UNIVERSITY AND REFLEXIVE FEMALE IDENTITY IN IRAN

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ABSTRACT

The active participation of women in higher education as a global reality has revolutionized gender roles of women and consequently the structure of their identity. In the last two decades in Iran society and very high development of higher education institutions, demand and competition for women participation in university has increased their social attendance and participation opportunity and with the presence of women in the social structures, women's awareness areas of their rights and efforts to eliminate inequalities has been increased. However, the presentation of women creativity in education process was along with intellectual and ideological structure changes which had an important role in women’s personal and social success. Higher education has boosted a reflexive thinking and critical wisdom in women’s gender socialization process, and had a constructive role in awareness and the construction of a new formulation of women's identity. Perspective change in which a dialectical process change stereotypical gender norms and portrays a new representation of their identity with an increase of women’s power. The meaning-making process in the individual construction of women’s new identity is investigated using theoretical foundation of interpretation in this research. Results of this study show that the outcome of higher education for women in the line of doing traditional tasks and housework, intellectual skills and insights acquisition is different from the past which led to the formation of a new intellectual and valuable social system for them and it provides social and individual lifestyle changes grounds through the revised strategies.

Keywords: female identity, higher education, reflexivity

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1. Introduction

In the last two decades in the Iranian society, broad development of higher education institutions has increased the demand and competition for the participation and presence of women at the Universities, the opportunity for their social participation and has formed new contexts for role playing and reconstruction of women's identity. What is important here is the evaluation of interaction and review the identity changes from the perspective of women after the experience of the higher education environment. This article is intended to provide a description of how to choose, interactions and strategies of women and the consequences of lifestyle choices that they prefer after the attendance to the Universities. This article examines the role of higher education as a social factor influencing the changes and the reconstruction of modern identity of women in Iran. This means to draw a picture of the new motivations and needs of women and women's experience of modernity, which in a rethought process of the women personal identity has led to a new representation of identity and consequently a change in the lifestyle of women. In the major approaches to development and cultural developments, women are generally considered as the objects of development plans. Such development plans usually want women to entry into the employment and higher education environments. The issue has influenced the social life of women in Iran and focused on the economic and social development, both on a general and specific level of gender. The use of the word “women” in development literature is not as a participant, but as an additional concept that has been used for the development and this is despite the fact that women should be considered as the elector, elected, and active participant in the development, as well as the beneficiary of the development interests (Shaditalab 2002: 16-19). What have been largely ignored in studies are the recognition of women’s performance and strategies, as well as the consequences of education from the perspective of women based on the logic of individual proactive. So the purpose of this research is to study the changes of attitude, meaning and identity transformations from the perspective of women.

Women as creative actors during mental dynamic processes and in pace with rapid changes in the modern world rethink their ideas and reflect their attitudes by reinvigorating their knowledge and insight. On the other hand, the society reflects an image of the education as a social reality to a person, which can be seen as a part of his personal identity. So choosing education as a way to define personal and social identity for women is not unexpected. Women build their own self-organized by using social experiences and will refer to the social sphere by devising ways to their realization. The innovation and reflection of rethinking start with continuing education, and will pave the way for women to enter the field of employment. Certainly, the role of social structures’ changes in choosing and the attitudes and actions of women is remarkable. This study has a two-part structure, at first it describes and analyzes the incentives for women to study and then explains and interprets the individual and social consequences of this action. It focuses on identifying new incentives that women are experiencing in the multiple identities and consequently change in their identity. Incentives that not only in the individual atmosphere, but also under the influence of massive social and cultural contexts, reform the women's action and eventually enable women to choose education as a source of identity in an abstract classification of concepts in the four personality types.
2. Problem Statement: the transformation of women mentality and higher education

