

## **Investigating the Role of Identity Styles in Predicting Psychological Well-Being amongst Adults from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

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### **Abstract**

Erik Erikson's (1968) seminal work provided a basis for further research relating to correlates and outcomes linked with ego-identity formation/maintenance in adolescence and adulthood. Erikson's emphasis on gaining a firmer sense of identity is considered for future psychosocial adjustment. This study was designed to examine stylistic differences in processing identity-related information and their relations with aspects of psychological well-being amongst adult population. Four-hundred individuals (185 males and 215 females) ranging in age from 17 to 50 years ( $M = 26.10$ ;  $SD = 8.59$ ) were recruited from various educational institutions and work places located in urban areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Identity style inventory (version-5) developed by Berzonsky et al. (2013) and Ryff's (1989) psychological well-being scale (middle version consisting of 54 items) were used as tools to collect the relevant information. The findings revealed that individuals with an informational style scored higher on all the subscales of psychological well-being. On the contrary, diffuse-avoidant persons showed the opposite pattern. Normative style users were low on well-being aspects of environmental mastery, autonomy, and personal growth. However, they scored significantly higher on the psychological well-being subcomponents such as positive relations with others, and purpose in life. Moreover, the findings indicate that as age increased, dependence on informational style also increased whereas use of normative and diffuse-avoidant styles decreased. A strong relationship that was observed between identity styles and psychological well-being attests psychological well-being as dependent on styles.

**Keywords:** Identity processing styles; informational style; normative style; diffuse-avoidant style; Psychological well-being; aspects, age

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## **Introduction**

Identity development is the most serious and significant developmental challenge that must be negotiated by the adolescents and young adults in order to have a healthy personality. The goal of this research study is to look at a very significant aspect of identity, i.e., how identity is formed as a process, and, to examine how does process (style) predict psychological well-being— one of very important aspects of personality.

Erikson's (1950, 1959) developmental life-span model consists of eight crisis stages that characterize our lives from birth through death. Each stage is marked by a certain specific developmental task (psychosocial crisis) which offers an opportunity for growth and development, if handled correctly. The most important developmental task of the fifth phase (adolescence) is identity formation, i.e., the conscious awareness of really different from others? (e.g., Erikson, 1950, 1980; Kroger, 2004) This situation calls for balancing the desire to attempt many possible selves and the need to find a single self (Sandhu & Tung, 2006). Erikson (1982) stressed that younger persons have to undergo a psychological moratorium; a process of trying on new identities as they grow older before making firm commitments to their newly-discovered identities. People experiencing a psychosocial moratorium, in fact, go through an “identity crisis”, i.e., digging deeply into their feelings, thoughts, and desires, which is a prerequisite for developing a healthy ego identity. Erikson noted that identity development provides a sense of direction to the individual, and a sense of mattering to those who count. Erikson (1959) pointed up that if an individual reaches adulthood without forming an identity and ends up in identity diffusion, she/he is expected to suffer psychologically. Such persons are very likely to develop confusion regarding their identity and role (to be played) in society. Later on, Arnett (2004, 2007b), whose main area of interest was emerging adulthood (process of transition from adolescence to adulthood) explained the relationship between identity and well-being from a perspective that was similar to that of Erikson. Thus, identity is a key concept to understand adjustment/psychological wellness in adolescents and adults (keeping in view the environment in which a child lives). Erikson describes identity as a social construction that is tied to one's close relationships (Kerpelman and Pittman, 2018).

In recent years scholars working in multitude of disciplines have expressed intense involvement in the issues/queries regarding identity. In all cultures, identity has been considered by psychologists, an essential aspect of all human beings that keeps on changing/ developing, from birth till death. Regardless of this wide-ranging interest in identity, this concept, even now, remains an enigma.

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Although Erikson's (1959) theory of psychosocial development is reflection of his training as a psychoanalyst, he and a number of other theorists have underlined the significance of cognitive processes in identity formation (e.g., Erikson, 1964; Marcia, 1980). Results of early studies regarding the role that 'formal operational reasoning' might play in identity development were not consistent (Berzonsky & Barclay, 1981). Subsequent studies, however, pointed out unswerving differences in the social-cognitive strategies that individuals employ to build, protect and rebuild a sense of identity (Berzonsky, 2011). Particularly, Berzonsky (1990, 2004) evolved a social-cognitive model of identity formation (known as a famous neo-Eriksonian approach) that proposes three identity processing orientations: informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant. These orientations/styles shed light on the preferences that individuals show in the social-cognitive processes while dealing with or avoiding identity issues/conflicts. The major purpose of the current investigation was to investigate the relationship of identity styles with psychological well-being. Previous research, mostly conducted on the adult individuals, has revealed that psychological well-being is a reliable predictor of health and long-term positive adjustment (Ryff, 2017). Medvedev and Landhuis (2018) indicated that well-being is a very broad term that covers all aspects of normal life including physical, mental, social and spiritual areas.

