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PERSONALITY TRAITS AND IDENTITY STATUS OF ADOLESCENTS: A PERSON-CENTERED APPROACH

Abstract

This research aimed to clarify the relationship between adolescent personality traits as measured by "Big Five Plus Two" inventory based on psycholexical studies of Serbian language, and identity status as defined in the theoretical and empirical works of Erik Erikson and James Marcia. The sample of the research consisted of N = 201 adolescents, aged 16 to 21, with an average age of M = 18.32, SD = 1.12. The instruments used were The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire and Big Five Plus Two - short version, an instrument based on lexical studies of Serbian language. Cluster analysis was used to classify adolescents according to identity maturity with an implicit goal of identifying adolescents who are predisposed towards successful or unsuccessful adaptation to identity tasks by their personality traits. The result showed that two clusters could be identified. The first cluster consisted of N = 125 adolescents who scored low on both commitment and exploration and this group was therefore named "undifferentiated identity status adolescents". Regarding the personality traits, the typical pattern in this cluster was low openness to experience, as well as marked negative valence. The second cluster consisted of N = 76 adolescents which scored high on both commitment and exploration dimensions of identity; the cluster was named "mature identity status adolescents". Their personality traits patterns were almost the opposite of the first group: high openness to experience and low negative valence were typical of this group. Therefore two conclusions are made from the results: (1) personality dimension openness to experience seems to be especially important in resolving identity tasks in adolescence, and it is possible to suggest that it corresponds to exploration based on their correlation; (2) identity maturity seems to be an important correlate of psychological well-being in adolescence, given that two groups differed sharply on the negative valence dimension and that less mature identity status adolescents typically scored higher scores on this trait.

Keywords: identity status, personality traits, adolescence, person-centered approach

Introduction

Erikson's theory of lifelong development, besides being one of the most influential developmental paradigms in psychology, offers us valuable insights in practical work with persons who are currently undergoing various life difficulties and crises (Hammack, 2015). First, it allows us to mark *those* periods that are especially prone to vulnerabilities, or, psychologically speaking, important regarding the balance between developmental risks and opportunities to grow and progress (although *every* life period carries its challenges). Second, it allows us an easier understanding of *the basic conflict* which a person faces in a specific life period, its core nature (Sokol, 2009).

Adolescence, recognized by other development theoreticians as a very turbulent period of physical, psychological and social development, is conceptualized in Erikson's theory as a phase of significant developmental crisis of *identity formation,* which represents a culmination of tasks started in earlier developmental phases during childhood (Marcia, 1980). Simply said, the basic goal of adolescence is to form a clear and coherent picture of yourself, which includes both consciousness about one's inner states, characteristics and attributes, and knowledge about relevant social roles which are salient for the person, that is which are significantly emotionally invested (as a member of your family, professional role, religious and political opinion, etc.; Erikson, 1956). The basic element of identity according to Erikson is the feeling of *space-time continuity of a person,* the fact that most persons still *feel* as same people during passage of time and various social situations and spaces, despite the multitude of changes they go through (Croger & Marcia, 2011).

First serious attempts at identity formation occur in adolescence because of the culmination of multiple seemingly "parallel" developmental streams which in reality are strongly intertwined (Erikson, 1963). The growth of cognitive abilities, in the sense of developing Piagetian formal operations, enables better insight into your own inner states, characteristics, and abilities, and also an exploration of different life alternatives, albeit often only in adolescent phantasy. The parallel weakening of emotional dependence on primary family and questioning primary identification with parents and their intrapsychic images creates a strong need to *independently* achieve a sense of personal identity, one which will not be a simple sum of identifications with close persons and relevant social groups, but actively constructed (Ćeranić, 2005; Marcia, 1980).

Achieved sense of identity in adolescence implies a feeling of *loyalty* towards choices that were made regarding friends, romantic partners, plans for the future, career choice, political ideology, etc., and a clear picture of one's strengths and weaknesses (Croger & Marcia, 2011). On the other hand, formed or achieved identity in adolescence should not be interpreted as a rigid construct which is not liable to change; every significant life change or event, as well as next developmental crises, can lead to a new exploration and modification of seemingly unchangeable identity (Stephen et al., 1992). The fact that is undeniably significant is the *motivational* role

of achieved identity in life development after adolescence: identity choices help a person to determine *what* he/she wants to achieve (for example, a student who continues his education in order to be able to work in the desired profession someday; Kroger & Marcia, 2011).

