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Migration, Belonging and Adolescent Identity in Dubai: Qualitative Analysis on Sociological Influence on Identity Recognition

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Abstract

Adolescence is usually the time when people begin to reflect on their true identity, and this is often tied to their emotional as well as political connections in the place where they live. This research evaluates how family connections, economic opportunities, immigration, regional conflicts and the influence from Dubai's artificial cosmopolitan social environment impact teenagers' recognition of their own identity. Through interviewing multiple students with different backgrounds and different lengths of residency in Dubai, the study investigates the extent to which being an immigrant in Dubai could transform a simple geographical location into a meaningful component of personal identity, while simultaneously preserving connections to family heritage and national culture. The findings suggest that identity among migrant teenagers is negotiated between inherited cultural affiliations and experiences developed within Dubai, rather than being determined exclusively by nationality or place of residence. Moreover, the study also considers the possible implications of regional instability for identity and belonging, while recognizing that the interviews do not directly establish a causal relationship between conflict and identity change. This is because geopolitical uncertainties could make existing identities more prominent while simultaneously tightening the personal relationship with Dubai when perceiving Dubai's stability and multicultural environment. The teenagers' identity recognition is reflected as a complex process that involves multiple factors from both the transient and the maternal culture. This study will be based on interview responses from six distinct high school students and one young adult, each having a unique background and an interesting personal connection with Dubai.

Keywords

Sociology, Identity, Migration, Artificial Society

1. Introduction

1.1. Background Context & Aim of Investigation

From the beginning of the 20th century, migration had become increasingly popular. The movement is significant in that it is no longer a simple geographic shift; in contrast, migration can impact the recognition of an immigrant's identity, bringing substantial cultural and psychological influence on the fundamental identity-forming process. This crossing from one location to another forces the migrants to immerse themselves in an environment with a relatively different culture, society and experience. As a result, migration forces individuals to reconsider their sense of belonging and their definition of themselves. In general, identity, in a given period of time, is developed through interaction with family, peers, language, society and culture. As migration changes these societal environments, identity could often be continuously questioned by migrants; constantly, there would be a negotiation between the original identity and the current identity associated with the new environment.

In this article, the term "identity recognition" refers to the process of recognizing and establishing the precise knowledge of oneself, based on the cultural, environmental and paternal influence. The term "artificial society" refers to a society that is expanded through immigration and sudden economic boost, instead of conventional demographic and territorial growth.

Frequently, migration might not be able to permanently adjust a migrant's personal perception of who they are after recommencing a new life in a different country. However, they may often simultaneously identify the sense of identity with their surrounding international community as well as their current "host-society". Although some migrants may live in Dubai for a long period of time, they may feel a strong connection between themselves and their birth country. This demonstrates how meaningful and cultural experiences that are heavily identity-related can remain stronger than the influence of this artificial society. On the other hand, the tight cultural connection with migrants' maternal nation may begin to weaken when the time spent in Dubai makes up a large proportion of their life. This demonstrates how prolonged residence can transform geographical location into one of the most important components of personal identity.

Places can become meaningful through unforgettable memories, experiences, and relationships. A teenager's identity can arguably become tightly connected to the physical environment where they spend a large proportion of their time. Migration thus places individuals within different cultural landscapes, which involve languages, religions, social norms and even societal values or expectations. Although each individual factor's influence could be rather minor, these differences collectively could play a major role in shaping teenagers' perceptions of themselves as well as their true identity within this community around them. In a society like Dubai, because immigrants constitute a large majority of the population, the teenager's recognition of themselves will be heavily influenced, especially when encountering people from different backgrounds becomes an ordinary part

of everyday life.

Moreover, the research underscored the target subject of analysis as adolescence, because it is often considered as a critical period of identity formation. Because teenagers are moving from childhood dependence towards a period of self-growth and independence, it is commonly noticed that adolescence involves experimentation with different roles, values and group memberships. Thus, this article finds that migration would further impact teenagers' development of identity, since they are negotiating multiple cultural identities simultaneously. Moreover, during this stage, the teenagers would actively seek for an answer for their equivocal identity, under the influence of a multicultural society. Some teenagers would emphasize on how Dubai would be a tool to shape his values, ambition and life-long achievements. This would be further discussed in this article, because it reflects the particularly significant aspect of the influence of migration on adolescent identity developments.

