

COGNITIVE REASONING PROCESSES AND IDENTITY COMMITMENT: MEDIATING ROLE OF IDENTITY PROCESSING STYLES

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Abstract

Knowing 'who one is' and developing a clear sense of 'self' are important tasks to be accomplished by adolescents. In negotiating the different issues related to the adolescents' self, the differences in how individuals process self-related information and general cognitive reasoning processes play important role. The present study is aimed at investigating the direct as well as indirect effect (through identity processing styles) of cognitive reasoning processes (rational-experiential processing systems) on identity commitment. In this model, identity processing styles serve as a catalyst for cognitive reasoning and identity commitment. For this purpose, a sample of 250 boys and 250 girls with ages ranging from 15-20 years was taken. Identity Style Inventory-3 (Berzonsky, 1992b) and Rational Experiential Inventory-Adolescents (Marks et al., 2008) were administered on the sample. The mediating role of identity processing styles in the relationship of cognitive reasoning and identity commitment was investigated. The results of Multiple Hierarchical Regression analyses revealed that the relation between rational processing system and identity commitment is completely mediated by informational identity processing style (positively) and diffuse-avoidant style (negatively). Still further, the relationship between experiential processing and identity commitment is completely mediated by informational identity processing style. The current study findings are considered in terms of Berzonsky's (2007, 2008a) socio-cognitive model of formation of identity.

Keywords: Informational Processing Style, Normative Processing Style,

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Diffuse-Avoidant Processing Style, Rational-Experiential Processing Systems and Identity Commitment

The period of adolescence is considered to be very critical in the identity formation (Erikson, 1968). Even though, development of identity is said to be a lifelong journey, the experiences gained in adolescence sometimes have a lifelong effect on one's identity. According to Marcia (1966: 131), "studying identity formation is educationally useful because individuals do better and feel better about themselves and others when they have it." So, gaining knowledge of the processes of identity formation and the experiences of adolescents can therefore assist in this endeavour. Adolescents who are capable of developing a clear and positive identity after their developmental struggles during the period of adolescence often advance more smoothly into adulthood. A coherent, well-integrated identity structure gives a sense of purpose and direction, and it helps by providing the base for effectively coping with and adapting to the demands of daily life (Erikson 1968). So, it is important to trace significant determinants of identity during the adolescence stage, so that it will be helpful in proposing different strategies for cultivation of positive identity.

Within the field of psychology, the nature and the process of development of identity and other related concepts like self and self-identity have attracted many researchers (Kroger, 2007; Louw & Kail, 2007; Luyckx et al., 2006; McAdams & Cox, 2010; Schwartz, 2006, 2007; Schwartz et al., 2011; etc.) over decades. Studies began with Freud's early writings and they were popularised by Erikson's (1950, 1968) theoretical expositions. Since the 1960s, Marcia's empirical operationalization of the concept of identity has led other theorists (like Beyers & Goossens, 2008; Crocetti, Rubini & Meeus, 2008; Kahan, 2013; McAdams & Cox, 2010; Smits et al., 2008 etc.) to develop the issue of identity further. Review of literature based on all these studies suggests that identity is an important social science concept. There are structural and process components involved in identity. Structurally, identity can be meaningfully organized into different domains like general, physical, psychological, social, and spiritual. Identity formation also involves dynamic processes because identity evolves along with person's development throughout his/her life span. Identity is dependent on extra personal factors like environmental changes, life experiences and intrapersonal identity processes, including exploration, commitment, and reconsideration. There is also evidence that other variables like gender, age, and

culture patterns at different times affect the identity development.

