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1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Culture is a way of life shared by members of a certain population. The definition of culture encompasses the thoughts, emotions, behaviours and customs shared by the people, as well as their social, economic, political and religious institutions. As children grow and mature, they absorb the mindset, behaviours and customs of the society in which they develop, and they begin to gain an understanding of their culture. Parents and other child-rearing agents consciously or un-consciously, promote the competencies required to absorb cultural values and perform cultural tasks through culturally standardized techniques for raising children that have been developed over time and passed down from generation to generation. Children learn the ways of people in their culture by participating in cultural tasks and activities. (Ogbu, 1988).

The family is the primary unit through which customs, beliefs, habits, values and modes of behaviour are transmitted from one generation to the next through the process of socialization. (Saraswathi & Dutta, 1988; Tandon, 1981). Therefore, it is always vital to study the aspects of child development from within the child's cultural context. (Ogbu, 1988).

Children grow up in a dynamic world wherein they influence the environment around them, and in turn are influenced by the environment. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This reciprocity involves a process of mutual accommodation between children and their environment. The immediate setting as well as the larger context of the setting influences a child's development. Consequently, the child's immediate family and friends influence their reaction to stress or any other negative or positive emotion. It also gets influenced by the community in which they live. Several global considerations also may affect family functioning and child development, like those that range from the home and school to the political climate of the country, international laws, and different social systems. (Bagdi, 2004).
The self-concept of the child develops gradually, and takes a stable form during late adolescence. This happens through the complex interplay of the above mentioned factors in his immediate environment as well as those of the outside world, with reference to his/her own locus standee.

In all societies, education aims at improving the quality of life by developing in citizen's human qualities and the capabilities to make the world a better place to live in. The child is the father of the man, whose multidimensional development is considered vital in the development of the society and its education system in order to save itself against divergent man-made calamities. The adolescents have to recognize and confront the challenges, arising due to the variety of tensions pervading the educational systems around the globe including India. These tensions are also affecting the cognition, attitudes and behaviours of teaching-learning communities at all levels and in all locations. (UNESCO report, 1996).

Parents and teachers have stressed only for high curriculum standards, more student hours on learning tasks, strict drilling in intellectual skills, and high learning achievement. The tradition of meritocracy based on performance, in state examinations has however, had a suppressed effect on the creativity of young minds and has corrupted the examination system. They emphasize the development of theoretical knowledge, to the detriment of quality imagination, ability to communicate leadership, aesthetic sense or manual skills to show dignity of labour. Schools try to make them virtually robots all being processed through the similar courses of study materials, and instructional and evaluation technology.

Society considers Academic success as the hallmark of a student's quality, both potential and actual. Certificates are seen as the passport to high salaried jobs and social status. Academic failure, low achievement, stagnation, is considered symbolic of individual incompetence, lack of intellect, effort and
prospect. School failure is expensive to the child, family and society. From the early years of schooling, the children are targeted to seek high academic competence, merit and rank, irrespective of the limitations of stretching their intellect, effort and time and other resources beyond a point. By the time these children reach the secondary stage of education pressures from family, and the society mount to the extent that many begin to consider schooling burdensome, learning a series of non-enjoying and unpleasant experiences causing examination distress and education a futile but necessary social evil. Some try hard to achieve the desired goals and actually achieve them. A good percent learn to compromise their set of goals and rationalize, while some others fail to achieve and turn themselves off to the extent of indulging in deviant and high-risk behaviours. A larger percent however begins to experience a variety of difficulties and get concerned about them.