In March 2026, the US-Iranian Conflict influenced the Dubai society significantly, as more than 40000 long-term immigrants left Dubai (Dubai Alternatives Editorial Desk, 2026). Eventually, at the height of the conflict, the population in Dubai had fallen by approximately 61000 (Christou, 2026). The vulnerability of the artificial society as well as the emphasis on identity recognition became particularly visible during geopolitical conflict; individuals became more conscious of social group boundaries. For the first time in history since its unification in 1971, the UAE was directly involved in modern warfare for the first time.

To a marginal extent, the conflict strengthened the distinctions between individuals' culture and the sense of belonging. From another perspective, the students' responses do raise the possibility that the contrived cosmopolitan society effectively maintained social cohesion during the occurrence of external conflicts, because immigrants may increase their appreciation of Dubai's safety, stability and long-lasting multicultural environment. Arguably, this would cause a greater national consciousness alongside stronger attachment to Dubai. This would be further discussed in the investigation.

1.2. Method of Investigation

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to investigate how migration, family background, economic opportunities and Dubai's cosmopolitan social environment influence students' identity formation and sense of belonging. A qualitative approach was selected because the research focuses on participants' personal experiences, perceptions and interpretations of living in Dubai. Rather than attempting to measure identity through numerical data, the study explores how individuals understand their cultural backgrounds, relationships with their communities and connections to the cosmopolitan city.

The research's analysis and evaluation draws evidence from interviews with six high school students and one young adult aged between 17 and 20. Their experiences provide examples of different relationships with Dubai, including individu-

als who regard the city as their home, those who perceive it as a temporary stage in their lives, and those who feel connected to the city without identifying with the wider Dubai community. Comparing these perspectives allows the study to develop nuances in examining how belonging can vary between individuals living in the same cosmopolitan environment. In addition, the seven participants who agreed to be part of the study had different national, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and varying lengths of residence in Dubai. Participants included individuals who had grown up in Dubai and others who had moved to the city more recently. This variation was relevant to the research because participants' experiences of migration, family background and social integration may influence how they perceive their identities and relationships with Dubai.

The sample also included variations in socioeconomic background. Six participants were described as coming from relatively high-income backgrounds, while one was from a comparatively middle-income background. These differences provided an opportunity to explore how economic circumstances and access to opportunities might relate to participants' experiences. However, the sample was small and unevenly distributed across socioeconomic groups. Hence the outcome of this research is not intended to be used as a generalization that represents all students or immigrants in Dubai.

Participants were recruited through personal networks; each respondent was either one of the students in the author's high school or the author's sports academy. The study used convenience sampling to recruit each respondent. Although this may undermine the quality of the response collected for this investigation, the purpose was to gather a range of personal perspectives relevant to the research question rather than to produce a statistically representative sample. During the interviews, the investigation explored participants' cultural backgrounds, experiences of living in Dubai, relationships with family and community, perceptions of economic opportunities, and feelings of belonging. Participants were also encouraged to describe what Dubai meant to them and whether they considered the city an important part of their identities. Before conducting the interview, the respondents gave consent and assent to the interview, and they were informed with the use of confidentiality measures such as pseudo-name. For the under-aged respondents, their legal supervisors gave parental consent as well to the research. Even though Student F provided a response with explicit details on sporting and aviation achievements, the student's identity would still be concealed, as there is no indicative personal information included in the response. In addition, the analysis on Student F's response that is included in the research paper remains strictly focused on the research question, instead of delineating information that violates the student's personal privacy.

The interview material provided both similarities and contrasts between participants. This further strengthens the quality of the analysis and the critical depth of the outcome of the investigation. Furthermore, Participants also expressed different views about the city's international character, including whether its cultural

diversity made it easier to belong or contributed to a sense of social distance. Interviews were conducted both online and in person from March to May 2025 and lasted approximately 10 minutes per interview. The interviews were fully structured and organized. They were both audio-recorded and transcribed by the author. These details are important for explaining how the interview material was produced and how it was subsequently analyzed.

