Studies Focused on the Investigation of Personal Identity School Children

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Abstract

The issue of identity is particularly relevant at the primary school age when school enrolment gives a child new opportunities for developing his personality, self-comprehension, and social relationships. Most research on identity development is based on Erikson's (1968) theory of identity. Inconsistent results regarding the changes that occur over time in identity statuses have led researchers to turn to a deeper analysis of how identity develops. The purpose of the study is to analyze recent studies in the field of personal identity formation in primary school students. Analysis results indicate a scarcity of studies on the investment of personal identity in schoolchildren. The results of the systematic analysis of the studies led to the establishment of two research directions: the development of personal identity, the identification of the relationship between personal identity and other components.

Key words: Content analysis; personal identity; primary school students; systematic review

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1. Introduction

Identity is a specific legal notion as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Each child is inherently entitled to this privilege from birth. The child is registered immediately after birth and, from the time of birth, has the right to name, nationality and, where possible, knowledge and care of the parents (UN, 1989, Article 7.1). For more than a century, there has been a debate in social science about how to best conceptualize a phenomenon called self and identity (Cote & Levine, 2002). On one hand, contemporary psychologists follow the approach of William James (1890) by examining self/identity from several perspectives: psychological aspects such as self-categorization, beliefs, and objectives; psychological processes related to awareness, such as self-evaluation, self-definition, self-reflection, etc.; personal self-development, in which individuals create a representational self-system based on their distinct social experiences in both local and distant social and physical environments. Legal identities are established from birth, and personal, social, and cultural identities grow and change (Woodhead, 2008). The term identity is a common word used to describe an understanding of oneself as an independent entity. "Positive identity/identity development involves the development of healthy self-esteem, the reduction of self-contradiction, and the promotion of role formation and achievement" (Tsang et al., 2012, p.1)."It promotes awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the individual and therefore functions personally and promotes well-being" (Zhou & Kam, 2018). Identity is a concept that gives the individual a sense of belonging, and a place in the world. It reflects the way it exists and sees in the world. In addition, identity affects how children relate to others and how others see and relate to them (Lyons, 2014). Identity is a psychological concept that has certain features for adults and children. Early childhood is an important period for the mental function of the child, and development involves the emergence of skills and abilities in such areas as language, motor skills, psychosocial, and learning. These can be greatly influenced by the nature of the educational environment in which the child is exposed to the first years of life (Bowman, Donovan, and Burns, 2001). The early years of children are the basis of their physical and mental health, emotional security, cultural and personal identity, and development skills (*UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*, 2005). The child's identity has two specific elements: self-identity/personal identity and cultural/social identity. Personal identity reflects a child's feelings about his individuality, distinction, and uniqueness, while social identity is an image of how a child identifies with family, peers, and culture. Thus, the identity of the child combines to be like others and at the same time different from others (Schaffer, 2006).

Research in psychology, biology, and neuroscience elucidates how specific elements of self/identity can be characterized by the content, structure, and working of the brain, mind, and experience. From this standpoint, self/identity can be stored in memory, triggered (e.g. in awareness) when specifically or contextually prompted, and manifested as spoken or nonverbal responses. Research in psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education has shown that the inter-individual dimensions of self/identity can be characterized by group designations of social agents (e.g. Americans), functional roles (e.g. students), and social standing (e.g. the impoverished), as well as by engagement in cultural activities (e.g., settings such as families, classrooms, and shopping malls). From these viewpoints, identity is bestowed, allocated, and acknowledged by other individuals, locations, and objects within the ecological context.