Marcia's subsequent modification of Erikson's original teaching conceptualizes the process of identity formation and its outcomes through two processes: *exploration,* in the sense of trying out and "experimenting" with possible alternatives, and also *commitment,* basically the level of person's loyalty towards once made choices, and its determination to achieve them (Marcia, 1980). Based on the combined development and phases of these two processes, Marcia discriminates four *identity statuses:* achieved (loyalty to choices made after a period of extensive research), foreclosure (loyalty to choices which weren't made on the basis of research and trying alternatives, but passive acceptance of social or family expectations and values), moratorium (those who are in the *current* exploration and search for identity) and diffusion (lack of clear self-concept, no long-term effort directed towards exploration and identity formation; Kroger & Marcia, 2001). Marcia's operationalization of the identity formation process inspired much research and also the construction of various identity measures and scales in order to classify participants (Cote & Levine, 1988).

During his initial descriptions of the many factors which influence the identity formation process, Erikson highlighted the significance of social and cultural/historical factors, such as the availability of different alternatives, the authoritarianism of native culture, etc. (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001). Subsequent research was mostly pointed towards various personality factors and characteristics of the immediate social environment, for example, the closeness of the parent-child relationship, structure and functioning of the family, etc. The available research on the relationship between personality traits and identity dimensions suggests a strong correlation. In a study by Lonzbury et al. (2007), conducted on over 2,000 adolescents, personality traits of The Big Five Inventory predicted over 34% of the variance in identity maturity. Dimensions such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, extraversion and emotional stability correlated positively and significantly with a mature/stable sense of identity. Klimstre et al.'s (2012) study addressed the correlations between different facets of the Big Five personality dimensions and identity dimensions. However, a similar trend can be observed in this study: conscientiousness and agreeableness manifested the highest positive association with identity maturity, and neuroticism had a strong positive association with certain negative processes in search of identity, such as obsessive rumination. However, most of these studies examine relationships between variables, neglecting the practical possibilities of classifying respondents into broader groups or clusters based on combinations of different personality traits and identity maturity, which would give us the ability to isolate different "profiles" in counseling practice. In this research we decided to use *Big Five Plus Two* (VP+2) model, a personality model based on the psycholexical studies of Serbian language (Čolović et al., 2014).

One research which attempted to explore adolescent identity and personality in a form of a person-centered approach is a study by Morsunbul et al. (2016).

Using cluster analysis on identity dimension exploration in depth, commitment and reconsideration of commitment, five groups of participants were identified. The groups mainly corresponded with Marcia's four identity statuses (achievement, closure, diffusion and moratorium), with the exception of a *searching moratorium* cluster that consisted of individuals who first achieved mature identity and then proceeded to question it and explore further options. More mature identity statuses (searching moratorium, moratorium and achieved identity) scored higher on personality dimensions openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness than less mature identity statuses. Authors interpret this in light of dual processes of exploration and commitment, which require both curiosity and willingness to experience new roles and sensations as well as the diligence in fulfilling personal goals and obligations.

The Big Five Plus Two inventory (VP+2) was constructed by Smederevac, Mitrović and Čolović, (2010) and it consists of the basic dimensions of personality: neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, aggressiveness, openness to experience, positive valence and negative valence. Neuroticism refers to the tendency to experience negative emotions, including higher levels of anxiety and depressiveness than population average. This dimension is made of three narrower traits: depressiveness, anxiety, and negative affect (Smederevac et al., 2010). Extraversion refers to a personality dimension in which the level of reactivity of a person to the environment is observed, in terms of involvement, tendency to express positive emotions, optimism and suchlike. This dimension consists of three narrow traits: cordiality, positive affect, and sociability. Conscientiousness implies an individual's attitude towards obligations. It consists of three narrow traits: self-discipline, perseverance, and thoughtfulness. Aggressiveness refers to the expression of aggressive impulses that differ in terms of control and intensity. The narrower traits are anger, intransigence, and a difficult temper. Openness to experience is a dimension that relates to intellectual curiosity, that is, the pursuit and acceptance of new ideas and experiences, and includes narrow traits: intellect and novelty seeking. Positive valence refers to a positive attitude toward oneself. This dimension includes narrow traits: superiority and a positive self-image. Negative valence implies a negative attitude towards oneself and a negative evaluation of oneself and includes the traits: manipulativeness and a negative self-image (Smederevac et al., 2010).

