ENHANCEMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' CONSCIOUSNESS ABOUT MULTICULTURAL IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

The perspective of multicultural identity enables an individual to acknowledge and respect the prevailing diverse identities individually and socially. This particular approach provides liberty and acceptance towards unique individuals around us. As a practicing community, respect for one's originality and openness towards diverse practices need to be promoted for peace and harmony in any society. This research study aims to enhance the consciousness about multicultural identity through mixed method research, qualitative followed by quantitative research with an experimental intervention. Semantic content analysis of the curriculum of Pakistan Studies designed by HEC enlightened the researcher about existing gaps between the outline and recommended topics and sub-topics in the outline. Triangulation has been performed through focused group discussion to ensure the results and actual influence of the introduced phenomena on the Undergraduate students of B.Ed. (Hons) II (N=46). The findings clearly illustrate the significance of the pretest and posttest results of gender identity and psycho-social identity with effect sizes of r= 0.59 and 0.44, respectively. The research study suggested inculcating the phenomena of multicultural identity at the national level through policymakers and curriculum developers and practiced at the institutional level in educational settings to promote healthy and well-rounded individuals and progressive society.

INTRODUCTION

What Multicultural identity is, and how can it be enhanced? This particular research paper answers your question and enlightens us about multicultural identity and ways to enhance it. Acceptance of diversity in all domains of human identity is multicultural identity (Miller & Collette, 2019). Respect and openness toward diverse beliefs, perceptions, and practices include the consciousness of multicultural identity. Being multicultural provides the liberty of being firm in personal beliefs and perceptions while keeping others' norms, beliefs, and perspectives appreciated and valued (Burton & Furr, 2014). For this study, the researcher has encapsulated the various dimensions of one's identity in a multicultural identity development framework proposed by Kegan (1982) through which one can enhance undergraduate students' consciousness about identity. This research is focused on enhancing adolescent students' multicultural identity through topics at the Undergraduate level through the content of Pakistan Studies to ultimately develop students' self-authorship for developing their coherent multiple identities and have a civic sense of rights and responsibilities of all individuals with a diverse set of identities (Magolda, 2008).

The existing era is globalization. Recurrent traveling for multiple purposes, such as education, professional development, and employment, has an experience of a global village that intrigues diverse experiences

(Hidasi, 2015). Living in different countries with diverse people with different cultural norms and civilizations vast one's exposure to cultures, traditions, languages, and much more. Growth through these experiences requires an openness and respect for other practices. Rejection or rigidity towards acceptance causes disbalance and stress in society and the personal well-being of individuals (Kaul, 2012).

Children and young adults are eager to learn and adapt, which enables them to remodel their rigid thoughts and re-learn (Lannegrand-Willems & Bosma, 2006). This research specifically focuses on undergraduate students as they are in their developmental stage and retain the capacity for shedding unmatched norms and perceptions. Their consciousness can be enhanced through curriculum and educational settings provide a vital role in the course of augmentation (Jupp et al., 2018). Although the study is limited to the Pakistani context, hence the procedure and intervention may help the global researcher to conduct the research in their context. The current research established a foundation for students to appreciate the urgency of knowing and identifying multicultural identity and relate it to their social, cultural, national, and religious identity to promote harmony. There is a necessity to impart to adolescent students to recognize their multicultural identity and enhance it for proficiency and societal growth.

This research study involved participants at the Undergraduate level in an academic setting engaging in curricular and co-curricular instructional activities for the enhancement of multicultural identity. Human identity is associated with multiple domains which provided the foundational approach to get the participants involved. The subject of Pakistan Studies was the most applicable subject to incorporate the connection of human identity with self and community to enhance the consciousness of the multicultural identity of the participants through intervention sessions. To measure the extent of enhancement of multicultural identity, a pre-post test was performed before and after the intervention session.

Research Objectives

The following are the objectives of this research:

1. To explore how the content of Pakistan Studies can be utilized for the development and enrichment of students' multicultural identity.