Self-identity, whether as a subjective experience or a representational concept, relies heavily on evolutionary history (Buss, 2004). Without this past, our physical body and brain would not exist to provide the foundation for the experiences or contents that we designate by self-identity. The predominant characteristic that sets temperamental representations apart from iconic, symbolic, and phenomenological ones is their species-typical content. This implies that all individuals of the human species possess identical fundamental anatomy, including the central and peripheral nerve systems. These shared components encompass the hereditary biopsychological processes that dictate our fundamental arousal and response patterns, which

comprise a collection of fundamental emotions and response inclinations initially elucidated by Darwin (Lazarus, 1991). The expressions of these inclinations, which are deeply ingrained in the biochemistry and physiology of the brain and the evolved body, differ depending on developmental time and location. These variances may be attributed to differences in nutrition, exercise, cultural socialization influences, and life circumstances, considerations and alternative self-representations (Kitayama & Markus, 1994; Thayer, 1989).

School is an important context that can sustain or inhibit the development of an individual's identity (Verhoeven et al., 2019). Teachers provide students with the opportunity to explore new concepts, skills and activities, allowing them to expose their new identity positions (Coll & Falsafi, 2010; Flum & Kaplan, 2006). Gee (1990, p.143) states that education is the discourse children use to identify themselves as members of a particular social group, how to use language, think, feel, believe, appreciate, and act. The psychological perspective of Del Rosario Arenas Paz (2011) posits that personal identity serves as the distinguishing factor between oneself and others. It is a set of personal features that make up the reality of each person and project oneself into the outside world, and the sum of past, present, and future experiences that others recognize that person from their specific and specific ways of being is what defines you as a person and distinguishes you from others. Individuality is possible only if the real personality of man is externalized, he can perceive himself as a part of humanity in general and, at the same time, as a unique being that differs from others.

2. Theoretical approaches to the formation of personal identity

Warin (2010) challenges the concept of identity and contends that self-awareness is crucial for an individual's holistic psychological welfare as it enables us to exert control over our lives and effectively handle our experiences. The development of personal identity in young children is facilitated by their interactions with others. According to Woodhead (2008, p.6), there exist two distinct dimensions of identity. - "that of a single individual and that of a common social person." According to Brooker (2008, p.10), the development of new or modified identities is facilitated by the transition to new cultural and social environments and the formation of new relationships. Therefore, we tend to perceive identities as comprising several constructions or characterize individuals as having several identities.

Children establish their identity by comparing themselves with other children, and children who start school appear to be fonder of and adapted to school if they build friendships.

The significance of friendship for children lies in its ability to facilitate mutual comprehension of the environment they inhabit. Dunn (2004) argues that the nature of friendship in children greatly influences the formation of their personal and social identity. Children who have friends can receive social support and safeguard themselves against challenges in beginning school, incidents of victimization, and acts of aggression. Therefore, having friends is a crucial asset for the development of their identity. Another dynamic arises from the contrast between personal identity and societal identity. Personal identification embodies "our view of what makes us unique, including our self-image and self-esteem" (Branje et al., 2021). Personal identity refers to the subjective feelings of the child about distinction, uniqueness, and individuality from others. Social identity, on the other hand, usually refers to how one feels to be (or want to be) the same as another person through identification with a family or fellow culture (Schaffer, 2006). Factors such as age, gender, religious origin, ethnic origin, interests, models and celebrities, talents, and hobbies play a role in the child's self-concept.

As children develop their own identity and perception, the child's identity introduces himself and his family to others - they begin to interact with others. These selves are shaped by the local environment, values, and unique developments (Schaffer, 2006, pp.83-85), "has achieved a positive sense of gender identity." Play is very important in early childhood education. Parents, caregivers, and teachers play an important role in the early stages of children's education.

(Wood, 2004). Children try to acquire a sense of self and their identity as they mingle with others around them. In the early years of childhood (the first 8 years), major brain development occurs, and the lack of education based on play activity can adversely affect the cognitive development of children, also impacting the development of identity (Piaget, 1956). Children begin to develop their identities and form relationships. The game contributes to the emotional development of the child, and since the game requires the use of several motor and mental functions, children also develop various skills. Game-based learning facilitates the development of moral and social qualities in youngsters.

