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ACADEMIC IDENTITY

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Abstract:
When the term "academy" is mentioned, the first thing that comes to mind is usually a university. In other words, academia is often associated with universities. From an institutional perspective, a university is an autonomous educational institution where professionals who are important for social continuity are trained, and new information is needed for the advancement of civilization and science is produced through scientific research. Additionally, academicians who are respected by society study independently. As an educational institution, the university holds a respected place in society and has undertaken the duties of educating qualified professionals for the needs of society, conducting scientific research that promotes the development of society and the advancement of science, enlightening individuals, and serving society. Academicians have overtaken the responsibility of fulfilling the university's educational, scientific research and community service duties. Academicians fulfil educational, scientific research and community service with their academic identity. Academic identity is a multidimensional and comprehensive concept that involves qualities and features that academicians who conduct their studies based on scientific methods should have. We can define academic identity as "*internalization of scientific attitudes and behaviours by academicians, making speeches and explanations based on scientific information, being able to question the events and phenomenon, defending science and open-mindedness against dogmatism, and prejudice*". Based on this definition, the dimensions of academic identity include (i) "*internalizing scientific attitudes and behaviours*", (ii) "*making discourse based on scientific knowledge*", (iii) "*questioning events and facts*", (iv) "*defending science against dogmatism*", and (v) "*defending open-mindedness against prejudice*".

Keywords: university, academician(s), academic identity, scientificness, open-mindedness

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1. Introduction

The origin of the academy can be traced back to the first centuries, with the first academy being founded by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato (2018: ix), on which the inscription reads "*anyone who does not know geometry should not enter*." In ancient times, Plato's student Aristotle and other philosophers founded academies with their names to teach their ideas and engage in high-level discussions. The most distinctive characteristic of academies is that they were established to teach philosophical thought through the use of thinking skills and to discuss it in the context of various disciplines such as mathematics, geometry, biology, anatomy, physics, chemistry, astronomy, geography, and more. Another characteristic feature of academies is that they were institutionalized for centuries after the death of the philosopher who founded the academy. Based on the purpose of its establishment and its characteristics, the academy can be defined as an "*education-teaching and science centre, institutionalized for centuries, aiming to teach a philosophical thought by employing thinking skills and to discuss them in the context of various disciplines*." The most important effect of academies on science is that it inspired the establishment of universities that emerged in Europe during the Middle Ages.

When the academy is mentioned, the first thing that comes to mind is the university. In other words, the academy is identified with the university, but there are different ideas about what a university is. Gasset (1997:125) suggested that it is an institution that teaches an ordinary individual to be a cultured personality and an ideal member of their profession. According to Özipek (2008: 185), universities are one of the most important places where academic and scientific knowledge is produced, ideas that shape the future of societies are put forward, discussed, and systematized. Güneş (2011: 32) defined the university as a place where the mind is institutionalized by being coded with culture. From an institutional perspective, the university is an autonomous educational institution where professionals important for social continuity are trained, new information needed for the advancement of civilization and science is produced through scientific research, and respected academicians' study independently. As an educational institution, the university holds a respected place in society, with the duties of educating qualified professionals for the needs of society, conducting scientific research that provides the development of society and the advancement of science, enlightening individuals, and serving society.

Academicians have overtaken the responsibility of fulfilling the university's educational, scientific research and community service duties. Academicians fulfil educational, scientific research and community service with their academic identity. Academic identity, in the eyes of society, is seen as a symbol of contributing to science and civilization, which is embodied in the person of the academician. In the meantime, academic identity involves the expectations from the academician about the solutions to the current problems and the advancement of society and humanity with scientific studies.