The interview material was analyzed using thematic analysis. This approach involves identifying recurring ideas and patterns across participants' responses and examining how these patterns relate to the research question. Instead of treating each interview as an isolated account, the analysis compares participants' perspectives to identify both shared experiences and important differences. The analysis focused on several themes: family background and early socialization; economic opportunities and socioeconomic circumstances; migration and cultural identity; Dubai's cosmopolitan social environment; and the relationship between identifying Dubai as home and identifying with the UAE's national identity. These themes were developed from the preparation stage of the interview; this allows the overall research to be relatively structured with a clear research goal.

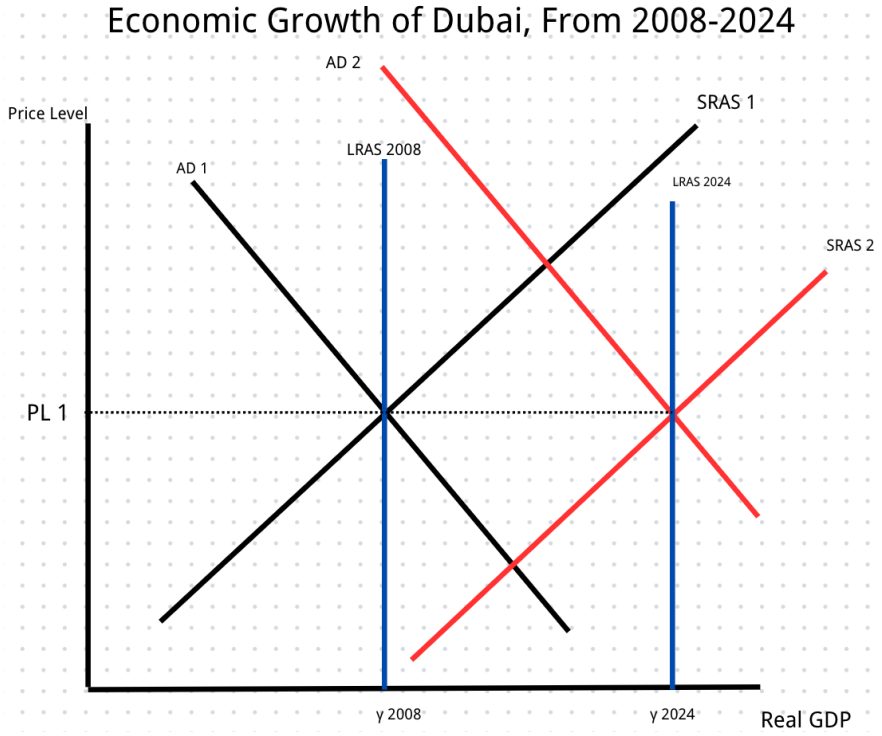
Nonetheless, this study has several limitations that may have to be addressed in future investigations. Firstly, the sample consists of only seven participants, so the findings cannot be generalized to all students, migrant teenagers or expatriate communities in Dubai. Besides, the sample is weighted towards participants from high-income backgrounds, meaning that the experiences of lower-income migrant families are not adequately represented, hence further compromising the universality of the outcome of the investigation. In addition, participants differ in age, national background and length of residence. Although this could diversify their response, the feasible factors of comparison could be identified, because of the difference in experience. Furthermore, the study relies on participants' own accounts of their experiences. These accounts provide valuable insight into how individuals understand their identities, but they do not necessarily capture every influence on identity formation. Finally, although regional conflict provides a relevant context for considering security, nationality and belonging, the interviews did not directly investigate participants' responses to the conflict. The study therefore cannot establish that the conflict caused any particular change in their identities.

2. Cosmopolitanism and Transnational Identity

2.1. Economic Growth in Dubai

As mentioned in section 1, the economic development in Dubai attributed to several distinct factors catalyze the society for long term growth. After the financial crisis in 2008, Dubai underwent an economic reconstruction, in which the metropolis shifts the main economic focus on sustainable economic development, such as real estate, immigration and tourism. This enormous and rapid economic growth could be attributable to the four capitals that Dubai obtains, according to

Bourdieu: economic capital, such as high salaries and zero-tax policy for businesses; cultural capital, such as international schools and global education; social capital, such as professional networks as well as societal diversity; and symbolic capital, such as astonishing landmarks and global recognition.