Developing a positive identity touches on some basic questions that every toddler faces: Who am I? Do I possess a positive identity? Furthermore, what is my position here in the world? The answers to these questions are crucial for the welfare of every kid and mitigate the shortage of competent educators. The author Siraj-Blatchord (2009, p. 156) observes that "teachers are an important factor in determining the formation of concepts and are identified among other factors. The most qualified staff not only provides the most direct teaching but also the type of interaction that guides the child's thinking; the unqualified staff is better pedagogy if supervised and supported by qualified teachers".

The study of the age characteristics of personal and social identity continues to be relevant in modern psychology as identity has gained increasing attention. In addition, another particular feature in identity research is noteworthy, because it focuses on a single element of social identity, personal identity, or social identity (Barsukova & Balabanova, 2013a). There are few essential studies of social and personal identity (Barsukova & Balabanova, 2013b). The question of identity is especially relevant in primary school age when school admission gives the child new opportunities for the development of personality, self-understanding, and social relations.

The exact definition of identity has been widely discussed and debated by scholars. Sarup (1996, p. 8) suggests that identity should not be seen as a unique entity because it is "full of contradictions and ambiguity". Similarly, Compton Lilly (2006) states that identity cannot be described as an individual element. Gee (1999) suggests that identity is multi-context dependent, indicating that humans exist in multiple ways depending on a particular social situation. On the other hand, it has been suggested that a person's identity is built through relationships with other people. In other words, identity is always influenced and changed by the influence of others. According to McCarthy and Moje (2002, p. 231), "identity is always in a relationship... And power plays a role in how identity is implemented and how people are arranged". Several different theoretical points of view try to explain the development of identity between individuals.

Since the conceptualization of identity varies widely within and between disciplines, it is often difficult to identify the concept of identity. Identity is defined as "single" or multiple, real or constructed, stable or fluid, personal or social, and in many other ways that often appear to contradict each other (Vignoles et al., 2011). Thus, some authors suggest that integration attempts are counterproductive (Wetherell, 2010), or that the term "identity" is too broad to make sense (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Against these perspectives, I believe that by analyzing these apparent contradictions, some of the most interesting and potentially important questions about identity come to the fore. If identity is built with multiple fluidity, how can we live as a single, stable reality? And what does it mean to conceptualize identity as both personal and social at the same time?

The comprehensive interaction hypothesis on human development (Magnusson, 2003) has been used in over a century of empirical studies on self/identity, highlighting several significant aspects of the human system in its environment (Peck, 2004, 2005). Primarily, it is defined as identity, self, and personality and includes several levels of expression (content) and dynamics (process) in the person; second, it is the content and process conceptualized as context, culture, and geography, this refers to the various layers of organization and dynamics within the environment. Thirdly, it refers to the dynamic interconnection between the content and activities that occur among different individuals and between specific contexts. A concise summary of

