

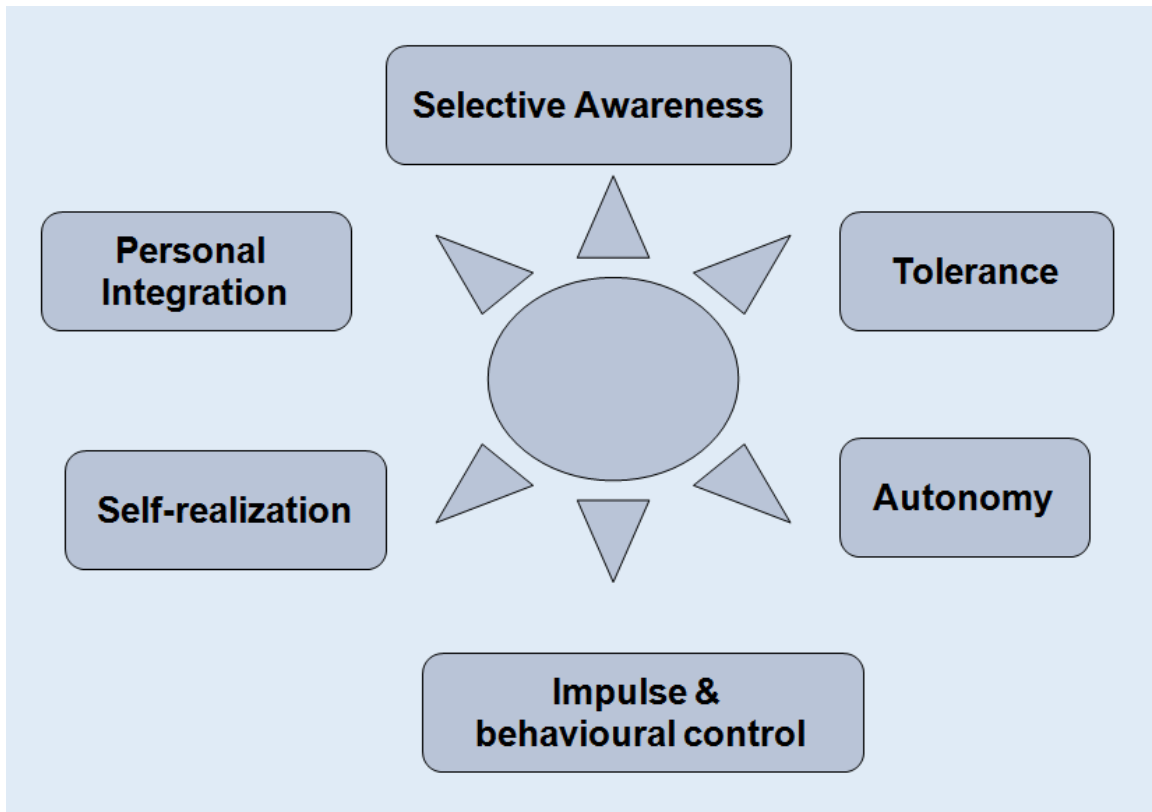
Module-2

Dimensions of Subjective Adjustment

We have understood that adjustment is interplay of various factors. Hence, it can be considered multidimensional. What are the dimensions of adjustment and what is the nature of each of these dimensions? If you read about psychological testing and measurement in detail you would realize that unlike many of the measurable constructs, psychological variables cannot be considered to have a zero point. Say, you can classify me as someone with X or Y personality type but cannot say that I have zero personality. Similarly, I can be intellectually superior or inferior; you can measure my IQ but I will not have zero IQ. Having said that, when you look at the dimensions of adjustment, you can envisage them to range from a theoretical zero to a maximum possible value or to have a theoretical neutral point with positive and negative values on each side. Each dimension of the adjustment process can be described in this way.

