Students' experiences with educational-ethical challenges

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate students' experience with educational-moral challenges. The research method is qualitative and phenomenological. The statistical population of this research included all female students of the second secondary level. The sample was selected purposefully and according to the available samples. Data saturation in the field of the educational-moral challenge of identity confusion was done after 14 interviews, communication challenge after 15 interviews, and existential anxiety challenge after 17 interviews. The three-step Ricoeur's method was used to analyze the interview data. Findings include 5 main themes and 16 sub-themes. The research shows that the educational-moral challenges of students are rooted in their untested assumptions and false beliefs. The analysis of the students' experience provides a clear picture of their perceptions about each of the challenges, and the discovery and interpretation of their speech shows that each experience has depth and breadth, and from each experience, we can reach the hidden things of the word.

Keywords: Challenge; education; ethics; morals; phenomenology.

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1. Introduction

Education has a broad and transcendent meaning (Hart, 2022). This means that it is not only extended to all areas of human life but is not limited to a specific place and time. Therefore, it can be argued that the focus of the educational process is not only in the realm of classrooms and educational centers but also in the more general context (Pattison, Ramos Montañez & Svarovsky, 2022; Rankin et al., 2022; Lewis-Dagnell, Parsons & Kovshoff, 2023). That is the family and the community in which the educational process is formed.

More importantly, the act of training is accomplished when it leads to the desired result (Tometten, Heyder & Steinmayr, 2021). But the question of where is the desirability and origin of the goals of education leads us to the fact that education deals with a system of values and value approaches (Seminary and University Research Institute, 2019). If the guidance of man refers to the transcendent being, living based on a good life, creating or changing attitudes, beliefs, values, ethics, behaviors, and mental adaptations, and finally social growth refers to the value and moral aspect of education.

The approaches and methods used in home and school educational institutions and in the general context of society play the most important role in the performance of students (Schaarsberg et al., 2022). Sometimes these approaches and methods have educational contradictions and, as expected, students show contradictory performance (Varjo, Kalalahti & Jahnukainen, 2020; Butterwick et al., 2020). On the other hand, the changes of the new era have faced students with challenges such as breaking down boundaries and structures such as forbidden and allowed (Bagheri, 2020: 59; Lind et al., 2020). Challenges in the field of education show their destructive presence and have a surprising and sometimes negative effect on students' psyche, ethics, and behavior (Davis & Hadwin, 2021; Mandich, 2022). With the impact of methods, practices, and changes, the education system faces many challenges in various fields such as educational-ethical challenges. It is essential to identify these types of challenges, especially during adolescence, which is the most important period of human development.

1.1. Related Research

Educational-Ethical Challenge is a term used to describe a wide range of obstacles and issues that originate in the educational and moral context that each faces at different stages of development. These challenges include a wide range of issues related to various individual and social issues such as academic performance, cheating on exams, dropping out of school, academic evaluations, disciplinary issues, difficulty in making life decisions and anxiety, value issues, the meaning of life, expression and Are identity and interpersonal relationships (Puhan et al., 2014; Butterwick et al., 2020).

The meaning of identity is the concept of the person and through it, the person achieves an integrated concept of himself, and based on that he makes value judgments in his life (Khajehpour, 2018). In other words, students' self-awareness can help them better understand and solve environmental issues and strengthen their responsibility towards others. Glasser (2005) believes that self-aware students can be more responsible and learn how to help each other and solve their interpersonal problems in different situations.

On the other hand, any factor that causes teenagers to not have a correct understanding of themselves (Tauber & Ariel, 2023) or creates a disturbance in the teenagers' inferences about themselves leads to the challenge of identity confusion or the inability to achieve the integrity and continuity of self-concepts, and as a result, cognitive weakness in finds out (Masson et al., 2016; Sedova & Navratilova, 2020). Man is not a one-dimensional being who only has the power of cognition and uses only this power when faced with reality, but has other spheres such as emotions that influence his cognition and perceptions.

Sha'arinejad (2013) writes that psychologists emphasize knowing the nature and emotional needs, and in their opinion, emotional needs do not arise from deficiencies in the human body, but the deficiencies of the human psyche are the root of these needs. The need for belonging, mutual love, sympathy, success, self-knowledge, and the need to be recognized and accepted is the most important emotional needs of individuals.