these features can be provided by the person model within the given situation (Figure 1). This encompasses many "focus" levels within both the person and the context (Peck, 2004, 2005).
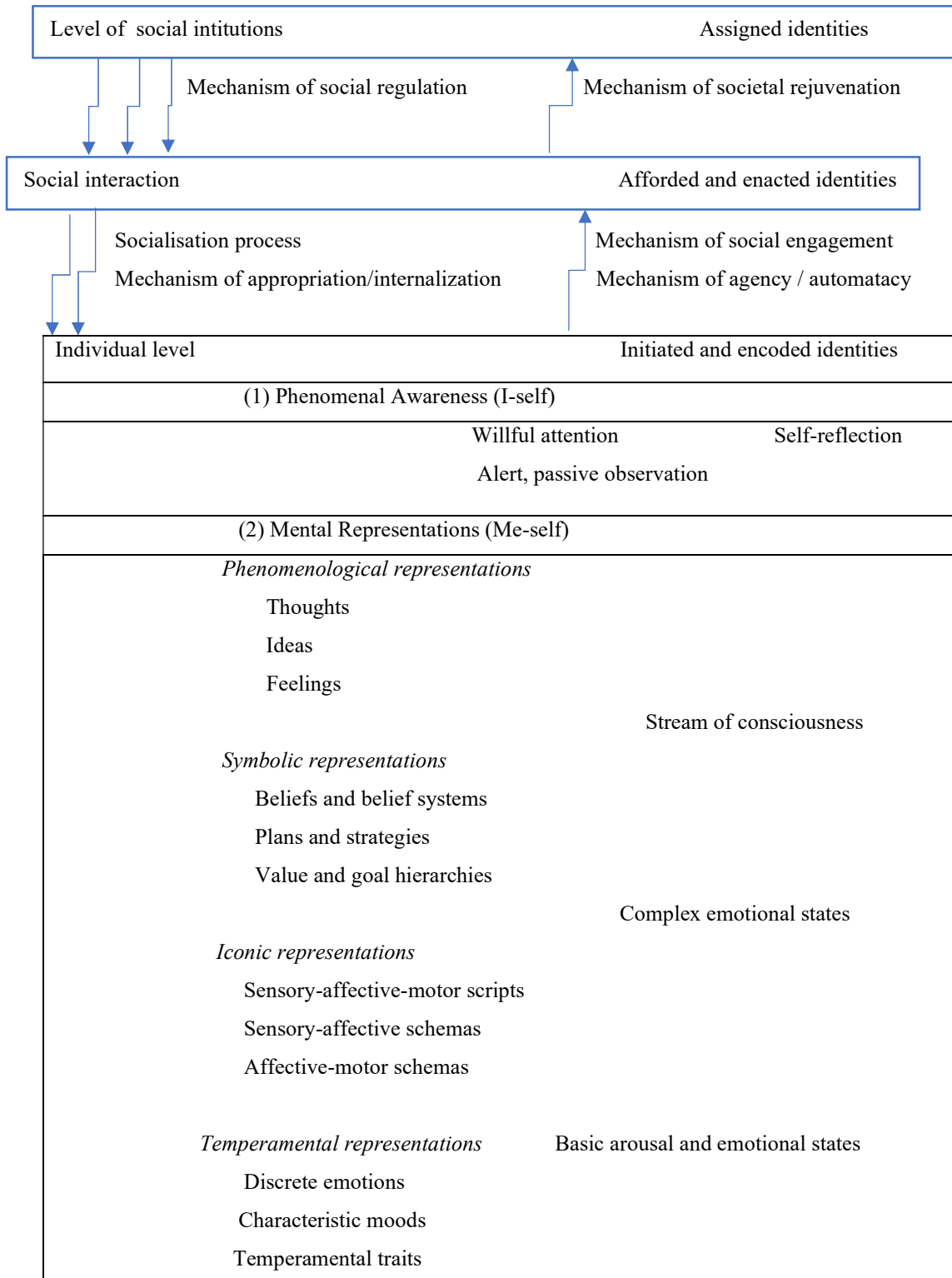
Level of social intitutions	Assigned identities

Mechanism of social regulation   Mechanism of societal rejuvenation

Social interaction	Afforded and enacted identities

Socialisation process   Mechanism of social engagement

Mechanism of appropriation/internalization   Mechanism of agency / automatacy

Individual level	Initiated and encoded identities

(1) Phenomenal Awareness (I-self)

Willful attention   Self-reflection

Alert, passive observation

(2) Mental Representations (Me-self)

Phenomenological representations

Thoughts

Ideas

Feelings

          Stream of consciousness

Symbolic representations

Beliefs and belief systems

Plans and strategies

Value and goal hierarchies

          Complex emotional states

Iconic representations

Sensory-affective-motor scripts

Sensory-affective schemas

Affective-motor schemas

Temperamental representations   Basic arousal and emotional states

Discrete emotions

Characteristic moods

Temperamental traits

Figure 1. Basic aspects of self from the perspective of (BASIC) model

We call this a model (elementary) of the basic aspects of the self in context. It highlights the extent to which understanding of self/identity associated with learning and achievement depends on research and theory related to multiple levels of expression (i.e. within a person) and organization (i.e. between the individual as a whole and various social contexts). The BASIC model highlights how self/ identity is defined differently by researchers working from different disciplinary perspectives. There are fundamental and often overlooked distinctions between definitions of self/identity such as:

- individuals' iconic, symbolic, and phenomenological representations of phenomena such as social group membership and roles (Case, 1991);
- the negotiation of social and physical possibilities through behavioral acts (Moje, 2004) and patterns of participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991);
- social categories, statuses, or roles assigned to individuals by macro-level social structures and institutions (Stryker, 1980).