### **Identity Processing Styles and Psychological Well-Being**

Identity style determines the particular way in which persons confront/tackle life stressors and threats to self. Diffused persons have been found to rely on maladaptive defense mechanism, whereas their information oriented counterparts reported use of problem focused strategies in order to cope with the situation effectively (Berzonsky & Kinney, 1994a, 2008). In one of previous studies, Jones, Ross, and Hartmann (1992) reported positive relationship between diffuseness and alcohol/work related difficulties among naval personnel. In contrast to it, application of information and normative-oriented processing had correlated positively with problem solving and increased success in academic and vocational domains (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000), decreased criminal activities (Whilte & Jones, 1996), and heightened confidence in one's opinion even if others agree with it or not (Berzonsky & Ferrari, 2009).

Various other studies of interrelationships also lent empirical support to linkage between identity and well-being. For instance, examining a sample of 5000 students, Bersonsky and Kuk (2000) reported that students with diffuse-avoidant style were low on educational involvement, academic autonomy, and personal relations, those using normative style did show positive association with educational purpose and negative connection with aspect of healthy relationship with other people. On the other hand, individuals with an informational style had

exhibited academic autonomy, time management ability (in order to meet the academic demands), and also good control over their emotions. (Petrides, Sanchez-Ruiz, Siegling, Saklofske, and Mavroveli in 2018, stated that emotional intelligence explains the self-perceptions of one's emotional abilities). Further women scored higher on educational purpose and employed diffuse identity style less and other styles more than men.

In another study, Ferrari, Wolfe, Wesley, Schoff and Beck (1995) studied the academic procrastination of university students. Participants (N=324) from first-year undergraduate class, were attending three different institutions. All three colleges were different from one another on the basis of SAT total score and ranking order (i.e., ranking high or ranking average). It was found across all three colleges that diffuse/avoidant style showed positive relationship with procrastination while informational style was inversely related to procrastination. Thus, it can be observed that regardless of the prestige of the college, students utilizing an informational style were less likely to manifest procrastination than those using a diffuse/avoidant style.

In summary, it can be concluded from above literature review that studies on styles and psychological well-being have shown a wide range of diversity. However, by and large, diffuse style is related inversely, whereas normative and informational styles are associated positively with well-being.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Identity is a core and inevitable part of our lives. It refers to who we are, who we've been, and what we think we will become. When we lose our sense of identity, we manifest symptoms of mental illness. It is the strongest force in human personality, or in other words, a very important aspect of an individual's self-development. Berzonsky's (1988, 1990) identity style paradigm serves as a coping mechanism, or a problem-solving technique/strategy. The term problem-solving indicates the mental process that people use to look for, examine, and solve problems. If our understanding of the issue is faulty, any attempt to resolve it will also be flawed. The socio-cognitive strategies that Berzonsky (1988, 1990) introduced as identity formation styles have proved their usefulness in diverse contexts and captured prominence across the world as process oriented approach utilized by individuals to have clarity about their identity. This macro view of identity styles appears to be associated with overall human functioning given the role they play in exerting significant impact on the folks' decision making skills with regard to important issues (i.e. identity does control/direct us about what needs to be done or what needs to be avoided). Another essential factor which contributed noticeably to the popularity of concept of identity styles is its apparent connection with various measures relating to quality of life. For example, identity

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styles are seemingly related to individuals' wise thoughts and actions, personal growth, self-actualization, and life meaning (Beaumont, 2009, 2011; Berzonsky, 2003; Vleoras & Bosma, 2005).

The present study was aimed at contributing to the literature on identity processing and well-being by investigating patterns of differences in psychological well-being aspects as a function of Berzonsky's (1990) identity styles. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, different studies have uncovered a link between identity and well-being, be it in the form of life satisfaction, meaning and happiness, or positive affect. For Berzonsky (2003) and Vleoras and Bosma (2005), for instance, success at identity formation may lead to psychological wellness, while others (e.g., Beaumont, 2009) argue that identity formation results in the self-actualization and self-transcendence (i.e., personal growth), which, in turn, are related directly to subjective happiness and life meaning. Hence, identity is a fundamental concept to get an accurate picture on an individual's state of adjustment/well-being.

