



328en17



Notes

17

SELF AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES

As people grow they develop their own concept of self which determine how they relate to others and perform the various activities. Our self concept, however, does not remain constant, rather it changes during the different stages of life. We perceive others as persons, relate to them and develop friendship and other kinds of close relationships. Also, we develop self control and grow morally. In this way, self does not remain one's attribute related to personal functioning only. It goes beyond that and relates to the social world that we inhabit. Infact, self relates to the social world in a reciprocal manner. It influences our interactions with the social world and is influenced by it. In this process self also gets influenced by the social world. In this lesson you are going to learn about self in action and see how we perceive and interact with others.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain development of self across the life span;
- understand the meaning of self control;
- explain the stages of moral development; and
- describe stages of the development of pro-social behaviour.



Notes

17.1 SELF IN A LIFE SPAN PERSPECTIVE

Most of us tend to agree that human beings have a self. It is treated as a distinct entity with its own qualities and functions. It is often considered as a natural aspect of our lived experiences. However, this assumption does not hold ground when we try to understand the lives of children. The studies suggest that some crude idea of self recognition is noted by the middle of the first year. It is during this period that children start processing the voices and facial images of infants other than themselves. This is often interpreted as an indication of the **beginning of self-other distinction**.

Infancy: While using mirrors it has been found that children of different age groups respond differently to the images they see. The infants are found to have a visual self concept between 15 and 24 months of age. Using videotapes of children it was found that 3 year olds do not have clear self awareness. The 4 and 5 year olds do have better representations of themselves. The toddlers start categorizing other children on the basis of age and gender. During childhood the categories remain concrete (e.g., possessions, appearance, things they can do)

Childhood and Adolescence: During early childhood children start defining themselves on the basis of psychological attributes. They start thinking about attitudes. During adolescence representations of the self become much more subtle. They realize that they are not the same kind of person with everyone and in every situation. Identity is the key issue of development during adolescence. **Identity provides a stable sense of who a person is and what one's values and ideals are.** Many adolescents experience **identity crisis**. They fail to have a coherent and enduring sense of self. They have difficulty in committing to roles, values and occupational choices. Some adolescents establish their identities after considerable soul-searching and introspection. Others commit early without much exploration. This forecloses identity development.

Early Adulthood: This stage of development confronts the challenge of *intimacy vs. isolation*. Intimacy refers to the establishment of a committed relationship which is enduring. It includes both romantic as well as friendly relationship. In the course of development one needs to redefine his or her role as father/mother, uncle/aunt.

Middle Age: During this stage people become concerned with relating to the next generation and one's contribution to society. During this period a person faces the crisis of **generativity vs. stagnation**. People are expected to engage in more and more generative activities. In fact 'midlife crisis' has become a popular phrase. It brings an interruption in the normal rhythm of life. For some, the changes are gradual and for others they are drastic in nature.



Notes

Old Age: With increase in life expectancy, the population of elderly people is increasing. The main challenge faced by the aged people is that of *integrity vs. despair*. Poor physical health, lack of support and physical illness make the life of older people difficult. In view of social mobility and disintegration of traditional family ties, many aged people suffer from poor self concept. However, those who look back upon their lives with a sense of satisfaction that they have lived it well, experience a sense of integrity. Others may have regret and despair.

Thus we find that the notion of self assumes different forms and undergoes important changes during the life course. It reflects the changes in the experiential world of the people. However, the view of self held by people is not merely a representation of the expectations of others. It also works as a powerful force which directs behaviours and shapes interactions in social situation. Self undergoes transformation and many elements are included and excluded in one's self structure. People often strive for an ideal self. They are expected to contribute to the healthy development of society to which they belong.