2. To enhance Undergraduate students' consciousness about multicultural identity.

Research Questions

The following research questions are posited to study the development of undergraduate students' identity:

Q 1. Does Pakistan Studies content attempt to develop undergraduate students' consciousness about multicultural identities?

Q 2. To what extent multicultural identity of the undergraduate students is enhanced through the intervention sessions?

Q 3. What are the views of the participants regarding their consciousness about multicultural identity developed through interactive instructional activities?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of the research clarifies elementary domains of human identity. The study is based on the concept of Erikson's proposed transactional spaces in the process of identity development. These transactional spaces are permissible to be filled by providing the individual an opportunity for the expansion of the learned experiences about diverse identities, beliefs, perceptions, and practices. The key to the growth of an individual's identity and its modification of other identities is held in transactional spaces, which keeps the re-modeling and the process of evolution in human identity alive and practical as these spaces cooperate as the supporting agent in the enhancement of identity domains.

The perspective of multicultural identity for this research study comprises Kegan's (1982) stages of consciousness, counting cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domains of development. The research strived to target those transactional spaces with curricular and co-curricular activities grounded on cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal levels for the highest consideration in learning. Figure 1 describes the conceptualized levels of consciousness, and the development of consciousness that has been operationalized with domains of human identity.
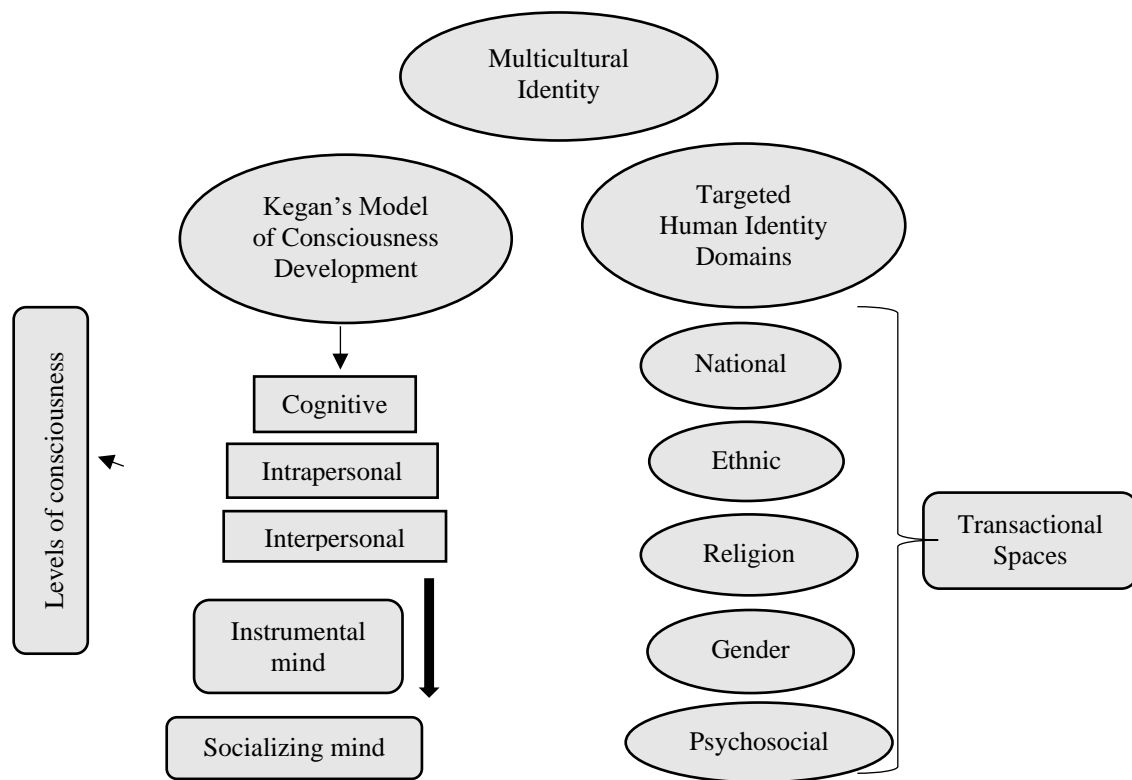