2. Academic Identity and Dimensions of It

> "*Academic identity is a luminous and promising mindset that is a combination of scientific attitude and behaviour, science and open-mindedness that is going to take civilization to more advanced level*." Ali Rıza Erdem

"Identity" is one of the most commonly used words in daily life, and one of the most extensively studied subjects in social sciences. Various definitions of identity have been proposed. According to the Turkish Language Institution, identity is "*the set of qualities and characteristics that reveal what kind of person an individual is as a social being*." Li et al. (1995:343) defined identity as *"how the 'self' is defined and categorized in relation to other people.*" Aydoğdu (2004:117) suggested that identity is *"our response to the question 'who am I?' in terms of how unique and different we are compared to others*." Identity is also about how an individual sees themselves and how they are perceived by society (Askin, 2007:213). In these definitions, the features that distinguish an individual from others are emphasized.

While the concept of "identity" is frequently discussed in daily life and extensively studied in social sciences, "academic identity" is a term that is not commonly used outside of the university environment. However, whether academics are aware of it or not, academic identity should be emphasized and clearly explained, as it often directly, and sometimes indirectly, affects their words, attitudes, behaviours, and studies. The statements "this word, attitude, behaviour did not suit a scientist, I did not expect it" or "this word, attitude, behaviour suited exactly as a scientist should do," which are sometimes made by members of society when referring to academicians, are directly related to academic identity.

Academic identity is a comprehensive and multidimensional term that encompasses the qualifications and characteristics of academics who carry out their studies based on scientific methods. We can define academic identity as the internalization of scientific attitudes and behaviours by academicians, which includes making speeches and explanations based on scientific information, being able to question events and phenomena, defending science and open-mindedness against dogmatism and prejudice. The dimensions of academic identity, based on the definition above, include: (i) internalizing scientific attitudes and behaviours, (ii) making discourse based on scientific knowledge, (iii) being able to question events and facts, (iv) defending science against dogmatism, and (v) defending open-mindedness against prejudice.

2.1. Internalizing Scientific Attitudes and Behaviours

The first dimension of academic identity is internalizing scientific attitudes and behaviours, which directly affects and defines the other dimensions. Internalizing scientific attitudes and behaviours is a prerequisite and fundamental component of academic identity. Scientific attitudes and behaviours serve as the backbone of academic identity as they are investigative thoughts and behaviours that facilitate problem-solving and the transfer of research competencies into practice (Karasar, 2007: 47-48). Scientific

attitudes and behaviors include being non-judgmental, open-minded, looking for logic in opposing views, being sceptical, independent in thoughts and observations, delaying decisions until evidence is available, making decisions based on criteria, being persistent and attentive in studies, thinking in relation, being humble by acknowledging the possibility of being wrong, and being humble in judgments.

Scientific attitudes and behaviours should ideally be acquired by individuals in society through education. It is seen that many education systems aim at gaining scientific attitudes and behaviours to individuals in the society. However, studies indicate that even in developed countries, individuals in the society cannot gain scientific attitudes and behaviours at a desired level. Although there are many possible reasons for this, the quality of education is considered as the primary factor.

Unlike other individuals in the society, it is imperative for academicians to acquire scientific attitudes and behaviours, since they undertake the responsibility of education based on scientific findings, conducting scientific research and serving the society based on scientific findings. However, the academic identity attributed to academicians brings not only the acquisition of scientific attitudes and behaviours, but also the internalization of them. In order to create an academic identity, academics must first internalize scientific attitudes and behaviours, in other words, adopt them and apply them in their daily and professional life. Otherwise, the academic identity formation of academicians will be interrupted.

