PASSION FOR

BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE

AND

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

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FIRST EDITION : 2023

DISCLAIMER

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The main aim of this book is to generate an awareness of core aspects of Behavioural Science and Social Psychology. The entire matter aims at disseminating knowledge among younger generation and to serve as notes on specified topics. The book will also be useful to all general readers interested in the field of Behavioural Science and Social Psychology. UG and PG students, researchers and executives will also immensely benefit from the contents of this book.

The authors are thankful to their family members for encouraging to complete the book project especially during COVID times. They express special thanks to the publisher and team for taking keen interest in publishing this book.

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ASPECTS OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE

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INTRODUCTION: KNOWING THE CONCEPT OF "SELF"

Generally, "Self" refers to a person's trait (character) or behaviour – his or her true personality. 'Self' in an individual includes elements, such as: (a) body, emotions, thoughts, and sensations which constitute the 'individuality and identity'; (b) personal interests; and (c) the ability of the immune system to differentiate self from others.

The 'self' is an individual's own thoughtfulness or awareness. In psychology, 'self' forms the distinction between the self as "*I*", the subjective knower, and the self as "Me", the subject that is known. Current views of the 'self' in psychology place the self as playing an integral part in human motivation, cognition, affect, and social identity.

The "sense of self" is stuck in the personality or ego and is subject to change in maturity or development. Psychologist **Carl Jung** observed that "the self is not only the centre, but also the whole circumference (or boundary) which embraces both conscious and unconscious; it is the centre of this totality." In Jung's psychology, 'Self' is "the archetype of wholeness and the regulating centre of the psyche – a transpersonal power that transcends the ego." It cannot be seen directly, can be experienced objectively by its cohesive wholeness making factor.

In sociology, the 'self' is defined as a dynamic, responsive process which structures neural pathways according to past and present environments including material, social, and spiritual aspects. The concept of 'self' is a belief which an individual has of himself or herself as an emotional, spiritual, and social being. Hence, the self-concept is the idea of "who I am", kind of

self-reflection of one's well-being. For example, the self-concept is anything a person says about himself or herself.

Cultural systems of different regions may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other, as conditioning elements of further action. Hence, in view of different cultures, the 'self' and 'self-concept' can vary due to different cultures. The way individuals construct themselves may be different due to their culture. For example, a Western culture-oriented 'self' is usually seen as abstract, private, individual, and separates themselves from the rest of the cultures. On the other side, an eastern culture-oriented 'self' might be considered as open and flexible. The 'self' depends on the environment and culture. The 'self' develops and continuously changes as per the environment.

Researchers have studied people who lived in Western and Eastern cultures; and concluded that Western cultures, for example, such as North American and West European cultures are more independent cultures. The individuals in the Western society tend to look only for positive attributes and strive for goals which puts them ahead of others. Western cultures are more goal-oriented for individualism, instead of being more collective for the people to advance ahead. This is due to the culture that Westerners impart and the whole culture – concept is to compete or out-beat another individual to advance their own well-being. The independent cultures create 'selves' to be concerned about their own individual thoughts and feelings. Whereas Eastern cultures such as those of Japan, Asian, Africa, Latin American, and South Europe are interdependent cultures. *The culture is very different in eastern cultures, because their culture focuses on the collective, instead of an individual.* For example, Japanese culture focuses heavily on self-criticism and trying to improve themselves to become better individuals. It is believed that they really depend on negative feedback and aspects of themselves, so that they can advance and help the entire culture as well as society. The entire objective is to maintain harmony and balance within society. Hence, Japan's conceptual self is very different compared to Western culture due to the environment and standards that each culture upholds. Eastern cultures are considered as interdependent because they only 'think and feel for others' instead of thinking about 'themselves'. Further, studies are believed to show an important relationship between the 'self' and how cultures can play a major role in shaping the 'self and self-concept'.

Moreover, the 'self' is shaped by the 'social interactions as well as physical environments'. The individuals' social interaction takes place when they are in a specific culture or society. When individuals grow up in a certain culture, they get influenced by societal norms to follow a specific standard which their culture believes in. This is why culture is important to explore how the 'self' develops and changes. *Thus, while Western cultures are more 'self-absorbed' in their own lives, Eastern cultures are 'less self-absorbed' because of the reason 'they cherish the*

collective'. The 'self' is dynamic as well as complex and it will change or conform to whatever social influence it is exposed to. It is continuously dynamic, because it always looks for reasons to not be damaged. The 'self', in any culture, looks out for its well-being and tries to avoid threats to the maximum possible extent. This can be elaborately understood through the 'evolutionary psychology concept called survival of the fittest'.

