Women Identity Crisis in Pakistan:
Application Of Habermas' Concept Of Identity Deficit

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Abstract

Pakistani women are facing an acute identity crisis, a challenge that has reached a critical stage due to socio-political, legal, and institutional shortcomings. This research provides a comprehensive analysis of the prevailing and projected status of women in Pakistan, incorporating legal and constitutional frameworks to identify gaps and propose timely interventions. A qualitative research methodology has been employed, utilizing statistical data from reports, scholarly articles, books, and newspaper publications. Additionally, Habermas's theory of identity deficit has been applied to critically examine the crisis. The study investigates the role of governmental institutions and legislation in shaping women's identities and evaluates the state's response to gender-related issues. Findings indicate that Pakistan's institutional failures, gender discrimination, and inconsistencies in law, ethics, and societal values have exacerbated the identity crisis among women. This issue poses a significant threat to national progress and development, as gender equality is integral to a country's socio-economic stability.

Through the lens of Habermas's identity deficit theory, the research explores two key crises among Pakistani women: the legitimation crisis, where societal norms fail to validate women's identities, and the motivation crisis, where legal and cultural contradictions hinder their empowerment. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-dimensional approach, including legal reforms, institutional accountability, and societal change. The study underscores the urgent need for a structured policy framework to bridge the gap between law and practice, ensuring women's rights and identity are protected and promoted in Pakistan.

Keywords:

Women Identity Crisis, Jürgen Habermas, Legitimate Crisis, Motivation Crisis, Gender Inequality.

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Introduction:

An identity crisis is a situation that can happened to all people at different levels and different stages of life. Sometimes, such crisis is happened due to a natural process of transformation, but sometimes, they happened because of some accident, punishment, sudden change, and multiple conversions (Marf Mohammed et al., 2024). It is the situation where a person does not have any guidance and commitment, but he/she struggles to develop some personal goals, values, and achievements. In such situation the person falls prey to the path of identity deficit. The individual becomes even unable to define the self. This problem can become the cause of segregation and disparity in the society (Berdibayeva et al., 2016). It can also disturb the progress and development of a society. Other than lowering the speed of progress in society, it becomes very harmful in the life of a person. It is the issue that affects the mental health of a person. It becomes the cause of hypertension, anxiety, depression, and other psychological disorders (Kaikati et al., 2004).

There are two major genders in the world such as men and women. Both of them are considered very essentials of the reproduction of humankind. Without the existence of one of them, the human generations cannot proceed. It is women who are responsible for giving birth to the children, taking care of them, making homes, and regulating the routine of everyone at home, but still, they are considered as the weaker ones (Syed et al., 2019). Pakistani society is based on patriarchy, in which men make decision and women are considered as the weaker gender (Hadi, 2017). In reality both men and women are the counterpart of each other, designed to contemplate the opposite gender. In Pakistani society, people have defined gender roles associated and assigned to both genders and it is considered as rebellion when people oppose following this culture and tradition (Conflict, 2015).

Due to these segregation in society women in Pakistan are suffering from of identity deficit. Jürgen Habermas has given the idea of identity crisis or identity deficit in the year 1973. As per the scholarly and analytical work of Habermas, the identity crisis is divided into two types as the legitimate crisis and the motivation crisis (Cordero, 2014). One reacts with the identity and personality building of the person internally whereas the other react externally. A legitimate crisis arises when an individual or an institution failed to deliver the promised demand and expectations (Munro, 2007). The individuals feel un-associated and unaligned because of the factor of non-deliverance. Other than this, it is the situation that compels the person to do multiple commitments. While showing commitments to multiple situations, ideologies, and people, the people feel so divided that they start losing the "Self". It becomes the vital cause of identity crisis.