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for enhancing multicultural identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to Human Identity

Human are not single beings with no societal connections; they are connected with social threads at many levels, which affect their personalities, norms, beliefs, and perceptions according to their experiences. Human identity is fluid, and it is molded with diverse circumstances and learning. However, Hoff and Pandey (2014) explain that it has the potential to remodel and reshape the overall perspective of the individual and society with time, space, and experiences. Erikson (1968) presented the developmental theory, which describes that the identities of individuals are different and can be identified by their culture. Their beliefs, norms, and perceptions towards life are hidden in their cultural foundations; hence, he identifies the transactional spaces as the potential in human identities to evolve, reshape, and re-model according to needs, experiences, and for betterment indeed.

The dimensions of human identity were introduced by Reynolds and Pope (1991) and this elaborates all related aspects of individuals. He discussed that these aspects play a core contribution in the development of an individual which leads to the influence of on the societal level too. These factors and their related perceptions, beliefs, and practicing norms enrich or suppress the experience of the individuals. This makes it difficult for beings to understand the diversity in perceptions, norms, and practices.

Marion and Thorley (2016) highlight the diverse engagement of individuals at personal and societal levels. The need for critical reflection towards personal national, ethnic, religious, gender, and psycho-social

identity domains has been encouraged to be critically analyzed through self-reflection for enhancement of the consciousness of multicultural identity perspective.
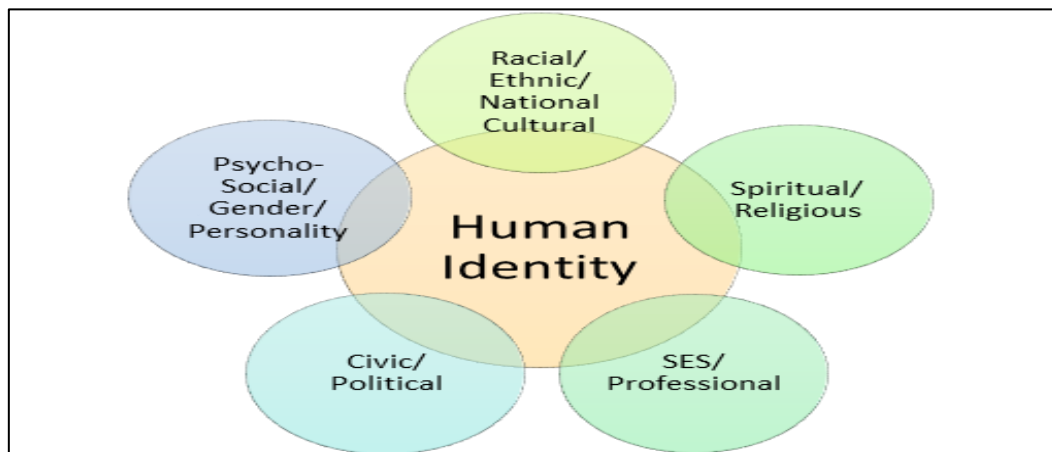

Figure 2. Dimensions of Human Identity (The complexities of diversity).
Source: (Reynolds & Pope (1991).

Interplay of Self and Society

James E. Marcia extended Eric Erikson's theory of human identity; in 1966, he presented the extended theory of human identity and elaborated four stages to the process achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion (Marcia, 1966). His model of development and ego-identity status opened new ways for philosophers and researchers to work on identity status during the life span. This helped the adults too, to understand who they are and at what stage of identity crisis needs more attention for resolution of the problems. This opened new ways of hypothetical and experimental work standards (Marcia, 1966).

Adolescents are encouraged to self-reflect on their cultural and practical norms related to religion, national, and psycho-social aspects with time and space, taking steps toward self-actualization, which acts as a transformational fulcrum (Orenstein & Lewis, 2021). Rigidity towards learned identity perspectives might resist re-learning in changed times and cultural contexts, but they need to be modified through acceptance of diversity in identity traits (Hope & Spencer, 2017).