The social changes in societies such as the spread of modernity, globalization, urbanization, technological growth, and rationality have an undeniable effect on religion. The young generation of our society, which is familiar with the thoughts and ideas of the new world, is most exposed to changes in religious values and religious disunity (Nasseri et al., 2016). Cognitive dissonance causes religious discontinuity. This type of inconsistency occurs when there is an inconsistency between people's behaviors, cognitions, ideas, attitudes, and related tendencies about various issues and topics. Another state of cognitive dissonance is when there is inconsistency and conflict between opinions and cognitions and people's behaviors and actions (Ahmadi, 2008).

Failure to pay attention to educational-ethical challenges in recent years has exposed all the agents of home and school educational institutions to significant crises and gaps. To solve the various challenges of students, the focus of educational professionals is to pay attention to unnecessary education, and families and educational staff of schools also point to these challenges by acknowledging the inadequacy of their skills and abilities.

School counselors are a good source of information to understand the educational challenges and problems of students. Counselors are an integral and professionally qualified part of schools who, as facilitators of the educational process, deal with the educational and educational problems of students in the context of the school from a psychological point of view (Ebrahimi, 2018). One of the most important features of the consultant's activities is monitoring students, responding to students' problems, and sending a monthly report of educational-ethical challenges to the consulting core of the Education Organization.

1.2. *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this research is to know the experience of secondary school girl students from the educational-moral challenges of identity confusion, communication issues, and existential anxiety.

2. Materials and Method

2.1. Research Model

The present study is a qualitative study that has been done by Ricoeur interpretive phenomenology. Interpretive phenomenology is another approach to phenomenology that not only describes the biological experience of phenomena but also examines experiences within the context of everyday life. Because it is an interpretive process in which the researcher interprets the meanings of one's lived experiences. The living experience is the phenomenon that has come out in the form of text and writing to finally clarify the meanings of the phenomenon and provide rich data and deep insight into the living experience of participants (Iman, 2015).

2.2. Participants

The statistical population of this study includes female high school students in Ahvaz. The sampling method is purposeful. To select the sample, first, the educational-moral challenges including the challenges of identity confusion, communication issues (boy-girl relationships), and existential anxiety, were identified. The identification of these challenges has been done by the reports sent by the school

counselors of Ahvaz District 2 to the counseling center of that district and the documents that were available in this field in the 2019-2020 academic year.

After identifying the educational-ethical challenges purposefully and according to the available samples in the field of identity confusion challenges, 25 students, with communication problems, challenges, 20 students, and existential anxiety challenges, and 20 students from girls' high schools in District 2 of Ahvaz were selected for interview.

2.3. Data Collection Tools and Ethics

The tool of the present study was a semi-structured interview. Before each interview, the level of readiness and willingness of each participant was assessed. Before presenting the questions, the researcher stated the objectives, to ensure that the information was confidential, and obtain permission from the participants. During the interview, the content of the meeting was recorded in full, with the permission of each participant, and then recorded on paper. For some interviewees who were not willing to have their conversations recorded, the interview was conducted in writing.

Although theoretical data saturation occurred before the interviews were completed, all participants were interviewed to increase the validity of the research and ensure greater confidence. In the field of saturated identity confusion challenge after 14 people, communication challenge (boy-girl relationships) saturation after 15 people, and saturation existential anxiety challenge after 17 people. The time of each interview was between 35 and 60 minutes, depending on the development of the topic by the participants and their desire to continue the interview.

2.4. Data Collection Process

In the process of this research, based on Ricoeur's opinion, the researcher first reviews the text as a whole to understand its overall meaning in his mind (simple understanding). In the second stage, it analyzes the structure to identify the patterns of meaning and relationships in that text (structural analysis). The third stage, the total interpretation, which includes reflection and commenting on the primary reading and the reading of the interpretation, is carried out (total interpretation). To ensure the findings, the hermeneutic cycle should be done well in the interpretation process (validation) (Iman, 2015).

2.5. Data Analysis

To analyze the interview data, the three-step Ricoeur's method was used, which includes the stages of raw reading or simple understanding, structural analysis, and overall interpretation.