Marcia (1966, cited in Kroger 2007: 27) has been credited with developing the identity status paradigm which was the very first empirical operationalisation of Erikson's pioneering work. Marcia classified four identity statuses on the basis of exploration and commitment: a) identity achievement (b) identity moratorium (c) identity foreclosure, and (d) identity diffusion. A large bulk of literature has proven authentic differences in identity statuses along many cognitive, personal, and social dimensions (Davis, 2012; Stoop, 2005; Pasupathi & Weeks, 2010). During the past four decades, most identity researchers had based their work on identity status paradigm and this model has stimulated quite a large number of theoretical and empirical researches in these previous years. The Marcia (1966, cited in Kroger 2007: 27) statuses are characteristically known as identity outcomes because exploration and commitment are confounded within each status category.

Longitudinal study by Meeus, Iedema, Helsén, and Vollebergh (1999) has revealed that individuals do shift or alternate between different statuses like from foreclosure to moratorium status, from foreclosure to the diffusion identity status, and from diffusion to foreclosure identity status. Further, in identity status model, identity achievement was considered as a mature status and identity diffusion as an immature status. According to Waterman (1990) moratorium status was considered more mature than foreclosure status. From this it appears that in status model of identity, the interest is shifted from holding commitment into the exploration of identity alternatives. Though, exploration refers to the process of formation of identity, however, the status paradigm of identity was rather outcome oriented. Keeping these issues in mind, Berzonsky (1990) gave the idea of identity processing styles that explains how individuals tackle different identity related issues.

Berzonsky (1990) described how identity can be conceptualized in terms of structure, process and content. Berzonsky (1989b, 1990) proposed an individual differences perspective on identity formation which is based on people's preferable methods of solving various problems and making decisions related to different issues of self. Berzonsky (1990) postulated three different identity processing styles. These identity processing styles refer to the socio-cognitive strategies used by the individuals to make decisions and to cope with personal problems, to process self-relevant information, and to construct a sense of identity (Berzonsky, 1989a, 1989b, 1990, 2003). The identity processing style model draws on the personal

construct theories of Epstein (1973), Inhelder and Piaget (1958) and Kelly (1955). Three identity processing styles/strategies have been identified by Berzonsky: informational, normative and diffuse-avoidant.

The informational identity processing style incorporates deliberately seeking-out, processing, and evaluating the information related to their identity. Informational style using individuals are skeptical self-explorers who are more open to new ideas and are willing to suspend judgment so as to examine and evaluate their self constructions. This identity processing style is hypothesised to lead to a well integrated self-theory or lead to more committed sense of self.

The normative identity processing style represents imitation and conformity. Individuals with a normative identity processing style internalize and stick to standards, goals, values, and prescriptions of significant others in a relatively automatic or mindless manner. It means they make premature commitments without critically evaluating the information (Berzonsky et al.2013; Berzonsky & Papini 2014, 2015). This automatic approach to self-construction is hypothesised to be linked with a rigidly organised self-theory compile of change-resistant self-construct (Berzonsky, 1989a, 1989b).

A diffuse-avoidant identity processing style involves a reluctance to confront and deal with identity related conflicts and issues. If an individual procrastinates too long, then his/her actions and choices will be decided by situational demands and consequences. Individuals with a diffuse-avoidant identity processing style adopt an unplanned, situation-specific approach to self-theorizing, which leads to a fragmented set of self-constructs with limited overall unity (Berzonsky 1989b, 1990, 2008a, 2008b).

As far as the strength of identity commitment is concerned, the informational and normative identity processing styles are expected to be positively associated with identity commitments, though the commitments in case of normative style are formed without active exploration. Keeping in view the above mentioned aspects, Berzonsky's (1990) socio-cognitive model of identity, emphasising identity processing styles has been used and studied with measure of identity commitment.

In the recent few decades, the researchers working on human reasoning have proposed the existence of two systems of reasoning—rational and experiential. CEST theory given by Epstein (1983, 1990, 1991) said that the individuals can utilise two systems to process information, i.e. the rational and experiential system. These two

systems operate relatively independently and are guided by different rules of influence. The rational system is an inferential system that functions on the basis of a person's understanding of the rules of reasoning and these rules are mainly culturally transmitted. The rational processing system relies on logics and rationality.

