



Internet-Based Identity Experiments in Late Adolescence *

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Abstract

This study's objective is to describe the nature of the identity experiments of university students on the internet; the participants are 230 students enrolled in Anadolu University prep school. Data was collected by means of The Sense of Identity Scale-Köker Form, Questionnaire of Identity Experiments on the Internet and Personal Information Questionnaire. Data analysis was carried out with logistic regression analysis. The results of logistic regression analysis indicate that 53.5% of students experiment with their identity on the internet. These students present themselves as more intelligent (56.9%), less shy (56.1%), more fictitious (40.7%) and more beautiful (35%). They also stated that they present themselves as someone else to speak more easily (74%), to meet or get to know others more easily (64.2%) and to say more things (62.6%). Logistic regression analysis indicated that sense of identity and gender were related with identity experiments on the internet.

Keywords

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Introduction

Identity development occurs in the adolescence period (aged between 12 and 21) and is completed during young adulthood coinciding with university attendance years (aged between 18 and 21) (Erikson, 1968). Seeking and experimenting with identity is a fundamental feature of adolescent development (Larrain, Zegers, & Trapp, 2007). In the process of exploring and experimenting with their identities, computer and the internet provide significant opportunities for adolescents to create a sense of identity because these two are the most important materials used by adolescents in forming their identity. In other words, adolescents use computer programs as a canvas to explain their identity (Turtle, 2005) and they use the internet as a social laboratory for experimenting with different identities (Turtle, 1995).

In more concrete terms, the Internet gives individuals an avenue to experiment with various identities that may be unacceptable in "real life" and to see how they feel during this experimentation (Larrain et al., 2007). At the same time, since the internet gives adolescents the chance to make contacts remaining disembodied and anonymous, they can create new identities through internet (Kennedy, 2006; McKenna & Bargh, 2000; Subrahmanyam, Greenfield, & Tynes, 2004; Turtle, 1995; Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008). All these provide a basis for researches related to the use of the internet in identity experiments (Gross, 2004; Larrain et al., 2007; Valkenburg, Schouten, & Peter, 2005; Valkenburg & Peter, 2008). In these studies, though limited in number, online identity experiments are defined as an adolescent behaving as if someone else when he/she is online (Valkenburg & Peter, 2008) and, the

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frequency and motives of adolescents' internet-based identity experiments, and the relationship with self-presentation strategies and self-concept have also been investigated.

The studies conducted on identity experiments on the internet indicate that they are primarily used by adolescents. One study conducted on chat/instant message use among adolescents on the internet, demonstrated that 50% of them conducted identity experiments on the internet (Valkenburg et al., 2005). In another study, it was found that 49% of adolescents never represented themselves as someone else; according to frequency of representation of oneself as someone else, 41% of the participants make use of it a few times; 10% denoted sometimes, 10% checked very frequently and 10% ticked all the time (Gross, 2004). Similarly, 67% of adolescents reported that they use a different name or identity in chat rooms (Bayraktar & Gün, 2007).

In the study examining gender differences in terms of the frequency of identity experiments on the internet with first grade university students (aged between 17 and 24) using chat rooms on the internet it was indicated that male students conducted more identity experiments than female students (Larrain et al., 2007). In the other study conducted on adolescents (aged between 9 and 18) using chat and instant message functions, no difference between genders was found in terms of the frequency of identity experiments (Valkenburg et al., 2005).

Considering the nature of adolescents' identity experiments, it was seen that most of the adolescents represented themselves as if they were older; fewer of them represented as a member of opposite gender and gender identity, and as a famous one or his/her sibling (Gross, 2004). In addition, it was found that in chat rooms, 42% of adolescents changed their age; 37.3% changed their name; 14.9% of changed their physical properties; and 13.4% of them changed their gender; 10.7% changed their profession (Bayraktar and Gün, 2007). Presentation strategies differed according to gender. Females represent themselves as someone older and more beautiful, compared to males, who frequently represent as macho compared to females (Valkenburg et al., 2005). Females tend to change their physical properties more than males (Bayraktar & Gün, 2007). Age is an important predictor of presentation strategy while conducting identity experiments on the internet. Younger adolescents have tendencies to represent themselves more beautiful than older adolescents more frequently (Valkenburg et al., 2005).