Adolescence is an especially important period for identity formation (Marcia, 1980). A strong increase in cognitive, emotional and moral maturity enables a critical re-examining of childhood identifications and goals, and also of wider societal issues and life questions, such as the meaning of life, what does it mean to live a fulfilling life, how to be accepted and loved by others for who we are and also how to find a place for ourselves in society (Cote & Levine, 1988). These processes are supported by strong external changes, such as choosing education and future profession, first experiences of long-term separation from family for many adolescents (usually in the form of going to college), and expanding social world beyond the circle of primary family by forming first mature friendships and long-term relationships (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). The most intensive period for these changes is the last few years of high

school and first years in university, and therefore the sample of this study consisted mainly of third and fourth grade high school students, as well as first-year university students. It is also important to remember that many previous developmental factors, successes and failures, determine the adolescent behavior and long-term strategies when facing this developmental crisis. Therefore, the focus of this study was to explore whether adolescents of different identity maturity, classified in different clusters, also differ on various personality traits. These traits can be seen as a result of complex interaction of early experiences, individual activity and interpretation as well as various hereditary dispositions. In order to differentiate between adolescents of various degrees of identity maturity a series of cluster analysis was conducted with commitment and exploration - key components of identity building - as input variables.

There is a growing acceptance of a holistic, interactionist view in which the individual is seen as an organized whole, which functions and develops as a totality, and which is formed by the interaction of elements: behavior, plans, values, goals, biocognitive system, environment, etc. (Bergman & Magnusson, 1997). A holistic dynamic approach is taken as relevant in all studies dealing with individual development. (person-centered approach) and is often cited as distinctive in relation to the variable-centered approach. In the person-centered approach, most often the variable itself is not important, but the combination. This variable-oriented approach, which deals with the relationship between variables, can be useful in studying complex systems in a developmental perspective. The variable-oriented approach is also based on the study of linear relationships, studied among individuals, relationships that in linear models are usually assumed to be equal for each subject in the sample (Bergman et al., 2006).

The meaning attached to a personality characteristic refers to a series of characteristics that represent a combination or pattern of characteristics that is the essence of the type. The properties of a type are often indicated by a profile of values in the studied variables that define the type. For example, cluster centroids for a set of natural clusters would be one way of representing types. For example, the entire cluster solution can be called a typology (Bergman et al., 2006). A similar approach was used in this study: instead of examining the relationship between identity dimensions and personality traits via a set of isolated correlations and/or regression coefficients, a cluster analysis method was used in order to differentiate between different "identity types" found in our sample and examine whether they differ in personality traits. In this way a person - or a class of similar persons who share similar traits and developmental trajectories - becomes the main unit of analysis instead of classic variables.

On the basis of previous empirical research and theoretical considerations, several research hypotheses were formed. First hypothesis was that it would be possible to differentiate several clusters of adolescents on the basis of identity formation dimensions (commitment and exploration) as measured by The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire which roughly correspond to identity statuses as described by Marcia (1980). Second hypothesis was that these adolescents who

belong to different identity maturity clusters would achieve significantly different scores on Big Five Plus Two model dimensions. On the basis of previous research by Lonzbury et al. (2007), as well as by Klimstre et al. (2012), it was hypothesized that adolescents who belong to more mature identity clusters (characterized by higher exploration and commitment) would achieve higher scores on conscientiousness and openness to experience, and lower scores on aggressiveness and neuroticism.

Method

Sample

The research sample consisted of 201 adolescents, third and fourth-year high-school students from the Sarajevo-Romanija region (63.68%), as well as psychology students from the University of Eastern Sarajevo (36.3%). Male adolescents compose 34.30% sample versus 65.70% females. Adolescent age was between 16 and 21 years, and the average age was M=18.32, SD=1.12.

