CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to Shyness

Humans experience shyness in varying degrees and differently in different social situations. Shyness is a feeling experienced as apprehensiveness or lack of confidence in social interactions with others. It is most likely to occur during unfamiliar situations, hindering a person from achieving the best and disrupting his/her interpersonal relationships. They tend to be slow to warm up in social situations and have limited comfort zone.

1.2 Definitions for Shyness

- Shyness is defined “as a feeling of discomfort or inhibition in social or interpersonal situations. It keeps one from pursuing their goals - academic, personal, or occupational” (Cheek & Buss, 1981, Henderson & Zimbardo, 1998; Van Ameringen et al., 1998).


- “Shyness is a stable dispositional trait describing an anxious self-preoccupation and behavioural inhibition in social contexts due to prospects of interpersonal evaluation” (Amico et al., 2004). Durum (2007) described “Shyness as a character, trait, an attitude, or a state of inhibition”.

- Leary (1986), stated shyness to be totally a social phenomenon in terms of both social anxiety and inhibition and defines shyness to be an “affective-behavioural syndrome characterized by social anxiety and interpersonal inhibition which results from the anticipation or presence of others’ interpersonal evaluation”. It also involves unlikeable physiological arousal, and threat of psychological harm (Leary & Kowalski, 1995).
• Zimbardo (1982), considers shyness as “a heightened state of individuation characterized by excessive egocentric preoccupation and over concern with social evaluation, with the consequence that the shy person inhibits, withdraws, avoids, and escapes”.

• Carver and Scheier (1986), define “shyness in self-regulation terms, with unfavourable social outcome expectancies leading to disengagement in task efforts”.

• Rickman and Davidson (1994), defined “shyness as a mixture of genetics, socialization, and modelling by an adult caregiver”. Shyness may be viewed as a tendency to be self-conscious, uncomfortable, and anxious upon an initial interaction (Theall-Honey, Schmidt, 2006; Manning & Ray,1993). “Shyness has been viewed as a cognitive dysfunction, where person feels responsible for social failures” (Bruch, Pearl, 1995; Miller & Coll, 2007).

• Shyness shows overlap with such related concepts as behavioural inhibition, social anxiety, Social phobia, social withdrawal, and social reticence (Crozier, 2000). Each of these constructs shares similarities. Behavioural inhibition means biologically based tendency towards wariness when exposed to novelty (Kagan 1997), and anxious-solitude means social wariness showed specifically in familiar peer contexts (Gazelle & Ladd 2003).

Shyness is at times misunderstood for social anxiety and Phobia. However it is different from both concepts.

• Social anxiety is defined “as an affective, cognitive experience aroused by anticipation of possible evaluation of others” (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). The author focuses on feelings of arousal centring on communications with others.

“Social phobia is a continuous marked fear of one or more situations exposed to possible scrutiny and the act of being humiliated or embarrassed by others” (Association, 1994).

1.3 Concept of Shyness through life span:

The concept of shyness is stable in infancy to toddlerhood and visible in early to middle childhood and many factors play a crucial role in the stability of shyness
(Asendorpf, 1990; Degnan et al., 2008; Pedlow et al., 1993). One can observe many developmental shifts across time. The way young children express feelings are more undifferentiated (Mathiesen & Sanson, 2000) and with formal childcare and education they gradually develop reaction ‘blue prints” to newer social circumstances which bring about a change in stabilizing behaviour among people or situations (Rubin et al., 2006). For a shy child, different age periods may bring different expressions and challenges (Rubin et al., 2009), thus making the effects of shyness dependent on the age period.

Maladjustment in the developing stages of an individual is linked with shyness (Rubin & Coplan, 2010). Shy children mutually acting as best friends tend to be perceived as sociable and popular by peers (Coplan et al., 2009), also, such children avoid social interactions and do not spend time in social engagement with peers (Rubin, Wojswlawowicz, et al., 2006), thereby, missing a chance to acquire important social, socio-cognitive and socio-communicative skills (Rubin et al., 2006), resulting in peer rejection, victimization and poor social skills in later development (Gazelle & Ladd, 2003; Oh et al., 2008; Perren & Alsaker, 2006).

The roots of poor romantic and sexual relationships, low self-esteem, and low subjective wellbeing in middle adulthood can be traced to shyness in adolescence whereas, this has not been found for childhood shyness (Kerr, 2000).

Caspi, Elder and Bem (1998), found association between shyness in childhood and coping strategies in adulthood. Buss (1986), suggests adolescent shyness to be deeply rooted in self-conscious which may appear during middle childhood or early adolescence (Bruch et al., 1986; Buss, 1980; Buss, 1986; Schmidt & Robinson, 1992), and stimulated at the time of puberty (Cheek, Carpentieri, Smith, Rierdan, & Koff, 1986).

A few studies reasoning out selection of friends on the basis of similarity of shyness show that shy or withdrawn children tend to behave similarly in socially fearful situations (Gazelle & Spangler, 2007; Güroglu, Van Lieshout, Haselager & Scholte, 2007; Haselager, Hartup, Van Lieshout, & Riksen-Walraven, 1998; Rubin, Wojswlawowicz, Rose-Krasnor, Booth-LaForce, & Burgess, 2006); children’s peer group tend to be similar in shyness-sensitivity (Chen, Chen, & Kaspar, 2001) and
youths with withdrawn characteristics chose individuals with such characteristics as friends (Güroglu et al., 2007).

Shy behaviour in individuals have been related to a desire for social approval on one hand and fear of negative evaluation and rejection on the other (Jackson, Towson, & Narduzzi, 1997; Jones et al., 1986; Leary & Kowalski, 1993; Miller, 1995; Pilkonis, 1977; Watson & Friend, 1969). It is this fear of social evaluation that is an important factor to dispositional shyness (Asendorpf, 1987), elicit shyness, and low self-esteem in early adolescence (Cheek & Melchior, 1990; Crozier, 1995; Kemple, 1995; Schmidt & Robinson, 1992; Smith & Betz, 2002).

Research has association between shyness and internalizing problems later in life (Letcher et al., 2009; Karevold et al., 2012).

1. Bohlin and hagekull (2009), found that shyness in infancy predicted symptoms of social anxiety and depression at age of 21.

2. Shy children who have a strong wish and urge to interact tend to withdraw from doing so as they are very nervous and socially afraid to approach (Crozier, 1995).

3. Shy children with avoidance motivational conflict become spectators to avoid initiating social contacts (Coplan, Prakash, O’Neil, & Armer, 2004; Coplan, DeBow, Schneider & Graham, 2009).

4. Such individuals are at risk of adjustment difficulties, internalizing problems like loneliness, social anxiety, negative self-regard (Findlay, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009; Rubin, Chen, McDougall, Bowker, & McKinnon, 1995), peer rejection and exclusion (Coplan, Arbeau, & Armer, 2008; Gazelle & Ladd, 2003).

5. These children are often perceived as anxious by their teachers (Coplan & Rubin, 2010), and are more socially competent in terms of cooperation and self-restraint compared to non-anxious children (Rudasill & Konold, 2008).

6. Such children are observed to be attentive, avoid conflicts and tend to develop intimate, close relationships with one or two friends (Bosacki, Coplan, Rose-Krasnor & Hughes, 2011).
7. Teachers also perceived shy children as less socially competent in areas of assertiveness (Bosacki et al., 2011.; Rudasill & Konold, 2008).