2.2. Discourse Based on Scientific Knowledge

The second dimension of academic identity is a discourse based on scientific knowledge. The most important contribution that science has obtained by using the scientific method and offered for the benefit of humanity is scientific knowledge. In the literature, there are various definitions of scientific knowledge. According to Malhotra (2003:67), scientific knowledge is "*knowledge obtained using scientific method and standard*". Engin defined scientific knowledge as "*the closest reality that affects and grounds human life related to events and phenomena*" (2005: 433). According to Erdem (2014: 1036), scientific knowledge is "*systematic knowledge produced based on scientific research*". In the definitions of scientific knowledge, it is emphasized that it should be revealed through scientific studies. Scientific knowledge is knowledge that can be tested for accuracy and falsity, obtained by using observation, investigation and experimentation. Scientific knowledge is the valid and reliable results obtained as a result of the analysis of research data based on scientific methods. It is not possible to acquire scientific knowledge overnight or from morning to evening. It is obtained by statistical analysis of the data collected by the careful and meticulous application of scientific methods by academicians with scientific knowledge research technical qualifications or researchers who are engaged in scientific studies, and the interpretation of the results by the academician and researcher.

It is expected that academics, unlike other individuals in the society, have a discourse based on scientific knowledge on the subject that they have an opinion on. Individuals in the society can make statements based on knowledge, which we can call daily or hearsay. However, academics are required to make statements and statements

based on scientific knowledge due to their academic identity. Otherwise, since the trust and prestige of academics will decrease, their academic identity will be damaged.

2.3. Ability to Question Events and Facts

The third dimension of academic identity is questioning events and facts. We start to hear questioning as a word more in our daily lives. There are various definitions of questioning in the literature. According to Stripling (2008: 50), an inquiry is "*developing new insights through reflection and inquiry*". Erdem (2020a: 27) described questioning as "thinking more deeply and finding different solutions to problems by constantly asking questions". In the definitions related to questioning, asking questions has been emphasized. Questioning activates mental skills by constantly asking questions for a purpose. According to Erdem (2020a: 27), questioning constantly encourages asking new questions, enabling the development of deep thinking and finding different ways to solve problems.

Questioning is the basis of inquiry. Questions are more important than answers, because asking questions is the first phase of thinking and it opens new horizons Asking questions activates thinking, and thinking takes place by the formation or creation of question marks in the head. According to Aytuna (1958: 373), the question serves to indicate how and with which elements a person makes associations, how he thinks, and the nature of his behaviour in the face of events. A person who does not ask questions cannot realize a cognition (Filiz, 2009; Kuzu, 2013; Erdem, 2020a). According to Erdem (2020a: 31), questions starting with *"what"*, *"what for?"*, *"why?"*, *"how?"*, *"if/whether?"*, *"really?"* provide the acquisition and development of the mindset and questioning skills.

(i) *"What?"* question. According to Çelebi (1992: 33), *"what?"* question gives the definition, and beyond making it possible to answer the question of how, it also allows a wide set of possibilities to be revealed in order to answer the question of why / wherefore.

(ii) *"what for?"* question. Kökdemir asserted that *"what for?"* question is asked when it is necessary to make a judgment or an interpretation, or when it is necessary to give an idea about the relations between the facts, and *"what for?"* is not just a question asked to find the answer; This question also enables the questioning of causal relationships in the responses encountered (2005: 218). Aydın claimed that *"what for"* question aims to reveal the natural cause-effect relationship between phenomena (2007: 48).

(iii) *"why"* question. According to Turgut (1996:19) *"why"* question is both a scientific and philosophical question. As why question there is a cause-effect relationship, grounding and reasoning in it. Aydın suggested that that *"why"* question aims to reveal why phenomena are in the way they are (2007: 48). (iv) *"how?"* question. Erdem asserted that *"how?"* is the most frequently used question type and asked to understand what is happening (2018:11). (v) *"if/whether?"* question. Erdem reported that *"if/whether?"* is indicating doubt and whatever caused this question starts a discussion about how it happened and its truth (2018:11). *"really?"* question. Similar to *"if/whether?"* question Erdem suggests that *"really?"* also indicates doubt and requires revision, check and test processes (2018:11). The basis of *"what"*, *"what for?"*, *"why?"*, *"how?"*, *"if/whether?"*,

"really?" questions is *"curiosity"*. Since the natural and social environment in which people live contains many problem/s, it is expected that people will inevitably be curious about what is going on around them, try to understand by *"asking questions"* and then perform a series of activities to find answers to their questions. On the other hand, asking questions is accepted as an indication that people can use their thinking and questioning skills. By asking questions, it concretely reveals that people have the skills of thinking and questioning and that they can use this effectively. The importance of asking questions is increasingly understood.