3.   Results

After analyzing the students' experiences with the challenge, they faced, the main and sub-themes were extracted for each of the challenges, which are discussed below:

3.1. Educational-Ethical Challenge: Identity Confusion

One of the major challenges that students face during adolescence is identity confusion. Identity is a set of personal, personality, social, emotional, cultural, national, and physical characteristics of individuals that are continuously formed based on different experiences and cause them to differ from others. Any developmental factor that helps the adolescent to confidently understand that he or she is different from others.

One of the signs of a developed identity is that it must be identifiable and predictable for oneself and others. From the challenge of identity confusion, 2 main themes of weakness in self-awareness and

barriers to self-awareness and 5 sub-themes were extracted, which were identified in Table 1 of these themes.

Table 1
The main and sub-themes of the identity confusion challenge

Main theme	Sub-them
Weakness in self-awareness	Inability to recognize individual talents and abilities
	Inability to know one's goals
	Inability to recognize values
Barriers to self-awareness	Irresponsibility
	Excess expectations

3.1.1. Main theme 1: weakness in self-awareness

Self-awareness is one of the most important structures of personality and means awareness of one's feelings, needs, and emotions and is the first step in the formation of communication skills (Farhangi, 2019). Having self-awareness skills for students has the function of adaptation in various educational, moral, and social aspects. Because the individual, aware of his talents, weaknesses, and strengths, plans to achieve his goals in life. This theme includes three sub-themes: weakness in recognizing individual talents and abilities, weakness in recognizing one's goals, and weakness in recognizing values.

Sub-theme 1-1: Inability to recognize individual talents and abilities, analysis of interviewees' statements indicates that students not only do not know their talents and abilities but also do not want to know them. *Interviewee 2: "I do not know what I can do well, I have not thought about these things until now. "I want to be happy and have fun right now, then I will think about my job, my job, and my abilities in due time." Interviewee 6: "I cannot decide at all. I'm afraid to make a mistake. "That's why my friends called me a coward."*

Sub-theme 1-2: Inability to know one's goals, knowing and choosing a goal is one of the most basic issues in human life. Analyzing the statements of the interviewees shows that some students have no purpose and do not try to determine the purpose of their lives. *Interviewee 3: "I do not want to have a specific goal at all and focus on it and spend my whole life doing something and repeating it over and over again. Even my entertainment should be varied and new. I like to experience everything."*

Sub-theme 1-3: The inability to recognize values, and developments, especially in the present era with the development of information technologies has accelerated so that the values that govern society, classes, and individuals of each society are also affected by these tools and technologies. Adolescents are most influenced by them and therefore always argue about existing values. In the analysis of interviews, the weakness in recognizing values is one of the most important cases of the weakness of self-awareness. *Interviewee 18: "Religious and value issues are not important to me at all and I do not think about these things. Who thinks of these things today? These things are from ancient times. "Everything has changed now."*

Interviewee 1: "I have nothing to do with political and ideological debates because I have no political or doctrinal views. These discussions are very boring for me and not interesting. I leave the room when my dad starts arguing about politics and beliefs. "My father accepts things that do not matter to me at all."

Interviewee. 13: "Who I make friends with has nothing to do with my family. They usually do not accept my friends. "I make friends with anyone in the class and I have nothing to do with my parents."

3.1.2. Main theme 2: barriers to self-awareness

In the analysis of students' speech evidence in the field of barriers to self-awareness, two sub-themes of irresponsibility and excessive expectations were extracted.

Sub-theme 2-1: Irresponsibility, analysis of students' speech evidence showed that irresponsibility is one of the barriers to self-awareness. *Interviewee 4: "When I'm at home, my mother keeps telling me why you do not clean your room or why you do not help with household chores. After all, we are students and our only job is to study. "I cannot stand hearing this and I cannot do anything at all except study, which I am not interested in."*

Interviewee 9: "I have no motivation to study. That's why I do not spend all my time studying. "I just go to school just to spend my days and see my friends."

