A Study of the Relationship between Life Style and Women's Social Identity: A Case Study of Women in Ilam

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The process of globalization has considerably affected different aspects of human life, including gender attitude, education, identity, and life style (Chiu, 2010; Lotf Abadi, 2008; Nourouzi, 2004; Theophanous, 2011). In modern society, social identity is predicated on social class or individuals' life style (Rahmat Abadi & Aghabakhshi, 2006). Women constituting one half of society are situated in the rather different atmospheres which have changed their available resources, roles, and status in the society more than anything else (Qaderzadeh, 2011). One of the most important of these changes is the change in the process of production and reproduction of their social identity (Moghaddas & Khajenoori, 2004). The present study considers the social identity of women in the city of Ilam which is deemed to be one of the tribal and traditional cities of Iran.

2. Theoretical Framework

In its simplest term, social identity is "the definition of an individual based on his or her membership in social groups in society" (Brown, 1985, p. 771). Moreover,a person's social identity refers to the characteristics and thoughts that one acquires through social sharing, membership in groups and social categories.. By internalizing these features, the individual feels affinity toward that group. The social identity of individual creates the concept of "we" against the concept of "they" (Mehrmand et al., 2009, p. 95). In fact, all identities are to some extent social identities (Jenkins, 1996) because no identity exists apart from society. The root of identity formation is in the process of socialization although this should be noted that the social identity is a process which changes during one's life. With

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regard to Giddens' (1999) view, "identity is created and constantly is adapted and experienced with respect to life styles and paradoxes, and the motivating tendencies of today's institutions" (Giddens, 1999,p. 261). Bourdieu (1984) also emphasizes the the role of identity with regard to one's life style, and use it as a tool to show social distinction (as cited in Storey, 2006). The results of this research confirm the existence of a relationship between life style and individual identity. Nowadays, women become acquainted with new styles of living through using modern tools like satellites, the Internet, and cyber space, and they feel compelled to compare these tools with the traditional style of living. The existence of women in different fields around the world specifically in developed countries has incited other women to reconsider their social identities and their roles within society, which has brought about many questions in their minds (Moghaddas & Khajenoori, 2005). The main assumption of the current research is to consider the relationship between the identity and the life style of women in Ilam.

3. Methodology

This research is conducted through a quantitative method. The population of this research is consisted of women living in Ilam. The samples are taken from four hundred married women from Ilam. Multi-stage cluster sampling is used here. The questionnaires used are designed by the researchers. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used to evaluate the reliability of the items of the social identity variable which equals $\alpha = 73/0$. For the validity of the items of the life style variable, two methods of content and construct validity are used.

4. Results

The results of the descriptive statistics showed that the average age of the women in this study was 36/52, and most of them belonged to the groups of 34-49. Forty-eight percent of them had university education, while 66/5 percent of them were housewives. In addition, most of them belonged to the middle class. The results of the two-variable methods showed that the social identity of women has a positive correlation with religious life style, musical life style, and athletic life style. Moreover, there exists a negative correlation between the virtual life style and social identity. Based on multiple regression statistics, the effective independent variables on social identity were taken into consideration. With regard to the logic of the method of multi-variable methods, independent variables that significantly contributed to the explanation of variance were included in the equation for the dependent variable in seven steps. . The entered variables respectively included social class, religious life style, musical life style, job, neighborhood, virtual life style, and athletic life style. Altogether, the model of this study explained 24 percent of the changes in the variable of social identity.

5. Conclusion

The present research showed that the selection of one specific life style can greatly affect women's identity. For several decades, girls and women around the world have questioned and confronted their established and traditional identity. Based upon Giddnes's view, due to today's open social life, the multiplicity of the activities in contexts and the great number of resources with more authority, the selection of life style with the purpose of constructing an identity and resuming daily activities is extensively becoming more important. The results of this research showed that the selection of life styles with the purpose of directing one's identity is significant. These findings are totally in line with the results of the studies conducted by Azadarmaki and Chavoshian (2002), Moghaddas and Khajenoori (2005), Tanhaie and Khorrami (2010), Mirzaii (2011), Campbell (2007), Mashhadi (2011), and Dedeoglu and Ustundagli (2011). They all approve that life style directs an individual's social identity.

Keywords: Social identity, life styles, Women, Ilam

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