

Exploring and Analyzing Self-Concept Using AI Tools

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Introduction

In psychology, understanding the concept of “self” is central to analyzing how individuals think, behave, and interact with the world around them. One of the most significant frameworks for exploring personal identity is self-concept, which refers to the beliefs, perceptions, and evaluations people hold about themselves. Self-concept is not fixed; it evolves throughout life, shaped by experiences, social influences, and internal reflections.

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a tool that can support psychological reflection. AI platforms such as ChatGPT can process information about values, goals, and personal experiences, offering insights that may help individuals better understand themselves. However, the use of AI in self-analysis also raises important questions about accuracy, depth, and ethical responsibility.

This assignment and I'll be doing will first define self-concept and explain how it is formed. It will then incorporate an AI-assisted self-reflection, critically analyzing the usefulness of the feedback provided. Finally, the discussion will connect the reflection to key psychological theories and conclude with how self-concept awareness and AI might contribute to personal and professional development.

Self-Concept Definition & Theoretical Understanding

Self-concept is a fundamental construct in psychology that refers to an individual's perception and evaluation of themselves. According to Rosenberg (1979), self-concept can be defined as the “totality of an individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to themselves as an object.” In other words, it is the mental image people create about who they are, including their abilities, personality traits, and social roles. This idea is closely linked to Carl Rogers' (1951) humanistic theory, which emphasizes that self-concept represents how individuals perceive their “real self” compared to their “ideal self.”

Formation of Self-Concept

Self-concept is shaped by a combination of personal experiences, social influences, and internal beliefs.

- Personal experiences play a significant role in identity formation. For example, early achievements or failures can create lasting impressions on how individuals evaluate themselves. In my own case, competing as a track athlete in the 200m and 400m events helped shape my identity as disciplined, hardworking, and resilient. However, sustaining a

serious back injury altered this part of my self-concept, forcing me to redefine myself outside of athletics. This shift demonstrates how personal experiences, both positive and challenging, continually reshape one's sense of self.

- Social influences also guide the development of self-concept. Mead's (1934) theory of the self-emphasized that identity is shaped through social interactions and the internalization of others' perspectives. For me, migrating to Canada for higher studies has provided new cultural and social environments that influence how I see myself. The support and expectations of family, peers, and mentors play a role in motivating me to persist academically and professionally. Being an international student also creates a sense of belonging to multiple social groups, which further influences my self-concept.
- Internal beliefs and values represent another key factor. These include attitudes, moral principles, and worldviews that shape how people evaluate themselves. My commitment to a disciplined lifestyle—avoiding distractions such as excessive social media, junk food, and alcohol—reflects internal beliefs about self-control and long-term growth. Additionally, my faith in God and the belief that “everything happens for a reason” have become core elements of my identity, particularly in times of challenge. Reading personal development books such as *Atomic Habits*, *Attitude is everything*, and *The Power of the Subconscious Mind* has also strengthened my growth mindset, shaping how I see my potential for success.

Self-Reflection with AI

AI Reflection Response: When I input my personal experiences, values, and goals into an AI system, the following reflection emerged:

Based on your description, your self-concept is strongly shaped by resilience, discipline, and ambition. Having been an athlete in the 200m and 400m events, you developed a foundation of hard work and perseverance. The injury you experienced, while a setback, also contributed to your identity by reinforcing adaptability and the ability to redefine goals. Migrating to Canada for higher studies reflects your willingness to embrace change and take risks in pursuit of long-term success.

Your commitment to discipline—such as avoiding distractions, staying consistent in your studies, and following a healthy lifestyle—shows that you define yourself through self-control and focus. Your passion for reading books like *Atomic Habits*, *Attitude is everything* and *The Power of the Subconscious Mind* highlights a growth mindset, where you believe in continuous learning and self-improvement.

Finally, your entrepreneurial ambitions and desire to build wealth suggest that your self-concept includes a vision of a “possible self”—a future version of yourself that is financially successful, innovative, and impactful. At the same time, your faith in God's plan reflects humility and the belief that challenges serve a higher purpose. Altogether, your self-concept blends resilience, discipline, and optimism about future success.