### **Research Objectives**

Keeping in view the theoretical and empirical linkage between identity styles and psychological well-being, as highlighted in the introductory section, the major purpose of the current study was to examine the interrelationship between these two variables.

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses have been tested.

1. The informational identity style users tend to be more adjusted on all the aspects of psychological well-being than those who prefer diffuse/avoidant style.
2. The normative identity style users are likely to get lower scores on the sense of autonomy and personal growth than those using informational style.

### **Method**

#### *Sample*

A sample of 400 randomly selected adolescents and adults including 185 men and 215 women, aged 17-50 ( $M = 26.095$ ,  $SD = 8.59$ ) enrolled in various courses of humanities, pure science, social science, agriculture, and engineering, at various universities and other educational institutions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, took part in

this study. Mean age of the men was higher (26.89; 8.89) than women (25.41; 8.28). The participation was voluntary and the subjects were required to complete the self-report inventories on identity styles and psychological well-being as described below.

## **Instruments**

### *1. Identity Style Inventory-Version 5 (ISI-5)*

This scale was developed by Berzonsky et al. (2013) to measure an individual's identity styles (three scales) and level of identity commitment. It is composed of 36 items with 9 items in each scale: An Informational-style scale (e.g., "I have spent a great deal of time thinking seriously about what I should do with my life"; alpha = .64); a Normative-style scale (e.g., "I prefer to deal with situations where I can rely on social norms and standards"; alpha = .62); a Diffuse-Avoidant-style scale (e.g., "I'm not really thinking about my future now; it's still a long way off"; alpha = .73); and an Identity Commitment scale (e.g., "I know basically what I believe and don't believe"; alpha = 0.75). These items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me). Alpha coefficients for the current sample were: Informational style, 0.92; Normative style, 0.89; Diffuse-Avoidant style, 0.91; and Identity Commitment; 0.90. The highest possible score on each subscale is 45.

### *2. Scales of Psychological Well-Being*

Researchers and theorists have focused much on psychological well-being because of its enormous impact on one's quality of life. This construct was measured through *Scales of Psychological Well-Being* (middle version consisting of 54 items). It is a six point Likert-type-scale and covers six domains of psychological wellness including self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, and autonomy (Ryff, 1989). Each area is assessed by 9 positive and negative items. The internal consistency of the scale, for all six dimensions, as indicated by Ryff (1989) is above. The highest possible score for each subscale is 54, whereas, for the entire Scale of Psychological Well-being, it is 486.

## **Procedure**

This study was carried out to establish the relationship of identity processing styles with psychological well-being among student population from various colleges and universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. All the subjects were contacted beforehand and assured that nothing would be disclosed regarding their identifiable information and this research is to be used for study purpose only. Then

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personal information sheet was administered on the entire sample to get information relating to demographic profile of each of them. Later, the identity style inventory and scales of psychological well-being were handed over to the subjects along with written instructions which were also verbally explained.

### Results

A total of 400 adolescents and adults including 185 men and 215 women, aged 17-50 ( $M = 26.095$ ,  $SD = 8.59$ ) from various educational institutions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan took part in this study. Mean age of the men was higher (26.89; 8.89) than women (25.41; 8.28). Mean age was higher for those who used an informational style (33.35; 7.51;  $N = 261$ ) than those who preferred normative (26.14; 7.26;  $N = 89$ ) and diffuse styles (19.09; 7.82;  $N = 50$ ) respectively. This finding underscores the importance of age for rational identity processing.

On the whole 67.03% men and 63.72% women used informational style. Similarly, 20% of men and 24% of the women reported use of normative style whereas 12% of women and 13.1% of men preferred diffused-avoidant style as their dominant style. So it becomes obvious that most members of both genders preferred informational style in order to process information related to identity, whereas diffuse-avoidant style used to be least preferred style indicating, again, that the majority of men and women, from the region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, take rational approach toward issues. Out of 400 subjects, 261 used informational style. This represents the portion of 65.25% of the respondents. Approximately 22.3% showed dependence on normative and only 13% on diffuse style. These statistics point out that majority of the respondents preferred informational style which reflects psychological maturity on the part of the users.