Dimensions of human adjustment:

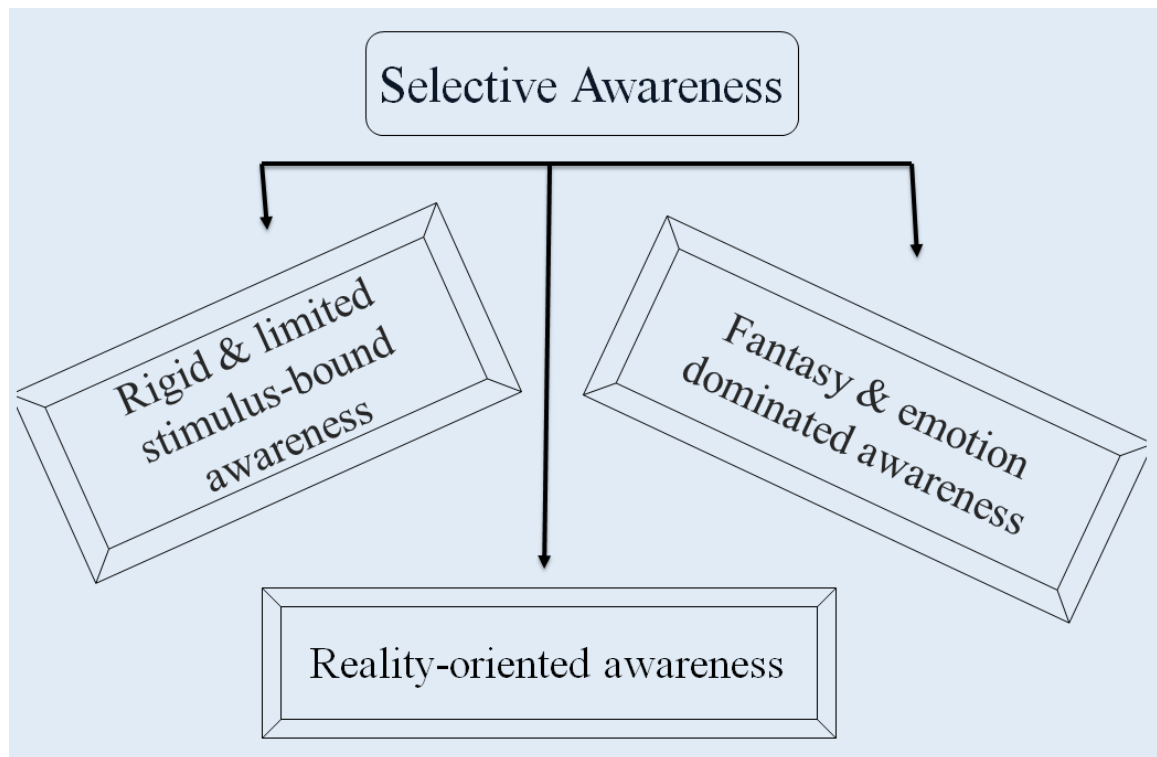
Although each and every aspect of human life, whether personal or social, interacts with few others and collectively affects the adjustment process, here we would look at the major constituent elements that come into play every time. These dimensions are— selective awareness, tolerance, autonomy, impulse and behavioural control, personal integration and self-realization. The illustration given below demonstrates these dimensions.



Selective Awareness

You must have come across the concept of selectivity in terms of perception and attention. In a broader sense, we all show certain degree of selectivity. We choose one type of food over the other, certain type of dress, and what not. In terms of adjustment, it refers to the tendency to get more and more familiarized and involved with certain aspect of the environment or completely cease to do so. In the former case one would selectively process all the relevant information whereas in the later case one would cease to respond to those aspects. This process is referred to as negative adaptation wherein one attenuates or stops responding to stimuli which the individual concerned finds non-significant. A typical example of it could be a very familiar sight that you always refuse to process. You walk out of your house and of all that you see while moving from your house to another