8. In terms of success, Hughes and Coplan (2010), found that teachers tended to rate shy children as less academically competent, though they showed better academic performance, as based on standardized test scores.

1.4. Shyness and Parenting styles:

Studies showing relationship between parenting styles and its effect on children and adolescent disorders including shyness:

1. Huang (1999), suggests family communication inculcates positive effects on children.

2. Kelly et al. (2002), opines weaker communication leads to shy and reticent behaviour in children. They are reluctant to talk in family with others around. His research suggests that parents who are less intimate or open nurture shyness and anxiety in their children.

3. Overprotective parents, unconsciously though, tend to discourage children from exploring novel situation by exercising significant control and supervision over a child’s activities and behaviour (Rubin et al., 2002), thereby exacerbating links to shyness and negative results

4. Warm and supporting parenting styles serve as protective roles in the lives of shy children (Coplan et al., 2008; Degnan, Henderson, Fox & Rubin, 2008; Hane, Cheah, Rubin & Fox, 2008).

5. Authoritarian parenting styles leads to irritability, shyness and reticent behaviour in children (Eastburg and Johnson, 1990). On similar lines Coplan et al., (2004), evidenced authoritative parenting has negative significant relationships with children’s shyness and the cause of shyness may be caregivers’ inconsistency and unpredictability in responding to children’s needs (Chen, 2012a).
1.5 Biological correlates of shyness:

Researchers have suggested that biological elements may play a role in shyness (Kagan, 1997; Marshall & Stevenson-Hinde, 2005). Children with extreme shyness display increased heart rate, increased levels of salivary cortisol and patterns of EEG responses due to greater right frontal activation (Fox, Henderson, Rubin, Calkins & Schmidt, 2001; Henderson, Marshall, Fox & Rubin, 2004; Kagan, Reznick & Snidman, 1988; Schmidt & Tasker, 2000). Due to this, children with extreme shyness show intense reactions to stressful situations. Individual differences in shyness are known to be related to human psychopathology (Henderson, 2010) and it may due to abnormality in different neural systems (Beaton et al., 2008). Brain imaging studies have shown the role of frontal cortex and forebrain limbic areas in shyness. Task-dependent fMRI studies have reported greater amygdalar activation in response to novel faces in shy adults (Schwartz et al., 2003), while processing emotional faces, increased inferior frontal and insular activation was observed in shy compared to non-shy subjects (Beaton et al., 2010).

The aspect of shyness in an individual rests upon a combination of genetic and environmental factors. One can observe physiological differences in shy and non-shy individuals (Theall-Honey, Schmidt, 2006; Rickman & Davidson, 1994). These differences can be documented through observation of external behaviour like closed body posture and decreased eye contact (Garcia, et al., 1991), that has resulted due to internal discomfort and this can impact future functioning of success, expressing oneself socially, loneliness, anxiety and/or depression (Teglasi & Hoffman, 1992; Garcia, et al., 1991). These culmination of both internal and external experiences induce negative self-talk, discomfort in physiological sensations, and behavioral inhibition that can influence an entire college experience (Booth, Bartlett & Bothnsack, 1992).

A study on social interaction and shyness suggests that shy individuals’ feelings and thoughts were thought to be abnormal by the non-shy group (Maddux, Norton & Leary, 1988), and that somatic symptoms for shyness, social anxiety or phobic adults were similar (Leary & Kowalski, 1995; Turner et al., 1990; Zimbardo, 1977). Also, shy adolescent reported frequent negative thoughts, including self-blame for failures. Therefore summarizing that shyness could be triggered by different
arousal cues and observed at different levels of cognitive, affective, physiological or behavioural aspects (Henderson & Zimbardo, 1998).

**Cognitive Features of shyness**

Cognitive features include worry, shameful and unacceptable behavior, showing empathetic behavior, evaluation of interpersonal situations, maladaptive attributes. (Beidel et al., 1985; Carducci & Zimbardo, 1995; Cheek & Briggs, 1982; Zimbardo, 1977)

**Affective features**

Affective features of shyness includes high levels of social anxiety, shame, guilt, depression and resentment and levels of shame and anger (Henderson & Zimbardo, 1998), embarrassment (Crozier & Russell, 1992). Speak less in social gathering or avoid initiating a conversation, avoid eye contacts, show nervous mannerisms, and less facial expressions (Leary & Kowalski, 1995; Turner & Beidel, 1989; Zimbardo, 1977)

Research literature suggests shyness to have significant effect and meaning for personal well-being and social adjustment during emerging adulthood when meeting different types of unknown peer groups. Studies showed that a group of children who were extremely nervous during the first 3 years of life became introverted and cautious as young adults (Kagan & Moss, 1962). Also, at the age of 3, children who had high levels of shyness scored low in impulsivity, aggression, risk taking and social potency (i.e., forceful, decisive, fond of influencing others and leadership roles (Caspi & Silva 1995), at age 18 and individuals who were hesitant to enter social settings in childhood avoided or were hesitant to enter new and unknown settings associated with the transition to adulthood.

Shyness is manifested by observation of social skills employed in both verbal and nonverbal communication behaviours. Nonverbally, shy individuals show high levels of agitation, low reaction to smile and are termed less friendly, assertive and relaxed (Heerey & Kring, 2007; Pilkonis, 1977), and their competence is reflected to be less in social skills which in-turn affect interpersonal relationships. The overall perception that shyness may negatively affect lives because of their inability to interact effectively negatively affect interpersonal and family interactions.
1.6. Shyness and Social skills:

Shy people have difficulty choosing and executing proper and straightforward actions in social situations (Crozier, 2001)

- During demanding social situations, shy people show certain behavioral problems such as anxious preoccupation and significantly heightened self-focused attention (Melchior & Cheek, 1990).

- Self-focusing in shy people reduces their cognitive capacity and makes it difficult to direct attention to the situation, intended actions, or other people (Eisenberg et al., 1998).

- Shy adults with low self efficacy cannot act appropriately in social situations and this may become an important handicap for them (Hill, 1989).

- Under demanding conditions, shy individuals become easily-aroused that they cannot handle the situation by planning and executing appropriate behavior (Eisenberg et al., 1998).

All of these characteristics may contribute in the development and the consequences of shyness (Asendorpf, 2008). Thus, shy individuals seem to depend on passive or avoidant strategies instead of effective behavioral strategies while facing social stressors. These coping strategies increase the negative consequences of shyness.

Consequences:

- Shy behaviour is described as reticent, silent, uncomfortable or overactive both by shys and observers (Zimbardo, 1982).

- Individuals are less visible or assertive at workplace and lesser to use resources for career-planning (Cheek & Buss, 1981).

- Show fewer verbal fluency, creativity and leadership skills when faced with evaluation (Cheek & Stahl, 1986).

- Conversation is always dominated with talks of immediate physical/social settings instead of themselves ending up with ambiguity in the continuation of conversation (Manning & Ray, 1993).
・ Genuine self-disclosure may lead to negative communications, thoughts and feelings about the self, which in turn increases inhibition (Henderson, 1992).