Dimensions of Human Identity

Human beings are a combination of genetic self and environmental upbringing. There is no one aspect/factor responsible for the development of identity. The following discussion covers the foremost factors that affect identity development.

The manufacturing of a human body depends upon genetic coding initially, which illustrates one's race, ethnicity, gender, and ethnic identity (Elliott & Brodwin, 2002). Current research studies claim that behavior has a strong propensity toward alteration of cultural identity and an individual can be transformed through social experiences and environment targeting the transactional spaces (Mao & Shen, 2015). Dinesen (2011) proposed that family is the first and fundamental source of psycho-social interaction, forming psycho-social and familial Identity. Parental support identifies a child's behavioral change to facilitate change in traditional practices. An individual is a combination of self and exploration. The more he/she is open to the environment, the more learning opportunities one can find (Nelson et al., 2018). Peer contribution towards identity development is generated from social interactions as Bonnett (2020) elucidates that peers can be cooperative to change one's attitudes, specifically in the social environment. Religious values and practices remain the dominant belief of the family, which reinforces individuals' spiritual dimensions. Religious identity is shaped by the family at a younger age (Lybarger, 2018). The relevant practices are being coached into the young adult through practices and dialog.

The Imperative Multicultural Identity

"I think of myself not as a unified cultural being but as a communion of different cultural beings. Because I have spent time in different cultural environments, I have developed several cultural identities that diverge and converge according to the need of the moment" (Sparrow, 2000).

The impressively defined phenomena of multicultural identity describe one's diverse experiences among distinct cultural contexts throughout life. Every experience is different, which enhances individuals' learning about other cultural preferences, providing dissimilar rational facets. Emotional intelligence has been viewed interestingly by Danial Goleman as an intrinsic and extrinsic emotional understanding of oneself. Self-concepts, perceptions, and personal beliefs are an individual's priority to grow intrinsically and extrinsically (Goleman, 2018). Erikson (1968) and Rogers (1961) claim the generosity of humans as the highest level, ignoring intrinsic needs and considering the highest level of human development as a step towards attaining self-actualization and working for societal improvement, resulting in the promotion of multicultural identity.

Fostering Multicultural Identity

A constant effort is required to foster the phenomena of multicultural identity through educating the society/community along with equivalent practical applications in educational institutes (Blue et al., 2018). Enhancement at the personal and societal level through practices can be promoted, yet society needs to reflect transformational synergy. The mismatch between individuals and society generates disbalance and frustration. This is one of the most common reasons that creative people with unique ideas feel misunderstood in society because they are not understood as they want to be perceived. To eliminate this devastating practice, developing the consciousness of the community is the finest option. Pedagogical conditions not only enhance students' identity at the personal level but also enhance the professional identity of the students by forming new learning and practicing interventions in the traditional ways of learning (Maslova & Romanov, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This research study involves targeted parameters to understand the perceptions of participants' identity and its enhancement. The pragmatic paradigm provides a guideline to use quantitative and qualitative methods appropriately according to the research questions, as some can be answered preferably through different methods and tools (Schwandt, 2001).

Mixed Method Research Design

Exploratory sequential with embedded experimental design

This design explains the sequences of the current research study. The design for current research is Exploratory Sequential with Embedded Experimental Design. This design is called embedded experimental design. The first phase of the research study is qualitative, and the research explores the problem through content analysis of the Pakistan studies curriculum designed by the Higher Education Commission and opts for further steps to conduct the research. The quantitative research method was followed by qualitative intervention as a pre-test before intervention.
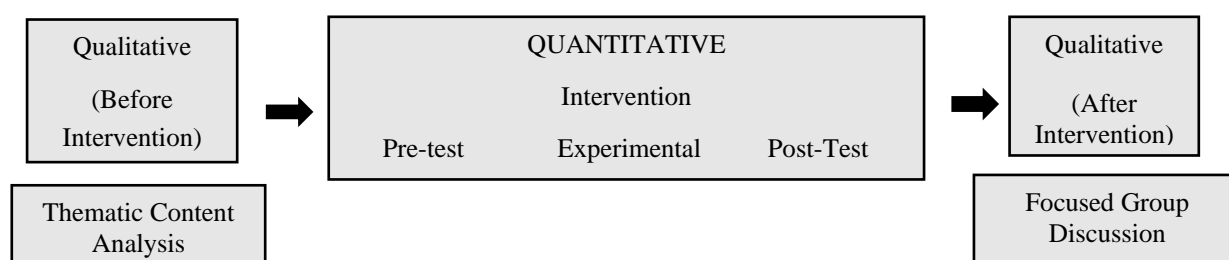

Figure 3. Research design.