Graph 1. Dubai's economic growth from 2008 to 2024 (graph created by author).

As shown in **Graph 1**, it is identifiable that both Aggregate Demand and Aggregate supply shifted outwards from 2008 to 2024. With the injection from the Foreign Direct Investment as well as the expansion in export industries, Dubai diversified its 120.6 billion dollars economy. This increases the net-export of the economy. Hence, the aggregate demand shifted from AD1 to AD2. Furthermore, by hosting major tourism related events, such as Expo 2020, and setting up mega-attractions, such as Dubai Mall, the city established a consistent inflow of global consumer spending, which further catalyzed the outward shift of Aggregate Demand through increasing the consumptions as well as government spending within the economy.

Meanwhile, the aggregate supply also increased over-time. As the investment in physical capitals and technologies involved increases, the long term productive capacity as well as efficiency of the economy has been improved. Moreover, the infrastructural development and economic related regulations had also enhanced legal transparency and property regulation to prevent future economic bubbles, securing a sustainable growth (Elsheshtawy, 2008). Thus, with the comprehensive development of the UAE government, the economy could achieve a stable and controllable rate of economic growth, shifting the Long-run Aggregate Supply

from LRAS1 to LRAS 2 over the 16 years period, which indicates an increase in the potential output level. This symbolizes economic growth along the business cycle.

Although Dubai was known for its rapid economic development, Dubai faced several economic crises in order to sustain a resilient economy (Ewers, 2017). For instance, after the 2008 financial crisis that brought detrimental harm to Dubai's economy, it catalyzed critical regulatory improvements and enforced a stronger compliance in the real estate sector. With such kinds of changes being made, Dubai's economy avoided to face another similar economic crisis in the future, hence becoming the modern-day economic giant. Furthermore, the huge income inequality between different workers would diverge opinions towards the society into two extremes. While the wealthier high-income group could receive adequate benefits and experience a lavish lifestyle, the low-income group has to face a significant unequal access to opportunities. Although this.

2.2. Does Dubai Set-Up a Shared Community, or Does It Simply Allow People to Coexist without Developing a Strong Collective Identity?

From interpreting the verbal responses collected from individual teenagers, it is shown that many students value Dubai specifically for its economic ability as well as its financial attractiveness. Many described Dubai as a global connection that carries several different forms of opportunities: this could be educational, career and business related. However, this influence appears to be rather influencing their future identity as well as their long term plans, instead of their short term identity recognition. According to human capital theory, an individual person with an education background tends to invest in education, which would provide them skills to maximize their future opportunities with jobs (Becker, 1964).

Because of Dubai's opportunities, it is arguable that the role of Dubai for teenagers is often bonded with profits and materialistic values, instead of sentimental and emotional connections. For example, Student A stated "The future here is only about earning money and working here [and] (...) take over the family business after graduating" (Student A 2026). This suggests that he views Dubai instrumentally, considering the city as an important hub for his identity economically. However, this response lacks the idea of emotional connections in his recognition of Dubai as well as his consideration of his own identity. From sociological analysis, this reflects the presence of rational choice theory, in which individuals would remain in societies because benefits outweigh costs; the identity connection with the city is lacking and irrelevant (Hechter & Kanazawa, 1997). However, the emotional identity would not necessarily be irrelevant. A person's decision can be economically motivated while developing emotional attachments. As a result, it could be thoroughly concluded that Dubai is comparatively useful, but its emotional meaningfulness could not be compromised nor undermined.

