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Semantic Understanding of the Identity Formation Process of Women in Yasuj City with a Postmodern Approach

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: Research Article **Article history:** Received: 17 September 2024 Received in revised form: 31 October 2024 Accepted: 3 December 2024 Published online: 21 April 2025 **Keywords**: *Grounded Theory Method*, *Identity Conflict*, *Patriarchy*, *Traditional Identity*, *Women's Identity Formation.*	**Introduction** This research work will, therefore, tend to explore the variant ways in which women construct their identities both in the traditional and modern societies, with particular reference to the Yasuj City region. The formation of women's identity construction in Yasuj will be contextualized from a postmodern feminist point of view, with an attempt to learn how their identities are shaped and transformed, impelled by unique social, cultural, and economic dynamics of the region. One may assume that in more traditional communities, such as Yasuj, female identity is shaped within more rigid cultural and social frameworks, which in themselves may also at times resist forces of global change and modernization. This research thus attempts to bring to light how changes in women's identities come about vis-à-vis these forces and help reveal both the challenges and opportunities built into the processes whereby identities are formed. This is important, since there is little research concerning this aspect from a postmodern feminist perspective. This paper will be grounded on the approach of the grounded theory in order to develop an elaborate explanation of the motives, strategies, and the consequences involved in the process of identity formation among Yasuj women in traditional contexts. In this light, the main objective will be to develop an elaborated understanding of the various dimensions of the factors that have been involved in the development of women's identities in these contexts. **Methodology** This study adopts a qualitative approach that utilizes the grounded theory developed by Strauss and Corbin. Yasuj is the capital of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, which contains many economic, social, and cultural problems. Women are central to social and economic development in this young, diverse city. Economic constraints, limitation in access to jobs, and social inequalities restrict the potentials of women. These challenges hit the very lives of women, cause social dissatisfaction, and diminish their participation in decision-making. Yasuj women have very distinct cultural and social characteristics, which significantly determine their status and roles in society. Many were brought up in traditional families and found options somewhat limited when it came to education or job opportunities. But women in Yasuj prove there is now a gap in mindset between mothers and daughters, even as the former preserve the traditions. Changing attitudes in younger generations toward social issues and family roles contrast sharply with traditional views. In this gap lies the tension between lasting cultural values and emerging individual trends. Recognition of the issues of this group can lead to the formation of more excellent policies for their upliftment. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data among 27 women in Yasuj. Analysis involved open, axial, and selective coding to identify important concepts. Validation is established through discussing findings with participants and comparing them to theoretical sources. This process revealed focused codes and a core code on women's identity formation. **Results** This study also brought to light the significant role of patriarchal domination, gendered othering, and religious discourses in shaping female identities through the demarcation of conventional gender roles and circumscription of educational and career opportunities. The

formation of women's identities through social surveillance in a structure of power finds women striving for self-definition in a symbolic system that counts them as the "other." This becomes clear with regards to how the performance of gender identity-performed and disciplined through social and cultural norms-controls and disciplines the female body. In Yasuj, two major positions that women are placed in are those of acceptance and resistance. Acceptance is internalization, taking in traditional roles shaped by social and religious influences, and making these roles part of their personal identities. In this way, conformity-necessarily implying the continuance of existing power dynamics-legitimates control of their bodies and roles, either wittingly or not. Resistance, on the other hand, is a clear rejection of imposed roles in exchange for economic and educational independence, the use of social media becoming an outlet for rewriting their identities. This resistance is against the patriarchal norms and opens up new possibilities for the redefinition of female identities in a modern light. The results of such identity-forming processes may be negative, mixed, or positive. In these negative dimensions, there is a manifestation of social and institutional controls that constrain basic autonomy. Mixed developments take place when the women are placed in situations where traditional roles conflict with modern expectations due to identity dilemmas. They also point to moments of women's successful reconstruction of identities and bodies, thus reclaiming their autonomy and gaining financial and personal independence. Resistance offers more control over women's lives and bodies and is one of the principles that balance institutional power with self-determination.

Conclusion

The results from this study have indicated that hegemonic patriarchy, gender othering, and the discourse of religious authority in women's identity formation stand in relation to the existing social and cultural discourses. This process sees women internalize such social norms unconsciously, where they accept certain roles as limiting in life, and these are normally propagated through social institutions such as family and religion. These discourses of power, by means of social surveillance of women's bodies and behaviors, restrict their options in various walks of life such as employment and education. Whereas women, who are at the receiving end of these conditions use two sorts of responses; some women give in to these discourses and perform the roles which are thrust upon them whereas the rest resist them and redesign their identity. Women's identity formation can have negative, mixed or positive outcomes. In negative outcomes, women give in to the discourses of power and social surveillance, hence their bodies become an arena of control at the expense of living autonomously and independently. In mixed results, positioning generates identity conflicts between acceptance and resistance. The results are positive, in that women, through this resistance and redefinition, gain more independence, which means effectively resisting patriarchal structures of power, especially in the case of taking more control over their bodies and identities. This process will be reproduced by norms, but at the same time, it will contribute to transforming dominant discourses and a reconstruction of women's identity in modern society.