The higher education for women in different social aspects (development, employment, etc.) has always been in the scope of various researchers. It contains whatever we can mention as the discourse of femininity in the modern era. But, a part of the reality is the individual and inner diversity of the female community and its multiple outcomes for the reality of higher education from the perspective of the women activists. Functions and impacts of higher education for women have always identified social changes of such event in the elitist viewpoints, while a clear picture that shows women how and by what mechanism experience these changes is rare. The university experience could guide women to the outer arena by changing the position of women from the traditions’ framework of home interior. The research has an attempt to study the relationship between higher education and the women's experience after the higher education. Description of women mentality of the motivation process is the transformation of their individual and social concepts and desires, so their interactions are classified accordingly and the consequences associated with this choice have been investigated, ultimately. Since these trends on the one hand are inherently based on individual and psychological needs and on the other hand are conceptualized in the mind of individuals and formed an identical concept during the socialization process and a social process as well as major changes in social structures and various deliberate policies in line with this development, at the same time, could greatly manage the actions of women manage; therefore, considering the issue in two mentioned ways is remarkable, and certainly the role of these interventions and outcomes that intentionally or unintentionally are associated with them is not negligible. It means policies and adopting structural strategies can coordinate the individual desires and social conceptualized aspirations of individuals with the culture and the structures governing it. In our country, such general and specific policies have been conducted in the field of women and have provided the opportunity for their participation in multiple roles and fields as much as possible. Education and employment as the most important fields of a new identical experience have provided the groundwork for cultural and identical changes and women choose new identities to create balance with their social environment in order to adapt and define their identical distinct from others. These changes can be considered in line with the continuing challenge to develop balance and personal and social satisfaction in women. However, the expectations of the individual, family and tradition have defined women mostly in the roles of mother and wife and new platforms such as education has added different expectations to the previous roles. The purpose of this debate is not discussion and review in the quality and quantity of this range and positive and negative aspects of it; rather, achieving a fundamental recognition in order to understand the motivations of women for entrance to this identical arena and also study the associated effects on women’s identity. Paying attention to this subject is necessary; due to the continuous dialectical interaction of women during their daily lives with the lifestyle that can affect their individual and family live and their identity in a social class. Women are present in this process both as performers that benefit from this kind of choice and as vulnerable actors; so, it is a serious matter to pay attention to their motivations and trends and the consequences of their interaction in line with their needs and desires at the entrance to the difficulties or gains from it. Here, we answer these questions to develop the knowledge and cognition, what is the nature of desire for higher education.
from the perspective of women? And on the other side, what were its implications on the individual, family and social level for women? Although this matter seems to be apparently micro, but the motives and conceptual systems of women is resulted from the proactive interaction between individual actors and structures and major cultural and social contexts. Women's experience after the higher education somehow suggests a mechanism of modernity's experience in its broadest sense by women activists. Employment and higher education are the result of development and modernization processes and also platforms for the construction of modernity’s experience and the modern man; on this basis, when women enter these new arenas, virtually represent a motivation and experience that can place it under the female experience of modernity. In this study, we will focus on this subject. Modernity should be understood as a social institution and the changes resulted from modern institutions directly mingle with individual life and so our "self" (Giddens 1999: 15). In this article, we will study the role of incentive, educational factors for women and the mechanisms of identical changes and the consequences of female identity construction.

3. Theoretical Foundations

In terms of identity and its formation, Jenkins is one of the theorists that consider personal and social relationships and structures to be effective. Identity is an essential condition for social life and is embodied in a “self” that is fully constructed in the society. It means the initial and subsequent socialization processes and the current processes of social interaction, in which individuals to define or redefine themselves or others during their lives. Jenkins (2012) stated in total, the emphasis on individual differences is the main basis of the theories of personality. And the emphasis on social similarities is the basis of the theories of social identity. That means individual differences that can grow and evolve in socialization and lead to social similarities (Schultz 2014: 11). The human behavior is complex; such a complexity is because behaviors do not result under the influence of personality, but situations and circumstances (Parvin 2012: 8). Also, Giddens in analyzing the path and separating the boundary of individual identity from social identity and the border between these two argues the discussion of reflectivity and explains reflectivity is developed in the brain. He believes that in the modernity process, change in personal and global identity is a dialectical affair. The result of these concepts indicates that the individual concepts, motivation and personal desires interact with the social affairs, and separating them is not possible in formal and semantic formation.