The consequences of shyness are deeply troubling:

Shyness is related to higher levels of anxiety (D’Souza, 2003). Shyness decreases the levels of happiness (Sreeshakumar, D’Souza & Nagalakshmi, 2007). Shyness is related to neurotic tendency and lower academic performance (D’Souza, Urs & James, 2000). Lowered self-esteem and decreased self-concept are observed in shy people (D’Souza, Singh, Basavarajappa, 1999). Shyness leads to increased fear (D’Souza, 2005; D’Souza, Urs & Ramaswamy, 2003).

1.7. Effects of Shyness in college life:

The most obvious departing milestone from parental attachment into a new independent experience is when children start college. It has clearly been identified that shyness has been the strongest in a person’s life (Parade, Leerkes & Blankson, 2010; Kandler, et.al. 2010). It is at this time emotional vulnerability and shyness intensify as the individual needs to satisfy the need to start new social networks and hence, shy individuals are generally at a social disadvantage, high levels of loneliness or depression and tend to involve in academic activities as compared to their non-shy counterparts (Henderson, Zimbardo & Rodino, 2011).

Research suggests that college dropout is most likely to occur within the first two years of college (Veenstra, 2009; Yazedjian et.al., 2009), and attending college brings forth a new set of responsibilities and stressors for students. These stressors may include anxiety and stress related to changing environments, changes in routine, new study habits, managing finances, and changes within interpersonal relationships (Dwyer & Cummings, 2001; Hicks & Miller, 2006).

1.8. Shyness and Friendship:

Shyness may be influenced by adolescents’ close friends. One is known as corumination, involves close friends discussing their problems together (Rose, 2002), and it might influence each other into becoming more depressed over time (Prinstein, Borelli, Cheah, Simon, & Aikins, 2005). Adolescents might also influence
each other’s shyness by sharing their fears, self-consciousness and desire to avoid specific social situations. Sharing fears might reinforce these fears, so they can feel better about their own shyness. In addition, interacting with shy friends might make one more shy over time, because there is no one to model or scaffold more effective social interactions.

Shyness has a negative effect on older adolescents’ peer relationships (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998), lesser social interactions (Henderson, 1997), leading to alienation because of low self-esteem (Block & Robins, 1993), in early adulthood. LaGreca and Hanison (2005), found lower scores on positive friendship quality and higher scores on negative friendship quality (Rubin et al., 2006), being associated with high levels of social anxiety; also anxiously withdrawn young adolescents and their friends perceived their friendship to be unsupportive and less in quality; they rated their friendship as lacking guidance, supportive, and intimate disclosure. Despite such findings, the presence of socially supportive friendships has proved to protect shy and anxiously withdrawn youth in adjustment difficulties (LaGreca & Hanison, 2005; Oh et al., 2008; Rubin et al., 2006).

Research suggests that a shy individual with low social support may experience greater levels of anxiety even though it protects negative effects to some extent (Panayiotou & Karekla, 2013). It could be so because shy individuals become more anxious about something potentially going wrong in social situations and hence could be related to the individuals' capacity to process information with self-regard.

Identity distress issues have been related to peer problems and social withdrawal (Hernandez et al. 2006), as shy individuals tend to be socially withdrawn due to the anxiety experienced in social situations. Gfellner and Cordoba (2011), also found significant relationship between identity distress and social support from friends. So, high shyness and low social support may be related to greater identity distress just as it is potentially related to rumination and anxiety.

1.9. Gender Differences in Shyness

The concept of shyness influences girls more than boys as it is more socially accepted and expected from girls (Bruch & Cheek, 1995), and socially anxious girls
are more susceptible to be influenced by their best friends especially with regard to depression (Prinstein, 2007).

There has been enough evidence suggesting shy, anxious and fearful behaviours to be more acceptable in girls than boys by parents as shyness is considered to be a negative emotion in boys (Birnbaum & Croll, 1984; Coplan et al., 2004; Engfer, 1993 in a German sample; Eggum et al., 2009; Simpson and Stevenson-Hinde, 1985 in a British sample; Burgess et al., 2005). A retrospective study on parents’ emotions and socializing practices, Garside and Klimes DOugan (2002), revealed girls were more supported for expressing fear and sadness and boys were punished for the same; and moderate maternal support was seen in the British sample (Coplan et al., 2012), but this was not true for extremely shy children as parents would not see the distinction between boys and girls when it comes to extreme shyness. Kingsbury and Coplan (2012), reported that parents’ attitudes towards gender role might moderate their responses to shyness in boys versus girls.

Along with parents, teachers also respond more negatively to boys than girls with respect to non-gender stereotypical behaviours (Cahill & Adams, 1997; Fagot, 1977, 1984; Sandberg and Pramling-Samuelsson, 2005 in a Swedish sample), talkative, exuberant, and disruptive behaviours are acceptable in boys than girls (DuPaul et al., 2006; Stipek & Miles, 2008; Sadker and Sadker, 1994). In a study in US, teachers praised boys for their outspoken behaviour and girls for restraining spontaneous conversation (AAUW Educational Foundation, 1995).

Difficulties developed in social relationships often persist in adulthood in case of shy and socially withdrawn males. A study on men in US, reported such individuals married to start families first and later thought of stable careers which was not same for women (Caspi et al., 1988), no gender differences were observed in a Swedish study in relation to stable careers (Kerr et al., 1996), but shyness in middle childhood was related to emotional distress in late adolescence and early adulthood for boys and not for girls. Gender differences have been seen in computer-mediated communication media where girls and women showing stronger preference and satisfaction in social networking, online interactions, text messaging to nurture personal relationships (Kimbrough et al., 2013; Pierce, 2009).
Extreme shyness can act as a barrier of social success as individuals fail to establish close friendships, romantic relationships or career advancement. Traditionally, shyness in women and children are considered to be respected, cute and charming (Scott 2004a), and men feel extra pressure of the stigma. Media shows shy male characters, too as barriers to success at work and in personal relationships (Scott 2003), where the problem of shyness (Gilmartin 1987), means a tragic failure to assert one’s masculinity. The 21st century has broken down the barrier and has resulted in a post-feminist era of later modernity where shyness is more acknowledged as a social problems than an enduring trait for both men and women (Giddens 1991).

1.10. Shyness and Culture

In North American societies, children who show shy and sensitive behavior tend to experience difficulties in peer relationships and school performance (Asendorpf, 1991; Coplan, Prakash, O’Neil, & Armer, 2004; Gazelle & Ladd, 2003). Contrary to the results from North American samples, shyness-sensitivity was related to positive peer relationships, school competence, and psychological well-being in China (Chen et al., 1992). Compared to children in North America, shyness is perceived as less problematic in some Asian countries such as Indonesia (Eisenberg, Pidada, & Liew, 2001), and Korea (Farver, Kim, & Lee, 1995). Due to the egalitarian values in Sweden, shyness has been associated with less negative outcomes in Swedish than American youth. Hence shy people may not necessarily be at a disadvantage in life adjustment over those who are assertive and competitive (Kerr, Lambert & Bem, 1996).