Philosophical view of 'self' seeks to describe the essential qualities which constitute a person's uniqueness or essential being. There have been various approaches to interpret such qualities. The 'self' can be considered as the source of consciousness, an element responsible for individual's thoughts and actions which endures and unifies consciousness over time.

The religious views of 'self' differ widely. 'Self' is considered as a complex phenomenon and subject in many systems of 'spirituality'. Two types of 'self' are usually considered: (a) the 'self', *i.e.*, 'the ego', also called the learned, superficial 'self of mind and body', an egoistic creation; and (b) the 'self' which is sometimes called the "true self", the "observing self", or the "witness".

A description of spirituality is the self's search for "ultimate meaning" through an independent understanding of the sacred. Another definition of spiritual identity is: *"A persistent sense of self that addresses ultimate questions about the nature, purpose, and meaning of life, resulting in behaviours that are similar or in agreement with the individual's core values. Spiritual identity becomes visible when the values of a culture is found by individuals in their own life-time. There can be various types of 'spiritual self' because it is determined by one's life-experiences."*

Concept of "Self" in 'Confucianism': The concept of 'self' has been interpreted in different cultures all over the world. In fact, each of the conceptions of 'self' thus produced can be viewed in different perspectives. Perhaps, the diversity of conceptions needs to be understood with flexible thoughts.

There are deeply held convictions of the 'nature of self' which is determined by one's place in the larger context, such as family and society. Western thinking of self seems self-oriented. *But Ames, a well-known writer on Confucian thought, writes:*

"It is often said that the Western conception of self is "individualistic", perhaps excessively so. But insofar as this refers to the obvious, namely the physical discernibly of individual human beings and some rudimentary awareness that "I feel this and you don't" (and vice versa), it is hard to understand what all the fuzz is about. How could people not be individualistic?"

The idea of 'self' in *'Confucian-thought'* is identical with the spirit of service-above-self, where every spontaneous impulse is rejected as selfishness. In Confucianism, the quest for the

human self, the search for what it is to be human in terms of substance or no-substance, in terms of spirit or body, does not exist. Personality, as such is not seen as inherently existing, but as something that is being formed through upbringing and environment. In that, the human being is seen as a social being. (Some have even used the term: Social animal). Accordingly, every person is born with four beginnings, which do not encapsulate a concept of self as yet, but which together, if put in the Western framework of thinking, may be called 'pre-self', or 'potential-self'.

Personality, in the Confucian perception, is an achieved state of moral excellence rather than a given human condition. However, such achieved personality, or self, is not to be understood as primarily an individual entity, as would be the tendency in Western thinking. The concept of 'self' also is deeply embedded within the family and society, and it is only in that context that the self comes to be what it is.

Confucius was not concerned with metaphysical speculation on good and evil, or with fates of the beyond, or with the nature of the human being "in itself". He was concerned primarily with human happiness in the 'here and now'. Confucius was concerned with conviction, not with rank or titles. *For Confucius, any man was a "gentleman" if his conduct were noble and unselfish.* 'Self' is considered as something that has to be developed, rather than something that is inherently given.

The Confucian sense of 'self' is very different from that of Western understanding of the same issue. The self is the true "formless self" only when it awakens to itself. The formless-self includes self-awareness and true 'self' which have neither a beginning nor an ending.

The concept of 'self' in Confucianism is closely linked with all those areas that the virtues stand for. However, the concept of 'self' in Confucianism is a topic that is relatively undeveloped. Whether this is because of difficulties in approach, complexity of the issue itself, or because of the still existing gap between Western and Eastern philosophical thinking. *It seems that the issue of "who am I" is an important one.*

UNDERSTANDING TERMS IN CONCEPT OF 'SELF'

The concept of "self" contains various words or terms which need to be understood. These are:

- Self-concept — an organized collection of beliefs about the self.
- Actual self — qualities which people think the actually possess.
- Ideal self — qualities people would like to have.
- Ought self — qualities people think they should possess.

- Actual self vs. Ideal Self — emotional condition like disappointment, unhappiness or sadness, etc.

- Possible consequence includes depression, etc.

- Actual self vs. ought self-emotional condition like anxiety, etc.; possible consequence includes anxiety-related disorders, etc.

- Individualism (self-concept).

- Interdependent — viewing selves' as more connected to others.