Considering why adolescents conduct identity experiments on the internet, self-exploration (exploring how others react- experiencing what it is to be someone else-having the opportunity to create one's own appearance) was found as primary motive. This is followed by social compensation (feeling less shy, being able to say more things, communicating more easily, being able to communicate and discuss specific issues more easily) and social facilitation (making contacts more easily, making new friends, having a date or a romantic relationship, being acquainted with people more easily) (Valkenburg et al., 2005). In another study, it was found that a considerable part (48%) of adolescents conducted identity experiments for joke (Gross, 2004).

The studies examining the relationships between identity experiments on the internet and self-concept unity showed that identity experiments on the internet did not affect adolescents' (aged between 10 and 17) self-concept unity (Valkenburg & Peter, 2008). In a study conducted with freshmen (aged between 17 and 24) using chat rooms, the relationship between identity-integration and identity experiments compromise in chatting (Larrain et al., 2007). There was a negative relationship between self-concept clarity and the duration of internet use, and having an online confidential nickname or a secret e-mail address (Matsuba, 2006).

The Internet has an important role in identity development (Zhao et al., 2008) and, identity is an inevitable source of internet use (Mullis, Mullis, & Cornille, 2007). Because of this, internet use is becoming more common among adolescents facing identity development. This can produce problematic/pathologic internet use defining overuse and uncontrolled use of the internet. It can also negatively affect adolescent identity development. In the studies, problematic internet use is more common among university students in the moratorium identity status (Ceyhan, 2010; Matsuba, 2006; Ward III, 2000) and students in the diffusion identity status (Huang, 2006; Ward III, 2000). These studies

indicate that adolescents' internet use can become a behavior that threatens adolescents' mental health and development of successful identity.

Although the internet provides ideal environments for adolescents to seek and experiment their identities the apprehension about these identity games is escalating because it is thought that these games do not help adolescents' development but prevent it. There are different and limited findings related to whether adolescents carry out online identity experiments intensively or not (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Since the developmental task of late adolescence period/university years requires combining all the identities of prior experimentation under one identity (Erikson, 1968), this study was conducted in order to determine a profile of adolescents' identity experiments on the internet in the first year of university and its relationship with identity development.

This study's objective is to describe the nature of internet based identity experiments of university students. Therefore, the proportion of individuals conducting identity experiments, whom they pretended to be in the process of identity experiments, and what are their motives for pretending to be someone else in online identity experiments were determined. In addition, predictivity of gender and sense of identity on their online identity experiments was also examined in the study.

Method

Participants

The study group for this research consists of 230 students enrolled in Prep Schools of University School of Foreign Languages. Participants were assigned randomly. Of the group, 131 (57%) are female, 99 are male (43%), and their ages range between 18 and 24. The average age is about 20 years old. These students' internet usage for one week ranges between 1 hour and 70 hours, the average is 15.41 hours.

Data Collection Tools

The Sense of Identity Scale-Köker Form: The scale improved by Köker (1997) measures students' levels sense of identity acquisition. A total of forty items are present in a five point scale. 18 of these items were defined as negative and 22 of them were defined as positive. The scale's lowest point is 40, the highest point is 200. Higher scores from the scale are an indicator that sense of identity was successfully acquired, while low scores indicate inadequately defining oneself in personal, social or gender fields, or not developing adequate commitment to these fields (Köker, 1997).