No one type of self/identity definition is more accurate or appropriate than the others; each refers to a specific component of the multi-level BASIC system. Regrettably, scholars from diverse academic backgrounds have employed the same terminology to characterize distinct components and different terminology to illustrate the same components of this fundamental system.

The main objective of this study is to carry out an in-depth analysis of the most recent research initiated on the subject of personal identity formation in primary school students.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research method

The purpose of the systematic analysis of specialized literature is to give a comprehensive summary of research on personal identity among primary school students. A systematic review compiles all extant research on a specific subject and involves a review of their results (Kang, 2015). A systematic review is "an objective, reproducible method to find answers to a certain research question, by collecting all available studies related to that question and reviewing and analyzing their results" (Ahn & Kang, 2018). The stages that form the basis of the systematic review consist of formulating the question, then identifying representative works by referring to different criteria, searching for articles, evaluating the quality of the included studies, summarizing the evidence, and interpreting the results (Khan et al., 2003).

2.2. Procedure

The researches of the last ten years regarding the theme of personal identity at the level of primary education were identified. Thus, several international databases, such as EBSCO, ProQuest, Science Direct, were explored to select the articles in the field.

3. Results

Following the systematic analysis of studies in the field of personal identity, the following research directions were identified (Table 1): studies focused on the context of personal identity development (Barsukova et al., 2016; Brennan, 2020; Byvsheva et al., 2018; Cooper, 2014), investigations concentrated on determining the correlation between personal identity and other factors, such as happiness (Chorro et al., 2017), wellness (Simion & Stan, 2018).

Table 1. Research centered on examining pupils' identities in elementary school

Author(s)	Objectives	Participants	Methods	Results
Cooper (2014)	The purpose of the qualitative research is to explore the process of identity formation in children.	three children	focus group discussions, observations, children's photographic pictures, and free drawings	Children's drawings are flexible tools for exploring personal identity that allow them to reflect and draw on experiences "outside" and "inside" a given research context.
Raburu (2015)	Emphasize the importance of friendship, companionship, and play in shaping identity among young learners.	58 years old 4-6 years old in Kenya	Semi-structured interviews	The identity position of 4-6-year-olds is compatible with good classroom learning identity.
Barsukova, Mozgovaya, Vyshkvyrkina, Suroedova (2016)	Simultaneous determination and affirmation of the degree and content of personal and social identity of students of grades 1-4.	100 (25 first graders, 25 second graders, 25 third graders, 25 fourth graders)	Cross-section method The "Who am I?" technique, (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954)	Personal identity dominates in students of the 1st and 2nd grades and social identity in students of the 3rd and 4th grades.
Chorro, Fernández, Corbí (2017)	Evaluating the degree to which students place a high priority on happiness; identifying how the experience of happiness influences the development of their identities and their interactions with the outside world; considering the values deduced from their perceptions and comprehending the sources and applications of these values in their daily lives.	45 fifth and sixth-grade primary school students studying in a school located in a rural area in Alicante province, Valencian Community (Spain)	A questionnaire with six images of contented kids from various social and cultural backgrounds and open-ended questions about students' perceptions of personal identity and values	Students in the 5th and 6th grades of primary classes consider happiness to be a necessary component of life, linking happiness to factors like health, friendship, and family. They value their friends more than their family to be happy, but they learn about happiness and how to perceive it from their parents and other family members at home. The results of this research suggest that it is necessary to update didactic practice and provide teachers with new tools to develop students.