Motivation crisis deals with the failure of defining ability of self (Baumeister et al., 1985). The person suffering from a motivational crisis are failed to define the self adequately. It isolates the person and the concerned party failed exercise the required solution to the concerned problem due to some commitments or any other issues. It has been seen that both genders have been affected by the problem of an identity crisis, but in Pakistan, women have suffered the most because of this problem. They have to show deep commitments to their husband and society. Most of the women have to act perfectly, this aim of achieving perfection has made them isolated (Amato, 2001). They feel isolated and alone, deep down. In Pakistani society, they have to suffer from multiple political and economic changes, which has affected the identification of a person, the failure of institutions left the people hopeless. They cannot trust the governance, authority, and institution because concerned institutions are failed to deliver the expected results. It has been seen that the failure of institutions; gender discrimination and variations in law, ethics, and values become the cause of women's identity crisis in Pakistan.

Problem Statement:

Pakistani women navigate a complex identity crisis, torn between **traditional expectations and modern aspirations**. Despite progress in education and employment, **deep-rooted patriarchal norms** continue to shape their roles, often leading to **conflicting self-perceptions**. Applying **Habermas's concept of identity deficit**, this study explores whether Pakistani women experience a **lack of coherent identity** due to these tensions. While research on gender inequality is extensive, the **psychological and sociological aspects of identity formation** remain underexplored. This study aims to bridge this gap, analyzing how women **construct, negotiate, and redefine** their identities within a **patriarchal yet evolving** society.

Significance of the Research:

Historically women are considered as the weaker gender. This is the reason people discriminate against women based on gender. Discrimination and segregation in society become a cause of identity deficit in women. There are enormous other reasons for identity deficit in Pakistani women. The scholarly work of Habermas has helped to understand comprehend the issue of identity deficit in Pakistani women. He was a German sociologist and his work presents the comprehension of the issue in collective as well as individual domain.

The study focuses on the problem of identity crisis and its impacts on Pakistani women. A very few studies based women identity crisis in Pakistan has been done so far. This study will help the student to understand and comprehend the problem of an identity crisis as per the work of Habermas and implementation of the theory from in Pakistani perspective. Other than this, the researchers and governmental institutions can take data and information from the research.

Research Objectives:

The fundamental objectives of the research are:
- To understand the core concept of identity deficit by Hebermass
- To study the current situation of women identity crisis in Pakistan
- To comprehend the philosophical and sociological approach behind the theory and research work of Hebermass

Scope of the Research:

The issue of the identity crisis is a serious one but hasn't been taken into account in the way, it should be taken. More than half of the population of Pakistan is comprises of women. It will not be any good if half of the population will suffer from a specific problem. Women are suffering from identity crisis on a massive level. It is very important to understand this issue so that a concrete solutions can be extracted. However, the research will help to understand the women's identity crisis in Pakistan with the support of the identity deficit theory presented by Jurgen Habermas.

Hypothesis:

"Pakistani women are facing identity deficit or identity crisis because of variations in law, ethics and cultural values, failure of institutions, and gender discrimination, this can be proved in the light of Habermas's theory of identity crisis".

Variables:

Anything that has got some quality or quantity and it is changing with time or circumstances is known as a variable. There are typically three types of variables in the research. The research variables include dependent variables, independent variables, and confounding variables (Marudhar, 2023). The main concern, concentration, and interest of the research are always in the dependent variable. They need to be discussed properly and understood with the help of the research. The independent variable has its effect on the dependent variable (Abiodun-Oyebanj, 2017). Confounding variables are all such variables that stand-alone successfully. These are the variable that doesn't correlate with any other variables; neither has got the effect on any. In the concerned research and as per the hypothesis,

"variations in law, ethics and cultural values, failure of institutions, and gender discrimination" are the dependent variables. "Women identity crisis" is the independent variable in the research.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable
Variations in law, failure of institutions, and Gender discrimination	Women identity crisis

Research Methodology:

A researcher needs to use an appropriate research methodology to conduct research. Three different methodologies can be used in any research to bring some rational outcomes. All of these methodologies have been used by the researchers, analysts, and scholars, as per the problem statement and nature of research. The research methodology includes qualitative research

methodology, quantitative research methodology, and mixed research methodology (K, 2023).