Within the scope of the scale's validity and reliability studies, factor analysis results put forth the scale's structure consisting of 40 items with multiple-factor. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was determined as .74 and the re-test coefficient of the scale was .73 (Köker, 1997). The Cronbach α coefficient for the present study was .90

Questionnaire of Identity Experiments on the Internet: In order to collect information about students' identity experiments, a questionnaire of identity experiments on the internet was prepared. In the questionnaire, questions included: "Do you ever pretended to be someone else when online? (No, I don't/Yes, I do)". Those who answered "Yes, I do" to this question were also asked to answer of the following "How or as whom do you present yourself [a) older, b) more macho, c) more beautiful, d) the opposite sex e) more attractive, f) smarter, g) less shy, h) imaginary, i) as known-mother, friend etc.] when online ? (No, I don't/Yes, I do)". These questions were prepared benefiting from measurement instruments used in the studies carried out by Valkenburg & Peter (2008) and Valkenburg, Schouten, & Peter (2005).

Students were asked to determine the basic motives why they pretend to be someone else online: "What are your basic motives why you pretend to be someone else online? [a) to feel less shy, b) to say more, c) to communicate more easily, d) to make new friends, e) to know people more easily, f) to obtain a date or relationship, g) to learn how others react towards me, h) to experiment how it is to be someone else, i) representing appearance as I wish] (No/Yes)". The questions related to the basic

motives were prepared by utilizing measurement instruments present in the studies of Valkenburg, Schouten, & Peter (2005).

Information Questionnaire: In the study, the researcher prepared an information questionnaire to collect data on demographic information for students and their internet use. In the questionnaire, gender (Female/Male) of students was a closed-end question, questions about their ages and approximately how many hours they are online in a week were open ended and they were asked to write the answers across the questions.

Analysis of Data

Study data was obtained by means of a set of measurement instruments comprised of measurement instruments present within the scope of the study. The measurement instruments were administered to students enrolled in Prep School in University School of Foreign Languages during planned and appropriate course hours. For data analysis, descriptive statistics and logistic regression analysis technique were used.

Results

1. Findings about conducting identity experiments on the internet

The study's objective was to determine the proportion of the students who conduct identity experiments on the internet, within the students comprising the study group. Within this framework, the distribution related to students' identity experiments online is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution Related to University Students' Identity Experiments Online

Do you ever pretended to be someone else when online?	Gender					
	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
No, I don't	69	30.0	38	16.5	107	46.5
Yes, I do	62	27.0	61	26.5	123	53.5
Total	131	57.0	99	43.0	230	100.0

As seen in Table 1, there is a slight difference between students representing as someone else when online (53.5%) and the ones not behaving as if someone else (46.7%). Table 1 shows that more than half of the university students in the data group conducted identity experiments when using the internet.

Within the framework of the distribution in Table 1, the study's objective was also to determine whether gender and the level of identity sense or not is a significant predictor of the conducting identity experiments online. In this context, logistic regression analysis was applied on the study data. Analysis results revealed that the level of sense of identity acquisition is a significant predictor of identity experiments on the internet (Wald's $X^2(1) = 9.48, p < .01$); however, gender (1 = male) is not a significant predictor (Wald's $X^2(1) = 2.64, p > .05$). This result explains that the decrease in levels of sense of identity acquisition is related to an increase in the probability of conducting identity experiments on the internet (B [unstandardized beta] = -.03, OR [odds ratio] = .98, 95%CI [confidence interval] = .96-.99).

2. Findings about self-presentational types of the students when conducting identity experiments online

The study's objectives included determining the most frequently used self-representations of students conducting identity experiments online (n=123). In this framework, students were asked whether or not they behaved as if they were someone else, i.e.: a) older, b) more macho, c) more beautiful, d) from the opposite sex, e) more attractive, f) e smarter, g) less shy, h) imaginary, i) someone who is familiar- such as mother, friend. The distribution related to this question is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution Related to Self-Presentational Types of the Students When Conducting Identity Experiments Online