**Table 1**

<i>Descriptive Statistics of components of Psychological Well-Being (PWB) by Identity Styles (N = 400)</i>				
	Identity Styles	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Positive Relations with-Others	Diffuse-Avoidant	24.94	4.68	50
	Normative	45.58	4.95	89
	Informational	45.65	3.81	261
	Total	43.05	8.03	400
Environmental Mastery	Diffuse-Avoidant	23.48	3.65	50
	Normative	37.19	4.27	89
	Informational	43.03	4.17	261
	Total	39.29	7.64	400
Personal Growth	Diffuse-Avoidant	19.50	4.15	50
	Normative	20.78	4.78	89
	Informational	45.78	4.67	261
	Total	36.93	13.00	400
Autonomy	Diffuse-Avoidant	18.88	4.10	50
	Normative	19.90	4.84	89
	Informational	45.03	4.86	261
	Total	36.17	13.06	400
Self-Acceptance	Diffuse-Avoidant	23.88	4.83	50
	Normative	43.41	4.52	89
	Informational	44.10	3.56	261
	Total	41.42	7.73	400
Purpose in Life	Diffuse-Avoidant	25.14	4.53	50
	Normative	45.58	5.00	89
	Informational	45.13	4.00	261
	Total	42.73	7.92	400
Total Psychological Well-Being	Diffuse-Avoidant	135.40	20.58	50
	Normative	211.47	17.51	89
	Informational	268.66	21.96	261
	Total	239.28	50.23	400

The components of psychological well-being defined by Ryff (1989) have been analyzed for subjects classified on the basis of their identity style. The subjects with normative and Informational styles, both scored almost equally high on positive relations with others with  $M = 45.58$ ;  $SD = 4.95$ , and  $M = 45.65$ ;  $SD = 3.81$  respectively, followed by purpose in life ( $M = 45.58$ ;  $SD = 5.00$ , and  $M = 45.13$ ;  $SD = 4.00$ ) and self-acceptance ( $M = 43.41$ ;  $SD = 4.52$ , and  $M = 44.10$ ;  $SD = 3.56$ ). This result demonstrates that as normative style users believe in obeying the significant others, typically the parents, that is why they develop positive relations with others. Normative style users are slightly ahead of

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information-oriented ones on purpose in life ( $M = 45.58$ ;  $SD = 5.00$ ) which reflects that they are more purposeful. Respondents with informational style scored highest on personal growth ( $M = 45.78$ ;  $SD = 4.66$ ), normative persons achieved lowest on autonomy ( $M = 19.90$ ;  $SD = 4.84$ ), whereas diffused types performed poorly on all the components.

The analysis appears to prove the correlation between identity styles and psychological well-being. The present findings reveal that informational style positively predicts all indicators of psychological well-being, whereas diffuse style shows the opposite pattern. Individuals with informational and normative styles were almost equally high on positive relations, self-acceptance, and purpose in life. However, the mean scores of 20.78 (4.78) and 19.90 (4.84) on personal growth and autonomy by normative indicated that the use of normative style negatively affects personal growth and autonomy. The lower mean scores of diffuse-avoidant participants on all components of psychological well-being reveal that they were poorly adjusted on these important domains of life, which is a really serious matter from psychological point of view. The respondents who preferred diffuse style have indicated reduced psychological wellness (minimum mean score=18.88 (4.10), maximum mean score = 25.14 (4.53). The scores in this range (as compared to other styles) reflect the individuals' bad psychological health. These findings clearly prove that informational style is indicative of considerable psychological maturity. Overall results show that the highest total mean was obtained on positive relations with others ( $M = 43.05$ ;  $SD = 8.03$ ), whereas the lowest total mean appeared on autonomy ( $M = 36.17$ ;  $SD = 13.06$ ). These results reveal the sample's belief in building good relations with others. However less level of autonomy is a matter of concern.

**Table 2**

<i>Difference between Means on Psychological Well-Being by Identity Styles</i>						
Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Identity Styles	Positive Relations	18736.39	2	9368.19	531.79	.000
	Environmental Mastery	16534.47	2	8267.23	484.44	.000
	Personal Growth	58866.62	2	29433.31	1372.68	.000
	Autonomy	59001.32	2	29500.66	1298.26	.000
	Self-Acceptance	17601.79	2	8800.89	560.35	.000
	Purpose in Life	17694.37	2	8847.19	477.32	.000
	Overall Well-Being	833710.13	2	416855.07	955.80	.000

Table 2 shows that all dependent variables (aspects of psychological well-being) differed significantly in respect of the independent variable of identity styles.