A. The qualitative research methodology:

The qualitative research method that deals with inductive logic. The researcher uses empirical observations to generate theoretical propositions. In this type of research methodology, the researcher does not use any numeric data. The researcher might use non-numeric data for the sake of collection of resources and analysis of it. Different strategies can be used to collect the data and information such as searching for documents, scholarly articles, interviewing people, in-depth interviews, focus group, etc (Khan et al., 2023). The relevance can be generated by the help of a non-textual form of work and the usage of art. Apart from this, the researcher uses the tools to make content and discourse analysis (Ugwu et al., 2023). The researcher has used the qualitative research methodology to do the research. Discourse analysis of illustrations, situations, speeches, and lectures will be used from national and international sources. Information, data, facts, and figures are taken from the books, reports, articles, newspapers articles and content-analysis of Habermas's theoretical framework has been used to drive the analysis about a women's identity crisis.

Theoretical Framework:

Women's identity crisis can be caused by enormous reasons. The ontological grounds for this research is based on interpretivist approach. The research is entirely subjective and it has epistemological linkage with Habermas' theory of Identity deficit. It is not an objective issue, neither had it got some objective reasons, but the reasons can be multiple. It is very important in research to opt for a theory and solve the issue in the light of the concerned theory.

A. Identity deficit by Habermas:

Habermas had presented the theory of identity deficit. The theory was based on the analysis and study on the societal and individual levels. According to him, there are two types of identity crisis legitimate crisis and motivation crisis (Marcia, 2001). Motivation crisis internally damages the sense of the person to define "Self". There are multiple reasons behind this damage. It also makes the person paralyzed and won't let him apply the solution to the concerned problem, and create a situation of confusion in people. Legitimate crisis deals with the failure of delivery of the expected efficiency by the person or an institution. Under such a situation, an individual has to show commitment to more than one person, ideology or situation. It damages the personality and individuality of a person (Gilbert, 2019).

Qualitative Research Questions:

The research questions are as follows:

1. How is the situation of gender segregation, disparity, and discrimination in Pakistan?
2. What influences are behind the Women's identity crisis in Pakistan?

3. How does Habermas's theory of identity deficit explain the identity struggles of women in Pakistan, and what insights does it offer for understanding their experiences?

Literature Review

Identity crisis refers to the corruption in the true identity by unknown and sometimes unrecognized means (Rabia et al., 2019). Women had been treated as a second-class citizen or an inferior person. After realization of their positioning, it became unacceptable for them. Apart from this, there are women who don't feel the sense of inferiority given by society. Instead of this, they consider it as the custom and norm of the society and follow it religiously. These are the women who are suffering from an identity crisis. In Pakistan, women are considered as the burden and having the position of a second-class citizen (Masitoh et al., 2020). They don't own separate identities, although it is the written part of the constitution of Pakistan. All of these women are suffering from a women's identity crisis. Neither they enjoy their identity, nor most of them feel the urge to acquire the one, because of severe identity crisis and psychological brought up in the oppressed society (Hasanah et al., 2019).

Most of the female population in the country considered their only aim in life to be a perfect wife and mother. They don't think about their own identity, but instead of this, their personality is entirely dependent on their spouses (Friedan, 1963). This is the mentality that had instigated in the upbringing of these girls. This mentality has been part of women's upbringing for generations. Instead of having a defined and separate role in society, their husbands and in-laws become their identity. A woman will be known and recognized as someone's wife, daughter, sister, and mother; she doesn't has any other role in society. It is mandatory in Pakistan to have the name of her husband on the National Identity Card if she wants her documents to be processed by National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) (Begam et al., 2019). Upon getting admission to some university or an educational institution, a woman must have the signature of her father or her guardian, even if the woman is 18+ (Shahid, 2022). It is as if she doesn't own a separate identity. Her identity is entirely dependent upon the male member, she is associated with. On the contrary, there is no such condition for the male members of the society. They don't have to get their spouse's name on their Computerized National Identity Cards (CNIC). Both genders, men and women are born with equal rights.