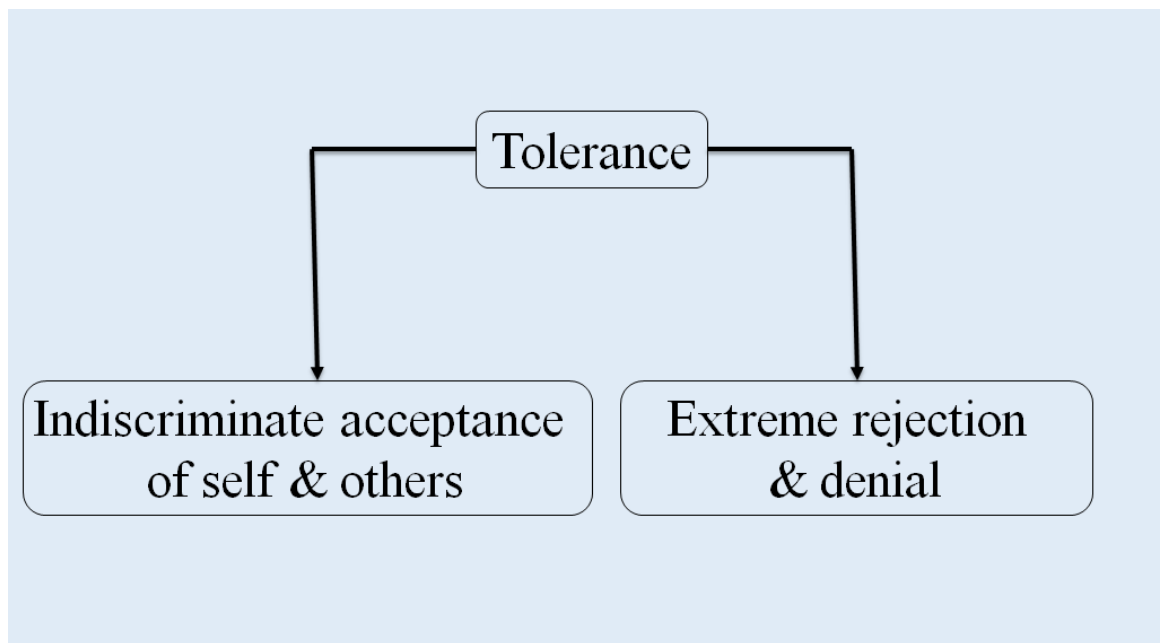
place only few catches your attention. Adjustment does not only mean termination of reaction to certain stimuli, it also involves intensification of response to some other stimuli. This is the reflection of selective awareness in the adjustment process which is determined by an individual's adaptability to differentially respond to stimuli that are available in the environment. The relative significance of the stimuli, as judged by the respondent, plays important role in this. Besides sensory-motor processes, selective awareness applies to affective and ideational processes as well. The example of selectively looking at the sight available in the environment described above represents selective awareness in sensory-motor processes. You look at several faces in the class and someone's face catches your attention. You feel compelled to look at that person repeatedly. Even after you have left the room and has gone somewhere else that very face comes to your awareness off and on. These are common examples that everyone must have experienced. The broader picture of selective awareness dimension of adjustment shows an interaction among sensory-motor, ideational and affective processes representing a continuum with two extremes— rigidly stimulus-tied processes and completely fantasy or emotion dominated awareness. The figure given below illustrates the continuum of selective awareness.



At one extreme the individual's behaviour reflects rigidity as he/ she has limited awareness due to remaining bound to a certain type of stimulus. In such situations one would show inability to break through the framework and hence modification of response in order to adjust to novel situations will be seriously hampered. The other extreme of this continuum is behaviour that is completely fantasy or emotion dominated. Interestingly, reality-oriented awareness exists between these two extremes and this is what seems pragmatic for human beings. In general, we have varying degrees of reality-tied awareness that is supplemented by appropriate ideation and emotion.

Tolerance

The Oxford dictionary defines tolerance as “the ability or willingness to tolerate the existence of opinions or behavior that one dislikes or disagrees with”. In general, life necessitates understanding specific goals. This, by default, implies that certain limitations will also be realized, which, in turn, would demand renunciation of certain goals. Similarly, one would have to concede the limitations. The process of adjustment demands acceptance of such things in life that one can neither change nor ignore. Hence, acceptance is an inevitable component of adjustment process. However, one needs to be cautious that such acceptance is realistic. Someone who considers himself/ herself to be unrealistically dependant might maintain low aspiration level. This, in turn, can make them accept and tolerate things more than what is appropriate. This could stunt the possibility of growth and hence, one should be cautiously examining the aspects that can be changed to adapt well. The illustration given below shows the two extremes of tolerance.