People like Mahatma Gandhi, and Mother Teresa, who have immensely contributed to society, were psychologically very strong. One of the notable characteristics that they had is a well developed conscience. Their ideas, words and actions went together. Mahatma Gandhi thought that truth would always triumph; so he spoke only the truth. Also, he carried out what he spoke. Like-wise, Mother Teresa was concerned for the poor and the sick. She spoke for their welfare and dedicated her entire life to that cause. Like-wise many famous people all over the world, have contributed to the welfare of society. All of them are known for their integrity. Well-integrated people contribute not only to their personal growth but also to the growth and development of society.

To achieve this integrity, each individual should develop all the skills which he/she is capable of, and in the long run, these individuals become psychologically and socially competent and lead a healthy life. By gaining social competence and contributing to society at large, they command respect of the people.

17.2 SELF-CONTROL AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Self control is a process of learning to regulate one's own behaviour in a manner maximally rewarding or satisfying. To this end, people use a number of self control strategies. For instance, an obese person is taught to use self-control methods to lose weight, a chain smoker to decrease smoking and an extremely tense person to reduce tension.

Steps in Self control: Following are the major steps in developing self- control.



Notes

- (1) **Performing a task :** This refers to the action taken to solve a specific problem.
- (2) **Self-monitoring of performance and outcome :** It means actual observation and recording of the action taken.
- (3) **Self-evaluation:** This involves revising one's beliefs about his or her competence.
- (4) **Self reinforcement:** This means recognizing and approving of the accomplishment that may lead to a tangible reward or a positive self-statement.

Following is an example where a child is taught to remain calm and to take control of a difficult situation and not get provoked to react.

- (1) **Prepare for provocation:** Teach the child to anticipate difficult situations and tell her not to get provoked.
- (2) **Confront the difficulty:** Through imagination, play-acting or rehearsal, the child is taught to confront the provocation but at the same time be in control so that a desirable response follows.
- (3) **Cope with the provocation:** The child is made aware of the physical response to confrontation like tightening of the muscles and rising fear or anger and that this will be followed by teaching simple coping skills.
- (4) **Reflect on the consequences:** The child is taught to think about the outcome of handling the provocation, whether positive or negative. The child is also encouraged to become more reflective about herself, others' responses and other consequences by keeping a diary, talking to friends, parents and generally becoming more aware of the possibilities.

Self Instructional Training (SIT): This kind of instruction focuses on the development of major skill areas emphasizing "self-talking" responses. The steps of self instruction are as follows:

- (1) Teaching problem identification.
- (2) Teaching self interrogation skills.
- (3) Teaching attention – focusing and appropriate responding skills.
- (4) Teaching self-reinforcement skills so that the youngster evaluates his own responses and rewards the adaptive ones.
- (5) Self correction and coping options enable the youngster continuously to monitor his behaviour, evaluate alternatives and arrive at optional solutions.



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Box 17.1: Application of Self Instructional: An Example

- (1) **Problem Identification :** You cannot sit to read for a considerable length of time.
- (2) **Interrogation Skills :** Since when have you had this difficulty? At what times of the day does this happen to you? Is it related to any subject?
- (3) **Attention :** (i) Sit for only 30 mins at a time; (ii) take rest for five minutes by going away from the books and doing what you like (e.g; chatting with your mother, listening to the radio, etc.), (iii) return to reading and voluntarily draw your wandering attention to the reading.
- (4) **Self Reinforcement :** (i) Reward yourself when you have achieved undistracted reading for some time with “I could do this for ten minutes. I can do it for twenty minutes now” or reward yourself with what you like to do most when you achieve the goal after a few days. On the other hand, if you get distracted even after your efforts, punish yourself by denying what you like doing most (e.g., watching your favorite TV serial).
- (5) **Self correction and coping option :** Correct yourself when you do what is not desired. In this case, when you get distracted, attempt focusing back on your work. Cope with the distractions by perhaps changing your place of reading e.g. go to a quieter place like library.

Thus, self-control procedures can be used for self improvement.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.1**

1. What do you mean by self control?
2. Describe briefly any two conditions in which self control will be effective?

17.3 MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Development of the notions of “right” and “wrong” is an important aspect of social development. These notions help a person to balance the self interest and well being of others. In other words acquiring such rules facilitates morality or the normative standards that are helpful in organizing social lives of the people.