Academicians are expected to be able to question in order to explain the reasons and the results of the cases and phenomena. They need to have acquired and use questioning skills operationally to question the cases and phenomena. In questioning cases and phenomena, *"what"*, *"what for?"*, *"why?"*, *"how?"*, *"if/whether?"*, *"really?"* questions should be asked and the results should be wondered and the answers should be investigated with scientific methods. Deep doubts and concerns may arise about the academic identity of academics who do not question events and facts.

2.4. Defending Science against Dogmatism

The fourth dimension of academic identity is to defend science against dogmatism. Dogma is an unchangeable thought that is accepted without examination and criticism, without testing and without discussion. We can define dogma as a set of stereotypes that are formed in order to protect and create a ground for a certain system understanding. The doctrines originating from scholastic thought and ignoring the existing changes and developments are called dogmatism. Building thoughts on dogma(s) is called dogmatism or dogmatism. Dogmatism is about being closed-minded or ignorant different type of thinking systems. Dogmatism is an understanding that accepts the ideas put forward by those who are accepted as an authority without verifying, researching and criticizing. Dogmatism is also the rejection of an idea, suggestion, or theory without research, or accepting an idea, suggestion, or theory only because those who are accepted as authority put forward it. According to Kant, dogmatism makes the human mind feel an unlimited sense of trust and imposes metaphysical knowledge on it. Various definitions of dogma have been made. According to Rokeach (1960), dogma is "*a kind of narrow-mindedness or a closed mind to new ideas*" (as cited in Gürses, 2007). According to Tuncay (1999:12), dogma is "*a set of stereotypes formed for the foundation and preservation of a certain understanding of order*". In definitions related to dogma, intellectual authority is emphasized. Rokeach expresses the narrow mindset in dogmatism or the narrow mindset not adopting new ideas as follows (as cited in Gürses, 2007). Immediate rejection of different beliefs and contradictory information and difficulty assimilation; minimal tolerance in uncertain situations; emphasis on univocal situations when faced with a questionable or ambiguous situation; the higher the level of dogmatism, the more sceptical of life and less self-acceptance. According to Gavray (2016: 10), dogmatism is focused on a single answer; it is his own answer. Other options are rejected as inaccurate, incomplete and/or inconsistent. Therefore, dogmatism takes different forms; sometimes universalist, sometimes ideological (socialist, liberal, republican) but whatever his reasoning, he sees

his own answer as the only option that should be accepted, and accepts sufficient reason to be involved in the decisions of others - whether the others are individuals, society and the state, or all humanity. According to Collingwood (2014: 231); "*There is not just one dogmatism; there are as many types of dogmatism as there are types of abstractio*n." Although there are many types of dogmatism, there are characteristic features that unite dogmas, but the most characteristic feature is that dogma(s) are not open to criticism. Dogma(s) cannot be refuted because they are not open to criticism. When someone is called "dogmatic individual(s)", it is used to mean narrow-minded, intolerant and intolerant of criticism. Other words used to describe dogmatic individuals; being anti-democratic, narrow-minded and authoritarian. Dogmatic individual; accepts and considers certain belief(s), acceptance(s), principle(s) and law(s) to be absolutely true for all time(s) and for all circumstances. Dogmatic individual(s) accept one truth and never discuss it. He seems to have a hard style in opposing different problem solutions and ideas; does not accept that their beliefs are challenged, and shows low tolerance in the face of uncertainty; It is highly sensitive to the reactions of the society and shows high conformity towards traditions. That is why a dogmatic individual is an anti-intellectual. Dogmatic individual already "knows" what he wanted to know (Tuncay, 1999; Ekşi, 2004; Şahin, 2008; Erdem, 2020b). In social life, many problems can be experienced in communication and interaction with dogmatic people, especially being closed to criticism and intolerance.