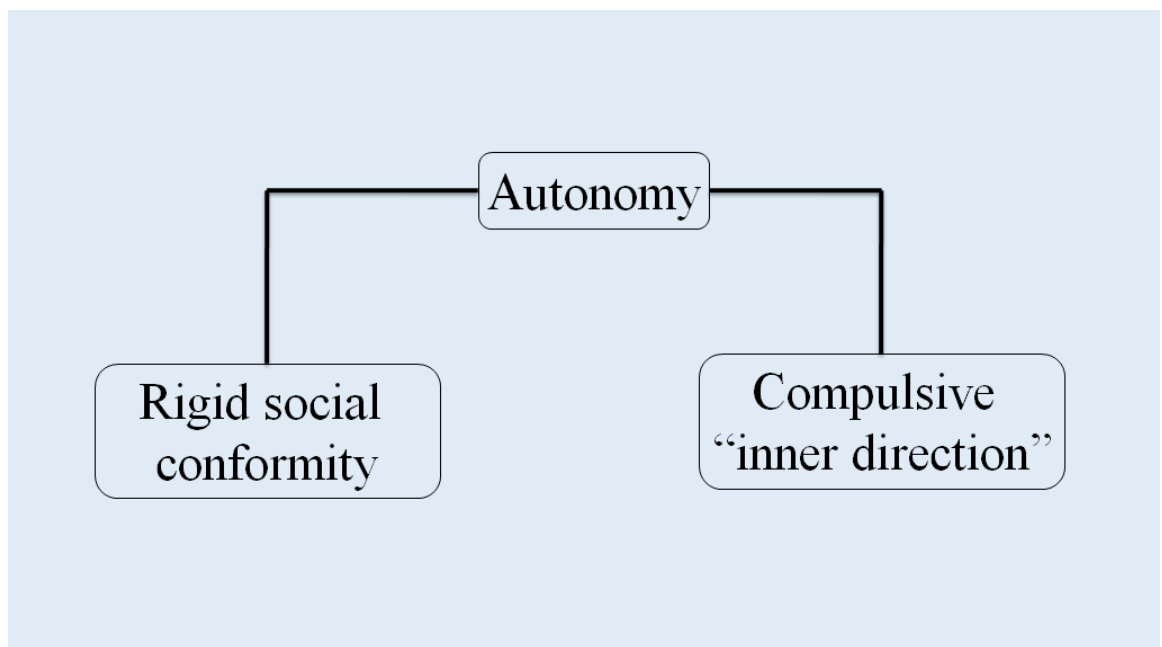
If you look at the continuum of tolerance, the extreme possibilities could be complete acceptance and complete rejection. One could show indiscriminate acceptance of self as well as others. This would mean that you accept the person and happenings the way they are. At the other end of the continuum one show extreme rejection and denial. One could simply reject a person or the circumstance. Say, someone who is physically challenged might deny his/ her handicap and choose to climb the Everest. He/ she has chosen to prove himself/ herself and compete with the rest.

Autonomy

The sense of autonomy is reflected right from our childhood. It is the capacity to act freely without getting influenced by the external agents. Till now we have looked at several scenarios where the social agents become very important and play decisive role in guiding one's course of action. While discussing "normality" we did come across the point that the view of the majority matters and compliance to such views are demanded. In situations where one conforms to the majority it is imperative that the individual has considered majority's view to be right. This might not be always true and although inwardly not favourable, one could comply in order to retain certain degree of stability in the system.

High level of conformity at the social level and susceptibility of the individuals to comply at the personal level make a social structure stable. In case an individual conforms in order to add stability to the existing social structure and considers this as his/ her ultimate goal, then such behaviour reflects defensible adjustment criterion. However, the range of social systems and cultural practices are so wide that individuals from the

other system might find many a things unacceptable. One cannot assume that the systems would be equally good. This gets further complicated when you look at individual differences. As a harmonious living is sought after by human beings, we mostly try to adjust even if there are differences. The extreme ends of the autonomy continuum have rigidity at both the ends. One extreme would be rigid and extreme social conformity whereas the other extreme would be rigid behaviour that is inner directed. The illustration given below shows the two extremes of autonomy.



Earlier we had taken the example of marriage as an institution in the Indian society. Let us look at the wide range of social systems. In most of the part of modern India, marriage has a social and legal identity. Several rules and norms govern it. After attaining specific ages a girl and boy can get married. We find love and arranged forms of marriages in the country. Let us turn our head and look at the other side. You must have come across the decisions of the Khap Panchayats. Khaps are cluster of villages combined on the basis of geographical location and caste. They exist in the states of