Instruments

Two instruments were used in this research. **The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire** (Balistreri et al., 1995) is based on Marcia's identity status model and it is used to asses ego-identity in four ideological areas (politics, religion, values, career) and four interpersonal areas (friendships, partner relationships, family, gender roles). It consists of two subscales: exploration and commitment. The instrument was translated into Serbian in a graduate thesis by Borović (2017), with the help of bilingual speakers. The instruments were first translated into Serbian by one bilingual speaker, and then back into English by another bilingual speaker in order to ascertain whether the meaning of items remained the same. Exploratory factor analysis confirmed the two-factor structure of the instrument. The decision about the number of factors that were used and interpreted was made on the basis of parallel analysis. Some examples of items from the commitment subscale are "I am unlikely to alter my vocational goals", "I am very confident about what kind of friends are best for me", and the following examples for the exploration subscale "I have evaluated many ways in which I fit into my family structure", "I have discussed religious matters with a number of people who believe differently than I do". Items refer to exploration and commitment in the field of political and religious beliefs, choice of occupation, friends and partners, as well as identification with family values. The alpha Cronbach coefficients we calculated in this research were $\alpha = .72$ for exploration and $\alpha = .83$ for commitment.

For measuring adolescent personality characteristics, we used **Big Five Plus Two – short version** (VP+2-70), an instrument based on psycholexical studies of Serbian language terms that describe personality traits, made by Čolović, Smederevac & Mitrović (2014). The questionnaire consists of seven subscales, each ten items long: extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, aggressiveness,

openness, positive and negative valence. The Serbian version of this personality model is specific because it integrates two new dimensions – positive and negative valence – which describe positive and negative social and moral evaluation of self, both by the person itself and in the eyes of significant others (or, to be precise, how we *think and feel* significant others perceive and value us). All calculated reliability coefficients were satisfying and their range is from 0.78 to 0.91.

Data Analysis

The method of cluster analysis used in the first stage of data analysis was a two-step cluster analysis in order to achieve a decision regarding the number of formed clusters. Erikson (1956) mainly spoke about immature and mature identity in his writings, whereas Marcia (1980) developed four identity status categories on the basis of commitment and exploration dimensions. The conducted two-step cluster analysis which used identity commitment and exploration as input variables confirmed the optimality of the two-cluster solution on the basis of silhouette measure of cohesion and separation (0.60). The clustering criterion used in this analysis was the Schwarz's Bayesian Criterion (BIC). The first cluster consisted of 122, and the second consisted of 79 participants. Then a k-means cluster analysis was conducted with the command to calculate two clusters. The results were almost identical to the results of the two-cluster analysis. The first cluster consisted of 125, and the second consisted of 76 participants. In both cluster analyses members of the second cluster were characterized by higher scores on identity commitment and exploration when compared to the members of first clusters. Since the results of two cluster analyses were extremely similar, the results from k-means cluster analyses were used in further testing of hypotheses. A series of t-tests was conducted in order to examine whether members of two clusters differed significantly from the Big Five Plus Two model dimensions.

Results

The theory of Erikson and Marcia postulates that identity development occurs via different "development trajectories". These trajectories are shaped by, among other things, adolescent dispositions that certainly include personality traits as permanent dispositions shaped by genetic background and upbringing. Identity formation is a fluid and dynamic process, and therefore, in light of the transversal nature of research, it should be noted that the results obtained are a rough cross-section of a process, based on which it is only possible to indicate the "favorable" and "unfavorable" combinations of personality traits that facilitate this process.

The first step of data processing was to calculate the basic descriptive indicators of personality dimensions of the Big Five Plus Two, as well as two dimensions of identity - commitment and research - and to calculate the normality of distribution to determine their representation/expression in the sample of respondents.

Table 1
Descriptive values and normality of distribution of the instruments

Scale	Min	Max	M	SD	Sk	Ku
EIPQ						
Commitment	40.00	90.00	66.56	9.44	0.03	0.10
Exploration	41.00	91.00	62.99	9.59	0.70	0.69
BF+2						
Aggressiveness	10.00	47.00	28.56	7.15	-0.11	0.01
Extraversion	10.00	50.00	35.53	6.59	-0.24	1.04
Neuroticism	10.00	50.00	24.18	8.30	0.47	0.02
Negative valence	10.00	49.00	27.47	10.64	-0.24	-1.09
Openness	10.00	50.00	37.32	6.91	-0.36	0.20
Positive valence	16.00	49.00	33.33	6.70	0.22	0.07
Conscientiousness	18.00	45.00	38.12	7.28	0.04	-1.12

As shown in Table 1, none of the variable skewness values were higher than +/- 2, so these deviations from the normal curve shape were not extreme and therefore parametric statistical measures were used in further analysis.

In Table 2, the correlation coefficients between research variables are shown.