As a requirement of academic identity, academics are required to defend science against the dogmas they encounter in their professional and social lives. Science is the systematic accumulation of knowledge obtained by scientific methods as the common heritage of humanity. The most important component of the civilization reached today is science. Various definitions of science have been made. Bianchini and Colburn (2000: 179) defined science as "*a way to understand the world and to produce knowledge valid for humanity*". Sönmez stated that science is "*the process of establishing a connection with a part of the truth based on evidence and the whole of live information obtained at the end of this process*" (2011: 23). In the definitions related to science, the search for the truth with scientific methods is emphasized. The essence of science is to seek and explain the truth with scientific methods. It is also accepted that reality in science is relative.

Academician(s) defending science against dogma is an indication of academic identity. There is an inherent inconsistency between dogmas and academic identity coming from the nature of science. Academicians, who are at the centre of scientific studies and are the producers of scientific knowledge by applying scientific methods patiently and meticulously within a certain period of time, are naturally a party to science and a defender of science against dogma and dogmatism. The fact that the academician(s) knows and explains the truth about his field by using scientific methods shows that he is far from dogmatism. For one reason or another, or knowingly or unknowingly, using expressions that evoke dogmatism, or being a party to and defending dogmatic statements will not be compatible with the academic identity they should have, and will greatly damage the trust and prestige of the science and scientist they represent.

2.5. Defending Open-Mindedness against Prejudice

The fifth dimension of academic identity is defending open-mindedness against prejudice. Prejudice is the attitude/attitudes that we encounter frequently in our daily life and relationships as well as in our socio-political life and can cause various discrimination. Prejudice is generally considered to be an intolerant, unfair and discriminatory "negative or positive attitude" towards groups or individuals, resulting from an incomplete or erroneous judgment. In social psychology, prejudice is used in the sense of adopting a different attitude and manner to a person just because he or she belongs to a certain group. There are various definitions of prejudice in the literature. According to Harding et al. (1984), prejudice is "*intolerant, unfair and discriminatory attitudes towards other individuals or groups*" (as cited in Deaux and Wrightsman, 1984). According to Erdoğan and Vatandaş defined prejudice is "*positive-negative attitudes of the individual(s), group or society to the other party (individual-group-society) because they are not sufficiently informed or misinformed*" (2020: 476). In the definitions of prejudice, manner is underlined. There is consensus that there are two basic components of prejudice: (i) a "stereotype" that can be defined as an unfounded belief or thought, and (ii) a strong "affection" accompanying a "stereotype". Stereotypes (stereotypes) are the image(s) we form in our minds as the sum of some pre-formed impression(s), attribution(s) that fill the knowledge gap for a particular object or group, thus facilitating decision-making for the object and group. Especially when we encounter a new phenomenon, object or group, our knowledge about them is shaped by these images. Thus, through our stereotypes, we perceive the new phenomenon or group not as it actually is or with its real characteristics, but according to our thought disposition(s). For example, stereotypes that every 'blonde' foreign tourist is German, that all Japanese are 'hardworking'. If a stereotype is accompanied by a strong affect, prejudice as an attitude occurs. Stereotypes are not always negative. Negative stereotypes are effective in the formation of prejudices. The affect in prejudice is generally negative (repulsive), but there are also prejudices that occur in the presence of positive (sympathetic) emotions. Discrimination occurs when prejudices turn into behaviour. In the literature, "personal prejudice" and "group prejudice" can be handled separately, as well as "pathological prejudice" and "norm prejudice". Individual and social factors play a role in the formation of prejudice. Individual personality and attitudes, socially valid stereotypes, norms, laws, regulations on organizational functioning, and all mechanisms that enable pressure groups to maintain their power over 'others' can cause prejudice to form and emerge. It is accepted that prejudice is formed as a result of the common interaction of the factors formed by psycho-dynamic, historical, economic, situational, social learning, mass communication and culture. Trying to minimize prejudice rather than eliminating it is considered more realistic in the fight against prejudice (Yapıcı & Kayıklık, 2005; Bal, 2011; Göregenli, 2012a; Göregenli, 2012b; Paker, 2012; Erdem, 2020b). Prejudice, as an individual and social reality, can cause many negative consequences in our communication and interaction in our daily lives.