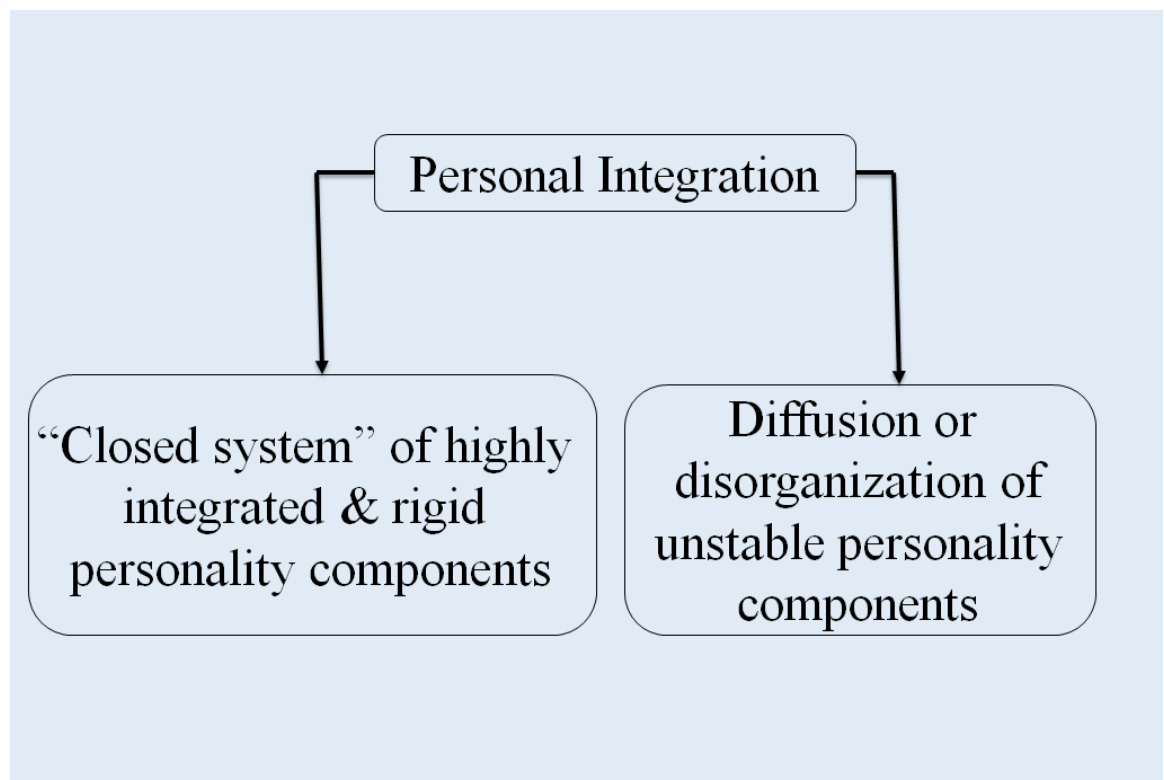
Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh and parts of Rajasthan in modern India. The reason for the Khap Panchayats to come to the limelight has been several cases of killings of young married couples who married in the same *gotra* (clan). They consider boys and girls of the same khap (and thereby same *gotra*) to be siblings and hence marriage between them is not allowed. You may find several individual who are well educated and exposed to the modern way of life but would not hesitate conforming to the khap decisions.

We did talk about the sacred nature of marriage and the concept of loyalty in such relationships. Prostitution has been socially disallowed and legally forbidden. Discarding such professional acts let us look at it as a part of social system. The women of erstwhile nomadic tribes such as *Bedia*, *Nat*, *Sansi*, *Kanjar*, and *Bachada* distributed across north, northwestern and central India engage in prostitution. Here prostitution is considered a familial occupation. Surprisingly, in modern India you will find a village called Natpura in Uttar Pradesh where all young women work as prostitutes. Even more surprisingly they define it as a tradition that they are carrying without realizing their right being violated and they being exploited on the name of tradition. Such behaviour is reflection of extreme social conformity.

I am reminded of an art exhibition where a well known painter had displayed a cow with six legs. When asked he said that it was his cow and could have as many legs as he wants. This is a reflection of inner directed pattern of behaviour. All forms of behaviour displaying personal autonomy and/ or social control lie between these extremes.

Personal Integration

In our earlier discussion we had talked about the congruence needed among the cognitive, conative and affective aspects of the behaviour. Personal integration refers to the coordination of personal characteristic such as belief, feeling and action. It is rather a stable form of behaviour that one reflects. The one extreme of this continuum is highly integrated but rigid and closed behaviour and attitudinal systems whereas the other extreme is inconsistent and unstable belief system.