The perceptions of societies that discourage assertiveness or self-expression appear to encourage shy and restrained behavior. Hence, shy children of such societies are at a greater advantage of being accepted by friends, competent by adults and considered well adjusted in society. China witnesses social and psychological adjustment of shy children equally well as their non-shy counterparts in contrasting environments. In Confucian and Taoist philosophies, behavioral restraint and wariness are considered social maturity and mastery (Ho, 1986; Liang, 1987). These environments may help shy children in obtaining support in social interaction, which in turn may help them form social relationships, acquire school achievement, and develop positive views and feelings about self and others.
Shy and restrained behaviour is viewed as less deviant and maladaptive in societies where assertiveness and self-expression are not appreciated or encouraged. The social and psychological adjustment of shy children in China might be due to the approval of socially restrained behaviours in the society. Hence Chinese children tended to be accepted by peers, viewed as competent by adults, and well adjusted to the social environment.

However, recent studies by Chen, Cen, Li, and He (2005), evidenced a change in shy-sensitive children’s acceptance in Chinese societies with social and psychological problems with the change in the societies perception. Presently, shy-sensitive children are now considered as incapable by teachers and rejected by peers leading to high levels of depression (Hart et al., 2000). Thus, with the change in the perspectives of the society, shy-inhibited behaviour that blocks self-expression and active social communication may be considered as undesirable characteristic in social and psychological adjustment (Chen, Wang, & DeSouza, 2006) and shy children may have problems in obtaining social approval and status (Chen et al., 2005).

1.11. Association between Shyness-Sensitivity and Adjustment

Shyness-sensitivity and adjustment seem to be closely associated with social and school achievements where teacher-rated competence and leadership skills are considered. One can very clearly conclude that independence and self-expression that are not endorsed by societies or families accommodate shy children more freely and do not regard shyness as a problematic behaviour and provide social support and consent by peers and adults that enables them achieve success in social and academic areas (as study with rural migrant children and urban children by Shen, 2006; Zhang, 2004). Rural China considers shyness-sensitivity to be associated with adjustment including peer acceptance, social standing, teacher-rated competence, and academic achievement since children from rural China have relatively little exposure to the dramatic social, economic, and cultural transformations (Fang, 2000; Huang & Du, 2007).

Contrary to rural China, in the urban competitive environment in China, behavioural characteristics that assists the achievement of personal goals such as social assertiveness and initiative are highly appreciated and encouraged, whereas shy behaviour that blocks self-expression, active social communication, and exploration,
may not be regarded as adaptive and competent. As a result, shy urban adolescents may be at a disadvantage in obtaining social approval and maintaining social status. Moreover, like their counterparts in Western societies (Rubin et al., 2009), they may develop negative feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction when they have to face social difficulties. For Chinese and Western children, shyness and unsociability are associated differently with adjustment (Chen, Wang, & Cao, 2011; Coplan & Armer, 2007).

Most of the times, shy-sensitive behavior is considered as socially immature and incompetent (Rubin et al., 2002), and may be responded with negative feelings, rejection, and distress (Chen, DeSouza, Chen, & Wang, 2006; Coplan et al., 2004; Crozier, 2001; Mills & Rubin, 1993), which creates an environment that helps the development of social, and psychological problems in shy-sensitive children. This significance of social functioning (shyness-sensitivity) for individual adjustment may be influenced by social and cultural contexts (Asendorpf, 1993; Bornstein, 1995; Chen & French, 2008). When such children encounter problems in social situations they develop negative self-perceptions, loneliness, depression, and other mild psychological problems (Coplan et al., 2004; Rubin, Chen, McDougall, Bowker, & McKinnon, 1995).

1.12. Shyness and Inhibition

Due to social inhibition, shy children and adolescents often feel loneliness, social dissatisfaction, negative self-perception, anxiety, and depression. Hence they are viewed as socially less competent and immature in comparison to their assertive peers (Chen, Rubin & Li, 1995; Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993). Longitudinal studies suggest shyness and inhibition to be predictors of anxiety disorders later in life (Fordham & Stevenson-Hinde, 1999; Masi et al., 2003; Rubin et al., 1995; Rubin, Chen & Hymel, 1993), where shyness-inhibition was generally related to social problems and psychopathology in childhood and adolescence.

Differences in cultures play significant role in the outcome of shyness-inhibition in children and adolescence. Studies in Chinese children reported shyness and inhibition were actually more adaptive because shy children were regarded as socially competent and thoughtful (Chen et al., 1998), positively related to self-
esteem, leadership, school adjustment, academic achievement, peer and teacher acceptance (Chen, DeSouza, Chen & Wang, 2006; Chen, Rubin, Li & Li, 1999; Chen et al., 1998), whereas, contrasting results were found in studies related to Western cultures. Hence, it is true that cultural differences and societies perceptions differ in the adaptation meaning and consequences in shyness and inhibition.

In collectivistic Chinese societies, achieving and maintaining social order, interpersonal harmony, behavioral inhibitions are regarded as a sign of social maturity (Chen et al., 1998). These cultures emphasize group harmony which may be facilitated by restraint, obedience, submission, and shy behaviour. Chinese children are encouraged to be dependent and cautious; and are treated as being “well-behaved” (Chen, 2000). Therefore inhibited behaviour may be considered as adaptive since it promotes group harmony (Chen, 2000). In individualistic cultures self-determination, autonomy, and assertive/competitive behaviours are emphasized (Chen et al., 1999). Hence, shyness and inhibition are more adaptive in collectivistic cultures and are less adaptive in individualistic cultures. Reserved and inhibited child behaviour may lead to serene and agreeable relations with others irrespective of culture. In collectivistic cultures, social behaviour is shaped by the role obligations (Heine, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and the hierarchical nature of children's social relationships and that may influence children's shyness.

Like Asian cultures, Hispanic cultures are also collectivistic in nature (Fuligni, Tseng & Lam, 1999; Raeff, Greenfield & Quiroz, 2000), where teaching children proper conduct in public contexts are the socialization goals of Hispanic parents (Leyendecker, Harwood, Lamb & Schölmerich, 2002), because respect in Hispanic cultures is related to qualities such as humility, submissiveness, and obedience and requires appropriate respect based on authority and age hierarchies (Marín & Marín, 1991). Children who were respectful and obedient were described as being well-groomed (Hildebrand, Phenice, Gray & Hines, 2000). Hence, collectivistic values in Hispanic communities promoted favourable views of childhood shyness and inhibited behaviour on the part of parents.

In summary, shyness has been seen as a potential risk in individuals who are shy in childhood being developed into adolescence and emerging adulthood. It is also suggested that shyness may serve as a protective factor against certain risk behaviours.
because of their low levels of impulsivity, aggression, and risk taking (Caspi and Silva 1995). Such individuals are hyper-vigilant to threatening social situations and are biased in perceiving ambiguous and neutral stimuli (Miskovic & Schmidt, 2012; Muris, Merckelbach, & Damsma, 2000).

1.13 Interpersonal Relations

Man is a social animal; individuals develop interpersonal relationship to be able to belong to a social group because social deprivation results in maladaptive behaviour ranging from loneliness to psychosis and social isolation. Hence, individuals tend to spend their lifetime in groups to a great extent, especially when faced with threat (Schachter, 1959) or anxiety (Buunk, 1995). Individuals adapt themselves to social groups with the motive to learn more about themselves by social comparison to learn more about one’s skills, abilities, perception and attitude or for support in reducing anxiety and seek information (Festinger, 1954).