In the interactionism view of culture, all the aspirations, goals, methods and experiences that exist for achieving the goals are the product of culture. Community and individuals’ action are formed through the concept system that culture provides it (Azad Armaki 2011: 28-32). Identities are formed by the interaction of meanings, mental motivations and social structures. In this paper, motivation is considered as the fundamental forces of identity construction and individual self of women in choosing the path of Higher Education, so we seek to identify the sources that formed them and the consequences associated with women's action.
4. Methodology

In the present study, based on the interpretive paradigm and emphasis on creativity and the ability of sense-making of women as active and open-minded subjects, through a purposive sampling, we try to understand the lived experience of 23 females who are practitioner and educated in higher education levels. And the construction of the identity of these women has been analyzed and interpreted through an inductive and explorative approach. First, the saturation of concepts is reached through data analysis and contextual classification by using the comparative approach, and data are coded and reduced in the process of concept representation. The main data collection technique is in-depth interviews and samples were selected by theoretical sampling in Tehran (Strauss and Corbin 2013).

5. The motivations of Women

In response to the question of how women decide to attend university and gain a higher education experience? The findings suggest that the causal conditions of position and individual motives of women in the social context are resulted from "the desire to fulfill the desires and interests" and "experience of negative emotions". Several factors create the dissatisfaction feelings about the status quo in women, such as women's interest in education, activity and promotion, perceive the joy of achievement, the desire to prove oneself, the desire to progress, the desire to succeed, belief in individual abilities and choosing education as a way to return to one's roots to factors that can be used to offset the negative emotions as "experience of negative emotions". For the women that have been studied, experience of negative emotions is caused by different kinds of failure, competition, a sense of stagnation and backwardness and the possible regret for missed opportunities in the past. Fear of losing the current situation, challenges and struggle to live and the lack of responsibility of husband and family and the insecurity that caused by them could be a factor in motivating women to rethink and review their conditions. Positive and negative motivational mechanisms in women generally lead them to choose the academic direction. However, the beginning and continuation of this path in the lives of women focus on personal and social aspects and there are some complexities in the process which generally put them in a series of interactions and guide them toward the renewed role-playings and redefining the identity in interact with multiple factors. In the present study, the findings of individual motivations show that women consider following three factors as a strategy to realize their desires and interests and will define their priorities accordingly. A) Experience a sense of achievement, B) Experience a sense of satisfaction and C) The desire for self-realization, that studied women with regard to their individual abilities consider them as the priority of their interests and desires. A numbers of women consider the choosing or continue the education as a kind of progress and propound a sense of stagnation and lack of progress towards individual improvement their motivation as a motivation for this progress. Through perceiving a joy that can bring satisfaction for women by respect and prestige, women are able to choose a burgeoning life, as well as getting away from the frivolity and vanity that in most cases have psychological effects on women and creates a void of meaning for them.
Also, the desire of women to realize themselves, through the awareness of their individual abilities and due to environmental stimuli make them try to fulfill or even prove themselves. Another kind of motivational classification that has been a factor for women to challenge and often an incentive to progress is social incentives that include: A) the challenge of traditional roles: the struggle of women in the pursuit of individual rights, and attempt to change the sexual stereotype under the effect of the major cultural and social structures in public life of women. It is where women under the title of individual rights abuse, lack of financial independence and lack of promotion stand out in front of a patriarchal wave of power and ability to resist against men. In fact, one of the ways for women to struggle in this direction is to choose such routes which not only reduce the consequences of this domination, but also show the women's strength in coping with the image of womanly weakness. B) Certain norms that by establishment of normative requirements in the traditional definition of women provide an abnormal image of woman and also certain stereotypes and forms that community explains the role of housekeeping based on them. This is while women based on the motivation to fight such thinking constantly seek for ways to participate in other areas of the community, so that in some way they can redefine the stereotypes of housewife role besides a duty to be a wife and mother. What is significant here is the formation of a modern thinking in women that have transformed their desire to participate in traditional spaces. The complexity and interrelationship of modernity are casual and effective background for the emergence of new motivations in women. C) Job concerns: Job concerns can affect women mentality in several motivational areas. It means financial need or improvement of financial conditions and in other words "cultural-economic concerns" that are subject to the "income" and "promotion". And D) Idealistic-Social expectations, which is an amplifier and effective factor that most of the studied women have adjusted their behavior patterns to it and tried to close themselves to the subjective ideals in the social intertextuality. Iranian society has expectations from a woman; the Iranian society will define a woman as a sublime person if she would have properties such as faith, awareness, empowerment and strength, loyalty, being a good mother and always has individual expansion and also overcomes her problems with tact and be devoted. So, definitely choosing this path not only put women in need of such characteristics but also will lead them sin their social position and status quo to this side. Therefore, the impact of cultural stereotypes, such as tendency to academic degree and credentials that can somewhat realize the ideal female pattern and lead women to the kind of idealism according to the expectations is significant; according to Herskovits, the cultural syndromes are organized around the themes of the community (Treyandis 1999: 27). The formation of the traditional challenges in social interactions simultaneously with the changes of value system that revolves around women, which strengthen the conflict contexts are understandable in the data. Modernity has resulted in changes and distancing women from their traditional roles through creating changes in norms and attitudes (see Figure 2).
According to the causes and factors affecting motivation, women in the interactive process move forward the selection of strategies that can approach them to their goals, such conditions that along with interfering factors such as of successful previous experience would help women in accelerating targets. Among these items, "previous experiences" can be mentioned that through them the decision-making process gets quickly short for women, as Schultz considers success in the performance as the judgment factor of individuals about their effectiveness (Schultz 2014: 537).