From another perspective similar to Student A, Student B also reflects the same extent of connections to Dubai. In the response, the Student underscored the idea

of "another phase [and] (...) definitely return in the distant future" (Student B 2026). This is another form of representation of the influence of economic opportunities on students' personal connections to Dubai: the response indicates that economic opportunity does not produce belonging, but only mobility. This is relevant to another sociological concept, which is known as the globalization theory: suggesting highly mobile professionals are increasingly willing to view cities as temporary economic hubs rather than a permanent stable home. According to Stuart Hall's Decentered Cultural Identity and Zygmunt Bauman's Liquid Modernity, constant immigration hugely influences the idea of identity recognition, as individuals' constant shift in place of identity would directly weaken his/her knowledge on who they really are (Bauman, 2000). In such circumstances, individuals tend to only focus on their nationalities, believing it as their only source of cultural and identity influence (Hall, 1990).

However, unlike the response from Student A and Student B, Student F's response presents another perspective of economic opportunities' influence on identity recognition. In his response, he specifically emphasized on his proud achievements that he had accomplished in Dubai. For example, he described "[he is now able to] fly the A320". This indicates that his achievements are inseparable from the UAE, this is what sociologists would refer to as self-efficacy, which means that confidence became the real identity, as achievements augments Student F's confidence. As a result, from Student F's point of view, Dubai provided him the platform that allowed him to achieve those long-lasting achievements. Therefore, Dubai to him is indirectly shaped identity through success, and it would be arguable that Dubai has the influence to his identity recognition to a greater extent than Student A and Student B. Nonetheless, this form of recognition occurs rarely, since not every teenager is willing to pursue their future dream in Dubai, or acknowledging the benefit of Dubai to their own good. As a result, from the economic perspective, Dubai's major influence in identity recognition remains in their long term plan, but not in present identity recognition.

Overall, despite the cosmopolitan environment's illusion of facilitating social coexistence without necessarily setting up a uniform collective identity, the interviews delineate that the distinction lies between participating in a community and identifying with it. This could be illustrated from Student C's response, as the student describes that Dubai is home because of the meaningful life experiences that was established during his immigration journey. Similarly, Student F specifically emphasizes on the idea that the city played a major part of his identity. Both students' responses contrast significantly with the responses of Student A and D, which both reflect a lack of emotional connection with the society, regardless of the time living in the city as an expatriate student. The differences in responses attenuate the idea that while Dubai could create social connections through shared experiences, the outcome may not always necessarily eliminate individuals' existing national or cultural identities. Therefore, from the sociological perspective, Dubai may be considered as a place of social integration; the idea of collective

identity does not always develop at the same place. This could be particularly attributable to the massive inequality between high-income groups and low-income groups, because the society's unwillingness to resolve the differences between immigrants reflect the idea that Dubai may support a form of plural belonging, in which people coexist with tolerance, but it does not intend to adopt an unified collective identity, because the immigrants are only considered as a factor for economic growth.

3. Primary Socialization and Cultural Identity

3.1. Teenager & Family-Shaping Identity Recognition?

Primary socialization, which means the learning phase during infancy or childhood to build individuals' core identity, makes family the strongest influence on identity recognition (Martell, 2017). Children, from learning cultural values, beliefs, traditions and norms, are fully influenced by their parents, which would deeply internalize the recognition of identity when going through adolescence. Talcott Parsons, who is a renowned sociologist, identifies family as society's primary agent of socialization. He argues that family and relatives are responsible for transferring shared cultural values across generations. Teenagers would interpret new experiences with their prior knowledge from their own beliefs that were established under the influence of their family. As a result, it would make identity highly resistant to external environmental factors, underscoring the importance of family influence. Beside, other sociologists such as George Herbert suggest that Identity develops with social interactions.

According to Symbolic Interactionism, family provides a child's earliest and most influential interactions, hence suggesting that parents' transmission of values and culture on a daily basis shapes teenagers' understanding of their identity (Blumer & Shibutani, 1970). In particular, when considering the sense of belonging, and the origin of a students' true identity, paternal influence would play the major role, as children from a young age would acknowledge and firmly believe in their belonging that is congruous with their parents. This argument suggests that family strongly impacts teenagers' ethnic and cultural identity, even in multicultural societies.