How or as whom do you present yourself when online?		Gender					
		Female		Male		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Older person	No, I don't	45	36.6	38	30.9	83	67.5
	Yes, I do	17	13.8	23	18.7	40	32.5
More macho person	No, I don't	55	44.7	43	35.0	98	79.7
	Yes, I do	7	5.7	18	14.6	25	20.3
More beautiful person	No, I don't	41	33.3	39	31.7	80	65.0
	Yes, I do	21	17.1	22	17.9	43	35.0
Opposite gender	No, I don't	48	39.0	53	43.1	101	82.1
	Yes, I do	14	11.4	8	6.5	22	17.9
More attractive person	No, I don't	39	31.7	37	30.1	76	61.8
	Yes, I do	23	18.7	24	19.5	47	38.2
Smarter person	No, I don't	25	20.3	28	22.8	53	43.1
	Yes, I do	37	30.1	33	26.8	70	56.9
Less shy person	No, I don't	29	23.6	25	20.3	54	43.9
	Yes, I do	33	26.8	36	29.3	69	56.1
Imaginary person	No, I don't	38	30.9	35	28.5	73	59.3
	Yes, I do	24	19.5	26	21.1	50	40.7
As known person (mother, friend etc.)	No, I don't	39	31.7	37	30.1	76	61.8
	Yes, I do	23	18.7	24	19.5	47	38.2
	Total	62	50.4	61	49.6	123	100.0

As seen in Table 2, the students in the study group usually represented themselves, consecutively, as smarter (56.9%), less shy (56.1%), imaginary (40.7%), more attractive (38.2%), someone familiar like as mother or friend (38.2%), more beautiful (35%), older (32.5), more macho (20.3%) and from the opposite sex (17.9%). While students mostly represented themselves as smarter and less shy online, they represented the least as more macho and/or from the opposite sex.

Within the framework of the distribution in Table 2, in the study, predictivity of gender and the level of sense of identity on each of the self-presentation styles were examined in the study with logistic regression analysis. All analyses results indicated that the level of sense of identity predicted representing as more beautiful, more attractive and someone imaginary among the self-presentation styles when using the internet significantly (Wald's $X^2(1) = 3.81$, $p < .05$, Wald's $X^2(1) = 6.71$, $p < .01$, and Wald's $X^2(1) = 3.79$, $p < .05$, respectively). Gender (1 = male) only predicted the presentation of oneself as more macho on the internet significantly (Wald's $X^2(1) = 4.82$, $p < .05$). These results indicate that the decrease in the level of sense of identity acquisition is related to an increase in the probability of presenting oneself as more beautiful, more attractive and someone imaginary ($B = -.02$, $OR = .99$, $95\%CI = .96-1.00$; $B = -.03$, $OR = .97$, $95\%CI = .96-.99$; and $B = -.02$, $OR = .98$, $95\%CI = .96-1.00$, respectively). In addition, it is revealed that the probability of males representing themselves as someone more macho is high ($B = 1.09$, $OR = 2.99$, $95\%CI = 1.12-7.93$).

3. Findings about the basic motives why the students conducting identity experiments on the internet pretend to be someone else

The study's objectives included determining the basic motives contributing to pretending to be someone else for students conducting identity experiments online (n=123). In this context, the students were asked to determine which motives behind representing as someone else online [a) to feel less shy, b) to say more, c) to communicate more easily, d) to make new friends, e) to know people more easily, f) to obtain a date or relationship, g) to learn how others react towards me, h) to experiment how it is to be someone else, i) representing appearance as I wish] apply for them (Yes/No) The distribution related to the answers of the students is given in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution Related to the Basic Motives why the Students Conducting Identity Experiments on the Internet Pretend to be Someone Else