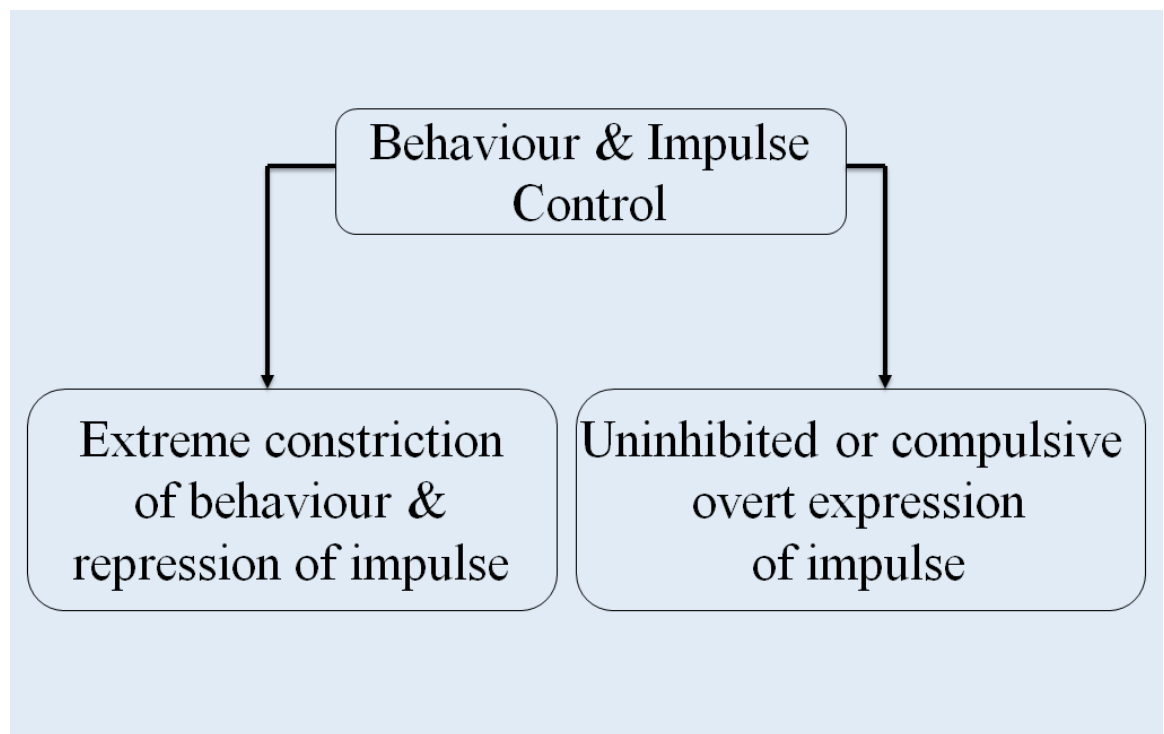


One possibility could be to remain rigid and closed thus not allowing behaviour or attitude to be reexamined. The example of members of Khap panchayats not attempting to be in tune with time is a case where one shows high degree of integrity but remains almost close. On the other end you find diffused behaviour that reflects inconsistency and instability in behavioural manifestations and belief system. Most of the people show

certain fixity but are open to learning and change. Hence, rest all forms of behaviour show variable degree of integration and lie between these extremes.

