

## FOUNDATIONS OF SELF

### Introduction: Nature of Self and Personality

Self and personality refer to the characteristic ways in which individuals define their existence and organise their experiences.

While the concept of self deals with how we perceive and understand ourselves, personality refers to the relatively stable patterns of behaviour, thought, and emotion that characterise an individual.

These two concepts are closely related, with the self forming the core of personality. Understanding them enables us to appreciate both our uniqueness and our similarities with others, and helps explain why individuals behave differently in similar situations yet maintain consistency across time.

### Concept of Self

The self may be understood as the totality of an individual's conscious experiences, ideas, thoughts, and feelings about oneself. It is not present at birth; rather, it develops gradually as the child grows and interacts with the environment.

Significant others such as parents, teachers, and peers play an important role in shaping the self. The structure of the self is dynamic and modifiable, meaning that it evolves through experiences and social interactions. Thus, the self is both constructed and reconstructed over time.

### Personal and Social Identity

An individual's self includes both personal and social identities. Personal identity consists of attributes that distinguish a person from others, such as name, abilities, traits, and beliefs. Social identity, on the other hand, is derived from membership in social or cultural groups, such as religion, caste, or region.

Together, these identities shape how individuals represent themselves mentally and interact with the world. The integration of personal uniqueness and social belonging forms a comprehensive sense of self.

### Self as Subject and Object

The self has a dual nature—it can function both as a subject and as an object. As a subject, the self is the knower or the active agent that experiences and interprets the world. As an object, the self is something that can be observed, evaluated, and reflected upon.

For example, when a person says, "I know who I am," the self is both the knower and the known. This dual status highlights the reflexive nature of human consciousness.

### Kinds of Self

The self develops in different forms through interaction with biological and socio-cultural environments. The biological self originates from basic physiological needs, such as hunger and comfort.

As development progresses, the personal self emerges, focusing on individual concerns like achievement, responsibility, and personal freedom.

Simultaneously, the social self develops in relation to others and emphasises cooperation, relationships, and belongingness. The balance between personal and social self is essential for effective functioning.

### Cognitive and Behavioural Aspects of Self

#### Self-Concept

Self-concept refers to the way individuals perceive their own abilities, traits, and characteristics. It may be positive or negative and can vary across different domains such as academic ability, social competence, or physical appearance.

It is not always easy to assess self-concept directly; therefore, it is often measured through self-reports. A well-defined self-concept contributes to stability in behaviour and identity.

#### Self-Esteem

Self-esteem involves the value judgment individuals make about themselves. It reflects how much they feel worthy, capable, and competent. Self-esteem develops early in life and becomes more refined with age.

Children typically form self-esteem in areas such as academic competence, social relationships, physical ability, and appearance. High self-esteem is associated

with better performance, social acceptance, and emotional well-being, whereas low self-esteem is linked with anxiety, depression, and antisocial tendencies. Parenting style plays a crucial role, with warm and supportive environments fostering higher self-esteem.

self-observation, self-instruction, and self-reinforcement help in improving self-regulation.

Cultural practices like fasting and discipline also contribute to developing self-control, reflecting the role of socio-cultural influences.



## **SELF-REGULATION, CULTURE, AND PERSONALITY**

### **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to control events and achieve desired outcomes. Rooted in Bandura's social learning theory, it influences the choices people make, the effort they invest, and their persistence in the face of challenges.

Individuals with high self-efficacy are confident, proactive, and less fearful, whereas those with low self-efficacy may feel helpless and avoid difficult tasks. It can be developed through positive experiences, encouragement, and observing successful role models.

### **Self-Regulation**

Self-regulation is the ability to organise, monitor, and control one's own behaviour. It involves adjusting behaviour according to situational demands and exercising control over impulses.

A key component of self-regulation is self-control, which enables individuals to delay gratification and work towards long-term goals. Techniques such as

### **Culture and Self**

The nature of the self is significantly influenced by cultural context. In Western cultures, the self is viewed as independent, with clear boundaries separating the individual from others.

In contrast, the Indian perspective emphasises interdependence, where the self is closely connected with family and society. The boundaries between self and others are fluid, allowing for expansion and contraction depending on the situation. Thus, Western cultures are often described as individualistic, while Indian and many Asian cultures are collectivistic.

### **Concept of Personality**

Personality refers to the unique and relatively stable patterns of behaviour, thoughts, and emotions that characterise an individual.

The term originates from the Latin word *persona*, meaning a mask used in theatre. However, in psychology, personality goes beyond outward appearance and includes internal processes. It reflects consistency in behaviour across situations while also allowing for adaptability.

### **Characteristics of Personality**

Personality possesses several important features. It includes both physical and psychological components, making it a comprehensive construct. It is unique to each individual, leading to differences in behaviour.

While personality shows relative stability over time, it is also dynamic and capable of change in response to situational demands. This adaptability enables individuals to function effectively in varying environments.

### **Personality-Related Terms**

Several related concepts help clarify the meaning of personality. Temperament refers to biologically based

patterns of reaction. Traits are stable behavioural tendencies, while dispositions indicate general tendencies to respond.

Character represents the overall pattern of behaviour, habits are learned behaviours, and values are guiding principles that influence actions. These terms together enrich the understanding of personality.

## APPROACHES TO PERSONALITY

### Type Approaches

Type approaches classify individuals into broad categories based on behavioural patterns. Early classifications include Hippocrates' four humours and the Indian concepts of tridosha and triguna. Sheldon's body types and Jung's introversion–extraversion typology further expanded this approach.

Modern classifications such as Type A and Type B personalities link behaviour to health outcomes. However, these approaches are often criticised for being overly simplistic and not capturing the complexity of human behaviour.

### Trait Approaches

Trait theories focus on identifying stable psychological characteristics that differentiate individuals. Traits are relatively enduring, consistent across situations, and vary in intensity among individuals.

### Allport's Theory

Allport categorised traits into cardinal, central, and secondary. Cardinal traits dominate a person's life, central traits represent general characteristics, and secondary traits are situation-specific preferences.

### Cattell's Theory

Cattell used factor analysis to identify 16 source traits that form the basic structure of personality. He also developed the 16PF questionnaire for assessment.

### Eysenck's Theory

Eysenck proposed three major dimensions of personality: neuroticism, extraversion, and psychoticism.

These dimensions are biologically based and explain major behavioural tendencies.

### Five-Factor Model

The Big Five model includes openness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness. It is widely accepted for its empirical support and cross-cultural applicability.

### Psychodynamic Approach (Freud)

Freud's theory emphasises unconscious processes and internal conflicts. He proposed three levels of consciousness: conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. Personality structure consists of id (instinctual desires), ego (reality-oriented mediator), and superego (moral conscience). Defence mechanisms such as repression and rationalisation help manage anxiety. Freud also outlined psychosexual stages of development, suggesting that early experiences shape personality.



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### Post-Freudian Developments

Later theorists expanded Freud's ideas. Jung introduced the concept of collective unconscious and archetypes. Horney emphasised social relationships and basic anxiety.

Adler focused on goals and inferiority complex, while Fromm highlighted social influences and human needs.

Erikson proposed a lifespan approach, stressing identity development at different stages.

### **Behavioural Approach**

The behavioural approach explains personality in terms of learned responses to environmental stimuli. It emphasises conditioning and reinforcement as key mechanisms.

According to this view, personality develops through interaction with the environment, and behaviour can be modified through learning principles.

### **Cultural Approach**

This approach highlights the role of ecological and cultural factors in shaping personality. Economic conditions, social structures, and child-rearing practices influence behaviour, values, and abilities. Personality is thus seen as a product of cultural context and environmental demands.