Table 2
Intercorrelations of research variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.commitment		.12	-.21**	.29**	-.35**	-.14	.23**	.39**	.41**
2.exploration			-.04	-.03	.01	-.08	.24**	.01	.09
3.aggressiveness				-.12	.35**	.44**	-.11	-.04	-.33**
4.extraversion					-.08	-.09	.46**	.32**	.32**
5.neuroticism						.20**	.06	-.33**	-.40**
6. negative valence							-.25**	-.05	-.37**
7. openness								.27**	.36**
8. positive valence									.57**
9. conscientiousness									

** < 0.01 (2-tailed).

It is interesting to note that commitment correlates significantly with most dimensions from the Big Five Plus Two model. This represents a strong argument for the interdependence of personality traits and identity formation process. The highest correlation is with conscientiousness, which is not surprising if we consider similarities between those two constructs, which are both described in terms of persistence and strong desire to achieve personal goals and choices, and the strength to tolerate various obstacles and frustrations on this path. Exploration correlates significantly and positively only with openness to experience, which also points to the similarities between these two dimensions. In Marcia's (1980) model, exploration is described as a tendency to explore new roles, relationships and

experiences in order to reach important identity conclusions. Openness to experience is a disposition towards seeking these new experiences, having wide intellectual and aesthetic sensibilities, strong curiosity, etc.

As the next step in the analysis of the obtained data, a classification of the examined adolescents was conducted according to the dimensions of identity, to separate groups of different identity maturity. Cluster analysis was used for this purpose since the EIPQ identity status questionnaire never went through extensive validation in our area, that is, we do not have elaborated norms that would allow individual respondents to be automatically classified into one of the four identity statuses postulated by the theory.

First, a two-stage cluster analysis was conducted to extract the optimal number of clusters that could be formed based on the set of data obtained. The silhouette measure of cohesion and separation indicated the optimality of the two-cluster solution, which is inconsistent with the theory of Marcia on the four identity statuses. However, it is possible that the instrument is not discriminatory enough in our population to make such fine distinctions, or that, due to the age of the respondents (average age 18 years), it is more correct to use a rougher distinction with a more mature - immature identity. Two clusters formed by the two-step cluster analysis corresponded to the two clusters formed by similar k-means cluster analysis. In both cases, the first cluster ($N = 122$ in two-step cluster and $N=125$ in k-means cluster analysis) consisted of adolescents who scored lower scores on commitment and explorations when compared to adolescents in the second cluster ($N = 79$ in two-step cluster analysis and $N =76$ in k-means cluster analysis). The Chi-square test showed no statistically significant difference in membership between these two classifications ($\chi^2 = 7.32$, $df = 1$, $p = .65$).

Cluster centers formed by the two-cluster analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Cluster centers

Dimensions	Cluster	
	1	2
Commitment	64.80	69.45
Exploration	57.16	72.75
N	125	76

As shown in Table 2, the participants from the first cluster score lower scores on dimensions commitment and exploration than the second cluster members. This cluster consists of $N = 125$ adolescents and, in light of its structure and score composition it was named "*undifferentiated identity status*".

The Chi-square test showed that there are no significant gender differences in cluster membership ($\chi^2 = 2.43$, $df = 1$, $p = .13$). On the other hand, t-test showed that there are significant differences in age ($t(199)=-4.53$, $p = .00$). Members of the second cluster are on average ($M=18.8$) older than the members of the first cluster (M

= 18.06). The next step was to calculate several t-tests in order to explore differences between groups, with the goal of establishing whether given clusters *are significantly different* in personality dimensions. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Significance of differences in personality dimensions between mature and undifferentiated participants

Identity status	Aggressive-ness	Extrave-rsion	Neuroti-cism	Negative valence	Openness	Positive valence	Conscientio-usness
Undifferentiated(M)	29.06	35.96	24.46	28.82	36.32	33.09	38.24
Mature (M)	27.74	34.82	23.74	25.25	38.97	33.72	38.04
t	1.27	1.19	0.60	2.34	-2.69	-0.65	0.12
p	.21	.23	.55	.02	.01	.52	.90

The results of the t-test show that participants – members of two clusters – differ significantly by scores on the dimensions openness to experience and negative valence. Members of the second cluster, which was marked as "*mature identity*", score higher scores on openness and lower scores on negative valence in comparison to the first cluster members – *"undifferentiated identity adolescents"*.