The experiential system relies on experience and intuition. In this reasoning processing system individuals consider issues automatically, intuitively and effortlessly. In this processing system, individuals don't prefer to use logical rules. The experiential processing system is more rapid, it focuses on ongoing actions rather than future possibilities. Kroger (2017), Landline (2016) and Monacis et al. (2016) proposed that the process of individual's identity formation is dependent on rational as well as experiential ways of processing the information related to the self.

The rational way of processing the information helps an individual in their active exploration of identity related issues. This view provides a basis for thinking about the process with the help of which conclusions and commitments are arrived at and in critically evaluating the extent to which those conclusions correspond to available evidence. Considerable body of research on identity formation suggests that adolescents often go through a period of actively exploring various possibilities or alternatives before committing themselves to particular beliefs, ideals and goals (Berzonsky & Adams 1999; Berzonsky & Papini 2014, 2015; Bosma & Kunnen 2001; Schmeichel, Caskey & Hicks 2015; Marcia 1993). The period of actively exploring different options that have not been considered before, appears to be essential so as to achieve an ego-identity that provides a sense of unity and direction in life. Hence, rational way of processing is expected to be associated with identity commitment. On the other hand, the experiential reasoning system involves those cognitive processes which work with limited conscious awareness and in an automatic fashion, therefore, this cognitive style is also expected to relate with identity commitment. However, individuals who are using rational processing system will make commitments after exploring different alternatives, but experiential system users tend to make commitment without active exploration.

The relevance of rational-experiential processing systems in identity processing styles is expected because the cognitive reasoning processing systems given by Epstein (1983) and identity processing styles given by Berzonsky (1989a, 1989b, 1990) both are information processing ways. An informational processing style is found to be positively linked with rational and experiential based reasoning

(Berzonsky 2007, 2008a; Berzonsky et al. 2013; Berzonsky & Papini 2014, 2015). Normative identity processing style may be associated to experiential processing system that involves relatively automatic internalization of the standards, expectations and values of significant others (Berzonsky 2008a, 2008b; Berzonsky et al. 2013; Berzonsky & Papini 2015). Krettenauer (2005) suggests that individuals scoring high on diffuse-avoidance style perceive knowledge and the world as a chaotic option that permits little scope of rational judgment. The diffuse-avoidance identity processing style has been found to be negatively linked to rational processing system (Berzonsky 1990, 2008a, 2008b; Berzonsky et al. 2013; Berzonsky & Papini 2015) and it is positively related with experiential or intuitive processing system (Berzonsky 2008a; Berzonsky & Luyckx 2008).

The empirical support for the hypothesised theoretical link found between identity processing styles and the rational-experiential processing systems indicate that individuals may vary in the extent to which they prefer to use different cognitive reasoning processing systems when dealing with different identity-related issues. The direct effect of cognitive reasoning on identity commitment, cognitive reasoning on identity processing styles and of identity processing styles on identity commitment has been explored extensively. Though the literature associating cognitive reasoning to identity commitment, cognitive reasoning to identity processing styles and identity processing styles to identity commitment has been considered separately but a different way of explaining the relationship of cognitive reasoning with identity commitment through the mediating role of identity processing styles has been reported by Berzonsky (2007, 2008a). Thus, considering all these links, the current research is focused on exploring the direct as well as indirect effect (through identity processing styles) of cognitive reasoning variables (rational-experiential processing systems) on identity commitment. Both the cognitive reasoning as well as identity processing styles have been found to predict identity commitment in adolescence, and cognitive reasoning have been also found to predict identity processing styles, therefore it may be plausible to consider that the identity processing styles may play a role in the relationship between cognitive reasoning and identity commitment. Keeping these links in mind, a mediational model is proposed as the objective of the current study. Hence, current study is also a validation of the mediational model proposed by Berzonsky (2007, 2008a). The hypothesized mediational model is shown in the following figure:

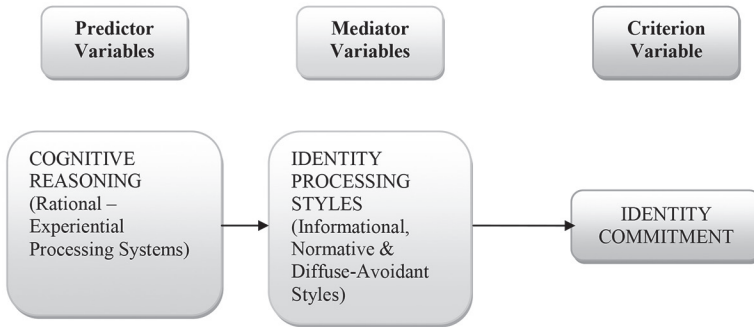


Figure 1. Hypothesised Model of Relationship between Cognitive Reasoning (Rational-Experiential Processing Systems), Identity Processing Styles and Identity Commitment (adapted from Berzonsky, 2007, 2008a)

Hypotheses

On the basis of theoretical considerations and review of research studies, following hypotheses were framed:

1. There will be a positive relationship between rational-experiential processing systems and identity commitment in adolescents.
2. There will be a significant relationship between rational-experiential processing systems and identity processing styles in adolescents:
 - a) Rational and experiential processing systems both will be positively related to informational identity processing style.
 - b) Experiential processing system will be positively related to normative identity processing style.
 - c) Rational processing system will be negatively related to diffuse-avoidant identity processing style.
 - d) Experiential processing system will be positively related to diffuse-avoidant identity processing style.
3. There will be significant relationship between identity processing styles and identity commitment in adolescents:
 - a) Informational identity processing style will be positively related to identity commitment.
 - b) Normative identity processing style will be positively related to identity commitment.
 - c) Diffuse-avoidant identity processing style will be negatively related to identity commitment.
4. There will be a mediational role of identity processing styles

in the relationship between cognitive reasoning variables (rational-experiential processing systems) and identity commitment in adolescents.

Method

Sample

To achieve the objectives of the research, total sample consisted of 500 adolescents (250 boys and 250 girls). The sample was collected from various schools and colleges of city Amritsar in Punjab, India. The age ranged from 15-20 years with an average age of 17.62 years. The sampling technique used was purposive and incidentally convenient in nature. This study used a non-probability sample, i.e. a combination of random and convenience sample. While choosing the sample, care was taken that the schools and colleges so chosen were more or less homogenous with regard to cultural background and academic milieu. The sample was chosen on the basis of the cooperation shown by the authorities of different schools, colleges and students. Only those students who were ready to participate were selected.

Measures

Identity processing styles: ISI-3 (Identity style inventory- third revision).

Identity Processing styles and identity commitment were assessed with ISI-3 (Berzonsky, 1992b). The ISI-3 contains three continuous style scales: (a) Informational style scale having 11 items, (b) Normative style scale having 9 items, (c) Diffuse-avoidant style scale having 10 items and 10 items for identity commitment (total 40 items). Each item is rated on 5-point scale (1=Not at all like me; 5=Very much like me). The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha were .70, .64,.76 and .71 for information style scale, the normative style scale, diffuse-avoidant style scale and commitment scales respectively. Test-retest reliabilities reported by the author over two-week interval were found to be: informational (.87), normative (.87), diffuse-avoidant (.83) and commitment (.89). Test-retest reliabilities of identity processing styles and identity commitment over 20 days interval in the current study were found to be: informational (.78), normative (.82), diffuse-avoidant (.71) and identity commitment scale (.84).

Rational and experiential processing systems: REI-A (Rational Experiential Inventory-Adolescents).