The defense of open-mindedness based on tolerance against the prejudices that academics may encounter in their social and professional life will strengthen their

academic identity. Various definitions of open-mindedness have been made in the literature. According to Dewey (1933), open-mindedness is "*the ability to look at the problem from different and new ways*" (as cited in Kızılkaya & Aşkar, 2009). According to Dirimeşe (2006: 47), open-mindedness is "*tolerance towards different approaches and being sensitive to one's own mistakes*". In definitions of open-mindedness, openness to listening to the views of the other party is emphasized. In open-mindedness, there is a willingness to listen to opposing views and a readiness to accept that the other party's opinion may be right, or that one's own opinion may be wrong or incomplete.

Academics' advocacy of open-mindedness against prejudice is, above all, a sign of self-confidence. Open-mindedness also shows the belief of academics that they are sufficient in terms of both personal knowledge and academic knowledge. Academicians accept that they are ready to accept and change if their thoughts, words, attitudes and behaviours are shown to be incomplete or wrong with their open-mindedness. Open-mindedness also enables academics to tolerate incomplete or erroneous thoughts, words, attitudes and behaviours that the other party is not aware of. Since academics are prejudiced, it may bring with it rigidity, intolerance and negativity, which may lead to suspicion of their academic identity.

3. Conclusion

Academic identity appears as a word that individuals in the society rarely think of in their daily lives and use in their speech. The main reason for this is that the academicians cannot immediately see, directly or indirectly, the benefit of the scientific studies and activities undertaken by the academicians in the context of their duties, related to the responsibility of education, scientific research and community service. Another reason is that individuals in the society focus on the result rather than the process, in other words, the focus on technology, which is the reflection of scientific results in daily life, rather than how scientific knowledge is revealed by academics(s) through a process that requires effort and patience. Such a situation may inevitably cause the academic identity to take little place in the minds and daily lives of individuals in the society.

Academic identity is perceived as a struggle and a process in fulfilling the responsibility of education, scientific research and community service undertaken by academicians. In fulfilling their responsibilities, academics sometimes spend more time and effort on education, sometimes on scientific research, and sometimes on service to society. The main reason for this is that the words, attitudes, behaviours and activities of the academicians who fulfil the responsibility of serving the society directly address the academic identity perception of the individuals in the society. While academics are fulfilling their responsibility to serve the society, they may also have the feeling of responding to the right or wrong, incomplete or complete academic identity perception of each individual in the society, which can cause many difficult problems to arise.

Academics bear two types of responsibilities in terms of academic identity.

First, it fulfils its educational, scientific research and community service responsibilities in accordance with its academic identity. The second is that in the

interaction with individuals in the society in the context of his responsibility, he gives special importance to the words, attitudes, behaviours and actions required by the academic identity, not according to the perception of academic identity in the minds of each individual in the society. While academics fulfil both their responsibilities regarding academic identity correctly and as they should, they should not fall into the misconception that everything will go well and that what they do will be understood and appreciated correctly. On the other hand, academics should not think that they will be constantly challenged, be on the defensive, or avoid accusations while fulfilling both of their responsibilities regarding academic identity correctly and properly. Academicians should act sensitively in fulfilling the requirements of academic identity in the context of their responsibility and should not be discouraged by the difficulties they encounter. On the other hand, they should be able to see criticism as an opportunity and praise as a test in developing their academic identity.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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