Although most of the problems cited by women in the following notes that are addressed under the title of consequences of multi-role suggest that women have endured a lot of pressure in such situations, but they balance the environment of Home, Work and University regardless of relative peace in their individual lives and have provided themselves some sort of psychological satisfaction. Women usually choose routes that can provide the desired amount of personal and social satisfaction in a rational process. Based on the research findings, women perceive education and profession as the two predictable factors in satisfaction of social life, this reflects the predictability of these two factors in the social development and promotion of women, which is generally have been defined and available by the state and society.

6. Components and elements of feminine identity

Gender identity as one of the types of social identity shows how a person define and distinguish himself as an individual as well as in relationship with others. However, the identities of today's society are moving toward multi-identity that still may be the result of the reflexive character of modern life (Jenkins 2002: 107). In the vast human groupings, there are numerous types of identity that people are recognized based on them, therefore, the identity need to be recognized and a person always acts interoperability and in a dynamic combination (Estfelaler 2015: 13-14). The identity is created during biographies that we engage every day and within the traditions that we quote for ourselves and others (ibid: 30-56).

In the past, an invariant definition and one-dimensional identity were referred to human, but modern human is faced with multiple, multi-strains and floating identities that interact and communicate with each other, and are influenced by each other. And accordingly, different identity layers are raised to describe the person as an independent integrity in a world of multi- strains and multi thought (Ghaderi 2007: 7). On social identity, individual and collective affairs are placed in one
format would and it contains the four main features of similarity, difference, reflectivity and process (Jenkins 2012: 44-50). In this study, the construction of social identity the surveyed women have been considered in the structural section of identity. These categories emerge from the data that the women in our study have been constantly in relation with them in their individual and social interactions as a part of their identity and personality: A) Mentality B) emotions and feelings C) Action D) interactions and relationships. Now, according the categories of identity components, the consequences of higher education on women’s identity have been studied in the context of this division of the identity based on the narrations of subjects.

7. Change of women’s semantic structures

Identity is a function of social affairs and wisdom formulations. Formulations of wisdom govern on different societies in different eras and epochs. And in a sense, interpretation and knowledge is determined compared to the human status. Social Affairs also claim the proposition that social subjects affect the formations of our knowledge, the formulations of our knowledge affect social subjects vice versa, and also formulations of knowledge are the beneficiaries of the production and development of the social affairs (Ghaderi 2007: 102-103). Assuming that the knowledge formations of women shape their semantic structures, we have examined these changes in the subjective aspects of identity. It means some aspects of consciousness, meaning, motivations, beliefs, insights and attitudes. The semantic components of human have six dimensions of physical, emotional, cognitive, interpersonal, spiritual and mystical. So, different kinds of women experience can be the consequences of arousing these fluid states and the level of understanding and awareness of themselves. Women through the entrance to university and academic environment experience some aspects of this awareness and the semantic transformation in these women leads to motivations, beliefs and different views.