The REI-A (Marks et al., 2008) is a relatively new questionnaire composed of 20 items designed to assess the extent to which an individual relies on rational versus experiential information processing. The inventory is theoretically motivated by Cognitive-Experiential Self Theory (CEST; Epstein, 1983). REI-A consists of two dimensions : **Rational Style**, measured by an adapted Need for cognition (NFC) Scale (Cacioppo and Petty,1982), emphasizes a conscious, analytical approach and **Experiential Style**, measured by the Faith in Intuition (FI) Scale, emphasizes a pre-conscious, affective,holistic approach. Each sub-scale contains 10 items. Each item is rated on five-point scale (1=disagree strongly; 5=agree strongly). Both rational and experiential scales of the REI-A exhibited good internal consistency (cronbach's $\alpha > 0.80$) i.e. rational $\alpha = 0.89$ and experiential $\alpha = 0.81$ and excellent five week test-retest reliability ($r > 0.90$) i.e. for rationality $\alpha = 0.98$ and for experientiality $\alpha = 0.95$ reported by the author. Test-retest reliabilities in the current study have found to be .81 for rational processing scale and .77 for experiential processing scale.

Procedure

Before the actual administration of different psychological measures, proper rapport was established with all the subjects. Subjects were taken into confidence by assuring them that the information was being purely collected for the purpose of research and it would be kept fully confidential. Some items of psychological measures were modified so as to make these measures more relevant to Indian adolescents. Psychological measures were administered in groups of 15-20 adolescent students within the classroom settings. Separate instructions were imparted to the subjects for each measure used as per instructions mentioned in their respective manuals. Subjects were told to fill their particulars like name, gender, age and any other important information mentioned on the face sheets. The queries and questions of subjects were cleared from time to time. All the subjects were asked to complete all questionnaires. Scoring of different measures used was done as per the scoring procedure mentioned in their respective manual booklets.

Results

Cognitive Reasoning and Identity Processing Styles

A series of Hierarchical Regression Analyses were conducted to study the relationship between cognitive reasoning (rational-experiential processing systems) and identity processing styles. In these analyses, each identity style variable (informational, normative and diffuse-avoidant) entered as the criterion variables and cognitive reasoning (rational-experiential processing systems) served as the predictor variable. The cognitive reasoning variables accounted for 14% ($R^2 = .14$) of the variance in informational identity processing style.

Table 1: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Taking Identity Processing Styles as Criterion Variable and Cognitive Reasoning (Rational-Experiential Processing) as Predictor Variables

Predictor Variables	Informational Style		Normative Style		Diffuse- Avoidant Style	
	β	t	β	T	β	t
Rational Processing	0.19	4.45**	0.05	1.00	-0.17	3.65**
Experiential Processing	0.14	3.20**	0.21	0.64**	0.01	0.26
R^2	0.14		0.07		0.05	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

As shown in Table 1, rational and experiential processing systems were positively associated with informational identity processing style. The beta coefficients of rational processing ($\beta = .19$; $t(500) = 4.45$, $p < 0.01$), experiential processing ($\beta = .14$; $t(500) = 3.20$, $p < 0.01$) are contributing in the variance. The positive association of rational-experiential processing systems both with an informational identity processing style reveal that the informational identity using adolescents not only depend on rational way of processing but they also utilize experiences which are based on real life. Similar findings were also reported by Berzonsky (1990, 2007, 2008a); Berzonsky and Papini (2015).

For normative identity processing style, the cognitive variables accounted for 7% ($R^2 = .07$) of the variance in normative identity processing style. As shown in Table 1, the experiential processing system was positively associated with normative identity processing

style. This unique contribution of experiential processing system was reflected in the beta coefficient which has come out to be ($\beta = .21$; $t(500) = 0.64$, $p < 0.01$). The experiential processing system was found to be positively linked with normative identity processing style. This is due to the normative approach to identity formation that emphasizes the relatively automatic internalization and adoption of standards, values and beliefs approved by significant persons. Similar kind of relationship was also reported by Berzonsky (1990, 2007, 2008a, 2008b); Berzonsky and Papini (2015); Crocetti et al. (2009).