1.14 Meaning and definition:

According to Plutchik (1997), “interpersonal relationship has been defined as the interaction of individuals with respect to the patterns of emotions, thought and behaviour”. In other words, it is supposed to be an association between individuals interacting in formal and informal situations that develop over time. Hence, researchers have proposed a life-cycle of development. Interpersonal relationships usually involve some level of interdependence. People in relationship tend to influence each other, exchange their thoughts and feelings, and involve in activities together. Due to this interdependence, most things that change, will have mutual impact (Berscheid, & Peplau., 1983). Interpersonal relationships are dynamic systems that change continuously. Relationships have a beginning, a life span, and an end. Relationships tend to grow and improve gradually, as people get to know each other and become closer emotionally. But it may gradually deteriorate if people drift apart, move on with their lives and form new relationships with others. (Levinger, 1983).

1.15 Stages of interpersonal relationships:

Typically, interpersonal relationships develop in stages, starting with an acquaintance stage. In this stage, individuals develop first impressions among
themselves. Next, is the build-up stage where trust is built and compatibility is assessed that determines the next stage called the continuation stage, where individuals establish a mutual commitment. Individuals aspire for an indefinite relation of happiness and understanding or it may also develop into the next stage of deterioration where boredom, resentment and dissatisfaction sets in resulting in less communication, loss of trust, betrayal and hurt. When this stage of deterioration is high then the relationship enters into the final stage of termination.

Social environments like schools, college, or work–place offers numerous opportunities for interaction among individuals that sets the ground for interpersonal relationships. Socializing and real-life experiences play a crucial role in developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships that forms the basis of social support, emotional situations, success in life and an overall wellbeing of individuals. Studies reported by a few researchers like Goswami (2012), on the effect of positive and negative interpersonal relationships reported that positive relationship among family, friends, and neighbours increased the wellbeing of children while negative relations decreased the same. Aspelin (2012), opines that relationships determines achievement and encourage performance; Kenny, Dooley and Fitzgerald (2012), report that children with high level of interpersonal relationships showed a low level of emotional distress. These few studies prove that interpersonal relationship plays an important role in the development and overall well being of individuals.

Researchers are of the view that interpersonal relationships offer numerous resources for the development and wellbeing of adolescents (Weiss, 1974), resources like positive teacher-student relationship, scaffold the development of social, behavioural and learning competencies in children (Brophy, 1985; Pianta, 1999), peer-relationships serves as a significant source of intimacy (Ladd, 2005; Way & Greene, 2006), and adolescents tend to establish prominent relationships with the same-sex peers than the opposites sex (Bukowski, Sippola, & Hoza, 1999; Hartup & Stevens, 1999), emotional support buffers developmental challenges (Mortimer & Call, 2001).
1.16 Types of Interpersonal Relationships

There are differing types of interpersonal relationships. A few are discussed below

**Friendships:** Individuals of same age, sex and race get close and develop common interests, trust and perspective towards life. Being close with friends enhances self-esteem and one’s identity.

**Romantic Relationships:** Romantic relations are perceived in the mind at a young pre-adolescent age signalling crushes on peers and media icons. With puberty these relations develop initially based on physical attractiveness and social status of the group and later on develop into long-term concrete relations at high school.

**Larger social group:** People regularly get together and make larger social groups. Individuals are old and wise enough to form a group developing trust and loyalty. Some forms of larger social groups are:

![Larger Social Group Diagram]

(Source: Study.com; 4th Chapter 11th lesson)

1.17. Interpersonal Relationship and Social relationships:

During adolescence, interpersonal relations build on the basis of interactions with family members, teachers, peers, romantic partners (Galanaki & Vassilopoulou, 2007; Giordano, 2003; Connolly, Craig, Goldberg & Pepler 1999). Previous research suggests that though romantic and peer relationships are closely correlated during adolescence, they are significantly different with regard to romantic relationships which are more passionate, committed and exclusive as compared to peer friendship
that characterize affiliation and is based on similarity and shared perspectives (Connolly *et al*., 1999; Giordano, 2003). In addition, while most adolescents experience peer-relationships during highschool (Mortimer & Call, 2001), not all adolescents experience romantic relationships (Carver, Joyner, & Udry, 2003). As a result, peer relationships influence adolescent individuals from a more universal aspect (Mortimer & Call, 2001).

The fundamental need of an individuals’ psychological well-being, mental health or physical health is the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). Research proves that socially connected people tend to be more mentally and physically robust than less connected ones (Cacioppo, Hawkley, & Thisted, 2010; Cohen, 2004; Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010; House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988).

Research evidences that interpersonal relationships and social support may be the two indicators of adolescents’ loneliness (Bowker & Spencer, 2010; Eldeleklioglu, 2008; Merz & Jak, 2013). Poor interpersonal relationships are closely linked to loneliness (Vanhalst, Luyckx & Goossens, 2014). Interpersonal relationship (Cheng & Furnham, 2002) and social support are negatively correlated to loneliness (Kong & You, 2013); decreased social support increases the feelings of loneliness (Hudson, Elek & Campbell-Grossman, 2000; Kapikiran, 2013).

Research also evidences the association between quality of interpersonal relationships and loneliness to be bi-directional (Stensland, Thoresen, Wentzel-Larsen, Zwart, & Dyb, 2014; Woodhouse, Dykas & Cassidy, 2012), especially during adolescents (Cheng & Furnham, 2002; Woodhouse *et al*., 2012), self-closure is suggested to be negatively correlated to loneliness (Stokes & Levin, 1986), and negative interpersonal relationships show higher levels of loneliness (Crick & Ladd, 1993; Woodhouse *et al*., 2012), on one hand and loneliness predicts poor social interactions (Hawkley, Burleson, Berntson & Cacioppo, 2003).

It is also true that the influence of quality of interpersonal relationships on adolescents affect from external aspects of the social environment (Giordano, 2003; Heinrich & Gullone, 2006), whereas loneliness impacts from an internal aspect through self-experiences (Heinrich & Gullone, 2006), and the dissatisfaction of
external social environment affects the inner feeling of loneliness (Perlman & Peplau, 1984). The above research concludes that the quality of interpersonal relationships as a significant predictor of loneliness which in turn results in deficient social relationships especially in adolescence.

1.18 Gender and Interpersonal Relationships

Gender plays a significant role in impacting interpersonal relationships, while females establish a dyadic relationship valuing intimacy, self-disclosure, and emotional support, males prefer joint activity in larger groups and companionship (Gabriel & Gardner, 1999; Maccoby, 1990), and females seek social and emotional support more readily than males Salomon and Strobel (1997).

Gender also defines its effect on different types of interpersonal relationships, girls seem to experience better relationships with peers (Cheng & Chan, 2004; Kenny et al., 2013), develop positive qualities in same-sex relationships (Blyth & Foster-Clark, 1987), teacher-student relationships (Salomon & Strobel, 1997), intimacy and emotional support from peers, whereas boys report positive qualities in opposite sex (Blyth & Foster-Clark,1987) and instrumental support (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Frey & Röthlisberger, 1996; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Salomon & Strobel,1997). The above studies tend to summarise the impact of gender on various types of interpersonal relationships providing different kind of support. Thus, revealing different patterns of association of different types of interpersonal relationships and loneliness across gender.

With regard to gender, adolescent girls tend to rate higher in interpersonal relationship than boys. This is because girls have a greater tendency to value close relationships, to rely on relationships as a resource, and to be concerned about maintaining harmonious relationships (Rudolph, 2002; Benenson, 1990; Maccoby, 1990). Steinberg and Silk (2002), argued that boys and girls might report similar degrees of closeness to their parents and a similar amount of conflict.