- Possible selves — one's awareness or insight about the type of person one might become in the future.

- Self-discrepancy — a mismatch between the self-perceptions that make up the actual self, ideal self, and ought self.

- Self-schemas — beliefs or ideas about self.

- Self-esteem — one's overall assessment of one's worth as a person.

- Self-attributions — inferences people draw about the causes of their own behaviour.

- Self-enhancement — desire to maintain positive feelings about oneself.

- Self-serving bias — tendency to attribute one's successes to personal factors and failures to situational factors.

- Self-handicapping — tendency to sabotage one's performance to provide an excuse for possible failure.

- Self-regulation — process of controlling one's behaviour.

- Self-efficacy — one's belief about one's ability to perform which should lead to expected outcomes

- Self-defeating behaviours — intentional actions that thwart a person's self-interest.

- Self-monitoring — degree to which people control the impressions they made on others.

Psychologically, the term 'self-concept' refers to 'how someone thinks about, evaluates or perceives himself/herself. *To be aware of oneself is to have a concept of oneself.*

According to an expert Baumeister (1999), following is the definition of self-concept: -

"The individual's belief about himself or herself, including the person's attributes and who and what the self is".

The self-concept is an important term for both social and humanistic psychology. The concept of self has two aspects: (1) existing-self; and (2) categorical-self.

(1) *Existential-self:* This is the most elementary part of the 'self-scheme or self-concept', *i.e.*, 'the sense of being separate and distinct from others and the alertness or awareness of the constancy of the self'. For example, in childhood stage, persons realize that they exist as a separate entity from others and that they continue to exist over time and space. The mindfulness of the 'existential-self' starts in very young age — at two to three months age and ascends in part due to the connections with the world. For example, the child smiles and someone smiles back, or the child touches and moves a toy-car.

(2) *Categorical-self:* Having understood that a person exists as a separate feeling entity, gradually he or she becomes conscious or mindful that he or she is also a human being in this world. The 'self' also can be categorized like age, gender, size or ability. The first two categories to be practiced are age, *i.e.*, for example, "my age is 5 or 6" and "my gender is female".

Self-description, in life ahead, also refers to internal mental and emotional qualities, comparative evaluations and to how others perceive.

There are three components in 'self-concept': (1) the view a person one has to oneself; (2) quantum of value one places on himself or herself (i.e., 'self-esteem or self-worth'); and (3) what a person really wishes to be like… (ideal-self).

Though the words are similar, one should not get confused with Self-awareness, Self-consciousness, Self-esteem, Self-image, or Self-perception.

One's self-perception is defined by one's self-concept, self-knowledge, self-esteem, as well as social-self. An individual's *self-concept (also called self-construction, self-identity, self-perspective or self-structure)* is a collection of **'beliefs'** about oneself. Generally, self-concept embodies the answer to "Who am I?"

An individual's self-concept is made up of self-schemas, and their past, present, and future selves.

Self-concept is distinguishable from 'self-awareness', which refers to the extent to which self-knowledge is defined, consistent, and currently applicable to one's attitudes and dispositions. Self-concept also differs from self-esteem; and it is a cognitive or descriptive component of one's self (*e.g.*, *"I am a fast runner"*), while self-esteem is evaluative and opinionated (*e.g.*, *"I feel good about being a fast runner"*).

Self-concept is made up of one's self-schemas, and interacts with self-esteem, self-knowledge, and the social self to form the self as whole. It includes the past, present, and future selves, where future selves (or possible selves) represent individuals' ideas of 'what they might

become, what they would like to become, or what they are afraid of becoming'. Possible selves may function as incentives for certain behaviour.

Actually, every individual strives to reach an "ideal self". The 'self-categorization theory', states that the self-concept consists of two "levels" — (1) personal identity level and (2) social level. In other words, one's self-evaluation relies on 'self-perceptions and how others perceive them'. Self-concept can alternate quickly between the personal and social identity. For example, children and adolescents begin integrating social identity into their own self-concept in primary-school by assessing their position among peers. By age 5 or 7, acceptance from peers significantly affects children's self-concept, affecting their behaviour and academic achievement.

According to well-known psychologist Carl Rogers, self-concept has three different components and they are:-

1. The view you have of yourself (Self-image);

2. How much value you place on yourself (Self-esteem or self-worth); and

3. What you wish you were really like (Ideal self).

Self-image (how you see yourself): A person's self-image is affected by many factors, like parental influences, friends, the media etc. Answers to the question "Who Am I?" probably include the following four types:-

1. **Personal traits:** These are the third dimension of our self-descriptions. "I'm impulsive…I'm generous…I tend to worry a lot", etc.