Behaviour and Impulse Control

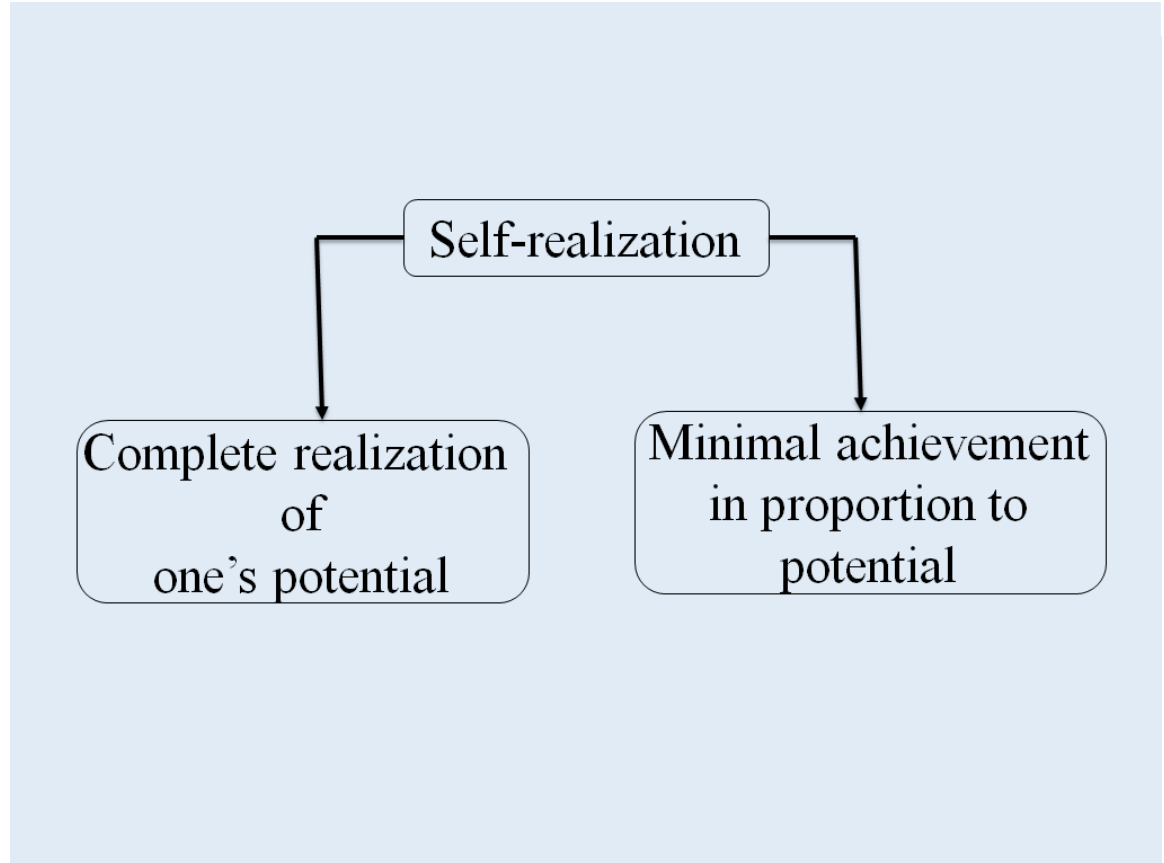
The whole of psychology talks only of behaviour, of course in all forms. Most of our reactions are wholesome. At times we come forward with unreflective immediate response whereas on certain occasions we refrain to respond. An unexpected unreflective urge to act is termed as impulse. Practically it is expected that human beings will have control over such impulses. However, this might be true for all individuals at all time. Hence, behaviour and impulse control ranges from extreme repression of such desire to uninhibited expression of the impulse. The illustration below diagrammatically represents the continuum of behaviour and impulse control.



At one extreme, the possibility exists of subduing the desire. This is called repression. Subdued desires are also seen in the case of suppression. Technically, the difference lies in the nature of this phenomenon. If the phenomenon is unconscious, it is repression. If one is aware of the desire, has weighed it and decided to keep it subdued, then it is suppression. This is a conscious phenomenon. Usually thoughts that are likely to be painful or dangerous are stopped from entering into conscious awareness. Depending upon the situation you will find cases of severe repression to complete unrestricted expression of impulse. As part of the adjustment process human beings try to appropriately control their behaviour so that it appears timely and justified. They also hold their behaviour or impulse in abeyance.

Self-realization

Self realization refers to the fulfillment of one's potential. However, given the individual limitations and social situations this process is too intricate. We have just discussed that conformity and compliance to socially prescribed forms of behaviour ensures the level of acceptance in the society and it also adds to social stability. However, when such demands become exploitative, when it restricts realization of the potential and is guided by social domination of some type then one should not succumb to it. As such situation restricts the opportunity of growth and fulfillment, refusal to conform in such scenario is considered a sign of mental health. Theoretically the continuum of self-realization ranges from attainment of fulfillment and complete realization of one's potential to minimal level of fulfillment. The illustration given below is self explanatory.



Truly speaking, complete realization of one's potential is close to impossible. The moment one strives to attain a goal in life, one has to compromise with attaining other goals that could have been also achieved. Extra attention to one area is at the cost of neglect of some other areas.