However, Bourdieu argues that even under constant immigration of the family, the traditional values and identity recognition that had been passed on to the children would not differ from place to place. He argues this process reproduces cultural identity despite changing economic or geographical circumstances, which is commonly known as social reproduction. This suggests that moving or living in a society like Dubai would not alter the original recognition that students grew up with. Furthermore, as Social Identity theory explains, teenagers tend to categorize themselves into specific social groups. Teenagers' strong family bonds would increase attachment to one's ethnic or national community. As a result, it would directly reduce Dubai's effect on influencing their identity recognition.

3.2. Why Does Time Spent in Dubai Not Necessarily Displace an Identity Established through Family and Earlier Experiences?

Influence from family is also a powerful agents in the students' responses regarding their own identity recognition, similar to the influence from economic factors. This is because family provides an important starting point for the teenagers' recognition for identity. Throughout the interviews, the influence of family appears to be much stronger than nationality itself, because family background could determine the nationality, cultural values and emotional belongings (Blumer & Shibutani, 1970). As a result, each students' response highlighted the importance of influence from their family on their understanding of their identity. However, the strength of its impact varies across the respondents of the interview, because it is one of the factors that are fitted specifically to the individuals' experiences and attachments.

Dubai has been emphasized as a place that allows immigrants to secure the dominance of their original identity. From Student D's response, the idea of identity recognition is described as "still recognizing the original identity, [even after eight years in Dubai], Dubai was monumental [for the student's life]". From the student's wording, Dubai is described as important but not defining. This suggests that Dubai works as identity layering rather than identity replacement. The student's Singaporean identity remains as a primary while Dubai becomes his important secondary identity. This aligns with the acculturation model that is agreed by sociologists such as John Berry. In Berry's model, he proposes the four outcomes when migrants encounter a new culture: assimilation, separation, marginalization and integration (Berry, 2005). From Student D's response, the idea of integration could be identified, since the student embraces the aspects of Dubai as part of his identity, while sustaining the Singaporean identity.

From other perspectives, students consider Dubai's influence on identity recognition as more emotional and abstract rather than a realistic shift in identity. For instance, Student E and Student G repeatedly say "Dubai will always be home [and] hard to qualify yourself to be Emirati" (Student E & G 2026). The difference between the idea of an "emotional home" and "national identity" is essential, because it marks a clear contrast between place identity and national identity. The city becomes part of their identity recognition, but not fully configuring their national identity. This could be argued from the perspective of renowned environmental psychologist Harold Proshansky, who proposed that emotional identity prevails under the condition of having continuous experiences within a physical environment. This argument is particularly relatable to Student E and Student G, because they have lived in Dubai for their entire lives. Hence, they would have the majority of important memories, such as childhood and friendship, in Dubai. However, because Emirati identity is strongly linked with citizenship, ethnicity and heritage, both teenagers and adults cannot psychologically categorize themselves as Emirati, which explains why they emphasized themselves as 'Dubai-grown British' instead of "Emirati".

However, the idea of integration and a shift in perception of identity may change according to the length of time that the student has spent in Dubai. As suggested by Student F, identity recognition had tied a strong bond with Dubai, as the student stated 'Dubai has become a major part of my identity'. This could be explained from the point that most of the student's important life-time highlights in 20 years occurred in Dubai. According to Erik Erikson's Theory of Identity Development, the teenage developmental stage is mostly revolving around self-questioning the final answer of one's identity. From Student F's perspective, it is believed Dubai became incorporated into his identity itself. Unlike others, Student F's identity is arguably constructed within Dubai. As a result, for Student F's scenario, the recognition of identity does not come from the family side as much as Dubai itself, because he incorporated Dubai into the achievements that build up identity.

Ultimately, the responses from the interviews reflect the idea that the length of time spent in Dubai does not unitarily determine the emotional and identity connections between individuals and the city. Despite the opportunities and personal connections that are formed during the prolonged residency, identity is always shaped by earlier socialization and relationships that are established through family and cultural backgrounds. For instance, Student A continuously emphasized on his connection to Korea and referred to earlier experiences in Korea as an important source of belonging, while Student D similarly sustains his original national identity as his recognition of himself, though he regards his years in Dubai as a period marked with consequential personal development. Both cases contrast with Student C, E and F, who believe that Dubai is a place that they would define themselves with, highlighting the idea of strong emotional and personal connections to the city. This pattern could be further explained through the sociological lens of primary socialization, because the early influences can remain significant even after migration; it symbolizes that migration is not the cause of erosion in experiences through which an individual first learned to understand themselves in the social world (Donnermeyer, 2022). As a result, identity formation is more likely to be considered as an ongoing process of constant negotiation between inherited influences from cultural values as well as the experiences in the host society, instead of a simple and direct replacement of one identity by another.