What are your basic motives why you pretend to be someone else online?		Gender					
		Female		Male		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
To feel less shy	Yes	26	21.1	29	23.6	55	44.7
	No	36	29.3	32	26.0	68	55.3
To say more	Yes	37	30.1	40	32.5	77	62.6
	No	25	20.3	21	17.1	46	37.4
To communicate more easily	Yes	44	35.8	47	38.2	91	74.0
	No	18	14.6	14	11.4	32	26.0
To make new friends	Yes	17	13.8	30	24.4	47	38.2
	No	45	36.6	31	25.2	76	61.8
To know people more easily	Yes	39	31.7	40	32.5	79	64.2
	No	23	18.7	21	17.1	44	35.8
To obtain a date or relationship	Yes	7	5.7	24	19.5	31	25.2
	No	55	44.7	37	30.1	92	74.8
To learn how others react towards me	Yes	37	30.1	36	29.3	73	59.3
	No	25	20.3	25	20.3	50	40.7
To experiment how it is to be someone else	Yes	18	14.6	20	16.3	38	30.9
	No	44	35.8	41	33.3	85	69.1
Representing appearance as I wish	Yes	10	8.1	13	10.6	23	18.7
	No	52	42.3	48	39.0	100	81.3
Total		62	50.4	61	49.6	123	100

As seen in Table 3, students answered that they represented as someone else, in this order: in order to speak more easily (74%), to get to know people easily (64.2%), to communicate more easily (62.6%), to learn how others react towards me (59.3%), to cope with shyness (44.7%), to make new friends (38.2%), to try to be like someone else (30.9%), to have a date or relationship (25.2%) and because I can change my appearance as I wish (18.7%). Students represent as someone else mostly in order to communicate more easily, with concerns about changing their appearance as they wish least prevalent.

In the framework of the distribution in Table 3, predictivity of gender and the level of sense of identity for each of the basic motives were also examined. The results of logistic regression analysis conducted for this purpose indicated that the level of sense of identity acquisition was a predictor for a desire for better communication and for appearance-changing significantly (Wald's $X^2(1) = 7.94$, $p < .01$ and Wald's $X^2(1) = 4.40$, $p < .05$, respectively). Gender (1= Male) only predicted the desire to make new friends online and getting a date or relationship significantly (Wald's $X^2(1) = 6.42$, $p < .01$ and Wald's $X^2(1) = 10.68$, $p < .001$, respectively). A low level of sense of identity acquisition is related to an increase in the probability of conducting identity experiments online in order to communicate more easily and to change appearances ($B = -.03$, $OR = .97$, $95\%CI = .95-.99$ and $B = -.03$, $OR = .98$, $95\%CI = .95-1.00$,

respectively). The probability of males conducting identity experiments online to make new friends and to have a date / relationship is high ($B = .99$, $OR = 2.71$, $95\%CI = 1.25-5.84$ and $B = 1.59$, $OR = 4.89$, $95\%CI = 1.89-12.66$, respectively).

Discussion

It was determined that while 53.5% of the study students conducted identity experiments on the internet, 46.5% of them did not. More than half of the university students in the data group conduct identity experiments when online. This finding is consistent with the findings that a considerable part [50 percent (Valkenburg et al., 2005), 51 percent (Gross, 2004), and 67 percent (Bayraktar & Gün, 2007)] of adolescents engage identity experiments on the internet. Since the findings in the study suggest that the fundamental developmental task of the adolescent is to acquire a sense of identity (Erikson, 1968), it is consistent with the theoretical information that suggests that identity exploration and experimentation are fundamental features in adolescent developmental stages (Larrain et al., 2007). In this context, the internet provides the opportunity for adolescents to create identities with their desired features, and to experiment with these identities and to evaluate the results; the internet is used as a tool by adolescents in their identity development process.