Further, with regard to diffuse-avoidant identity processing style the cognitive variables accounted for 5% ($R^2 = .05$) of the variance in diffuse-avoidant identity processing style. As shown in Table 1, rational processing system was negatively associated with diffuse-avoidant identity style by making unique contribution which is reflected in the beta coefficient that has come out to be ($\beta = -.17$; $t(500) = 3.65$, $p < 0.01$). The results are indicative of how the diffuse-avoidant identity processing style using adolescents may view knowledge and the world as chaotic multiplicity of options that offer less hope of objective thinking and rational judgement. Similar kind of findings were also reported by (Berzonsky, (1990, 2008a, 2008b) in which diffuse-avoidant identity processing style was found to be negatively related to rational processing system. In present study, no significant relationship between automatic/experiential processing system and diffuse-avoidant identity processing style is found. It may be because of the low psychosocial resources, low level of commitment in diffuse-avoiders do not allow them to take decisions on the basis of their experiences. Similarly, research findings by (Berzonsky 2007; Crocetti et al. 2009) revealed no relationship between diffuse-avoidant identity processing style and automatic/experiential processing system.

Cognitive Reasoning, Identity Processing Styles and Identity Commitment

The hierarchical multiple regression analysis was employed to study identity processing styles as mediating the relationship between cognitive reasoning (rational-experiential processing systems) and identity commitment. In these analyses, cognitive reasoning variables were entered on step 1 and identity processing styles were entered on step 2 as predictor variables and identity commitment served as criterion variable.

Table 2: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Taking Cognitive Reasoning (Rational-Experiential Processing) and Identity Processing Styles as Predictor Variables and Identity Commitment as Criterion Variable

Predictor Variables	Identity Commitment			
	Step 1		Step 2	
	β	T	β	t
Rational Processing	0.16	3.60**	0.03	0.82
Experiential Processing	0.12	2.71**	0.04	0.99
Informational Style			0.49	10.39**
Normative style			0.08	1.67
Diffuse- Avoidant Style			-0.17	4.57**
R ²	0.09		0.34	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2 reveals that at step 1, the rational-experiential processing variables when entered accounted for 9% ($R^2 = .09$) of the variance in identity commitment ($F = 10.112, p < 0.01$). The beta coefficients of rational processing system ($\beta = .16; SE = .05; t(500) = 3.60, p < 0.01$) and for experiential processing system ($\beta = .12; SE = .05; t(500) = 2.71, p < 0.01$) indicated that both rational as well as experiential cognitive reasoning variables as significant predictors of identity commitment in adolescents. In step 2, identity processing styles were added to see the mediational effect, accounted for 34% variance in identity commitment ($R^2 = .34$), with two identity styles of informational and diffuse-avoidant uniquely explaining this variance. The $F = 31.907, p < 0.01$ predicted a significant relationship of the predictor and the criterion variable along with revealing the mediational role of mediator variable. So when the identity processing styles were added to see its mediational role, then additional 25% variance (R^2 change = .25) in identity commitment was accounted. The beta coefficients of informational identity processing style ($\beta = .49; SE = .04; t(500) = 10.39**, p < 0.01$), and diffuse-avoidant identity processing style ($\beta = -.17; SE = .03; t(500) = 4.57**, p < 0.01$) came out to be as significant variables predicting the effect of mediation.

Discussion

The results of the present study have led to the analysis that identity processing styles (informational and diffuse-avoidant) play a

significant role in the link between rational-experiential cognitive processing and identity commitment in adolescents. The results of the current study have proved the effect of mediation as the addition of the mediating variable has led to an increase in the R^2 (from 9% to 34%). Evidence for mediation is also proved as the variance in the value of beta coefficients between the predictor variable and criterion variable is lower and insignificant in the presence of the mediator variable (Table 2). The β values of rational processing and experiential processing systems were insignificant at step 2 that indicate that the relation between rational and experiential processing systems and identity commitment was completely mediated.