Today’s urban and middle class children are far more precaution worldly-wise, street smart, techno savvy and sexually aware individuals. (Kar D, 2006) Adolescence comes sooner, sometimes even before reaching middle school. High school students in various ways exhibit characteristics of adulthood—some may even reach adulthood officially before leaving school, as if leading dual lives. It often appears that they are adults outside school and children inside it. What they are at home, wholly depends on the attitudes of their parents. Today’s teenagers have attained adult status earlier than their counterparts did some years ago. (Kar D, 2006). The most significant change however, is the frenetic pace of life they lead. And it is this pace that is governing much of their conduct and behaviour. (Kar D, 2006). Possibly, changes will also be seen at different coping strategies in ways and magnitude that they are adopting to resolve the life stressors. (Kar D, 2006).
1.2 EMERGENCE OF THE PROBLEM

As the summer heat and monsoon rains set in each year, Indian newspapers run colourful front page pictures of joyous high school seniors cheering over their final exam results. But turn the page and the black and white reality hits home, from the lineup of brief stories on anguished students who have killed themselves.

We live in an examination conscious age where children are often categorized based on their academic performance. Success in examination is seen as a passport to a successful life and a determinant of the future of the child. Failure in examinations is viewed as a catastrophe, confronted with the hopes and frustrating examination process. Many children find themselves under increasing stress, sandwiched between an examination system that focuses on marks rather than achieving an ability to think and grow. Success is no guaranty and even the best can fail.

Parental pressures to perform are also very high. Coupled with societal and peer pressure, it is an important cause of stress on the child. External pressure only adds to the self-created expectations and efforts to better one's own previous performance, and this combined pressure occasionally becomes difficult for the child to handle. Loss of self-esteem, a feeling of ineffectiveness, anxiety, depression is seen before examinations. (Borich & Tombari, 1997). Higher parental aspirations and overt disappointment over lower than expected performance lead to a greater stress on child. Some of the researchers have shown that it is worse for girls. (Finalayson, 1971; Debold, 1995). This could probably be because in a male dominated society, priority of female education is low, and is more likely to be pulled out of school if they perform poorly. (Shah, 2006).
The schools are behaving the way the system desires, and not as per the needs of the children. Classrooms are killing creativity in children. (Kaila, H., 2006). One of the major anxieties of the adolescents lies in anticipating if they do not score now, then they will not get admission to the desired courses in future. The educational anxiety is rising due to the increased competition for entry into any professional colleges.

As a result of all this we see, that today's child is gripped with multitude stressor, like making career choices, attending too many instructional hours at the same time, (regular and tuition), forming a social identity, acquiring meaningful relationships, excelling in academic pursuits and facing stiff competition to get into one of the elite professional colleges.

While many adolescents may be able to face the challenges, successfully and pass on smoothly into adulthood, some youngsters may develop a gnawing frustration. This might blaze into aggression, defiance, insecurity, loneliness, boredom and a feeling of being at the brink of crisis, which may not be severe enough to attract medical attention. (Sharma, 2006).

All these challenges are affecting the parental behaviour as well. With fewer children in the nuclear families, the relational gap between the child and the parents are sometimes seen as being narrowed down as compared to the traditional hierarchical and authoritative family set up of one or more decades back. Parents are equally bothered about his or her wards studies, examinations, future career choice and emotional development. (Kaila, H., 2006).

Every individual has to face some amount of stress, at some point of time in his life. It has been seen that those who are at a better position to control their lives experience low levels of stress. Failure to do so will result in low self, anxiety and depression. (Siddiqui & D’Arcy, 1984). In other words the
internal locus of control can buffer the effects of stressful life events. (Cohen & Edwards, 1989).

According to Bandura's Social Cognitive theory individuals self-efficacy exercises control over potential threats, that plays a key role in the arousal of one's anxiety. (Schwarzer & Wicklune, 1991). Individuals who are able to manage and control these threats experience low levels of anxiety, while those who cannot control experience high anxiety leading to personal distress. In order to control these threats an individual requires strong positive perceived self-efficacy to turn them off. (Schwarzer & Wicklune, 1991).