Findings in the study indicated that while the level of sense of identity acquisition is an important predictor of conducting identity experiments online, gender is not an important predictor. This result explains that a lower level of sense of identity acquisition is related to an increase in the likelihood of identity experiments. This finding is parallel with the findings in another study, conducted on first grade university students (aged between 17 and 24) using chat rooms on the internet, that there is a positive relationship between identity-integrity and identity-compromise in chatting (Larrain et al., 2007) and negative relationship between having an online nickname or a confidential e-mail address and self-concept unity (Matsuba, 2006). However, there is inconsistency with the finding that identity experiments on the internet do not affect adolescents' (aged between 10 and 17) self-concept unity (Valkenburg & Peter, 2008). According to these results, the probability is high that those university students in, late adolescence who still have not acquired a sense of identity and have inadequacies in knowing themselves in social, personal and sexual areas, exploring and experimenting identities on the internet is like a social laboratory for them in realizing the above mentioned needs.. This finding supports the opinion that suggests that identities formed online through identity experiments are not always transferred to real life and may cause psychological issues (Ward III, 2000).

The finding showing that gender is not an important predictive is consistent with that suggesting that for adolescents (aged between 9 and 18) using chat and instant message functions of the internet, there are no differences between genders in terms of frequency of identity experiments (Valkenburg et al., 2005). The study conducted with first grade university students (aged between 17 and 24) using chat rooms on the internet is inconsistent with the result suggesting that males carry out identity experiments more than females do (Larrain et al., 2007). It can be suggested that the fundamental developmental need of adolescence period is acquiring a sense of identity (Erikson, 1968), and this may eliminate gender differences in carrying out identity experiments.

The results in this study point that students representing as someone else while online consecutively represented themselves as smarter (56.9%), less shy (56.1%), imaginary (40.7%), more attractive (38.2%), familiar (38.2%), more beautiful (35%), older (32.5%), more macho (20.3%) and from the opposite sex (17.9%). While students mostly pretended to be smarter and less shy on the internet, they pretended to be more macho and from the opposite sex at the least. The finding denoted that students represent primarily as smarter and less shy is consistent with the findings indicating that adolescents represent themselves as older (Bayraktar & Gün, 2007; Gross, 2004). This may be due to the samplings of the studies. Other studies have been conducted with adolescents in the first and mid-adolescence periods but this one was conducted on university students who were in the late adolescent period. While adolescents in the first and mid-adolescence periods primarily explore their future identities, those in late adolescence experimented by changing features of their identities which are still

information stages. The finding pointed out that students represented as someone more macho and someone from the opposite sex is consistent with the findings of other studies suggesting that adolescents represent as someone from the opposite sex and in sexual identity at the least (Bayraktar & Gün, 2007; Gross, 2004). These results indicate that adolescent sexual identity acquisition in late adolescence period is sufficient.

In the study, the level of sense of identity acquisition predicted pretending to be more beautiful, more attractive and imaginary among self-presentation styles while conducting identity experiments online. Gender was a predictor only for presenting oneself as more macho significantly. These results displayed that a low level of sense of identity acquisition is related to an increase in the probability of the presentation of oneself as more beautiful, more attractive and imaginary. In addition, the probability of males presenting themselves as someone more macho is high. These results support the fact that body image, including beliefs of around physical presentation, are very important for adolescents in personality formation (Steinberg, 2007). In the process of acquiring a sense of identity, adolescents conduct identity experiments by changing their physical appearance (more beautiful-more attractive) as they believe that the key to societal acceptance and respect is related to physical appearance. On the other hand, adolescents may be still exploring their identities by conducting identity experiments by behaving like someone imaginary that they want to become and whose features are created according to their aspirations.

In this study, looking at the basic motives behind pretending to be someone else on the internet, students said that they did so for the following reasons, consecutively: in order to speak more easily, to know people more easily, to communicate more easily, to learn how others react to me, to feel less shy, to make new friends, to experiment how it is to be someone else, to get a date or romantic relationship and to represent appearance as wished. Findings indicate that students represent as someone else in order to speak more easily and, in the least, to change their appearance. This finding is not in compliance with the findings in the literature. In the study examining identity experiments online, basic motives were self-exploration, social compensation and social facilitation respectively (Valkenburg et al., 2005). In another study, a considerable part of adolescents conducted identity experiments as a joke (Gross, 2004). This finding indicates that adolescents find the opportunity to explore experimental identities in virtual environment compared to real life in their identity development process. But, the finding that adolescents conduct identity experiments at the least in order to change their physical appearances as they wish supports the fact that sense of identity is a predictor of why students want to change their appearance. Adolescents having a lower level of sense of identity conducted these experiments online mostly because of a desire to change their physical appearances.