Critical Analysis of AI Feedback: The AI's reflection captures several important aspects of my self-concept, particularly resilience, ambition, and discipline. These themes align well with my own understanding of myself, as I often view challenges—such as my sports injury or adapting to life in a new country—as opportunities for growth. The AI also correctly highlighted my interest in personal development and my entrepreneurial vision, which are central to how I see my future.

However, the AI's analysis feels somewhat generalized. While it recognizes values such as discipline and growth, it does not capture the emotional complexity behind these experiences. For example, the psychological struggle of transitioning from athletics to academics is not fully acknowledged. Similarly, the reflection does not explore the pressures of financial struggles or the emotional weight of pursuing success in a new country. This demonstrates a limitation of AI: while it can identify broad patterns and strengths, it lacks the ability to deeply empathize with lived experiences.

Connection to Theory

The AI reflection and my analysis can be better understood when connected to established psychological theories of self-concept. These frameworks help explain why resilience, discipline, and ambition emerged as central themes in the reflection, and they also highlight the limitations of using AI as a self-analysis tool.

Carl Rogers' Self Theory: Carl Rogers (1951) described self-concept as the perception of one's real self-compared to the ideal self. In my case, the AI reflection pointed out qualities such as discipline and resilience as part of my real self, while also noting my entrepreneurial goals and ambition for wealth as elements of my ideal self. Rogers argued that psychological health depends on the degree of congruence between these two aspects. The AI's reflection captured this congruence but did not critically assess potential gaps between my present abilities and my long-term ambitions. This shows both the usefulness and limitation of AI: while it can identify self/ideal-self patterns, it cannot evaluate the depth of tension between them.

George Herbert Mead's Social Theory of the Self: Mead (1934) emphasized that the self develops through social interactions and the perspectives of others. The AI highlighted my migration to Canada as an example of adaptability, but Mead's theory reminds us that this move also involves redefining my identity within new cultural and social groups. For instance, being an international student shapes how I see myself and how others perceive me. While the AI reflection recognized this transition, it did not fully address the role of social dynamics, such as peer influence or cultural expectations, which are central to Mead's framework.

Markus and Kunda's Possible Selves: The AI's emphasis on my entrepreneurial ambitions and vision of wealth aligns with Markus and Kunda's (1986) theory of possible selves. According to this framework, individuals construct mental images of who they might become in the future, which guide motivation and behavior. The AI correctly identified my "possible self" as a successful entrepreneur, but it did not explore how this vision can create both hope and pressure. Possible selves are motivational, but they can also cause distress if progress feels slow or uncertain—a nuance missing in the AI's summary.

Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory: Finally, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory argues that identity is shaped by group memberships. My past identity as an athlete, current identity as a student, and future goals as an entrepreneur all demonstrate how belonging to different groups influences my self-concept. The AI reflection identified these roles but did not fully connect them to group dynamics or status, again showing a gap in interpretive depth.

Final Reflection & Conclusion

Understanding my self-concept has given me greater clarity about how my past, present, and future identities shape both my personal and professional development. Reflecting on my experiences as an athlete, student, and aspiring entrepreneur reveals that my self-concept is not static but evolves through challenges, discipline, and long-term goals. Recognizing this allows me to better align my actions with my values and to remain resilient in the face of setbacks. On a personal level, self-awareness strengthens my confidence, decision-making, and motivation to maintain a disciplined lifestyle. On a professional level, it enhances skills such as communication, adaptability, and leadership, all of which are essential for success in the workplace and in entrepreneurship.

The use of AI in this reflection process was valuable because it helped organize my thoughts and highlight important aspects of my identity, such as resilience and ambition. At the same time, the exercise showed that AI lacks the emotional depth and contextual understanding to fully capture the nuances of lived experience. This suggests that while AI can serve as a useful starting point for self-analysis, it should not replace human insight or psychological guidance.

In the future, AI tools may play a stronger role in enhancing psychological self-awareness, but their effectiveness will depend on responsible use, human oversight, and integration with established psychological theories.