Sub-theme 2-2: Excess expectations, one of the things that come from a person's ideal self is excessive expectations. The idea itself is the set of personal and personality traits we would like to have. This desire may be an individual and mental goal that we want to achieve in our imagination or it is an image that we want to show to others (Biabangard, 2011). Self-idealism can have a motivating aspect for the person if it is evaluated realistically and by the strengths and weaknesses of the person, otherwise, the person will be led to daydreaming. Excessive expectations are among the issues that emerged in the analysis of the interviews.

Interviewee 11: "My dreams are many and great and I have to achieve all of them. I wish to be accepted into medicine. Teachers say your math talent is not good. They kind of give me negative energy. "But in any case, I have to be accepted as a doctor and prove myself."

3.2. Educational-Ethical Challenge: Communication Issues

Communication issues refer to girl-boy relationships. The relationship between boys and girls is an important issue but full of doubts and anxiety. Because human nature is complex and painful, his behavior also has the potential to endanger him. Interacting with the opposite sex is a special feature of adolescence.

However, since adolescents' behaviors in this period are often influenced by emotions and they have not been trained in educational and cultural limitations and communication skills with the opposite sex, the occurrence of risky behaviors among them increases, so that boy-girl relationship is one of the educational-moral challenges. It is considered in this period. From the challenge of communication problems, 2 main themes and 5 sub-themes were extracted, which were identified in Table 2 of these themes.

Table 2

The main and sub-themes of the communication issues challenge

Main theme	Sub-them
Causes of the opposite sex	Emotional needs
	Lack of psychological security
	Religious rupture
	Show off through unconventional role models
Justify the behavior	Highlight the presence

3.2.1. Main theme 1: Causes of the opposite sex

One of the main themes obtained from the analysis of the interviews is the causes of the opposite sex, which include four sub-themes emotional needs, lack of psychological security, religious rupture, and showing off through unconventional role models.

Sub-theme 1-1: Emotional needs, Human behavior is evoked by a set of needs such as physiological needs, psychological and emotional needs that vary from person to person. Attention to emotional needs is one of the items extracted in the analysis of interviews. *Interviewer 10: "I felt lonely among my family members and I wanted to make up for it. "So, I became friends with a boy." Interviewee 5: "I do not have anyone in the house with whom I feel pain. Each member of the family was looking for their work. My friends recommended that I make friends with boys. Because they listen to us well. I listened to my friends. I saw that they were right. "He listened well when I spoke to my boyfriend, and I felt comfortable talking to him."*

Sub-theme 1-2: Lack of mental security, Security is one of the basic needs of human rights. If one of the basic concerns of human beings is to provide security in all aspects of life. "Psychological security" is one of the most fundamental issues in human life and the family institution, and providing and paying attention to it is an inevitable necessity. Because in a healthy family, they need mental security before they need comfort. *Interviewee 1: "I felt relaxed with my boyfriend. Every time we talked, I felt calm for many hours, forgetting other sorrows and thoughts about my future, which are very painful for me. "I thought his words would alleviate all the pain that has been inflicted on me by this world." Interviewee 3: "I became friends with him so that he would be my supporter in life."*

Sub-theme 1-3: Religious rupture, Religion is a part of the culture, and one of the important factors in the behavior and actions of individuals is a process of interaction with society. How and to what extent the effect of religion in any society depends on the definition and role of religion in the lives of individuals and on the other hand depends on the socio-cultural conditions of that society. In other words, religion is both an individual rooted in the beliefs of individuals and a social issue that is crystallized in the norms and values of social action. And modernity is experiencing a change in religious values. In the analysis of students' speech evidence, it was found that religious dissociation is one of the causes of the opposite sex. *Interviewee 4: "In my opinion, having sex with the opposite sex is not a sin. "We need to have a relationship and interact with the opposite sex."*

Sub-theme 1-4: showing off through unconventional role models, modeling unconventional models is also one of the negative methods used by students to show off. In recent years, for obvious and unknown reasons, students have become more inclined to emulate things that are less common in their family, school, community, and culture. In the analysis of the interviews, there were many manifestations of unconventional role models.

Interviewee 2: "At first, I hated having a boyfriend. "But when I saw how my friends enjoyed this kind of relationship, I became interested in it too."

Interviewee 6: "I love being famous. When I see how they spend time with their friends and they talk about them everywhere, it means that he has become a famous person. "Well, I have to be like this in my youth."