Figure 1

Average values of cluster members on Big Five Plus Two dimensions (values given in z-scores)
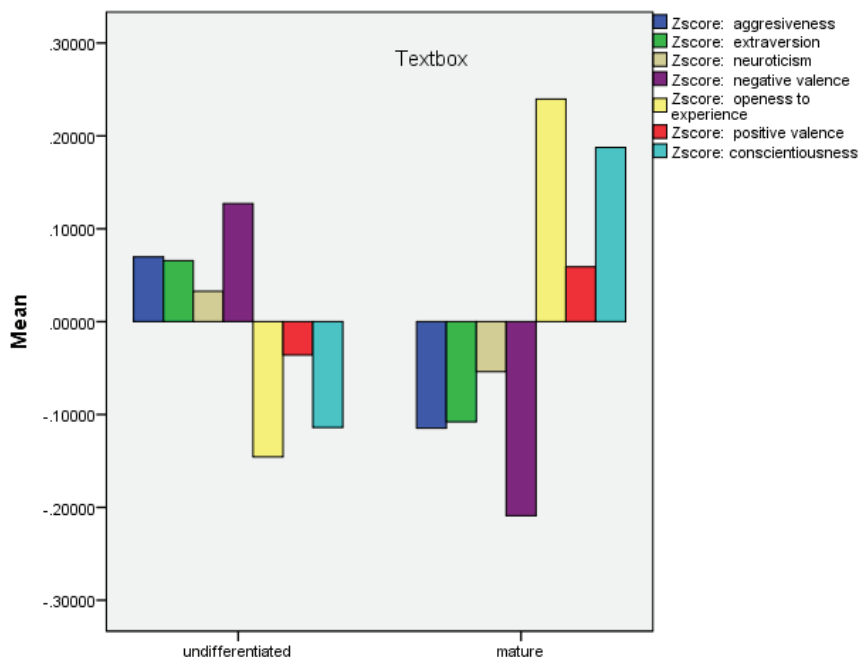
Members of the second cluster, who score higher scores on both commitment and exploration, also achieve higher scores on openness to experience, positive valence and conscientiousness, and lower scores on aggressiveness, negative valence, but also extraversion. Members of the first cluster reveal a profile with higher negative valence and lowered openness to experience and conscientiousness. However, t-test values show that only differences on negative valence and openness to experience are statistically significant.

Discussion

Two clusters were formed from the studied sample of adolescents on the basis of identity dimensions, commitment and exploration. Subjects from the second cluster achieved moderately elevated scores on commitment and exploration, indicating an intertwining of these processes and adequate steps toward the development of mature identity. The resulting cluster reveals to us a picture of a curious adolescent who is ready to explore and experiment, but also to be loyal to the choices already made. Therefore, this cluster has been referred to as a "mature identity" - with the deliberate avoidance of the term "achieved" identity, since these are adolescent high school and university students who have certainly not yet fully formed their identities, as they are yet to make many significant life choices (such as the choice to further choose their possible education and profession). The term "mature" should not be interpreted in absolute terms, as Erikson's theory considers that it is not possible to form a completely mature and adult identity in adolescent age. Hence this category should be seen as composed of adolescents who show *greater maturity* regarding identity questions *compared to* their peers, not maturity equal to persons who successfully resolved this developmental crisis and moved to adulthood.

The first cluster reveals a different picture and by most characteristics represents the opposite of the second. Adolescents classified in this cluster have low scores on both commitment and exploration, which indicates either apathy towards questions of identity and near future, or unreadiness to face them. Therefore, the members of this cluster are marked as *"undifferentiated".* We used this term in order to suggest that their identity is merely *immature* at the moment, not that they experienced a permanent failure to construct identity, a state which Erikson (1956) calls *identity diffusion.* Adolescents classified in the first cluster cannot be equated with persons in permanent identity diffusion, who didn't solve the adolescent crisis, because in this case, we are speaking about adolescents who didn't achieve this developmental achievement yet, it is completely possible and expected that they shall do so in the future.

These two clusters differ significantly on personality dimensions, openness to experience and negative valence. Members of the second cluster achieve lower scores on negative valence and higher scores on openness to experience. Low scores on negative valence are related to a positive self-image that, together with the need to

search for new experiences and openness to new ideas and attitudes, points to a secure attachment style (Bolbi, 2011). It is possible that positive self-concept is a necessary prerequisite for a successful entry into the process of identity formation (Vukčević, 2014). High openness to experience also seems to be an especially significant trait, possibly because it leads to an increased willingness to explore new social roles and choices in adolescence, as well as a degree of intellectual curiosity that is necessary in the process of building a complex view of self and the world.

