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TOPIC OF RESEARCH: CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY AMONG MUSICIANS: AN
IDENTITY PROCESS THEORY AND POSSIBLE SELVES THEORY APPROACH

FINDINGS

Identity is a complex issue to be described and understood, thus embraces a range of viewpoints across disciplines. The issue becomes more challenging when art forms such as music become a platform for identity construction. Music and music education have been found useful in construing reality, undertaking self-work and understanding processes of identity construction in those who pursue it. As identity construction is considered as a defining process for youth, the present study has utilized a sample of emerging adults (18-29 years) to study the same.

While using a mixed method design (two qualitative strands and one quantitative), the study aims at understanding identity construction in a sample of musicians using the theoretical lens of identity process theory and possible selves theory. Together the results of the three strands of the study indicated that the motivational principles (self-esteem, self-efficacy, meaning, belonging, continuity, distinctiveness) highlighted by the identity process theory hold significant value for emerging adult musicians and can also be used to make sense of their future possible selves in a balanced and realistic manner. The possible selves of the musicians seemed to have elements of both hoped-for and feared selves. Through their hoped-for selves, participants articulated their desire to build social connections. Feel competent, enhance their skills, and become successful,

while gaining autonomy. However, they seemed apprehensive about finding work that is stable and pays enough to escape the impending responsibility of finding an alternate profession. They also seemed wary of being inauthentic, ordinary, and losing their relevance. Additionally their belief of being capable of influencing their environment and other's life boosts their self-efficacy and also gives meaning to their existence. Their music provided them with a sense of competence adding to their self-esteem, found support in all the three strands of the study. It also provided them with a sense of autonomy. As expected they were keen on being distinguished from others, being unique, and making a difference in the society. However, it enhanced their sense of belongingness to their in-group which has potential benefits for their identity, not just professionally but even at an emotional and personal level. Music for them seemed to be a medium for communication and catharsis, and also served as a medium for advocacy. Long term engagement with music seemed to have enduring impacts while sensitizing them towards their needs, values, goals and most important giving them meaning or a sense of purpose.

Apart from adding to the utility and rigor of the theories- identity process theory and possible selves theory, the study also contributes towards the possible links between the two theories with inter relations between motivational principles of identity vis-a-vis their possible future selves.