Dr Marlies Kustatscher (2017)	This research examines young children's social class identities in a Scottish primary school, exposing conflicting institutional discourses on diversity and social class.	children aged 5-7 years	An ethnographic study in a 'socially and culturally diverse' Scottish primary school	The study suggests that practitioners should recognize and address social class distinctions, including gender, color, and ethnicity, and engage young children in discussions about identities and inequities.
Mijung Kim (2018)	The current study explores children's scientific learning and science identity domains. This investigation looks at how children understand the process of doing science-related tasks in a way similar to scientists and how they develop views about science that go beyond common platitudes.	15 students in grades 4–6 science classrooms in Western Canada	Case study	The teacher's stance fostered the development of students' scientific identity, encompassing attributes such as the pursuit of information, determination, and enthusiasm for science.
Simion & Stan (2018)	Establishing the emotional and social aspects of primary school children that are vital to children's well-being.	21 primary school children enrolled in third grade at a school in Cluj-Napoca, aged between 9 and 10	Open interview	Some children believe in the long-term benefits of education, considering that learning will provide them with a stable job or at least a prospect for a better future. Most kids enjoy the things they learn at school and wouldn't change a thing about it.
Byvsheva, Bukharova, Konyuk, Kropotukhina, Semenova (2018)	An exploration of the unique aspects of self-identification and worldview throughout early school years, focusing on the process of self-knowledge development at this stage.	35 pupils, aged 7 to 11, are enrolled in 5 elementary schools in Sverdlovsk.	Research methodologies suitable for the age demographics of elementary school students	Although the young children mentioned a range of personal traits, their responses showed no evidence of deliberate capacities and attitudes towards material goods. The children did not exhibit any attributes that were indicative of their perception of their own traits based on the perspectives of others: Parental figures, educators,

				or peers. This could be due to the high level of autonomy of self-knowledge.
Brennan (2020)	Exploring children's awareness and understanding of their learner identity and identifying factors children attribute to the development of their learning identity.	22 people between the ages of ten and twelve	Student questionnaires, semi-structured interview, and audio recording	Students demonstrated traditional learning perspectives, associating them with gathering and memorizing information from the teacher. They appreciated the potential role of their voice in informing teachers about students' preferences and interests, thus cultivating enjoyable and authentic learning experiences. Most respondents in the study demonstrated fixed identities as learners, focusing on their innate abilities, including intelligence.
Adriana Alvarez, Leah Peña Teeters, Molly Hamm-Rodríguez, Sona Dimidjian (2021)	The objective of this study was to investigate the process by which students establish and shape their identities as learners, as well as their views of learning and learning environments, during the implementation of DIA lessons by their teachers. These lessons were specifically developed to explore students' experiences and existing knowledge as valuable resources for learning.	39 children in grades 4–6 were enrolled in the DIA program instructed by 13 teachers, each teacher had three students.	DIA program	By examining the various ways in which students in Mexico City express themselves and reflect on their learning experiences as part of the DIA program, this study demonstrates how student-centered teaching methods and teacher-mediated learning processes enhance students' sense of identity through dialogue, art, socio-emotional awareness, and collaborative knowledge construction. The results of our study indicate that prioritizing art and discourse as a means of facilitating learning fosters robust personal associations with the subject matter.
Kerem Coskun, Betty J. Liebovich, Cihan Kara, Ozkan Cikrikci (2022)	The objective of this study is to uncover the relationship between theory of mind (ToM) and moral identity (MI) in children attending primary school.	148 primary school pupils who were selected using convenience sampling.	The data pertaining to MI were obtained using the Moral Identity Test devised by Coskun and Kara (2019),	After data analysis, it was shown that there was no strong or significant link between ToM and MI. These findings led to the conclusion that the possible cause of the lack of connection between the research variables may be variations in the focal points