Higher negative valence scores found in the second cluster probably play their role as a factor that both *contributes* to the maladaptive realization of developmental tasks and is at the same time a *consequence* of the insufficient resolution of identity questions. We can also mark lower openness to experience as personal disposition that contributes to worse identity integration: lack of intellectual curiosity, and of desire to experience and try new things is a significant risk factor because it deprives adolescents of key developmental experiences and opportunities to explore themselves and the world in different ways.

It should be noted that negative valence consists of two subdimensions: manipulativeness and a negative self-image, and that both dimensions are to a certain degree intertwined. Several studies typically conducted on a sample of students have shown a correlation between negative valence and negative mental health. For example, in the study of Sakač and Marić (2018), conducted on a sample of 418 students, both subdimensions of negative valence were significant and negative predictors of their subjective well-being. In a study by Vukić (2018) conducted on a sample of 100 elementary and 100 high-school students, negative valence correlated positively with social anxiety and negatively with assertiveness. These results point out that a negative view of oneself in the sense of moral defectiveness as well as incompetence could lead to negative mental health in adolescence through avoidance of developmental challenges, feelings of helplessness and vulnerability, fear of rejection from others, etc. In light of our results this could suggest that negative self-image makes successful resolution of key adolescent experiences and challenges less likely, which leads to a less coherent self-image and further mental health problems arising from a lack of clear goals, values and convictions.

It is interesting to note that members of the first cluster ("undifferentiated") are more numerous than members of the second cluster ("mature"). The Chi-square test shows no gender differences in cluster membership, although the t-test showed significant difference in age. However, the difference is not drastic: average age for the first cluster is 18 years, and for the second cluster 18.8. One explanation that can be offered is that moving to university, which often includes first long-term separation from primary family and a larger degree of autonomy and self-sufficiency in everyday life, is a powerful catalyst of identity development and especially exploration at this age.

Klimstre et al (2012) in their study found the correlations between different facets of the Big Five personality dimensions and identity dimensions. Lounsbury et al. (2007) in a study based on a sample of 2,092 college students, Sense of Identity was found to be significantly related to the Big Five traits (agreeableness,

conscientiousness, emotional stability, extraversion, and openness) as well as four narrow personality traits (aggression, optimism, tough-mindedness, and work drive).

The results found in this study bear many similarities to the ones found in a study by Morsunbul et al. (2016), but there are also some differences. The main difference is the number of formed clusters. Morsunbul et al. (2016) formed five clusters that roughly correspond to Marcia's identity statuses, but in this research a two-cluster solution was found to be optimal. The main source of these differences could be in the structure of the sample - this research had a smaller sample and a narrower age span than the cited study (in which participants were aged 12 to 24) - that could lead to lesser sensitivity in differentiating between different identity statuses. Furthermore, there were differences in measured dimensions of identity formation. This study measured commitment and exploration, but Morsunbul et al. (2016) study also measured an additional identity dimension, reconsideration of commitment, that refers to the subsequent examination of made choices in fields such as occupation, ideology and relationships. In our study there were significant differences between members on clusters on dimensions of negative valence and openness to experience. In the cited study higher openness to experience was noted in more mature identity statuses, but also conscientiousness. However, one possible explanation could be that conscientiousness becomes especially important element of identity formation only in subsequent stages of adolescence when there is a strong societal pressure to realize choices that were made (for example, find a job in chosen occupation, form a stable relationship with a chosen type of partner, have a firm ideological stance of societal problems, etc.). Morsunbul et al. (2016) study also covered participants aged from 22 to 24, whereas this study only covered participants up to the age of 21. So, it could be possible that openness to experience is a key component of early identity building and experimenting, but conscientiousness becomes more important near the end of adolescence when it is expected to realize made choices and show a larger measure of self-discipline and diligence.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this research was to examine whether adolescent groups of different identity maturity differ significantly on personality dimensions of the Big Five Plus Two model. It may be possible to separate the "at-risk" and "adequate" profiles of adolescents who are at an increased risk of psychological distress and inadequate resolution of the identity development crisis, or who are adequately "prepared" to go through this significant developmental crisis and life milestone.