4. The Influence of Conflict and Crisis: A Place of Identity and Belonging

On the 28th of February, the United States launched a series of missile attacks on Iran, in order to eliminate its threat in nuclear development. This significantly influenced Dubai as well as the expat population in Dubai. For the first time since the unification of the UAE in 1971, the UAE is directly involved in modern warfare. Because of the US Military bases in the UAE, Iran sent several rounds of attacks to different locations, including the tourist locations, such as the 5-star Fairmont Hotel, in Dubai (Cloud, 2026). Therefore, it is arguable that the recent

regional conflict set up a relevant context for taking the influence of geopolitical uncertainty on teenagers' perceptions of belonging into account. However, because the interviews did not directly examine participants' responses to the conflict due to political censorship constraints, its effects on identity cannot be established from the present data. Hence, future research could investigate whether such events increase attachment to national identities, strengthen perceptions of Dubai as a secure home, or produce different responses among migrant teenagers. In this investigation, the conflict-related changes in identity and social cohesion are considered only as theoretical possibilities, because subsequent passages could still imply that participants' accounts demonstrate the changes despite the absence in conflict-related responses.

One of the major sociological consequences of international conflict is that individuals become more conscious of their own identities. Often, because of the multicultural diverse society, the sense of identity as well as the recognition of identity would often become blurred and subordinate. However, under the environment of an ongoing conflict, people, the immigrants in particular, would become more conscious of their own identities. According to the Social Identity Theory that came up in 1979 by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), it is argued that people would naturally classify themselves into social groups, but the extent varies depending on the stability of society: during geopolitical crisis, the boundaries between groups much stronger, while the categories remain weak during peaceful period. As a result, it could be argued that the 2026 conflict in the Middle East specifically revealed the nature behind Dubai's multicultural society, making teenagers and members of the immigrant population aware of the fragile cover of the previously unknown identity.

Furthermore, analyzing the student's response, it could also be seen that the conflict may reinforce the expatriate identity while underscoring the importance of Dubai in their recognition of identity. Interestingly, students' responses all emphasized their own nationalities when defining who they are; however, the majority of them came to a similar statement: Dubai is their home. Reviewing this commonality from a sociological point of view, the current conflict could weaken the effect of considering Dubai's importance in their recognition, while augmenting the significance of their own nationality. As stated from before, people would often be more attached to their identities, hence the differentiation between the importance of their nationality and Dubai would become more obvious for them.

However, it is indisputable to suggest that the artificial society of Dubai has successfully achieved its original aim, which is to become a home of people with different backgrounds and cultures. This is evident for the economic growth in Dubai, as it would inject more wealth into the society, without increasing the cost of spending on social welfare. Moreover, as the UAE government is attempting with its best capability to protect its residents which reassures stability and collective security, Dubai is no longer solely being economically attractive, but also psychologically reassuring for its immigrants. Therefore, arguing from a contrasting

perspective, Dubai's effort may also strengthen the connections of residents, such as the teenagers, to Dubai, underscoring the values of Dubai's artificial society under time of regional instability.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Dubai's artificial society was designed to boost its long term economic sustainability, diverting it from an oil-reliant economy. This was fully represented in the students' responses, as a constant idea of returning to Dubai for future economic purposes could be easily acknowledged. However, it could also be noticed that the special resonance that the multicultural society has created for the students was often overlooked. With the repetitive reference of home and a platform that enables students to further pursue life-time achievements, Dubai has in fact played a major role in influencing student's identity recognition. Although the teenagers may still highlight their original political identity, they would always mention or state the emotional ties that they had with Dubai.