**Table 3**

*Post Hoc Pair wise Comparison on Psychological Well-Being by Identity Styles (N =400)*

Tukey HSD	(I) Identity Styles	(J) Identity Styles	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Positive-Relations with-Others	Diffuse-Avoidant	Normative	-20.64 <sup>*</sup>	.74	.000
		Informational	-20.71 <sup>*</sup>	.65	.000
	Normative	Diffuse	20.64 <sup>*</sup>	.74	.000
		Informational	-.07	.52	.991
	Informational	Diffuse	20.71 <sup>*</sup>	.65	.000
		Normative	.07	.52	.991
Environmental-Mastery	Diffuse-Avoidant	Normative	-13.71 <sup>*</sup>	.73	.000
		Informational	-19.55 <sup>*</sup>	.64	.000
	Normative	Diffuse	13.71 <sup>*</sup>	.73	.000
		Informational	-5.84 <sup>*</sup>	.51	.000
	Informational	Diffuse	19.55 <sup>*</sup>	.64	.000
		Normative	5.84 <sup>*</sup>	.51	.000
Personal Growth	Diffuse-Avoidant	Normative	-1.28	.82	.265
		Informational	-26.28 <sup>*</sup>	.72	.000
	Normative	Diffuse	1.28	.82	.265
		Informational	-25.01 <sup>*</sup>	.57	.000
	Informational	Diffuse	26.28 <sup>*</sup>	.72	.000
		Normative	25.01 <sup>*</sup>	.57	.000
Autonomy	Diffuse-Avoidant	Normative	-1.02	.84	.448
		Informational	-26.15 <sup>*</sup>	.74	.000
	Normative	Diffuse	1.02	.84	.448
		Informational	-25.13 <sup>*</sup>	.59	.000
	Informational	Diffuse	26.15 <sup>*</sup>	.74	.000
		Normative	25.13 <sup>*</sup>	.59	.000
Self-Acceptance	Diffuse-Avoidant	Normative	-19.53 <sup>*</sup>	.70	.000
		Informational	-20.22 <sup>*</sup>	.61	.000
	Normative	Diffuse	19.53 <sup>*</sup>	.70	.000
		Informational	-.69	.49	.331
	Informational	Diffuse	20.22 <sup>*</sup>	.61	.000
		Normative	.69	.49	.331
Purpose in Life	Diffuse-Avoidant	Normative	-20.44 <sup>*</sup>	.76	.000
		Informational	-19.99 <sup>*</sup>	.67	.000
	Normative	Diffuse	20.44 <sup>*</sup>	.76	.000
		Informational	.46	.53	.662
	Informational	Diffuse	19.99 <sup>*</sup>	.67	.000
		Normative	-.46	.53	.662
Overall Psychological-Well-Being	Diffuse-Avoidant	Normative	-76.07 <sup>*</sup>	3.69	.000
		Informational	-133.26 <sup>*</sup>	3.22	.000
	Normative	Diffuse	76.07 <sup>*</sup>	3.69	.000
		Informational	-57.19 <sup>*</sup>	2.56	.000
	Informational	Diffuse	133.26 <sup>*</sup>	3.22	.000
		Normative	57.19 <sup>*</sup>	2.56	.000

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

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The estimated marginal means and standard errors for components of psychological well-being were assessed in Table 3. The Table investigates the possible interaction effect between the different identity styles (used by the respondents) on psychological well-being. All three styles exerted significant effect on respondents' state of well-being at 0.05 level.

**Table 4**

<i>Homogeneous Subsets for Positive Relation with Others</i>			
Tukey HSD			
Identity Styles	N	Subsets	
		1	2
Diffuse-Avoidant	50	24.94	
Normative	89		45.58
Informational	261		45.65
Sig.		1.000	.99

The homogenous subsets output produced in Table 4 shows that group-1 (diffuse-avoidant individuals) appeared in subset-1 showing significantly different mean (on the component of positive relations with others) as compared with other two groups which fall in subset- 2. Moreover, group 2 and 3 were not significantly different from one another, as both appeared in subset- 2. Respondents with diffuse style had obtained lowest mean (24.94). This range of scores shows that the diffused persons' level of positive relations compares poorly with that of other two groups. Respondents with normative and informational styles both, scored highest on this well-being aspect, with means of 45.58 and 45.65 respectively. These scores indicate that respondents with these two styles were enjoying good relations with other people.