Human rights are considered to be based on equity. Stereotyping gendered roles is the fundamental reason for gender segregation in Pakistani society. The situation of transgenders is worse than the situation of women in Pakistan. In the name of rights, nothing is given to them. The population of women is more than the population of men in the country, but still, very few rights are given to women (Ali et al., 2021). This is the era of digital progress and educational development, but women still have to take the permission of the parents or the guardians, before getting admitted to an educational institution or getting a job. It is very important to provide balanced and equal constitutional rights to women (Bukhari, 2013). It will help her to raise her confidence level and she would cope with the issue of identity deficit. The lesser she will be dependent upon others, the more she will feel confident and complete in her shoes. In the respective country, the masses will talk about giving rights to women, providing them privileged positions, but on the other hand, they will associate women's very identity with the guardian men (Iqbal et al., 2022). This will not only demoralize the women, but it will also traumatize the identity of a lady and resulted in an identity deficit. It is a matter of fact that in Pakistan, no legal and official document will be processed unless it has the name of the spouse or guardian of the woman (Afzal at al., 2013). It is as if, the man owns the woman as a piece of property. This condition doesn't apply to men. They don't have to show their spouse's name on the official documents. It is a norm that has been followed all over the world, a single woman is assigned to be a "Miss", whereas, a married woman is called "Mrs.". On the contrary, the

man is reported as "Mr" and he will remain a "Mr", whether married or not (Hamid et al., 2011).

There are severe impacts of the mental and psychological trauma of identity crisis on the personality of a woman. It is a normal thing to feel insecure and in-associated. In the case of identity deficit, the woman will lose her confidence and become vulnerable. The emotional state of such women is miserable. The identity and the independence of the women are prone to the approval of other beings, it is the ultimate cruelty of society (Ali et al., 2022). In the current times, when women are more vocal about their rights and becoming the part of the liberation movements such as, "Aurat March and Me Too Movement", it has seen that a woman who raised her voice for even the acquisition of her fundamental rights, is labeled as "Feminist" negatively (Ahmed et al., 2023). Feminism simply means the equality of both genders, but it is considered an anti-men movement by the masses.

Multiple steps have been taken to empower the women and provide fundamental rights to them on the governmental as well on the private level (Cheema et al., 2022). Apart from this, media is also playing a vital role in highlighting the cases against women and girls. It is good to appreciate the efforts and amendments made by the authorities, but the ultimate change will not come unless they will cope with identity deficit issues (Naseem et al., 2020). This is the unaddressed problem, other than being unaddressed, it is the severe one. For the ultimate betterment and change, one has to address and resolve this issue. The women have to be liberated from the identity complexities imposed by the structure of the society and the state (Orazaliyev et al., 2023). It is a myopia and society is responsible for it. Multiple factors had nourished the issue and instigated the identity crisis in the women.

Habermas and Identity Deficit:

Habermas is one of the most prominent philosophers who had worked on the identification of the issue and provided some remedial solutions to cope with the problem. He belonged to the Frankfurt School. 1973 is a life-changing year in the life of Habermas, as he had left Frankfurt to start a professional life (Hodge, 2005). To do so, he had joined Max Plank Institute as a director of research. It is the influence of such a working environment that had helped him to develop the idea of an identity crisis, in the name of a legitimation crisis. Contemporary capitalism is the basic concern of the current period and the legitimation crisis are directly linked with the nature of contemporary capitalism (Ross et al., 2011). The focus of Habermas was on the analysis of political, fundamental, and structural changes in capitalism. The legitimation crisis was an entirely different subject for the philosopher because it had changed the domain from philosophy to social theory.

Habermas is a German researcher, scholar, and sociologist. He had presented the most impressive and important theory of identity deficit. As per his work and analysis, he had divided the identity crisis into two further types of crisis such as legitimate crisis and motivation crisis (Rasche et al., 2014). According to the research and work of Habermas, the identity deficit comprises this two basic crisis. A legitimate crisis occurs when the individual or an institution is failed to deliver the promised commitment. It has been seen that due to non-fulfillment of commitments and non-deliverance of expected demands people become hopeless and feel unassociated in the situation. It becomes the cause of identity deficit in an individual (Eva, 2010). Other than this, under the spell of an identity crisis the individual become confused between two are more commitments at the same time.