Notes

Development of morality occurs through stages. The development of the **idea of other persons** and **perspective taking** play important role in its development. During infancy children start recognizing social interaction as a reciprocal process. It's a great achievement to realize that people's actions depend on one's own. Initially children, up to the age of 8 years children focus on simple and concrete attributes of others and have difficulty in appreciating others. They only gradually learn to understand other's point of view. This ability starts during childhood and continues during adolescence.

Researchers trying to explain the pattern of cognitive development have tried to see how moral reasoning develops. Piaget found that younger children up to 9-10 years of age show **morality of constraint**.

During this stage children think in terms of conformity to social rules. Such rules focus on one aspect of the event and ignore others. For example, if child is asked to decide who needs to be punished, a child who went to kitchen to get her favourite dish by stealing and broke cups while reaching the jar in which the dish was kept or another child who did not know and accidentally opened the door and broke five cups which were kept near the door.

The younger children tend to recommend greater punishment for the second child who broke 5 cups than for the first one. Older children follow a different type of reasoning. They think about the intentions and do not consider rules as unchangeable. The moral rules can be changed if there is need. This is known as **morality of cooperation**. If we compare the reasoning of children we notice that young children's morality is autonomous.

In the process of socialization, the ethical beliefs are internalized and provide the foundation for moral development. Moral concepts start developing in a child from an early age. The first stage of morality is based on consequences, that is, before the age of about seven, the child tends to view or categorize acts which yield positive outcomes as "good" and those which yield negative outcomes as "bad". This pattern is called **objective moral orientation**. After the age of seven years, we focus our attention on the intentions behind various actions. This is called **subjective moral orientation** and generally it develops when a child is around ten years old.

Moral reasoning passes through three different levels, namely pre-conventional stage, conventional stage and post-conventional stage .

In the pre-conventional stages, the reasoning is somewhat self-centred and focusses on the personal consequences of individual's behaviours. Then in the conventional stage, reasoning focusses on what is considered as acceptable moral rules. Later



Notes

during adolescence, the individuals enter the post conventional stage in which they rely on abstract principles. A brief description of the stages of moral development as envisaged by Kohlberg.

Preconventional Level

Stage One : Moral judgement is based on obedience and punishment. Actions which demonstrate obedience to authority and allow the individual to avoid punishment are viewed as “good”.

Stage Two : Actions which satisfy the individual’s needs are viewed as “good” while those which do not, are viewed as “bad”.

Conventional Level

Stage Three : Actions which are approved of by others are viewed as “good” and those which are disapproved of are labeled as “bad”.

Stage Four : Actions through which an individual “does his or duty” or which shows respect for law and authority are viewed as “good”. Actions which violate this sense of duty are viewed as “bad”.

Postconventional Level

Stage Five : Actions which are consistent with the community’s well fare are viewed as “good”. Actions which do not abide by the laws of the community are viewed as “bad”.

Stage Six : Actions which are consistent with an individual’s self-chosen standards of justice are viewed as “good. Actions which are not consistent with such standards are viewed as “bad”.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.2

1. Trace the developmental nature of moral orientation.

2. How many levels does moral reasoning pass through according to Kohlberg?



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Box 17.2:

Try it yourself

Check whether you experienced changes in your attitude towards morality during late childhood and adolescence in morality. From when did you start noticing that certain things are forbidden because they are bad, whereas right things are to be repeated? List out the persons responsible for your moral development.

Kohlberg used certain situations in which a moral dilemma is presented and the task of person is to solve the dilemma. The solution arrived at indicates the stage of moral reasoning being used by the person. In general it is thought that acting in a moral way demands a higher stage of moral reasoning. However, the studies indicate that other factors like perception of risk, self interest and social conventions also play important role. Studies have indicated that moral behaviour of children does vary from situation to situation. For example, cheating may be reported in one situation (home) but not in school. It has been indicated that situational factors play important role.