In this study, women have experienced identity transformation in the following dimensions. As we discussed under the title of new incentives regarding how to motivate women to choose the academic direction in the previous section, in this section we also show that individual and educational motivations of women differ from the past and attaining peace and inner satisfaction that are the motivational priorities of women in the reconstruction of their identity have been achieved to a large extent. During the process of meaning-making a re-conceptualization after the higher education, women have become more aware of their human and social rights and adopt new strategies to address and compensate for their lost rights. In the study, these strategies mostly start from the family atmosphere and reach their climax in the presence of women in social environments such as universities and the workplace. Following challenging motivations, women get a more negative perception of the traditional responsibilities after education and that always have entered them to family challenges and crises. These subjective challenges are based on the logic of duty and not necessarily the mutual participation. Because the subjective logic of duties is resulted from the customary and religious rules, women somehow experience the social and religious deconstructions. According to a sense of power and strength and achieve a positive attitude about themselves,
women have confidence in their practical strategies and often change their lifestyle and reconstruct their own identity with a self-centered individualism. After higher education, the studied women experience a range of positive and negative emotions, a sense of accomplishment, strength, honor, independence and satisfaction of the conditions in the form of positive emotion and also the turmoil resulted from the role conflict, feelings of anger for conflict between roles and the distance between mentality and reality, feelings of guilt regarding to the responsibility to children, psychic insecurity, mistrust of men’s feelings in relation to women. The sources to boost morale of women to experience positive and negative emotions are father, mother, sister, brother, friends, colleagues and grandparents.

8. The Interactions of women in the process of reflexively

Higher Education affects the interactions of women in the family, job and education environments. On the relationships of family, women often adopt conflicting viewpoints about the decisions within the family that in most cases these differences can face them with family conflicts and crises. In the cases in this study, most of these conflicts are associated with the lack of adequate cooperation of men in family duties. Disputes and disagreement of women arise from the look and logic that considers men’s participation not as a help in that just is defined stereotypically for women as a maternal and marital task, but the participation of men in normal and crisis situations of life. In some cases of these women, there are economic challenges with the husband about the future responsibilities of children and also in the sphere of emotional relationships it seems the instrumental rationality governing over these women have affected their feelings and emotional relationships with their husbands. The consequences of higher education for women associated with the manner and personal and social behaviors also indicate the other consequential aspect of education among the studied women. It means more consciousness of women in social actions and adopting dramatic behavior in order to provide the desired image of themselves to others. Also after education, women gain more information to manage their bodies and look forward to new opportunities to implement physical strategies to manage their body. However in most of the cases, the mere knowledge of the matter constitutes a part of the subjective meaning of women and they consider not having enough opportunity to implement and practice in this field as a factor of non-fulfillment of their attitude in this regard. What is remarkable is the way of thinking and critical wisdom of women that have challenged them to find reliable ways on the social path and result in deeper realism and pragmatism in their attitudes. In other words, strengthen of decision-making and increase the self-confidence and self-esteem that show the image of self-centered individualism of women in the social view. Also, the time and space as the sources of identity-making has a focal importance in the social scene (Jenkins 2012: 46). The presence of women at the University and the dominance of critical thinking also affected the relationships of women in the business environment. The educated working women also experience critical and challenging relations of how to manage and equality of rights and benefits as well as opportunities for promotion in the workplace. Although in the studied cases, the occupational activities of women are often different from their academic
expertise, but in accordance with occupational strategies, women still experience a kind of adaptation and compromise with the business environment due to the lack of job security.

9. The experience of higher education from the respective of women

In the field of academic relations, women often try to establish new micro-cultures of relations and interactions through the redefinition of women's roles. Such interactions that regarding the inner satisfaction always have been in the new relationships with professors and other students and quotes from women are based on their interest, and positive, desirable motivations for selecting the education. In this regard, women explain that this part of their interactions in the university environment is the only part that have been invested in themselves and despite the problems is enjoyable for them. In the context of higher education, women have defined different relations in the behavioral domain with other students and professors and plan different strategies for settlement of the probable role conflicts in the case of having other simulates roles, including continuous reflection on the division of tasks in order to more contribution of husband, children and entourage to prevent possible crises in the family that can be created due to the presence of women in higher education environment. For this purpose, women adopt adequate measures in order to save time for family and social interactions, and also try to improve their lifestyle by reviewing opportunities in the prior interactions and relationships with a focus on time management. Women in their rethinking process also rethink about the method of upbringing and education of their children and often adopt their educational practices based on more scientific principles, they also assign a part of the children responsibility to themselves in order to solve the problems caused through the lack of their full presence at home, which could have a significant contribution in the independence of their children.