Interviewee 11: "When I saw that most of my friends have boyfriends, I also wanted to stand in front of them and experience having a boyfriend."

3.2.2.   The main theme 2: justification of behavior

The justification of behavior is often done without attention and awareness, because sometimes, for the sake of self-respect and pride in our own eyes, we unknowingly engage in misconceptions, which we call reasoning. By doing this, the person deceives himself to cover his defect or sin and to make his thinking, speech or actions appear legitimate or logical (Ketabi, 2012). This main theme includes 1 sub-theme of expression.

Sub-theme 2-1: expression, to express oneself means to realize one's right, to express one's thoughts, ideas, and feelings in an appropriate, direct, and honest way. Existence is defined as the ability of a person to defend himself or herself and the ability to say no to demands that one does not want to make. In the analysis of verbal evidence, expression is evident. *Interviewee 11: "I think one has to experience everything. So, I have to experience these things too, to say later that when I grow up, I have experienced even falling in love. So, you have to experience a relationship with the opposite sex and fall in love. "This is how we are told I am a girl today."*

3.3. Educational-Ethical Challenge: Existential Anxiety

Existential psychologist RolloMie sees anxiety in two types: natural anxiety and existential anxiety. In his view, natural anxiety is a force that comes to us, attacks us, and forces something to move. Because the dignity of emotions is such that many times, they attack us without our knowledge. But this anxiety is transient and even plays an evolutionary and maintenance role. But in existential anxiety, one encounters a kind of conflict with oneself. In other words, existential states generally subconsciously fall within us and become so ingrained in us that they become one with us as if one dignity of existence rebels against another dignity of existence and calls it alien (Dabbagh, 2018).

In the present century, existential anxiety has spread to people for various reasons. Students are no exception to this rule and it is one of their most important educational-ethical challenges. The existential Anxiety Challenge includes 1 main theme and 4 sub-themes, which are identified in Table 3 of these themes.

Table 3

The main and sub-themes of the existential anxiety challenge

Main theme	Sub-them
The nature of existential anxiety	Feelings of emptiness and futility
	Despair
	Loneliness
	Liability

3.3.1. The main theme 1: the nature of existential anxiety

Any situation that endangers the well-being of an organism creates a state of anxiety. Anxiety is an unpleasant emotion that is expressed in terms such as worry, panic, and fear (Atkinson, Atkinson & Hilgard, 2015). Anxiety implies the concept of insecurity or threat, the source of which is not clearly understood. Numerous thinkers and schools of thought have attributed the origins of anxiety to a variety of factors. If the existentialist approach considers the origin of anxiety as an ontology issue and the need of preserving their existence, it is called existential anxiety (Mohammadpour, 2016).

Sub-theme 1-1: Feeling of emptiness and futility, the feeling of emptiness in life is one of the most frightening feelings that a person sometimes experiences in life. According to existentialist views, a lack of sense of meaning, aimlessness, and futility in life leads to annoyance and leads to existential anxiety. *Interviewee 5: "My life has become very meaningless, nothing means anything to me, I have become indifferent to what is happening around me and I feel I can do nothing and if I can do something, my work is worthless to others. Is". Interviewee 8: "I do not think anything in life is worth the effort. All these people are trying to figure out what to do. We have to die at the end of the day. "When everything is worthless to me, then why should I try and why should I bother myself."*

Sub-theme 1-2: Disappointment and despair is a shocking state that manifests itself in feelings of impossibility, inability, and apathy. Failure to achieve goals repeatedly and comprehensively reduces hope, and this is the beginning of depression (Snider, 2018). *Interviewee 13: "I'm just alive, not living at*

all; I have no purpose and no hope for the future. I feel bad when I think about the future. "When I see that by going to university and studying after that, you have to be unemployed in another house, what can I do?" Interviewee 3: "My feeling is that no matter how hard I try; I will not succeed. "I feel like I'm just alive in this world, but I'm not." Interviewee 10: I do not know why I was born; I just came to suffer in this world. "Dying is much better than this life."*