2. **Existential statements (abstract ones):** These can range from "I'm a child of the universe" to "I'm a human being" to "I'm a spiritual being"…etc.

Typically, young people describe themselves more in terms of personal traits, whereas older people feel definite to a greater extent by their social roles.

3. **Physical description:** I'm tall, have blue eyes…etc.

4. **Social roles:** We are all social beings whose behaviour is shaped to some extent by the roles we play. Such roles as student, housewife, or member of the football team not only help others to recognize us but also help us to know what is expected of us in various situations.

Self-Awareness: *Self-awareness is an awareness of the self, with the self-being what makes one's identity unique; and the unique components include thoughts, experiences, and abilities.*

According to eminent psychologist Daniel Goleman, self-awareness is 'knowing one's internal states, preference, resources, and intuitions." This definition places more emphasis on the ability to monitor our inner world, our thoughts and emotions as they arise. Self-awareness

allowing us to be aware of 'self' is the key basis to emotional intelligence. The ability to monitor our emotions and thoughts from moment to moment is key to understanding ourselves better, being at peace with who we are and proactively managing our thoughts, emotions, and behaviours.

This study found that the self-reflection, insight, and mindfulness aspects of self-awareness can lead to benefits such as becoming a more accepting person, while the rumination and mindfulness aspects can lead to emotional burdens. *'Self-awareness is the strongest predictor of overall success'.* "Self-awareness might be a tool to decrease the negative impact of hindering self-focused attention on self-efficacy". Being self-aware about all aspects of one's thoughts is crucial, rather than being aware of the current emotion one is feeling. The tremendous benefits of '*high self-awareness*' can be felt by anyone who puts time towards it.

Ways to promote self-awareness include:- (a) spending some time with oneself, such as reading, writing, meditating, and connecting with yourself; (b) practicing mindfulness, *i.e.*, "paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally."; (c) keeping a journal, *i.e.*, writing not only helps us to process our thoughts, but also makes us feel connected and at peace with ourselves; (d) practicing to be a good listener, *i.e.*, being present and paying attention to other people's emotions, body movement, and language. It is about showing empathy and understanding without constantly evaluating or judging; and (e) gaining a different perspective to see a fuller picture of ourselves.

PRESENT AND IDEAL SELVES

The perception individuals possess about their past or future selves' relates to their own mindsets. People have a tendency to maintain a positive self-evaluation by distancing themselves from their negative self and paying more attention to their positive one. In addition, people have a tendency to perceive the past self less favourably (*e.g.*, "I'm better than I used to be") and the future 'self' more positively (*e.g.*, "I will be better than I am now").

Ideal Self (what you'd like to be): If there is a mismatch between how you see yourself (*e.g.*, your self-image) and what you'd like to be (*e.g.*, your ideal-self) then, this is likely to affect how much you value yourself. A person's ideal self may not be consistent with what actually happens in life. Hence, a difference may exist between a person's ideal self and actual experience. This is known as incongruence. Where a person's ideal self and actual experience are similar, a state of congruence exists. Rarely, if ever does a total state of congruence exist; all people experience a certain amount of incongruence. The development of congruence is dependent on unconditional positive regard. For a person to achieve self-actualization, they must be in a state of resemblance or congruence. There are major factors which influence its development, namely, the ways in which others react to us, how we think we compare to others, and our social roles (*i.e.*, the extent to which we identify with other people.

The present self is always on the lookout to maximize pleasure right now, while the future self is the one setting up goals and who help to maintain long term happiness. As these two *perspectives* are often conflicting, the two selves are fighting an eternal (and often uneven) battle.

While the present self, for example, is the one that makes a person to skip the morning exercise or purchase some sweets, the future self, on the other side, is responsible for setting up goals such as making a good career, being able to live a healthy life, etc.

The present self easily surpasses the future self, because the reward system is considered as not very well-organized at discounting the present value of future rewards, which makes the reward system favour immediate rewards over future satisfaction or enjoyment.

The ideal-self is the person who he or she 'want to be'. Our 'future/ought self is our understanding of what others desire us to be and do'. There is a relation or connection between the numerous selves — *actual, ideal and ought*. The ideal and ought selves are our "guides" or standards that we use to organize data and motivate action. The motivational properties of these selves are related to the specific emotions which are associated with the difference between the actual self and the ideal or ought self. For example, when our actual self does not align with our ideal self, we naturally feel disappointed or sad. *When actual self does not match with ought self, often one may feel guilty or anxious*. Such inconsistency between the actual and ideal selves can have serious consequences.