Participants of the Study

Fatima Jinnah Women's University willingly supported the research process, and the Department of Education allocated separate sessions for the intervention. B.Ed. (Hons) students of Semester II were chosen through purposive sampling as they were studying the course of Pakistan Studies in the present semester.

Implementation Plan

Semantic content analysis

The implementation of the research started with the content analysis of Pakistan Studies designed by the Higher Education Commission. Themes were designed related to the human identity domains and multicultural identity, and semantic analysis of the curriculum was done to identify the gap between the objectives and the content. Coding scheme for content analysis is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Coding scheme for content analysis.

Sr. No.	Content Source for Analysis	Themes of Identity Domains	Analytical Perspective	Tallies for Coding
01	Curriculum of Pakistan Studies	National Identity	National perspectives with alliance (at personal and societal levels) of identity were analyzed.	Example
02	Course Objectives	Ethnic Identity	Diverse cultural norms and their acceptance and respect	卌
03	and its alignment	Religious Identity	Religious perspective with respect for other religions.	
04	with designed course	Gender Identity	Gender as a social construct. Difference btw gender identities and their acceptance.	
05	content	Psycho-social identity	Influences related to personal and social environment	
06		Multiculturalism	Acceptance and respect for all other domains of identities being aware and firm on personal beliefs.	

Pre-test responses from the adapted questionnaire of the Multicultural Identity Integration Scale MULTIIS (Yampolsky et al., 2016) with the 0.77 coefficient value, which indicates the reliability of the questionnaire and depicts the appropriateness of the tool used to collect data, were collected in a session without any introduction to human identity, its domains, and multicultural identity. The responses were taken and recorded. After content analysis of the curriculum designed by HEC and the university course outline, with consultation of the subject instructor, an outline and detailed lesson plans were devised for the intervention sessions.

The field intervention as shown in Table 2 was initiated after a discussion with the participants in a 90-minute session, these intervention sessions were designed as lecture-based sessions. One session was allocated for the art exhibition and one session for focused group discussions was held at the last for triangulation.

Table 2. Field intervention plan.

Pre-Test		
Connecting Phenomenon: Multicultural Identity		
Respect, humbleness, and acceptance of other's self, nationality/ethnicity, religious, and gender identities		
Session 1	Psycho-social Identity Relationship with self, family, and peers (Towards family and peers), influence of socioeconomic status	Socratic inquiry method (Q/A), Reflective activity sheets, Self-report survey
Session 2	National Identity Patriotism, unity, roles and responsibilities	Oral Questions, Small Group discussion
Session 3	Ethnic Identity civic responsibilities, celebrating cultures, traditions, languages, cultural norms	Role-play activity sheets based on the beliefs and reflexivity of the students
Session 4	Religious Identity Rights and responsibilities towards religious identity of self and others	Socratic method Q/A in the form of Oral discussion, self-reflective activity sheet
Session 5	Gender Identity Perceptions, gender as a social construct, gender differences, associated values (Self and others' gender identities)	Illustration method- Role-play, reflective activity sheet
Post-Test		
Art Exhibition		
Focused Group Discussion		

Focused group discussion

Focused group discussion was conducted in a non-formal open setting to eliminate the stress of judgment with given questions in Table 3.

Table 3. Focused group guide.