Sub-theme 1-3: Loneliness, loneliness is a pervasive phenomenon that always leads to unpleasant feelings and experiences for people and especially for students who are in their teens. Because it can be considered the deepest reality and the most painful suffering of human existence. The phenomenon of loneliness has different types such as intrapersonal loneliness and interpersonal loneliness, each of which can be examined from different aspects such as psychological, sociological, psychotherapeutic, or philosophical aspects. *Interviewee 1: "I'm so lonely I think I'm not important to anyone. It does not matter to anyone whether I am or not. "I do not care about others at all, even my family." Interviewee 6: "My parents, and better yet, all the people around me in this ridiculous world cannot even understand my existence and body. "Let alone that they want to understand my feelings as if I do not exist."*

Sub-theme 1-4: Irresponsibility, Glasser (2019) believes that the problem of humans and their anomalies is irresponsibility. Because they cannot meet their basic needs based on the right and humane situation. So, we choose all our actions, including the feeling of misery. According to him, accepting responsibility will lead the person to reduce external controls in his decisions, to control himself and take responsibility for his actions, and to increase and improve his life situation. While in irresponsibility, the individual absolves himself of responsibility by resorting to various excuses and external controls. Evidence of irresponsibility was evident in the analysis of verbal evidence.

Interviewee 15: "This miserable life I have will not give up. What can I do? They say that everyone's destiny is written by God. "God must have wanted me to be born into a poor family."

Interviewee 8: "I think working for us poor people is nonsense. "It bothers me a lot to think about these things because I feel so much less than everyone else."

4.   Discussion

In this study, an attempt was made to analyze students' life experiences and to provide a clear picture of their perceptions and mentalities about each of the educational-ethical challenges of identity confusion, communication issues, and existential anxiety without any judgment about the correctness or incorrectness of their perceptions. The discovery and verbal meaning of the interviewees show that every lived experience has depth and breadth, and from every experience, the depth and hidden cases of the word can be reached. By analyzing the words of female students about the challenge of identity confusion, we found that students are unable to recognize their talents and abilities, their goals as well as their values, and parents at home and school have not helped them solve this problem.

This result is consistent with the research of Masson et al., (2016) who believe that a lack of correct understanding of adolescents causes a lack of integration and cognitive weakness, and Khajehpour (2018). One of the barriers to students' self-awareness is the irresponsibility and excessive expectations that have been created in them, which is consistent with the research of Glasser (2005) who believes in the relationship between self-awareness and responsibility of individuals.

By analyzing the words of female students about the challenge of communication issues, we found that they have emotional needs and parents play a minor role in their relationship, which is in line with the research of Shaarinijad (2013) who considers the root of emotional needs to be human psychological deficiencies.

Also, a low relationship between religious issues and distance from religion is consistent with the research of Nasseri et al. (2016) who believe that the adolescent generation of our society is exposed to changes in religious values and religious rupture by becoming familiar with the thoughts and ideas of the new world.

5. Conclusion

The 21st century sees many challenges. These challenges affect all areas of human activity, including education. Unfortunately, in the classroom, teachers only teach pre-determined lesson objectives, and students are also expected to memorize what has been taught. In such a situation, the process of training is based on memory, and there is no room for questioning, realizing life experiences, challenging beliefs, and thinking about their concepts and values.

In the process of raising their child, the family also extinguishes the desire to ask questions and think. It is clear that this system of thought is not designed to deal with the changes of the new age, so students are not effective in dealing with personal problems and everyday problems and face many educational-ethical challenges such as identity confusion, communication, and challenges that are not rooted in their subconscious thoughts, but are rooted in untested assumptions and misconceptions.

6. Recommendations

Many of the educational-ethical challenges of students are rooted in a lack of awareness and cognitive ambiguities that can be identified through philosophical methods and philosophical counseling and by developing philosophical attitudes (critical thinking, deepening of thoughts, and breadth of personal perspective on the issue). Created epistemological coherence in students. This allows them to achieve intellectual growth and a more meaningful life in the first place, and then to experience a better state of mind.

Educators and counselors are the first people competent to apply philosophical counseling in the training of philosophical thought and mind and will play a key role in this regard. Therefore, the educational staff of the educational system must pave the way for the realization of philosophical counseling through in-service training and holding training workshops.

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