**Table 5**

<i>Homogeneous Subsets for Environmental Mastery</i>				
Tukey HSD				
Identity Styles	N	Subsets		
		1	2	3
Diffuse-Avoidant	50	23.48		
Normative	89		37.19	
Informational	261			43.03
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000

The homogenous subsets output presented in Table 5 reveals that all three groups achieved significantly different mean scores on environmental mastery (i.e., all groups were significantly different from each other) and appeared in three

separate subsets. The diffused group got a place in subset-1 because of obtaining lowest mean (23.48). This range of scores shows that the diffused persons were significantly low with regard to sense of control over external environment, improving surrounding circumstances, managing everyday matters, and awareness about existing opportunities. The normative group had obtained mean of 37.19 and captured subset-2. On the other hand, informational group scored highest on environmental mastery with mean of 43.03, thus occupying subset-3. Their score indicates that respondents with this style can make skillful use of available chances; they have got the sense that they are capable to create or choose such contexts that suit to their needs and values.

**Table 6**  
*Homogeneous Subsets for Personal Growth*

Tukey HSD			
Identity Styles	N	Subsets	
		1	2
Diffuse-Avoidant	50	19.50	
Normative	89	20.78	
Informational	261		45.78
Sig.		.170	1.000

The homogenous subsets output displayed in Table 6 shows means of all of groups on personal growth. In addition to that, it also shows that group 1 and 2 were not significantly different from one another, as both groups got a place in subset 1. Whereas group 3 appeared in subset 2 showing significantly different mean from the other two groups that fall under subset 1. Respondents with diffuse style had obtained lowest mean (19.50) followed by normative group (20.78). The scores in this range show that the diffused and normative persons have shown reduced self- improvement and personal development, whereas respondents with informational style scored highest on personal growth with mean of 45.78, indicating transformation of the self/behavior, and that, nothing can hold them back from reaching their full growth potential.

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**Table 7**

<i>Homogeneous Subsets for Autonomy</i>			
Tukey HSD			
Identity Styles	N	Subsets	
		1	2
Diffuse-Avoidant	50	18.88	
Normative	89	19.90	
Informational	261		45.03
Sig.		.343	1.000

The homogenous subsets output appeared in Table 7 shows means of all of groups on the aspect of autonomy. The homogeneous subsets for Tukey HSD further reveal that groups 1 and 2 were not significantly different from one another, as both of them appeared in the subset 1, whereas group 3 appeared in subset 2 showing significantly different mean from the other two groups that are placed in the subset 1. Respondents with diffuse style had obtained lowest mean (18.88) followed by normative group (19.90). The scores in this range show that the diffused and normative persons have shown reduced capacity of doing what they think best. On the other hand, respondents with informational style scored highest on the aspect of autonomy, with mean of 45.03 revealing the capacity to form uncoerced, informed decisions.

**Table 8**

<i>Homogeneous Subsets for Self-Acceptance</i>			
Tukey HSD			
Identity Styles	N	Subsets	
		1	2
Diffuse-Avoidant	50	23.88	
Normative	89		43.41
Informational	261		44.10
Sig.		1.000	.490

From the homogenous subsets output presented in Table 8, it is obvious that the mean score of diffused group (group-1) was lowest (23.88) as well as significantly different from that of normative (43.41) and informational (44.10) groups (group 2 & 3 respectively) on the aspect of self-acceptance, therefore diffused/avoidant group was placed in subset-1. Furthermore, since groups 2 and 3 differed insignificantly from one another, therefore, these groups were placed in subset 2. As the respondents with an informational style scored highest on self-acceptance (closely followed by normative persons), these findings point toward the fact that respondents with these two styles do not hesitate to embrace all facets of their-

selves--not just the positive aspects. They believe that paying attention to the strengths they possess can help them continue to develop.