1.19. Interpersonal relationships in an online world:

College students live in a technological age. They are often physically alone, yet somehow entangled in social relationships that are often established and mainly
The extensive use of social networking sites among adolescent and emerging adult populations is attracting attention from mental health professionals and researchers. They interested in knowing how this social phenomenon influences interpersonal development (Tao, 2013). It seems that people use Facebook to maintain existing relationships and to expand personal social networks. It seems that the greater the need to maintain offline acquaintances, the greater the likelihood of becoming addicted to Facebook. Similarly, greater the need to maintain online friendships, greater is the likelihood of becoming addicted to Facebook. Without physical proximity or actual talking, students can spend hours reviewing the intimate details of friends’ or acquaintances lives.

Satisfaction in romantic love, friendships, and emotional functioning from interpersonal behaviours and competencies are linked to attachment styles (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). For well-being and psychological functioning, social connectedness and the ability to form close relationships are necessary. At the time of distress, similar to children, adults also seek stable, trusting, and responsive relationships (Bowlby, 1969).

Social networking has impacted interpersonal relationship to a great extent. Kuss et al., (2013), reviewed an article suggesting social networking sites helped in maintaining relationships with offline acquaintances, existing ones and to expand personal social network.

**1.20. Interpersonal Needs**

Will Schutz (1958), a Harvard scientist, opines that interpersonal needs are as important as the core physiological needs of an individual and it motivates behaviour. Just as insufficient food causes hunger and suffering, so the wrong level of social contact causes interpersonal suffering and conflict. He measured different people’s levels of needs in three interpersonal relationships areas and highlighted areas of these needs not being met. Based on such studies he formulated the Fundamental interpaersonal relationship orientation-Behaviour theory in 1958 which was revised many times (Schutz, 1992, 1994, Thompson & Schutz, 2000).

Schutz (1966), in his theory, says people need people. According to this theory, there are 3 basic interpersonal needs- inclusion, control and affection. It
includes two aspects – expressed and wanted needs and all-this works together to satisfy an individual’s need. Schutz (1966), “defined an interpersonal need as a need that may only be satisfied when one has attained a fulfilling relationship with another person”. These needs for inclusion, control, and affection can be met through satisfying relationships. An individual’s desire to express his/her needs to others and the want of the same for others represents the basic premise of the theory. To avoid stress and frustration all individuals seek to establish compatible relationships in their social interactions(Whetten & Cameron, 1988, Thompson & Schutz, 2000). Thus, interpersonal relationship needs become an important necessity which when neglected by either of the partner will result in anxiety which may manifest into illness, anger, a general lack of desire to live or sometimes even death.

Every individual deals with interpersonal relationship needs differently. A person may not try to satisfy his/her need directly as it is easier to ignore the problem, he/she may try too hard and engage themselves totally to fulfil their need, or find balance and strive to meet the need.

The need for inclusion marks a milestone in determining the personality of the individual with respect to social interaction and association (Schutz, 1966) and he/she may become an under-social, over-social or a social person. An under-social person is an introvert, and is withdrawn (Schutz, 1966), he tries to avoid interactions to avoid potential rejections but unconsciously wishes to be one among the social group. The over-social person is one who appears to be completely opposite of the under-social counterpart superficially as he/she desires to be the centre of attraction and gives an impression that he/she has met the need of inclusion completely. However, this desire for inclusion would be extreme. On observation, one can notice that this individual behaves so to avoid anxiety.

On keen observation one realizes that, though both the types of individuals appear to have opposite requirement for inclusion, they have the fear of rejection at their heart and hence they approach this fear differently either by withdrawing or overcompensating for the need of inclusion. In contrast to these two types, the social person is one who has established a healthy equilibrium between the want of being alone and in a social group (Schutz, 1966).
Like the need for inclusion resulting in three social types of personalities, the need for affection can be examined in three personality types: under-personal, over-personal and the personal. The under-personal personality type, involves the active avoidance, maintains relationships superficially and desires to be treated the same way. The over-personal personality type exhibits contrasting behaviours. The underpinning reason in both types is the fear of rejection and the difference in behaviours as per the personality types and the personal personality type is one who has found a healthy equilibrium and has met the need for affection by understanding the necessity and importance of being liked or disliked (Schutz, 1966).

Schutz (1966) addresses the need to control, that is, the need to establish and maintain satisfactory relationships. The three personality types expressed under the need for control are- the abdicrat, the autocrat and the democrat. The abdicrat is one who plays a passive role and does not take control of any situation virtually because he assumes that it would be safer to let others be responsible. The autocrat is one who dominates every situation to fight the fear of others becoming dominant and losing control over the situation, hence, he/she overcompensates for he/she abhors the idea of somebody else taking control.

The democrat is that individual who has learnt to balance between the need for control and the need and ability to be controlled by others. He/she recognizes the necessity of who, when and where leadership is to be assumed. The desire for power, authority and control often ends up in a personality characteristic where the individual habituates himself/herself to take control as per his/her thinking and attitudes. Such individuals do not tolerate others taking control and consistently dominate others which sometimes ends up in violence in couples (Felson & Messner, 2000) and the individual who is autocrat will go to any limits to maintain the sense of contro.

Therefore, Schutz (1958), opines that interpersonal relationship satisfies the basic need of humans for inclusion, affection and control. It is these needs of interpersonal relationship that establishes a sense of belonging, being valued, empowered and being a part of a group that shapes one’s life. With regard to western culture Moghaddam et.al., (1993), is of the view that interpersonal relationship is individualistic, voluntary and temporary and in non-western cultures was more collective, involuntary and permanent.
1.21. Functions of Interpersonal Relationships

Schools and colleges serve as the platform and motivate children and young adults to establish interpersonal relationships. An individual’s behaviour is influenced by that of the encouragement or behaviours of their fellow peers which shapes the personal and social development.

Interactions with peer play a crucial role. At pre-school and early elementary, children develop cooperation and persuasion skills through make believe situations, as they get older they learn negotiation skills, conflict resolution and emotional control and finally peers stand more as a social and an emotional support than for recreation.

The need to belong or be with peers is considered fundamental to human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and a significant developmental task (Sullivan, 1953). The impact of individual development depends on the position a child holds in a social networks. Researchers posit that socio-emotional development in children (positive or negative) largely depends on peer relationships which can be evidenced in a variety of mental health issues (Bukowski, Laursen, & Hoza, 2010; Rubin, Bukowski & Parker, 2006).

Clique inclusion, social status and friendship are the contributing factors in a child’s socio-emotional development (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989; Coie & Dodge, 1983; Hartup, 1996). Clique inclusion and social status are interrelated skills and determines the child’s placement and functioning within the peer network but friendship enables children to navigate peer relationships to be rewarding or less satisfying and stressful experiences (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003).

Socially anxious people experience poor social support and tend to have small social networks, fewer friendships, and isolated (Alden & Taylor, 2004; Hudson & Rapee, 2009; Teo, Lerrigo, & Rogers, 2013). Anxious women are less disclosing, less intimate and less satisfied with regard to women (Cuming & Rapee, 2010; Porter & Chambless, 2014; Sparrvohn & Rapee, 2009).