The results of the present study provide support to the hypothesis that the rational-experiential processing systems are positively related to identity commitment, thus, hypothesis 1 stands proved. The rational and experiential processing systems both have been found to be positively related to informational identity processing style, thus, our hypothesis 2a has been proved. Further, the experiential processing system has been found to be positively related to normative identity processing style and rational system negatively related to diffuse-avoidant identity processing style, the hypotheses 2b, 2c have been proved. However, no significant relationship has been found between experiential processing system and diffuse-avoidant identity processing style, hypothesis 2d has been disproved.

Further, studying the relationship of identity processing styles with identity commitment, the informational identity processing style is found to be positively related with identity commitment, thus, hypothesis 3a stands proved and the relationship between normative identity processing style and identity commitment has found to be insignificant; hence, hypothesis 3b stands disproved. Still further, the significant and negative relationship between the diffuse-avoidant identity processing style and identity commitment has been found, thus, hypothesis 3c stands approved. The results of mediational model have found that the relationship between rational and experiential cognitive processing systems and identity commitment is completely mediated by identity processing styles. Thus, hypothesis 4 is accepted.

Figure 2 showing hierarchical multiple regression analysis studying the mediating role of identity processing styles between rational-experiential cognitive processing systems and identity commitment has revealed that the relation between rational processing system and identity commitment is completely mediated by informational identity processing style (positively) and diffuse-avoidant style

(negatively). The relationship between experiential processing system and identity commitment is completely mediated by informational style (positively). Similarly Berzonsky (2007) also reported that the relationship between rational processing system and identity commitment completely mediated by informational (positively) and diffuse-avoidant identity processing styles (negatively), reporting 37% additional variance after adding identity processing style in multiple hierarchical regression. In the same study the relation between experiential system and identity commitment was found to be completely mediated by informational and normative identity processing styles. Likewise, Berzonsky (2008a) also reported the complete mediational role played by all three identity processing styles between rational-experiential processing systems and identity commitment (reporting 20% additional variance after adding identity processing styles). Moreover, identity processing styles accounted for more or greater portion of variance in identity commitment as compared to rational-experiential cognitive processing systems in the current study as well as in the studies reported by Berzonsky (2007, 2008a).

The results of the mediational analysis indicate that the process of identity commitment is not only a rational and analytical process. It also relies on experience based automatic processing. It indicates that along with the logical development, healthy real life experiences are also important in achieving a coherent sense of identity. The present finding further suggests the contribution of rational and experiential way of processing in the formation of a sense of self is mediated by identity processing styles. It shows that other than the general ways of processing the information, the specific ways of processing the self related information i.e. identity processing styles also play important role in achieving a coherent identity by mediating the relationship between rational-experiential processing and identity commitment. Present results suggest that the relationship between rational processing system and identity commitment is completely mediated by informational identity processing style (positively) and diffuse-avoidant style (negatively). It means the different characteristics associated with informational identity processing style and rational way of processing the information i.e. more openness to new information, more critical attitude towards their self-concepts, and more flexibility in revising their identity when they face discrepant information about themselves, willingness to suspend judgment so as to examine and evaluate their self constructions. All these features will help an adolescent to make strong identity commitments on the

basis of active exploration.

Further, the negative association of diffuse-avoidant identity processing style with identity commitment indicate that diffuse-avoidant style using adolescents tend to avoid and procrastinate and deny different identity related issues and problems and are reluctant to confront and actively engage in commitments. If an individual procrastinates too long, then his / her actions and choices will be decided by situational demands and consequences. Such context-sensitive adjustments are more likely to involve temporary acts of verbal or behavioural compliance rather than stable one. Still further the results of current mediational analysis indicate that the relationship between experiential processing and identity commitment is completely mediated by informational identity processing style. The association of experiential processing with informational identity processing style and identity commitment further reflects that the process of identity formation is not only a rational process; it also involves self-reflective process that reflects on intrapersonal values, views and convictions. It is significant to point here that the mediational analyses applied on the data has provided for a further validation of the mediational models as had been proposed by Berzonsky (2007, 2008a), where he mentioned that the identity processing styles are mediating the relationship of rational-experiential processing systems with identity commitment.