This article contributes to migration as well as identity research by underscoring the influence of an artificial society on teenagers' perception of their identity. Although the intention behind setting up a mostly man-made community is to increase the sense of diversity as well as to create a sense of cultural tolerance, the artificial society could also mingle the self recognition of teenagers, who also contribute to the society as part of the expat population. Because of the overall multicultural environment and the increasing global mobility, students developed rather complex emotional ties with Dubai. This tie is usually varied from person to person. For example, Student A maintains a strong connection to Korea and does not identify strongly with Dubai's wider community, while Student D views his time in Dubai as an important life experience without abandoning his original national identity.

Moreover, these responses indicate that Dubai's economic development influences how young migrants imagine their futures and evaluate the city's practical value. However, the subtle nuances between participants' responses suggest that benefiting from Dubai's economic environment does not necessarily mean their recognition of identity is being altered or modified. Instead, economic opportunity may encourage individuals to remain in or return to Dubai, while their emotional and cultural identities continue to be shaped by other influences. Therefore, economic factors appear to have a substantial influence on teenagers' future decisions, but their contribution to identity recognition depends on the individual's wider social experiences.

The diverse nature and cultural backgrounds behind each student are another important finding that raises questions about the influence of the distinctive nature of Dubai's cosmopolitan society. From conducting the interviews, it is revealed that the presence of people from diverse national, cultural, and religious backgrounds creates an environment in which teenagers regularly interact with individuals whose experiences differ from their own. Student B describes Dubai

as international and artificial, while Student C suggests that its artificial social environment can make it easier for people in similar circumstances to establish relationships. Such perspectives indicate that Dubai's social structure may create a shared sense of belonging among expatriates without requiring them to adopt a single cultural identity. Teenagers can participate in the same schools, social networks, and urban environment while maintaining different nationalities and cultural traditions. This reflects the sociological concept of cosmopolitanism, in which individuals encounter and negotiate multiple cultural influences within a shared social setting.

Although migration can consequently function as a significant challenge to the recognition of one's identity, it could also turn into an opportunity that fosters and benefits the development of oneself. For instance, on one hand, moving between countries may disrupt established social relationships, create feelings of alienation, and require teenagers to adapt to unfamiliar cultural expectations. Student A's account of initially feeling out of place in Dubai illustrates the potential difficulties of cultural adjustment. On the other hand, exposure to different cultures can broaden an individual's perspective and encourage the development of new values and social skills, which could be reflected through Student F's response.

In addition, this investigation also subtly highlights the importance of studying identity during adolescence. Because teenagers are undergoing a significant period of time in their life that involves constructing their unique understanding of their true values, cultural affiliations, and future aspirations. Hence, it is arguable that their identities are still heavily influenced by family socialization, peer relationships, education, and wider societal expectations.

Nevertheless, as migration comes into play, the factors that could influence strangers' identity formation could marginally vary and potentially influence the final outcome. In this case, Dubai provides a particularly relevant context because many teenagers grow up in a society where their everyday experiences may be closely connected to the modernistic cosmopolitan, while their citizenship, nationality, or family heritage may be associated with another country. Thus, the interviews illustrate to a moderate extent the precise influences that can produce layered identities rather than a single, clearly defined sense of belonging. Although some participants constantly highlight the greater importance of their inherited national identity, others also underscore their emotional connection to Dubai through the experiences and opportunities that possibly shaped their lives. As a result, this indicates that teenage identity formation should be understood as a continuous and irresistible process of caprice negotiation instead of a sudden fixed outcome that is determined solely by nationality or the place of birth.

To conclude, Dubai demonstrates how migration and global urban development can construct a social environment in which identity could be simultaneously rooted in family heritage while being shaped by experiences within a host society. The findings indicate that belonging and the recognition of one's identity

is not an answer that could be determined by a single factor. In contrast, it emerges through the interaction of personal experiences, social relationships, economic opportunities, and diverse cultural exposure. For the teenagers in this investigation, Dubai can represent a home, a source of opportunity, a temporary stage, or a combination of these experiences. The question could be simplified down into one definite correct answer. In fact, developing a deep understanding of these differences is essential to recognizing that identity in a highly globalized city is not simply a question of where individuals come from, but also of how they experience, interpret, and develop relationships with the places in which they live.

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Conflicts of Interest

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