Another interesting result is that *two* clusters were formed, not four as described in Marcia's (1980) theory of identity formation. One of the possible reasons may be the relatively small number of participants, but also insufficient discriminability of the instrument used for measuring dimensions of identity (EIPQ), which did not pass through standardization in Serbian culture. However, the real reason may also be connected with the developmental characteristics of participants: maybe we can only

differentiate between more and less mature identity in middle adolescence, but in late adolescence (for example during college) there is a clear differentiation between four identity statuses as described by Marcia.

The practical implications of the results suggest the possibility of creating treatment in working with adolescents, which would be focused on recording the situation and monitoring the development of identity statuses, and the possibility of predicting crises in identity development. Recommendations for future research would be to increase the sample and longitudinally monitor the development of adolescent identities.

This study also faced several limitations. First of all, the age span of participants (16 to 21) should be considerably widened in future studies in order to include both younger adolescents as well as older ones which could be considered to be in "emerging adulthood". A more detailed analysis of identity domains is also needed in order to identify key identity themes in separate phases of adolescence. For example, it seems appropriate to assume that relationship identity themes (friendship and romance) are more prominent in younger adolescents who form their first intimate friendships and partner relationships, and that vocational themes become more prominent in older adolescents who are facing the choice of future profession or further continuance of education. It is also necessary to measure identity processes in a more detailed way. This study measured only global commitment and exploration, but more modern studies (for example, the study of Morsunbul et al.) also differentiate between different types of exploration, such as in-depth and in-width exploration, which gives us a more detailed picture of these processes in adolescence.

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OSOBINE LIČNOSTI ADOLESCENATA RAZLIČITOG STATUSA IDENTITETA: PRISTUP USMJEREN NA OSOBU[2]

Apstrakt

Cilj ovog istraživanja bio je pojašnjenje odnosa između osobina ličnosti adolescenata onako kako ih definiše model „Velikih pet plus dva" razvijen na osnovu psiholeksičkih studija srpskog jezika, te statusa identiteta onako kako ga definišu Erikson i Marsija u svojim teorijskim i empirijskim radovima. Uzorak se sastojao od $N = 201$ adolescenata, starosti od 16 do 21 godine, sa prosječnom starošću $M = 18.32$, $SD = 1.12$. Korišćeni su instrumenti Upitnik procesa razvoja identiteta i Velikih pet plus dva – skraćena verzija, nastala putem leksičkih studija srpskog jezika. Za klasifikaciju adolescenata prema zrelosti identiteta korišćena je klaster analiza, sa implicitnim ciljem identifikovanja adolescenata koji su po svojim osobinama ličnosti predisponirani ka uspješnoj ili neuspješnoj adaptaciji na zadatak formiranja identiteta. Na osnovu dobijenih podataka bilo je moguće izdvojiti dva klastera. Prvi klaster se sastojao od $N = 125$ adolescenata koji su postigli niske skorove i na posvećenosti i na istraživanju, te je ovaj klaster imenovan kao „adolescenti nediferenciranog statusa identiteta".U pogledu osobina ličnosti, tipičan obrazac koji su ispoljili pripadnici klastera se odlikuje niskom otvorenošću ka iskustvu i visokom negativnom valencom. Drugi klaster sastojao se od $N = 76$ adolescenata koji su postigli visoke skorove i na posvećenosti i na istraživanju; pripadnici ovog klastera su nazvani „adolescenti zrelijeg statusa identiteta". Obrasci njihovih osobina ličnosti su bili u oštroj suprotnosti spram pripadnika prvog klastera, tj. ispoljili su visoku otvorenost ka iskustvu i nisku negativnu valencu. Stoga je na osnovu dobijenih rezultata moguće donijeti dva zaključka: 1) dimenzija ličnosti otvorenost prema iskustvu je izuzetno važna u rješavanju zadataka u vezi sa identitetom za vrijeme adolescencije, te je moguće sugerisati da korespondiraju procesu istraživanja na osnovu njihove međusobne korelacije, 2) zrelost identiteta je značajan korelat psihološkog blagostanja u adolescenciji, s obzirom da su se dvije grupe izraženo razlikovale u pogledu dimenzije negativna valenca, a adolescenti nezrelijeg statusa identiteta su tipično postizali više skorove na ovoj osobini.

Ključne riječi: status identiteta, osobine ličnosti, adolescencija, pristup usmjeren na osobu