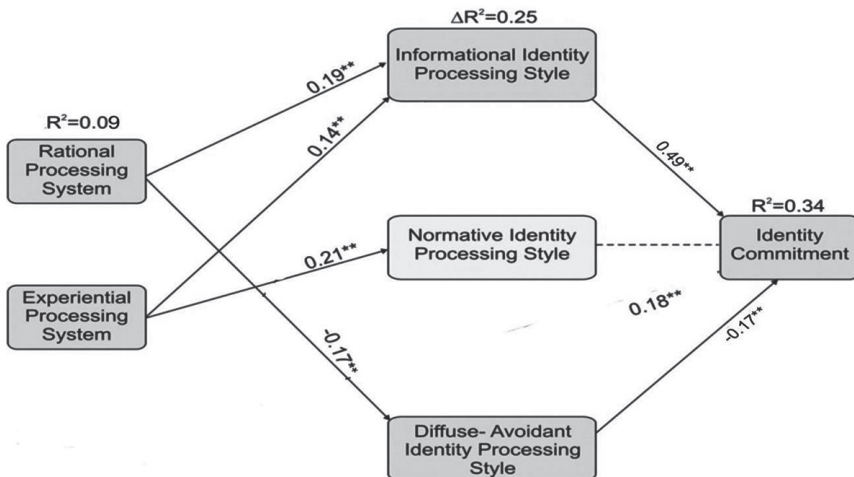


Figure 2: Mediation Model Showing Significant Paths Between Cognitive Reasoning Variables (Rational-Experiential Processing Systems), Identity Processing Styles and Identity Commitment. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Suggestions

The present study was conducted on the adolescents of Amritsar district only, therefore, limiting the generalisation of the results to the larger population. Few recommendations can be considered for the further implementations and study can be conducted on larger sample also. Even the cross cultural comparative study can be conducted. There are various factors in the Indian culture that may be contributing to the development of identity of the adolescents, thus, future studies should be executed in order to explore cross cultural affects on adolescent's identity formation. The future researchers can also explore the role of gender differences in the formation of identity.

Implications

The findings of the present study can have practical implications for young people in their adolescent years. The research can serve as a framework for development of identity enhancement programs for adolescents. As exploration is seen as the important aspect in identity formation, so increasing exploration can serve as a fruitful tool in identity formation. Thus, the development of identity enhancement programs requires knowledge concerning the different important components of the process of exploration e.g. general cognitive reasoning processing systems, identity processing style, etc. and how these components of exploration are related to identity in adolescents. Acquisition of the knowledge about how these components operate will help in effective designing of identity enhancement programs. Under this program it is recommended that the quality of educational experiences should be improved so as to contribute in making adolescents' sense about their 'self.' It is suggestive that the schools, teachers and parents should become proactive in supporting and creating congenial learning atmosphere in the school as well as home context that should provide opportunities and experiences that are sensitive to rational-experiential processing systems and identity processing styles. Adolescents should be provided opportunities that promote active engagement in real life experiences that they can incorporate into their understanding of the sense of 'who they are?' Hence, the curricular and co-curricular activities should be aimed at promoting adolescents' sense about their 'self.' Further, the present study results can be fruitful in school counselling and career counselling, the adolescents who are high

on rational processing system can be guided accordingly regarding their career choices.

Conclusion

On the whole, it can be said that the results of the mediational model indicate that how an adolescent is able to form an identity is associated with identity processing styles used by him / her while dealing with various identity-related issues and concerns in particular rather than general as well as on rational-experiential cognitive reasoning processes that he / she used in general while dealing with any information. As expected, rational-experiential processing system is mediated by identity processing styles, that in turn was expected to correlate with identity commitment, meaning thereby, the degree to which an adolescent is able to make use of identity processing styles depends upon the rational-experiential system used by him/her which further defines the likelihood of how an adolescent will form identity.

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