17.4 ROLE OF FAMILY

In recent years the studies have demonstrated the role of family in moral development. The various domestic exchanges regarding rights and wrongs and parental expressions of regulations contribute to the development of morality. The idea of 'proper behaviour' develops in initial form as early as two years of age. The actions and emphases on acceptable behaviour by parents play an important role in moral development. The early experiences outside the family (e.g., preschool, peers, neighbourhood) also contribute to the development of morality.

Gilligan has proposed that while male children are socialized to be independent and achievement oriented, female children are socialized to be nurturant and maintain a sense of responsibility. Womenhood or femininity is often linked with self sacrifice and care of others.

It is also important to note that questions of morality are dealt with in different ways in different cultures. For instance, the views prevalent in Western society may not be appropriate in the non-western cultures. For instance, in the Indian context the non relative objective values are important. Such values are based on human and spiritual dignity.

17.5 PRO AND ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Prosocial behaviours are behaviours which benefit another person. They include cooperation, sharing and helping when others are in distress. Children pass through four predictable stages in the development of empathy which makes prosocial behaviours possible.

**Notes**

In the first stage infants have difficulty in differentiating self from others. They cry when others cry and they laugh when others laugh. After one year they gradually develop a **sense of self** as different from others and at that point they enter the second stage characterized by **egocentric thinking**. They “help” the other person in ways that they themselves would want to be helped. Then comes the third stage during which children show situation—specific empathy. Finally when they reach the fourth stage they come to relate their expression of distress to others when others are also in distress. Infact in the fourth stage, only appropriate exhibition of empathy is demonstrated, that is, others get emotional support from those who show appropriate empathic reaction.

Children can learn helping behaviour by imitating other known people. Opportunities for responsibility taking, role playing, reinforcing desirable behaviour as and when it occurs will strengthen the development of prosocial behaviour.

Anti social behaviours are characterized by truancy, delinquency, theft, vandalism and other forms of violation of the accepted social rules and convention. In some cases of antisocial behaviour the causal factors may be more personal than environmental, whereas in other cases it is vice versa. However, there is always a mixture of both personal and environmental influences, in varying proportion, that leads to delinquent behaviours.

Psychological management of antisocial behaviour would include counseling and guidance for learning socially constructive behaviours, assertiveness training or social skills training which will enable them to shed aggressive behaviour or channelize the aggressive behaviour into something constructive. This would enable the growing child to benefit himself as well as the society.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.3**

1. Give two example of pro-social behaviour.

2. Mention any two techniques with the help of which pro-social behaviours can be strengthened.

3. Give any three examples of antisocial behaviour.

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

- Self control is a process by which an individual learns to regulate one’s own behaviour in a manner that is maximally rewarding or satisfying.



Notes

- Chain smoking, over eating, compulsive behaviour are some of the responses which can be modified by self control.
- Self Instruction Training (SIT) is one of the methods of self control. It emphasizes the importance of self talking.
- The foundation for moral development is laid when ethical beliefs are internalized. Jean Piaget and Kohlberg are well known theorists who put forth their views on moral development.
- Prosocial behaviour is a response which benefits fellow members of a society in their development which in turn enables society to grow and develop in the positive direction. Antisocial behaviour is an act which hinders the well being and development of society.



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. How will you apply the procedure of self control to any problem condition? Illustrate with an example.
2. How does morality develop?



ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

17.1

1. Self control is a process of learning to regulate one's own behaviour in such a way that it maximally rewards or satisfies the individual concerned.
2. Discuss the stages of moral development.

17.2

1. Resolution of inner conflicts
2. Three main levels

17.3

1. Cooperation
2. Role playing and modeling.
3. Stealing, promiscuity, delinquency.

HINTS TO TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Refer to section 17.2
2. Refer to section 17.3