Research studies indicate that 'procrastinators have a greater actual-ought self inconsistency compared to non-procrastinators'.

The ideal-self is a perfect or flawless version of oneself created out of what has been learned from life-experiences, the demands of society and what has been inspiring as role models. *For example, your parents are medical doctors who are respected and admired in the community, and experience shows that in order to be happy, one need to be smart and have a high-paying job. The ideal-self might be someone who excels in mathematics, spends a lot of time studying, and does not get uneasy at the sight of blood. If the real-self is far from this idealized image, then there may be a feeling of dissatisfaction and failure in life.*

SELF-EFFICACY

Self-Efficacy is a person's belief that he or she will be able to achieve a specific task.

According to well-known psychologist, Bandura 'self-efficacy' is "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations".

Self-efficacy determines:-

- *How motivated a person is to take on a task?*

- *The amount of effort that one is willing to put into the achievement of a task.*

- *For how long a person will keep it up in the face of adversity.*

- *Whether a person will ultimately succeed in achieving the task.*

Self-efficacy is task and situation-specific.

For example, one may have high levels of self-efficacy when it comes to solving mathematical problems; medium levels of self-efficacy when it comes to giving presentations at work; and low levels of self-efficacy when it comes to doing anything athletic.

Subsequently, what can be done if a person sets goals with low self-efficacy. The answer is simple: *'one has to work on increasing self-efficacy'*. According to prominent psychologist Bandura, self-efficacy beliefs can be developed on the basis of interpreting the input received from following four sources:-

1. Mastery

2. Modelling

3. Persuasion

4. Physiological factors.

It means that if self-efficacy has to be increased in any area, one has to find a way to work with the above four sources.

The four sources are explained as follows: -

1st source of self-efficacy – 'mastery': If a person has performed a certain type of task well in the past, the person is likely to have a strong belief of achieving that type of task again in the future also.

In order to increase this source of self-efficacy, one has to carry out the following:

- Remembering the past successes. Ideally, a person may have past successes with goals as a basis that are similar to the goal that one is currently working on. However, just remembering how success was achieved in spite of difficulties, at first thought, can be helpful.

- Setting goals that have an element of challenge in them but which are also realistic and attainable.

- If there was failure in a certain type of task in the past, when it is time to work on that sort of task again, one has to set smaller goals for oneself and work on them slowly, making sure to recognize even small successes.

- While working on one's goal, it has to be remembered that committing some mistakes and experiencing setbacks along the way is normal.

2nd source of self-efficacy – 'modelling': The second source of self-efficacy is carefully observing others performing the task that oneself desires to succeed at. One can be influenced by observing 'what others are doing'.

As there is a belief that *"if they can do it, I can do it"*, an individual has to perceive that the people who are succeeding in achieving the goal are also similar to oneself. Ideally, one may be able to find role models within one's circle of friends or acquaintances. However, one need not have to know someone — or even be near them — to model them.

The idea is to find someone who will make oneself think as follows: -

"This person is a lot like me, and he was able to do it. Hey, I bet I can also do it".

3rd Source of self-efficacy – 'social persuasion': Social persuasion is the third source of self-efficacy. What others tell you about your ability to achieve a certain task matter? Look for people who will encourage you to go after your dreams and who will cheer you on as you strive to achieve your goals.

At the same time, one has to stay away from those who try to rain on your parade. People who try to convince that you don't have what it takes to achieve your goals will have a negative impact on the self-efficacy. If you don't currently have a supportive network, then try daily affirmations and journaling to remind yourself that you can succeed.

4th Source of self-efficacy – 'physiological factors': The emotional state that you're in when it's time to act on your goals will affect your self-efficacy. But what's also important is what you tell yourself about you're feeling.

For example, everyone gets a little nervous when they are about to try something new. One can interpret this nervousness in the following two ways:

    (a) It can be interpreted as a sign of excitement at the prospect of stepping outside of one's comfort-zone. This excitement will encourage to keep moving forward.

    (b) However, if you interpret the nervousness as anxiety and fear, it's likely that you'll conclude that it is best 'not to proceed'.

Positive moods increase feelings of self-efficacy, while negative moods reduce it. One has to strive to put oneself in moods that will boost the self-efficacy by managing stress and also by talking to oneself that 'it is possible make efforts to achieve the goals'.