Motivation crisis are also part of the identity crisis presented by Habermas. Motivation crisis disturbs the individual internally. It is the situation when the person becomes unable to define the "Self". It is that level of confusion because of various issues and problems that won't let the person react concretely and rationally (Schachter et al., 2018). Under motivation crisis, the individual or the society knows the solution of the preceding problem, but they cannot implement it because of some other commitments (Peto et al., 2004). This situation of duality

won't let the person work pragmatically and become a victim of an identity crisis. Women are more vulnerable to be fallen prey to identity crisis because of all the situations they are going through. They are treated as a second-class citizen and this behavior broke them from the inside out. Apart from this, the policymakers are also unfair towards women and they make flexible policies. This is the reason more women suffer from an identity crisis as per the theory of identity deficit presented by Habermas (Heng et al., 2003).

By legitimation crisis, it means the inability of an officer or a social entity to perform the given jobs. The social entities, government officers and authoritative people are selected to perform some particular duties and obligations. They are responsible for the deliverance and governance in the society as well as on the individual level (Dahlberg et al., 2004). The lives and regularity of others are dependent upon the working and efficiency of such people. In case of better delivery, the people will be going to trust the governance, authorities and law in the country. This type of crisis is part of an identity crisis, as per the working of Habermas. The confidence level and factor of safe dependency can help the people dignify a social setup in which their social identities can be polished. The absence of efficient delivery of promised social entity can lead to creating legitimation crisis (Fleming, 2006). It is the external way of transforming the identities of people, by suppressing their rights by the authorities. In case of lower delivery or non-delivery, the people lost their confidence in the authorities. In this situation, society suffers from an acute legitimation crisis, and the social entities and authoritative persons are responsible for it. The people lost their identities, hope and trust slowly. This situation is very dangerous for a society because it can lead to an identity deficit in the masses (Edgar, 2005). For example, in Pakistan, the authorities are not working with all their effectiveness and efficiency, but their attitude is worse while treating women. This has increased the level of identity crisis in women. They are facing severe women identity deficit or crisis in the country.

One can analyze the situation in the country by having multiple examples such as the law of the country allowing women to marry as per the personal choice, but it is against the cultural norms and values of the people of the country. The social entities and authorities don't handle the situations as per the codes of law, but they become reluctant to help them to acquire such rights (Khan, 2012). Every day, in every court of Pakistan, there are some cases of love marriage being fought by the people, but such women are threatened by the authorities and families. In most of the cases, such eloped women got killed by the families in the name of honour and dignity of the family (Farooq, 2022). The authorities take it as a normal case, they don't priorities it. This is the reason women have no confidence in the authorities, neither they want to take the help of the law enforcement departments in the case of some issues (Blühdorn, I. (2019). This situation has become a cause of acute women identity crisis in country. They not only lose confidence and hope, but it also made them vulnerable to being attacked by anyone. In this situation, it is very difficult for them to trust the authorities, people or media anymore.

It can exhaust the victims and enhance the scheme of the crisis on the individual and social levels. Habermas was a sociologist, he had particularly done his work to show the changes and crisis on the social level, but one can apply such concepts and situations on an individual level as well (Suri, 2018). On the individual level, the segregation of the society on cultural, social, national and environmental levels can cause the disparity in their identity. An example can be taken from the youth of 3rd world countries. In such countries, people are obsessed with technology and change. They want new phones, internet and devices, but when it comes to the liberation of women and the provision of fundamental rights for the women, they find it anti-religion and anti-culture (VARGOVA, 2005). This is how they are coping with multiple ideologies and concepts on the same level and there is a huge controversy between the findings and beliefs. The psychological dragging and division of a person in multiple things

can cause many issues such as legitimation crisis and identity deficit (Muhammad et al., 2024). The human brain and psychology are sensitive, it is very difficult for them to process many critical things at the same time. This can damage their psychological health and drag them into the depth of identity crisis.