10. Conclusion

Higher education is a new incentive for women: what we have entitled as “newfound motivations” in the final findings of research on women’s motives for entering the higher education environment is the outcome of the analytical results of interviews with women who have experienced the environment of higher education. Such experiences that its innovative nature means for women in a way that will lead to their multidimensional presence and participation in various social spheres. According to this model, the conditions that in concomitance with the daily life of women in the social context led to the emergence of motivation in women indicate that they have created the basis of motivation in themselves during an interactive and fluid process over time, and choose the strategy of education as a way to fulfill the target in order to reduce the stress caused by failure to fulfill the needs. What can be considered as the consequences of the formation process of women's motivations is providing a multiple typology of women who represent an efficient and effective self in the common categories of mind and their common features and interactions. The concept of type makes sense through the classification a significant number of different traits and implies on more
and discipline and generality in behavior. Although people can have varying degrees of traits, they are usually considered in a particular type (Parvin 2002: 11, quoted by Horney 1945). We have sufficed to the following findings, among the subjects in an abstract classification.

A) Choosing education as a means of struggle and competition, B) Education as a vague plan, C) Education and employment in order to self-realization, D) Employment as a way to promote, foresight and financial independence

**Self-identity is the key concept of women’s transformation:** In the findings of research as a central subject, what more than anything else could reveal the identical atmosphere governing on women is a concept that we refer it as "self-identity". The studied women often prefer interests, needs and individual goals and personally show an independent identity based on values, norms and beliefs. The individual identity, the personality independence and the recognition of the independence are particularly important for them. The types of communication for these women have got selective and optional and the review of women in the interactions and relationships is largely voluntary. This is while the women's individual pleasures are defined based on their individual preferences, although sometimes not be met in practice. Based on the quotes of these women, what sometimes can lead to anxiety of people in perceiving of these women is self-centered individualism that in its vulnerability aspect to some extent can move towards the selfish individualism. In fact, the fast and growing move of women toward themselves has formed the framework of the self-centricity and is notable in discussions of the female modernity.

**Secondary rethinking is a deliberate process in the reconstruction of female identity:** Women interpret realizing themselves to a balance between opportunity seeking and risk. Dropping the past and get rid of the annoying emotional habits with the help of various techniques, creates diverse opportunities for character development. The informed risk is an integral part of a deliberate strategy that should be adopted in relative to the future. Modern human must deal with the unpredictable events that provide the necessary background to break away from the established behavior patterns and may bear some risks far worse than the past (Giddens, 1999: 115). The results of this study show that the movement of women in the direction of realization of their social rights, through education and employment, have strengthen a sort of reflexive thinking and critical wisdom, but despite it; women in order to solve the individual and family conflicts, under the pressure of external requirements, meanwhile the deliberate pause of this process, by adopting a strategy of maintaining the status quo, will move toward the sustainability of their social life. In fact, the solution for women is a "secondary reflection" to select the strategies in the form of organized social attitudes, which have made possible their true and nominal identity based on the understanding of constant and stable social references. According to Wallerstein and Blakeslee, the process of going back to the early experiences in the current modernization is not confined to the critical stages of a person's life, but the general coordinates of social activities for ongoing psychological organizing or reorganizing. In terms of new communities, on the contrary, the transformed oneself should be found through personal explorations, and build and keep it strong as a part of the process of mutual contact between the personal and social changes (Giddens 1999: 57). So a compilation of scholarly understanding through the mastery of literature and intellectual logic of higher education, and social
consciousness through the ability to analyze data on women’s daily problems, which in its entirety has given women the authenticity of informed citizens are the new identical construction of women of our study after the higher education.

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