In the study, the level of sense of identity acquisition was a predictor of wishes to say more things and manipulation of their appearance, which are among the primary motives behind pretending to be someone else online significantly. According to these results, since the internet provides a social environment - although it is virtual for adolescents who cannot know themselves in personal, social and sexual areas, and have a low level of sense of identity acquisition for explaining their identities, they conduct identity experiments. At the same time, because of the internet's virtual nature and the opportunity that this offers for adolescents to change their physical properties, adolescents might tend to conduct identity experiments online.

Gender was a predictor of pretending to be someone else for the motive of making new friends online, getting a date or romantic relationship significantly. The probability of males conducting identity experiments to make new friends, get a date or romantic relationship is high. This finding is not consistent with the findings that females conducted identity experiments by the motive of self-exploration more than males (exploring how others react- experimenting what it is to be someone else- having the opportunity to create one's own appearance) (Valkenburg et al., 2005) and that females changed their physical properties in the chat rooms more than males did (Bayraktar & Gün, 2007). This

result can be related with males trying to make or have relationships and friendships that they cannot achieve in real life by experimenting with different identities on the internet since their communication skills are lower than that of females (Korkut, 1999) and their social concerns are higher than those of females (Sübaşı,2007).

Conclusion

In the study, 53.5% of the students conducted identity experiments. In these identity experiments, they behaved most often as smarter and less shy and behaved less as more macho and someone from the opposite sex; and these identity experiments were conducted mostly in order to speak more easily, and to manipulate appearance as desired. In the study, the level of sense of identity acquisition and gender are important predictors of conducting identity experiments online. The level of sense of identity acquisition predicted pretending to be more beautiful, more attractive and someone imaginary - which are among self-presentation styles when conducting identity experiments online significantly. It was determined that gender predicted only presenting oneself as if someone more macho to significantly. In the study, it was found out that the level of sense of identity acquisition was a significant predictor of wishes to speak more and manipulating appearance, which are among the basic motives behind pretending to be someone else. Gender predicted going online to make new friends on the internet, get a date or relationship significantly. The probability of males conducting identity experiments on the internet to make new friends, get a date or romantic relationship is high.

Were study results evaluated in general, it can be said that 53.5% of university students in the late adolescent period facing the developmental task of combining all the identities they experimented with under one identity still conduct identity experiments. In these identity experiments, gender and level of sense of identity acquisition are important predictors. In this scope, it can be suggested that identities created by identity experiments in an online environment cannot always be transferred to real life. At the same time, consistently making contacts in the virtual world with a fake identity may prevent adolescents from acquiring their own sense of identity. For these reasons, it is important for university students' to know themselves in real life and acquire a sense of identity to provide effective student personal services. In this scope, it would be useful to direct students to social environments and activities in which they will find opportunities for self-knowledge and arranging psychological helping services. While study findings reveal significant results about understanding the nature of identity experiments on the internet, the study does have some limitations.

The first limitation of this study is that it was conducted only on students at a single prep school of one university. The findings of this study should be supported by other studies, conducted at different universities. Another limitation of the study is that data for students' identity experiments are based on students' own statement. Thus, study findings should be repeated using different measurement methods. In further studies, different measurement processes and statistical techniques can be used. Within the framework of these restrictions, the findings of the study should be evaluated by taking account the characteristics of participants, measurement instruments and procedural limitations into consideration. Thus, examining the role of the use of the internet in the identity development of adolescents and the patterns of adolescents' identity experiments on the internet with different studies will make important contributions to the findings, offer better understanding of the nature of this behavior and enable the creation of effective services and environments related to this issue in the university environment.

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