

**BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY**

**The Connection between Personal and Public Self-Awareness and  
Identity Formation amongst Adolescents**

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## **Abstract**

This study attempts to examine the process of identity formation in adolescents in the context of tendency to self-awareness.

Self-awareness is a behavioral disposition to focus attention on the self .

Self-identity is an objective entity in its own right; it is the individual's internal sense, the knowledge of himself, and his future goals. Obtaining identity is a developmental stage that occurs in adolescence. The difference between self-awareness and identity is that self-awareness is a behavioral disposition of focusing attention while identity is an independent entity and refers to the individual's knowledge of himself.

Focus of attention on oneself can be internal or external. Private self-awareness is a tendency to focus internal attention which is a sense of the hidden aspects of the self. Public- self-awareness is a tendency to think of the aspects of the self related to social exposure. This study examined the consequences of high self-awareness, private and public, according to the hypothesis that these consequences may be related to the development of identity among adolescents.

Excessive private self-awareness is associated with emotional disorders such as anxiety and depression. On the other hand, people with high internal focusing, tend to direct themselves towards standards derived from self-determination and identity, whereas those with excessive public self-awareness tend to worry about the evaluation of others and often adopt a defensive style and difficulty in self-presentation arising from conformism. Therefore the hypothesis is that those with a more pronounced private self-awareness will develop a more coherent identity but possible emotional disorders may impair the identity formation process. Those whose public self-awareness is more pronounced will have difficulty in achieving a coherent identity,

because self-presentation depends on social situations, external variables that are not stable. Because there is a difference between high versus low awareness, the hypothesis refers to the different levels of awareness in relation to the development of identity. The hypothesis also examined linear correlation between private and public self-awareness and identity development. In addition, because of the relationship between private self-awareness and emotional disorders such as anxiety and depression, the hypothesis that anxiety is a mediating variable between private self-awareness and identity formulation was also examined.

Regarding the first hypothesis, results showed differences between groups of various levels of private self-awareness only. Differences were found between high and medium awareness and lower than average awareness. That is, although high private self-awareness is not differentiated from the other levels as hypothesized, there was a difference between groups at different levels as opposed to public self-awareness, in which no differences were found. In addition, results pertaining to the second hypothesis showed a weak positive correlation between self-awareness and identity. On the other hand, a moderate positive correlation was found between high self-awareness and identity. I.e. those with high private self-awareness more easily achieve a cohesive identity. Consequently, emotional disorders like anxiety that are the corollary of private self-awareness, are not mediating variables between identity development and self-awareness. Indeed, the results of the third study hypothesis do not show anxiety as an intermediate variable between private self-awareness and identity. Therefore it is possible that it is the consequences of high private self-awareness associated with high standards of self and identity, that have a positive influence on the development of identity. This study also addressed the various components of identity according to Tzuriel, when these components were found

relevant to self-awareness. A weak positive correlation was found between private self-awareness and the component of Solidarity in self-identity, which represents the recognition of identity and the inner sense of equilibrium, stability and continuity despite changes in the individual's life or social situation.

In addition, correlations were found between private self-awareness and the components of Social Recognition and Physical Identity which refers to the individual's acceptance of his physical appearance. Further positive correlations were found between private self-awareness and Purposefulness, which constitutes a sense of meaning, interest and affiliation. A correlation with the component of Genuineness, the individual's perception that he behaves naturally, was also found.

These factors contribute to the well-being of the adolescent and indicate the importance of the development of identity at this age. Also, these correlations to private self-awareness indicate the importance of developing a tendency to internal focus in order to be able to develop a cohesive identity.

However, only negative correlations were found between public self-awareness and the components of identity, indicating the negative contribution of public self-awareness toward identity development.

In conclusion, the study found a low positive correlation between private self-awareness and identity, and medium positive correlation between high private self-awareness and identity. We also found a weak negative correlation between public self-awareness and identity. In addition, there were found to be positive relationships between the components of identity and private self-awareness and negative relationships between the components of identity and public self-awareness, indicating a consistent relationship between the variables and strengthening the hypotheses and the

conclusion that importance must be given to the development of the tendency to private self-awareness among teenagers.