**Table 9**

<i>Homogeneous Subsets for Purpose in Life</i>			
Tukey HSD			
Identity Styles	N	Subsets	
		1	2
Diffuse-Avoidant	50	25.14	
Informational	261		45.13
Normative	89		45.58
Sig.		1.000	.766

The homogenous Subsets output displayed in Table 9 reveals that the mean score of diffused group (group-1) was lowest (25.14) as well as significantly different from that of informational (45.13) and normative (45.58) groups (group 2 & 3 respectively) on the aspect of purpose in life, therefore diffused/avoidant group was placed in subset-1. Furthermore, since groups 2 and 3 differed insignificantly from one another, therefore, these groups were placed in subset 2. As the respondents with normative style scored highest on purpose in life (closely followed by informational persons), these findings suggest point that respondents with these two styles take keen interest to discover real purpose of their life, the real reason why they are here at all — the very reason we exist.

**Table 10**

<i>Homogeneous Subsets for Overall Well -Being</i>				
Tukey HSD				
Identity Styles	N	Subsets		
		1	2	3
Diffuse-Avoidant	50	135.40		
Normative	89		211.47	
Informational	261			268.66
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000

The homogenous subsets output shown in Table 10 points out that all three groups have obtained significantly different mean scores on overall psychological well-being. Accordingly, these three groups are listed in three subsets. All three subsets contained one group each. Respondents with lowest score on overall psychological well-being (diffuse-avoidant group with score of 135.40) are placed in subset-1. Whereas, respondents with highest well-being

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score of 268.66 (informational style users) are found in subset-3. The normative persons with medium level of well-being (score of 211.47) are placed in subset 2.

**Table 11**

<i>Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Psychological Well-Being by Identity Styles (N = 400)</i>						
Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Identity-Style	Pillai's Trace	1.648	262.03	14.00	784.00	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.027	283.96 <sup>a</sup>	14.00	782.00	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	11.034	307.38	14.00	780.00	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	7.854	439.82 <sup>b</sup>	7.00	392.00	.000

The multivariate tests table displays four tests of significance for each model effect. Pillai's trace which is a positive-valued statistic indicates strong effect that is contributing to the model. The value of Pillai's trace is found robust indicating significant effect of identity styles on psychological well-being.

## Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine whether differences in identity processing would predict relationship with construct of psychological well-being which indicates psycho-social adjustment that everyone should be desirous to achieve, and going after it. From the era of Aristotle, philosophers have taken much interest in the concept of well-being which is considered the essence of human existence. In recent past, however, well-being has moved into the realm of science, stimulating a lot of researches into the psychic factors that influence quality of people's life experiences. This has made it possible for experts to develop a thorough understanding of the factors which play a part in influencing and constituting well-being. Despite compelling theoretical evidence that the constructs of identity/ identity styles and well-being relate to each other (Erikson, 1968; Berzonsky, 2011), serious empirical research—considering these variables simultaneously-- remains hard to come by (especially in Pakistan).

The current study highlights the importance of stylistic differences in identity processing for vital aspects of psychological-wellness. This investigation also shows that the majority of the persons have demonstrated informational style as their most dominant style. The normative style emerged as the next most prevalent, and the diffuse-avoidant as the least prevalent style respectively.

## **Identity Styles and Psychological Well-Being**

Multiple analyses showed that all identity styles were associated with scales of psychological well-being as hypothesized. An informational style was found to be positively related to all aspects of psychological well-being, whereas the diffuse style indicated the opposite pattern. The normative style did show negative relationship with environmental mastery, autonomy and personal growth, and positive connection with positive relations with others, and purpose in life. Thus, it turns out that dealing effectively with self-related issues is linked with high psychological well-being, and that inability to handle the issues of identity is tied to low/decreased psychological wellness. These findings are, by and large, in line with earlier work. For example, Berzonsky and Ciecuch (2014) reported that informed self-exploration and element of identity commitment may play a role in enhancing psychological well-being. Waterman (2007) indicates that those who go through and effectively resolve identity-related crises possess high sense of well-being than those who fail to do so. In various other studies, diffuse style has appeared to demonstrate a positive link with conflicting personal relationships and academic failure (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000) as well as adults' inability to concentrate and keep full time jobs (Jones et al., 1992). Although all these studies used different measures, even then the pattern of these past results shows consistency with present study.

In a study with a Greek sample, Vleioras (2002) arrived at a similar conclusion with regard to informational and diffuse-avoidant styles, using Ryff's scales (of psychological well-being). He also found positive relation between normative style and environmental mastery, whereas, Li's (2005) study on a sample of American individuals revealed normative style to be positively related to environmental mastery for women only, while it was unrelated to men. However, in the current study, this style has shown negative association with environmental mastery which is in line with inconsistent previous results. Both Vleioras (2002) and Li (2005) unfolded the fact that normative style was negatively related to autonomous actions as well as to capability of learning, growing, and improving, and positively associated with social ties, and purpose in life, giving support to the current research findings.