The behaviour of a human being comprises of two main things such as the nature of that person and the environmental impacts that transform the attitude of that person. Externally the legitimation factors can transform the attitude of a person and they can suffer from an identity crisis whereas, internally, the feeling of a person can make him feel unmotivated (Hassanzedeh, 2021). Motivation crisis encompasses the internal issues of a person that made him feel unaligned. By motivation crisis, Habermas means the internal feeling of sensing less motivation. A person may feel less motivated and unaligned due to multiple reasons. It is the feeling that left the person in the world of hopelessness and deprivation. The person or society who is suffering from such a condition, they have to face many difficulties while moving forward. He had seen a lot and concluded that no matter how much he is going to work hard, he will not be able to acquire the required results. The person instantly feels unmotivated and won't be able to perform well. Resultantly, one would not achieve anything. Even, achievable become unachievable and it can accelerate the identity crisis in the person. Motivation crisis and legitimation crisis lies at the core of identity crisis. The motivation crisis occurs when there would be a conflict between two patterns of life. When the culture and norms come in conflict with some social values or beliefs, the motivational crisis can occur and be enhanced with the intensity of the issue (Habermas, 2004). The issues can get worst when the conflict raise between the primary and secondary groups of the societal institution. It usually fails to produce an ethical atmosphere in society. When the ethnic structure of society weakens, it can leave the citizens unresponsive and deprived. Such issues can weaken the personalities, identities, economy and the state. This issue can be happened and studied on the national level as well as on the individual level.

Hypothesis Proved:

With the help of research, data analysis, and study, it has been discovered that Pakistani women are suffering from an acute identity crisis as per the study of identity crisis given byJürgen Habermas. Therefore, the hypothesis, "In light of Habermas's theory, women in Pakistan are facing identity crisis due to gender discrimination, failure of institutions and difference in values, ethics, and law" stands proved". That needs immediate measures by concerned authorities and the governance of the country to solve the issue.

Findings:

1. Men and women are counterparts of each other and for the betterment and progress of society, it is very important to give the importance of both of the genders on the same level.
2. The world is growing and developing, Pakistani women should also develop with the growing world. It is better for the progress and development of the country. Gender roles should be changed and transformed in the country because they are becoming a cause of women's identity crisis.
3. Pakistani women are suffering from the issue of an identity crisis. They are failed to define the self adequately. Society has made them show commitments to multiple things and it became impossible for them to concentrate on defining the self.
4. Definition of self is very important for better psychological health. The presence of an identity crisis can cause many issues in Women. As per the research, it has been seen that 2 out of every 5 Pakistanis are suffering from some psychological issues.
5. There is less acceptance of any progressive movement for the betterment of women in the country. People amalgamate the idea of women development and progress with the destruction of cultural values.

6. Feminist women are considered anti-men and anti-cultural women. They are not accepted and liked by the masses in Pakistani society. The opinion of people about feminism and other liberation movement is very negative.
7. It is very important to study the research of Jürgen Habermas because Pakistani women are suffering from an acute identity crisis as per the concept of identity crisis given by Jürgen Habermas. To solve the issue, it is very important to study the issue under the lens of the concerned scholar.

Conclusion:

Identity crisis is the biggest and most serious issue that is being faced by Pakistani women. This issue is highlighted by the scholarly work of Jürgen Habermas. He has provided two types of identity crisis such as motivation crisis and legitimacy crisis. Both of the types of crisis are becoming a hurdle in the progress and development of Pakistani women, as she is even failed to define the self because she is suffering from an acute identity crisis. Such crisis have become the cause of hypertension, anxiety, depression, and many other psychological issues for Pakistani women. It is a serious problem and it needs to be solved so that Pakistani women can gain some confidence to define themselves and start walking on the path of progress and development. Women do not have confidence in the institutions of the country because of the factor of non-deliverance. The woman of the country is failed to deliver in the society. It is the reason people do not have any confidence in them. It made the person divided into the concept of in duality and it affect the definition of self for them. The legal system and judiciary system in the country should be regulated in such a way that people start gaining confidence in them. Women should be aware of their position and importance. There must be well-defined gender roles and no discrimination in society based on gender. It is the only way from which the women can learn to define the self. The education system and the society must provide the required confidence to the women so, that they can learn to define the "Self". The instability in the institutions of the country becomes the cause of the legitimacy crisis in the country. Since the foundation of the country, Pakistan is facing a political and economic crisis. This has lowered the confidence of the people in the institutions of the country. The authority, policy-makers, and government should work to establish stability in the political and economic system of the country. so that the women's identity crisis in Pakistan can be cured.

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