Themes of Focus	Areas of Discussion
Human Identity	Have you thought about your identity before? What are your views about evolving ideas, beliefs, and thought patterns? What are affecting aspects of personal identity? Did you recall your previous beliefs during intervention sessions? Will you accept different identities around you?
National Identity	Do you find any connection between your national identity and your identity? What are your views about the need for acceptance of diverse national identities?
Ethnic Identity	Do you find traces of your ethnic identity in your identity? What impacts cultural norms can have on the identity of a family or an individual? Do you accept changes in your cultural norms and people with other cultural diversity?
Religious Identity	What are your views about religious diversity? What influence do you think religion has had on your identity? What is the role of your family's religious practices in your identity formation? Can promoting religious harmony affect your religion?
Gender Identity	Do you understand the difference between gender identity and biological representation? Sound minds and body requires peace, can we promote peace and acceptance for such people?
Psycho-social Identity	What effects a family can have on an individual's identity? Do you think peers can modify your identity? Do you think socioeconomic status hinders identity development?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The pre- and post-comparison of mean and standard deviation was performed on SPSS version 2023 as shown in Table 4. Two domains of identity showed significant differences through applying the non-parametric test Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test to know the difference between the pre-test and post-test. The value of p <.000 denotes the significant value. According to the standard significant p-value, two domains, gender identity and psycho-social identity, with .000 and .005 p-values, had positive significance with an enhancement of consciousness of multicultural identity after the intervention session. The remaining three identity domains with (.29, .16, .56) imply negative significance on identity enhancement of Undergraduate students.

Table 4. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Wilcoxon Signed Rant Test for Pre-Post Test using MULTIIS N= 46.

Domains of Identity	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Zstats	Alpha (p)	Sig.
Gender Identity	3.37 (0.29)	3.63 (0.30)	3.879	.000	Yes
Ethnic Identity	4.25 (0.49)	4.15 (0.45)	1.057	.290	No
National Identity	3.95 (0.54)	4.05 (0.54)	1.392	.164	No
Religious Identity	3.89 (0.57)	4.04 (0.50)	0.570	.569	No
Psycho-social Identity	3.76 (0.65)	4.14 (0.45)	2.804	.005	Yes

A Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test revealed that two engaged identity domains, gender identity and psycho-social identity, to enhance multicultural identity are statistically significant with effect sizes 0.59 and 0.44. Cohen (1988) indicated the criteria of values determining the effect size are 0.1 = small effect, 0.3 = medium effect, and 0.5 = large effect.

Table 5. Extent of multicultural identity consciousness enhancement through intervention.

Themes	Sub-themes
Human Identity	Free expression of personal identity
	Holding previous beliefs and perceptions
	Evolution of identity
	Acceptance of diverse identities
National Identity	Connection with national and personal identity
	Acceptance of diverse national identities
Ethnic Identity	Cultural norms
	Evolution in cultural norms
	Acceptance of diverse ethnicity
Religious Identity	Religious impact on personal identity
	Religious diversity as a threat
Gender Identity	Difference between biological representation and gender identity
	Acceptance for people with the clash in genetical self and gender identity
Psycho-social Identity	Parental and peer influence on identity
	Socio-economic status and identity

Themes Focused Group Discussion Interpretation

This has been found after the semantic analysis of the Pakistan Studies curriculum, a 2-credit-hour course designed by the Higher Education Commission, that no identity domain has been catered to the course content of Pakistan Studies.

Table 6. Themes and sub-themes for FGD interpretation.

Sr. No.	Identity Domain	P value	Effect Size	FSD Viewpoint	Sign.
01	Gender Identity	<.000	0.59	Acceptance of diverse gender identity	Yes
02	National Identity	.164	Low	Acceptance of diverse National identities	Yes
03	Ethnic Identity	.290	Low	Acceptance of diverse ethnic identities	Medium level of sign.
04	Religious Identity	.569	Low	Acceptance of diverse religious identities	Gap b/w Practice and Understanding
05	Psycho-social Identity	<.005	0.44	Acceptance of diverse psycho-social identities	Yes