The underlining aspects and importance of proper measurement of social skills in adolescence during development of social skills are to establish and maintain friendships and romantic relationships (La Greca & Harrison, 2005), which when
failed or fulfilled inadequately interfere with healthy psychosocial development of youth (Nangle, Erdley, Newman, Mason, Carpenter 2003).

1.22. Social conformity

We are all influenced to some extent by the people around us. If we were not, then we would not be members of any social group. To fit into a group means to adjust to other people and to conform to at least some of the social norms of the group. But how and to what extent we are influenced by others are vital questions. Social conformity is the social influence or change of beliefs and behaviour in response to real or imagined group pressure. It often indicates the desire to ‘fit in’, be correct or of identification of an individuals’ agreement with the majority position in a social group.

1.23. Definitions on Social Conformity

1. According to Mehrabian and Stefl, (1995) and Santor et.al., ( 2000), it is the characteristic willingness to follow ideas, values and behaviours of the social group to avoid conflict and the tendency to either conform or deviate from such attitudes and actions.

2. “It is the capacity of the individual to be one with the thoughts, feelings, attitudes or behavior of other individuals or groups. The individual may experience direct or indirect pressure so as to accept the social norms in a given situation”. In other words, “yielding to group pressure” (Crutchfield, 1955).

3. “It is a condition or act of change in ones’ behaviour to go along with the beliefs and /or behavior of a social group” (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004).

4. Deutsch & Gerard (1955), believe that conformity is the outcome of informational social influence and normative social influence.

5. According to Hogg, and Vaughan, (2005), conformity is the act of matching one’s attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours to group norms.

Norms are implied, unspoken rules shared by a group of individuals, which monitor their interactions with others and among society or social group. It can occur in the presence of others, or when an individual is alone. Conformity occurs in small
groups and/or society as a whole, and may result from subtle unconscious influences, or direct and overt social pressure

1.24. Non conformity:

It is a behaviour or belief that is opposite to the norms or standards (Nail, Macdonald & Levy 2000), amounting to social cost. It gives observers the opinion that such individuals may be in powerful position that enables them to risk the social cost or the fear of losing their position in the social hierarchy (Levine 1989; Schachter 1951).

Snyder and Fromkin (1977), have shown the relationship between a person’s nonconforming behavior and need for uniqueness, perceptions of enhanced status and competence. Also Observers with high levels of need for uniqueness tend to confer greater status and competence to nonconforming behaviours as compared to observers with low needs for uniqueness.

McLeod (2011), observed that people often conform from a desire for security within a group-especially in a group consisting of members of similar age, culture, religion, or educational status. As they think alike, it is often referred to as groupthink: Here a pattern of thought featured by self-deception, forced manufacture of courses of action can be seen. Conformity strongly affects humans of all ages but is often associated with adolescence and youth culture,

Society is a powerful tool that motivates conformity to social norms and expectations. Conformity is rewarding with group acceptance and inclusion (Cialdini and Goldstein 2004), whereas non-conformity, results in social disapproval, rejection and punishment (Anderson et al. 2006, 2008; Levine1989; Lin et al. 2013; Marques et al. 2001; Miller and Anderson 1979; Schachter 1951; Wilson 1979). This has been very well demonstrated through experiments by various researchers. The Asch’s experiment (1956), reports that participants found it easier to go with the crowd than face absurd consequences (Crutchfield 1955), prison experiment (Zimbardo 1973), evidences more powerful and disturbing outcomes where volunteers who were assigned roles of ‘guards’ and ‘prisoners’ randomly behaved accordingly; and Milgram’s (1963), obedience experiment showed behaviour of individuals in agreement with the social roles they were expected to play.
1.25. Types of Conformity: There are three types of social influence that put pressure on us:

- Actual Pressure: Somebody imposing their will on one’s thoughts, feelings, beliefs and behaviour.

- Imagined Pressure: Pressure perceived wrongly that if one does not follow a particular norm they will be rejected.

- Implied Pressure: Following a pattern in the group just because it’s been there for long though unwillingly or thoughtlessly.

1.26. Normative theory of social conformity

**Informational Social Influence:** It is the influence that individuals perceive cognitively with regard to a situation, opinion, behaviour or actions involving public compliance. Also known as ‘herd behaviour’ or ‘social proof’ involving public behaviour. Example: when we hear several positive movie reviews we see the movie.

**Normative Social Influence:** The need for being accepted and to belong is a characteristic feature of humans as social animals. People may conform to avoid rejection and gain social approval. It is the assumption of actions reflecting correct behaviour or the expert knowledge of others in a given situation.

**Mindless Conformity**: Using other individuals as cues to model behaviours without thinking or dealing with the dilemma of perception/ thought and others’ perceptions and thoughts is mindless Conformity.

Normative influences are considered to be the basic motivational forces operating in the participants with the kinds of beliefs that are generally accepted and encouraged by the majority. A study by Sechrist & Stangor (2001), found highly prejudiced participants maintained distance from an African American confederate that those with less prejudiced participants which increased when they learnt that their attitudes were shared by a majority. However, the perception of a agreement among group members’ intergroup attitudes and behaviours was enough to exert an informational influence. Researchers have shown that confidence in the accuracy of one’s intergroup beliefs over time is positively related to perceived level of agreement (Stangor et al. 2001).
Two prominent theories that differ in their interpretations with regard to cognitive and motivational processes investigating the extent to which normative and informational influences governed motivation and how individuals processed messages associated to numerical majorities and minorities so as to conform to each type of sources are Moscovici’s (1980) conversion theory and Mackie’s (1987), objective consensus approach. Conversion theory postulates that majority influence is normative and objective consensus views it as informational influence.

Festinger (1954), opined that individuals examine their own opinions and ideas to social comparison. When one notices that others are not behaving in the same way, or that they think differently, it causes anxiety. Festinger called this cognitive dissonance.

In a broader perspective, conformity is an attempt to gain security in a social network.

- The feeling of belonging and strong social connection motivates individuals to a great extent and is reflected in their psychological health in contrast to rejection and isolation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). It may serve as a protective factor to a range of symptoms of psychological distress (Williams & Galliher, 2006), and internalization and a lesser need to conform to external influences.

1.27. Social impact theory

The Dynamic social impact theory of Latane (1996), explains higher order processes emerging over time from local level conformity. Conformity also arises within multiple person assemblages of varying sizes, functions, complexities, and levels of interpersonal interaction. In other words, individuals in a given social space tend to conform to the attitudes and beliefs of the numerical majority that of the minority or less proximate individuals. This model suggests influence to be informational or normative or both and hence predicts four core forms of self-organization emerging within the aggregate –

- Clustering of attitudes, opinions, or behavioural tendencies in social space.
- By consolidation of attitudes diversities can be reduced
- Interrelationship of attitudes possessed by cluster members
Continuing diversity (lack of complete convergence) of attitudes. That is, individuals rarely dissolve because each member is surrounded by the local numerical majority holding the same minority attitude.

