, changes in the economic life, new requirements and challenges change people's attitude to life in general. The young generation's social identity is manifested as a reflection of the content of these processes. Many elements of the Western way of thinking, as well as pragmatism, individualism, career values are entered into the system and begin to influence people's lives dramatically. However, Eastern spirituality, pertaining to national and moral values of the family, their homes, the country is becoming an essential element. Over recent years' adolescents have been exposed to changes, which, as a result, will affect the whole future societies, because our youth is the holder of our society's intellectual resources. Therefore, the study of this problem is very important for the community. These studies make it possible to show the changes that take place in the social, cultural and spiritual areas. Main task of

the educational institutions, parents and community is to create favorable conditions for the development of teenagers to reveal their potential.

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