Informational style enhances development of positive connections with all human beings. Positive and supportive relationships help people to feel happier, healthier, and more satisfied with their lives. As informational persons like to build relationship with all, this may be one of the reasons for these persons showing high levels of personal growth and environmental mastery. Additionally, individuals using an informational style do not struggle with self-acceptance issues, and worry less about the things they would be willing to change about themselves. It appears that they are honest to themselves about themselves: they accept their personal deficiencies and strengths with no hesitation and attain an

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inner satisfaction. A normative-oriented style, on the other hand, encourages persons to look for a legitimate authority: some significant individual or a set of principles which may serve as a norm for guiding/ mandating (regulating) action or conduct. This style also prevents its users to establish their own set of rules or make search for some other code of regulations. As a result, those who firmly adhere to a normative style can create better relationships with others (though they may not be perfectly happy) which are possibly based on some sort of social commitment, in the context of cultural, social, or other influences (family, work associates, friends etc). Also, they are likely to be more self-accepting, and purposeful in life due to conforming to norms (enforced in the group) and meeting collective requirements of institutions and social relationships. However, following the external moral standards blindly, makes it really hard for such persons to move forward independently in life without being influenced by these 'guides', and would be expected to show lower levels of autonomy, personal growth, and environmental mastery, all of which are fostered by engaging in activities that help develop the sense that we have got some control over our lives, that is, we are not stuck in a hopeless, helpless state of mind. Environmental mastery is the remedy to feelings of helplessness. It is a state of mind rather than a behavior. As normative persons do not have complete control over their activities/lives (see above) and they let others (willingly or unwillingly) be in charge of the situation, thus, they perform poorly on the subscale of environmental mastery. As far as psychological growth is concerned, it requires expanding our mental horizons continuously, by increasing knowledge relating to ourselves and the universe. Having better knowledge about ourselves helps understand the unutilized/hidden capacities that we hold, and develop awareness about how to bring about more positive changes in ourselves. Increased knowledge about the outer world gives us the picture in respect to the available chances or opportunities for more achievements. Generally, people identified as normative in orientation have considerably narrow and restricted conception of what they can do because of their overreliance on other individuals whose permission has to be sought before exploring their potential or for carrying out some act. To grow, one must get rid of such constraints, and achieve maximum accomplishment.

### **Conclusion**

In brief, the results of this study indicate that there is a relationship between identity styles and psycho-social adjustment: (1) informational style (as a coping mechanism) strongly predicts high psychological well-being, (2) normative style demonstrates reverse relation with half of well-being subcomponents i.e., personal growth, sense of autonomy, and environmental mastery, while it is positively related to subscales of positive relationship with others, and purpose in life, (3) diffuse-avoidant style related negatively to all

subscales of psychological well-being, (4) age increment increases reliance on informational style, and reduces reliance on normative and diffuse styles. Overall, the pattern (of results) looks pretty favorable for informational style and adverse for the diffuse style.

### **Directions for Future Research**

Identity is not a well-researched area in Pakistan. More empirical studies need to be carried out for improving existing knowledge on the concept of identity. For assessing the relationships between constructs that were selected in this study, utilization of other methods including qualitative approaches (e.g., interviews) is also recommended. In the same way, in future, psychological well-being can be measured through some other instruments to endorse the results of this study. Studies are needed to further assess identity styles in relation to variables such as parenting, depression, drug addiction/delinquency, etc.

### **Implications of the Study**

In light of present findings, it is suggested that educators, counselors, and other mental health experts should realize the importance of identity processing orientations in boosting (or otherwise) cognitive, reflective, and affective skills, personal growth and overall well-being. In view of the critical situation of the country (in the recent past due to war on terror) in general and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular, strong need is felt to discourage the young persons' reliance on diffuse-avoidant and normative styles (for processing identity related options), as these (styles) are closely linked with psychological illnesses such as juvenile delinquency, alcohol/ drug dependence, anxiety, depression (reference to diffuse/avoidant style), narrow-mindedness, intolerance etc. (reference to normative style). Introducing some kind of intervention for those in need and encouraging/ helping the students to use more adaptive informational style for dealing with life issues would be a huge step toward making their private and work life more successful and meaningful.

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