				whereas the data concerning ToM were gained through a battery of four ToM tasks.	of ToM and MI.
Namlı Altıntaş & Başara Baydilek (2023)	The purpose of the research was to measure the teachers' perception of the factors of identity development in children.	10 teachers	interview	The teachers explain the way of identity development in general in correlation with self-development, which is related to children's self-expression.
Nicola Yelland, Clare Bartholomaeus, Sandy Muspratt, Anita Kit-wa Chan, Vivienne Wai Man Leung, Li Mei Johannah Soo &Kam Ming Lim (2024)	Exploring some emotional dimensions of children's worlds in relation to school and considering some personal dimensions of education, beyond performance as just a score on a math, science, or reading test.	627 Year 4 students in three global cities in the Asia Pacific (Hong Kong, Singapore, and Melbourne)	Online survey	The data presented, with a clear emphasis on the responses of fourth-year students from three global cities in the Asia Pacific (Hong Kong, Singapore, and Melbourne), have contributed to the existing literature by providing insights into students' experiences in relation to their sense of belonging, student identity, and preferences for certain school activities. Understanding these aspects is directly relevant to the essence of effective learning, which must form the basis for policy development and curriculum design.

4. Discussions and conclusions

Personal identity is formed as primary school students detach from the primary ties that bind them to the family. Understanding the formation of personal identity refers to the construction of a complex image of the whole child (Cooper & Collins, 2009). The continuation of cognitive development at school age gradually allows primary school students to form a balanced, realistic, and relatively stable self-view regarding positive and negative attributes. At this age, children are still struggling with apparent contradictions in constructing their identity and encountering difficulties regarding the different standards and opinions of others. Awareness of opposing self-attributes makes students vulnerable to confusion, distress, and decreased self-worth (Harter, 1999). Therefore, it is necessary to explore the way of building self-identity in students, to facilitate the transition from primary school to preadolescence and then to adolescence.

The longitudinal study conducted by Warin (2010) with children aged 3 to 17 highlights two main points. Firstly, it emphasizes that identity is not independent of the social environment in which it is formed. Secondly, it underscores the idea that the self remains constant over time

and across various social situations. Warrin (2010) examines the personal dimensions of identity in stories for preschool children, underscoring the educative significance of self-awareness and understanding of others. Dunn (2004) underscores the significance of peers, asserting that the presence of friends for children is a crucial asset in the formation of identities. Moreover, children who receive rejection from their peers or lack friendships may encounter victimization and hostility.

Siraj-Blatchford's (2009) study in the UK shows that teachers are an important factor in determining the formation of infant concepts. The study highlighted the importance of "play-based programs" and for teachers to share with their children and generate sustained conversations. Similarly, Wood (2004) states that play in an educational environment is always strong on ideology, but is a problem. Distinct perspectives on the definition of the game (Siraj-Blatchford; 2009) were offered in different academic disciplines taught by distinct instructors.

Schaffer's work (2006 a, b) reveals that the understanding of the concept of identity has changed in two aspects. The first is that children acquire unique and simple identities in early childhood. The second, emerging from cross-cultural research, is that how identities are acquired or constructed differs across societies, and this process can be multiple and complex. According to Brooker (2008, p.10), the development of new or modified identities is facilitated by the transition to new cultural and social environments and the formation of new relationships.

George (2007) and Weller (2007) discussed the importance of friendship groups in relationships with identity formation. Belonging to a group (or exclusion from it) can greatly impact the construction of "who you are" in terms of identity – both related to your self-identity and how others see you (Currie, Kelly & Pomeramtz, 2007). Holmes and Brown Hill (the 2010 study of preschool children in The United Kingdom) point to the lack of male teachers in primary schools to act as role models for boys (Carrington et al., 2007; Hutchings et al. 2008; Parkin, 2009). Gudzovskaya (2020) explored the formation of social and personal identity in students with intellectual and academic talent in primary education.

The results of the systematic analysis of the studies led to the establishment of two research directions. First, research was conducted on the development of personal identity, and second, several studies were initiated based on the identification of the relationship between personal identity and other components.

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