Course objective-Content Gap: The phenomena of identity and diversity were added to the overall course objectives, but the topics were not incorporated accordingly to achieve the target of emphasizing the awareness of diverse cultural and ethnic practices. The thematic analysis highlighted the gap between the designed course objectives and the content in the recommended topics, along with activities and assessment procedures. To achieve the course objectives, this is essential to build a connection between content and objectives. The inferential statistics designates a medium significant value in the enhancement of consciousness about multicultural identity, keeping the ethnic domain intact with p <.290. However, the focused group discussion had a different point of view which claims that ethnic practices need to evolve with time. The core essences of the cultural norms can be preserved through evolution in ethnic tendencies. The quantitative results of the religious identity domain show p <.569, which demonstrates a low significance value because the participants already claimed to be well aware of the differences in religious diversity in the community. They claimed that being society members, they have no other choice but to show tolerance and acceptance for their differences. Similarly, they explained that despite the clarity of differences in religious diversity, particularly in the Pakistani context, less patience and acceptance have been analyzed, which unfortunately led to different incidents occurring due to less acceptance for religiously diverse individuals. The quantitative analysis of the psycho-social domain of identity presented p <.005, and the effect size was calculated as r =0.44, which is a high significant value; however, FGD explained the interference clearly as the participants described that they cannot explicit their perspective of identity due to family and societal influence of living. Gender and national identity domains possess the least significant value in enhancing the multicultural identity perspective. The quantitative and qualitative analysis illustrates low significance value for national identity as the responses were almost the same before and after the intervention sessions. Although the interaction experience of Pakistani participants was less as national diversity is rare, the concept of diverse national identity and expectations from them still contained the perspective of multicultural identity. Quantitative and qualitative triangulation concluded that there was a significant value of enhancement in participants' consciousness about multicultural identity after the intervention session. The concept was clearer, and they were ready to experience and promote a positive attitude toward the differences in identity domains.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Quantitative and qualitative research analysis methods were used for the analysis of the collected data. The research was explanatory by design and started with a qualitative research method adopted for content analysis. Intervention sessions were directed in the following phase of research comprising a pre-posttest

of the adapted scale. Non-parametric data analysis was performed. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was applied to rank the difference between the pre and post-tests of the participants. Two domains of identity showed significant differences; however, three domains rank between medium and low significant effect. For triangulation of the results, a focused group discussion was organized. Participants' responses were recorded along with the field notes. Interpretation of the responses highlighted the synergy in the shared opinions. The inter-rater reliability of the interpretations was performed by a fellow researcher.

The substance of the research was intended to enlighten the bidirectional process among beings and society, in an operative way, resulting in people becoming more accountable through being conscious of self-concepts and acceptance and respect of diversity, which are major aspects of multicultural identity. Enhancing multicultural identity in an educational setting necessitates alignment of all academic and co-curricular activities with course objectives and the syllabus. The results of the study describe that the process of identity can be enhanced by connecting it with academic content and connecting students in co-curricular activities like role-plays, interviews, and interactive learning procedures. There are many features of multicultural identity enhancement in the future, such as thorough relational content analysis should be done to minutely check the content relationship with the identity development process. Human identity carries vast aspects of identity at the personal and societal levels. This research has theoretically discussed the bidirectional process between being and society. The future researcher can statistically check the effects of aspects on both variables. Identity enhancement flourishes in the early years of life. The practice needs to be done by the parents and teachers in school. Future researchers can research young children's identity development process at the primary level. This research was conducted on female participants only. Future research can conduct a research study on mixed groups of participants to promote the phenomena of multicultural identity equally in society.

Multicultural identity is a bond between diversities in our communities. Every individual is unique in their very own way, genetically and extrinsically. Every context adds its color to the situation. To develop humble and peaceful societies around us, it is mandatory to promote acceptance and respect for diverse identities. Connecting the perspective of multicultural identity in educational settings, family rituals, and societal norms will encourage understanding of the people around us. To stop blaming people and start exploring logical findings behind the malpractices against diverse identities to remodel and help individuals reverse their negative attitudes. Globalization is an opportunity to develop our identity in such a way as to fill the transactional spaces with acceptance and respect of multiplicities by diversifying ourselves. This research study proves that consciousness can be enhanced through educational settings, which can directly impact society. And educating our teachers can bring a positive change in the overall mindsets of society.

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