Conformity may arise through social learning in the following conditions:

- Individual’s identity stays private with certain amount of uncertainty about utility maximizing actions.
- Social comparisons where behaviour is used as the reference point for decisions (Cialdini, 1999).
- Strategic complementarities where the subject’s payoff depends both on his and others’ choice. However, it is hard to discern how much of the change in behaviour is due to social interaction and how much is due to the subject’s attempt to increase his payoff.
- Crutchfield (1955), found that people who conform are characterized by less intelligence, less ego strength, less leadership ability, less maturity in social relationships, and feelings of inferiority. They also exhibit authoritarian, submissive, narrow-minded and inhibited behaviour and have relatively little insight into their own personalities compared with those who tend not to conform. However, consistency across situations is not high (McGuire, 1968) and the authoritarian personality (Adorno et al., 1950), is perhaps as close to a ‘conforming personality type’ as can be found. In general men seek less conformity than women. (Zimbardo & Lieppe, 1991), suggest that men like dissent or independence while women tend to seek cooperation and consensus with others as a way of expressing competence. Conversely, women and men who show stereotypical ‘masculine’ qualities and interests conform less (Maslach et al., 1987).

Some accepted models on social conformity are

1. Noelle-Neumann (1977), defines” public opinion as ‘pressure to conform,’ and her theory states that:

2. The fear of being isolated motivates individuals to be popular and respected. As social beings, most people would like to be popular and respected.
3. To avoid isolation, individuals constantly observe their environment closely to know the prevalence and popularity of opinions and behaviours to express and behave accordingly.

4. When an individual’s opinion is accepted as genuine by the majority he/she has the courage to speak publicly without the fear of losing popularity or self-esteem and remains silent or avoid confrontation or embarrassing situations against criticism of such opinions.

1.28. Social Interaction Theory

Bernheim’s model of social interaction theory examines the basic differences between an individual’s understanding of the society, action taken in the social setting, and the level of conformity. According to Bernheim, people conform due to their inability to stray from homogeneous standards of social behaviour. Thus, inaction hinders persons in trying potentiality for individuality. People suppress their individuality, conforming to social norms, since any deviation would lead to unpopularity (Bernheim, 1994).

Individuals who are capable of experiencing social pressure plan and give themselves the required space within the socio-cultural norms and stand by their decisions. Such individuals make valuable judgments necessary for the development of self, family, community, institution and society as a whole. (Sapp, Harrod & Zhao, 1994).

Individuals who are dispositional incline to social conformity stand by the belief system held by the majority and hence are characterized by vulnerability to high levels of conformity to local norms matching global norms. This principle accounts for faster consolidation of majority opinions first and to a rarer set of circumstances where local norms deviate from global norms. The latter effect spreads more rapidly within the conformist’s population. Prototypically individualistic cultures are characterized by relatively low levels of conformity and by relatively high levels of extraversion.

Researchers found that when the target’s previously formed opinion was against to the message being conveyed, the recipient’s motivation to avoid deviance
from the majority group hampered message elaboration (Martin & Hewstone, 2000) and the individual focused on the normative concerns of ‘fitting in’ a process consistent with conversion theory. Conversely, when target’s held opposing attitudes, they are more receptive to the position being approved by the majority and hence engage in extensive processing of the message for numerical advantage as representing an objective consensus. That is, when sources and issues were of lesser importance targets applied little cognitive effort to process the message often using an accuracy heuristic favouring the majority (Erb et al., 1998). Crandall et al., (2002), found an almost perfect interrelationship between individuals’ possibility of expressing or tolerating prejudice and their perceptions of the extent to which most others agree of those behaviours.

1.29. Cultural Aspects of Conformity

Some societies exert a strong social pressure (ex. Mexico) on individuals to adhere to restrictive societal roles and maintain the status quo, appearance and external control over decisions (Gelfand, Nishii & Raver 2006; Pelto 1968). With increasing opportunities in quality education, health care, and judicial systems, social-cultural norms tend to change the tight norms of external control and possibly change the norms themselves. Hartman, (1967), is of the view that the individual, who respects, cares or behaves as expected by the society tries to maintain his/her image in society even if it accounts to over-ride his personal interests, desires or intrinsic values. And on the other hand, an individual who deviates is considered disrespectful, unworthy of social support, attention or love and an alien in the society (Gongora Coronado, Cortes Ayala, & Flores Galaz 2002).

In Mexico, the social pressure to adhere to the local norms forces an individual from even taking day-to-day risk that are necessary in everyday life leading to fear of taking initiative, failure or success ( Jáuregui 2010), or making autonomous decisions and being an agent of change. This fear limits the possibility of enhancing one’s freedom or access to opportunities resulting in the use of lies and cheating to avoid shame, guilt and fear of rejection by the society. Agency is influenced by and develops according to particular structures of living together, so we need a way to distinguish the types of structures that help promote individual agency” (Stewart &
Deneulin 2002). High levels of conformity and low levels of extraversion are the characteristics of collectivistic cultures (Schaller & Murray, 2011).

A group member strives to earn and maintain his/her status through distinctive qualities to accumulate good impressions in the minds of others in the society (Hollander, 1958), which can be reflected to the degree he/she deviates from the said norms. In comparison, individuals with higher status tend to have wider autonomy for deviation and freedom from social limits than their low status counterparts (Feshbach 1967; Hollander 1958; Peterson & Kern 1996; Phillips & Zuckerman 2001). Thus, the high status group members are powerful and can afford to diverge from the traditional behavior and expectation without social disapproval (Cartwright 1959; Galinsky et al., 2008; Haslam 2004; Sherif & Sherif 1964), and voluntarily downgrade their lifestyle and adopt broad range of products), and simplicity (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Brooks 1981; Holt 1998; Peterson & Kern 1996; Solomon 1999).

1.30. Advantages of Conformity

1. It is a lubricant that keeps the society run smoothly.

2. Complicated social movements become easier.

3. It helps in getting right answers to important questions. In other words, toeing the line and not ruffling the feathers.


5. It offers the opportunity for normatively embraced across diverse cultures.

1.31. The bad effect of conformity

1. Detrimental to organizational performance, individuals facing injustice or treated unfairly often remain silent and take the abuse only because no one is speaking against the unjust order.

2. Peer pressure; Santor et. al. (2000), found conformity to be a stronger predictors of adolescents’ risky behaviour

3. Influence of high conforming individuals shaping behaviours of other (Stefl, 1995; Santor et al., 2000)
In conclusion, Conformity can be good, bad or neutral. The individual’s motives can be traditionally understood to be information or normative (Cialdini & Goldstein 2004). Informational social influences facilitates response to an unsure/ unaware stimuli by copying others with the desire of achieving correct interpretation (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004), thereby, such compliance to agree publicly and not having to believe in their response (Nail, Mac Donald, & Levy, 2000), because it is assumed that individuals complying in the same activity leads to unquestioned acceptance. Research by Cialdini and Goldstein (2004), suggests that once an individual is accepted, it allows him/her to develop and continue social relationships which in time leads to increase in self-esteem (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004).

Though conformity is more likely in public situations, yet it influences the degree of perceived similarity among individuals (Abrams, Wetherell, Cochrane, Hogg & Turner, 1990). Research confirms that even in the absence of interaction among individuals conformity is likely to occur in response to reports of group perceptions (Burger, Soroka, Gonago, Murphy & Somervell, 2001). Burger et al., (2001), found conformity increased linearly along with perceived similarity among individuals, even if these similarities were based on fictional attributes.

To summarize this chapter has presented the theoretical view of shyness, interpersonal relations and social conformity. Effect of gender and culture on these aspects have also been presented.