It has also been agreed by several researchers that parental support is positively related to adolescent self-esteem. (Gecas, 1971, 1972; Growe, 1980; Graybill, 1978; Hoelter & Harper, 1987; Holmbeck & Hill, 1986; Kawash et al., 1985; Litovsky & Dusek, 1985; Peterson, Southworth & Peters, 1983). High self-esteem is correlated with psychological well-being, (Leary et al, 2004; Ross et al, 2005) which makes the individual to have confidence in self and be satisfied with oneself. (Robbins et al, 2002). It also enables the person to feel more accepted, cared and loved about, consequently enhancing the self-esteem. (Harter, 1999; Leary & downs, 1995 Sawatphanit et al, 2004; Trzesniewski et al, 2004). Thus, we see that good parenting helps in the formation of high self-efficacy, which results in low anxiety, finally leading to the development of a strong self-concept in the adolescent.

It is the objective of this present research to study the child of today in this changed perspective. Are the future generations really on the verge of breaking due to the undue stresses that are mounting on them? To be more specific, how far the important life events in the life of the adolescents have affected their personality make up? For the present purpose, Test Anxiety, Academic Overload and Parental behaviour as perceived by them has been identified as some of the important issues in the life of the adolescent children.
It has been assumed that the parenting style may lead to academic overload in the child causing test anxiety, which may affect the Self-concept.

It has been observed however, that very few studies on self-esteem and its correlates have been conducted in India, in spite of its all-emerging importance. Only a dozen studies were identified on aspects of self-functioning published between 1990 and 1995. However these well conducted studies indicate both the utility and the construct validity of various measures of self-esteem, self-concept or self-appraisal (e.g. Albuquerque et al, 1990; Basu, 1993; Bhogle and Prakash, 1993; Kamath & Kanekar, 1993). This sets the backdrop of the present study.

In the present study the variables Test Anxiety, Academic Overload, Perceived Parenting and Self-concept have been taken into consideration and are discussed in detail in the following chapters. This will help us to understand why Self-concept has been analyzed here as a response and not as a cause, as it is primarily an emotional response to what others have done to us. (Vitz, Paul, 1995).
1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to examine whether the self concept of adolescent children is amenable to the impact of test anxiety, academic overload and the status of perceived parenting, and if it depends on the above then the nature of their relationship.

To be more specific, the objectives of the study are to find out:

- whether the adolescents appearing for the board exams of classes X and XII are academically overloaded.
- whether the adolescents appearing for the board exams of classes X and XII are experiencing Test Anxiety.
- what is the level of test anxiety faced by the adolescents of 14-18 years of age.
- what is the type of parental styles prevalent in Kolkata metropolis, as perceived by their adolescent child.
- how the adolescents in Kolkata metropolis view themselves.
- whether there is a gender difference in test anxiety, academic overload, self-concept.
- and in perceived parenting styles in the adolescent children.
- the collective effect of Test Anxiety, Academic Overload and Perceived Parenting on the Self-concept of the adolescents.
1.4 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THE IMPORTANT TERMS

SELF-CONCEPT: The self-concept of the individual is an individual's way of looking at himself. It also signifies his way of thinking, feeling and behaviour. (Saraswat & Gaur, 1992). It has been measured by a test developed and standardized by R.K. Saraswat.(1992).

ACADEMIC OVERLOAD: Academic overload is defined by the excessive internal and external demands regarding academic performance, which creates a disequilibrium in the mental life of the child. (Piffer, 2001). The stress or the feeling of burden resulting from various associated aspects of academic achievement is called academic overload. (Mitra & Sengupta, 2006). Academic Overload has been measured by a Questionnaire developed and standardized by the researcher (Mitra & sengupta, 2006).

TEST ANXIETY: Speilberger & Sarason, (1989) defined test anxiety as a situation-specific trait that refers to the anxiety states and worry conditions that are experienced during examinations. The level of anxiety can fluctuate over time in response to both internal and external stimulation. (Vogel & Collins, 2000). It has been measured by C.D. Speilberger's (TAI) Test Anxiety Inventory. (1980).

PARENTING STYLES: Parenting styles are collections of parental attitudes, practices and non-verbal expressions that characterize the nature of parent child interactions. (Blasgow, Dornsch, Troyer, Steinberg & Ritter, 1997).

The parenting style that has been observed here is based on how the child perceives his/her parenting. In other words, it is the child's perception of his parental attitude towards him. (Bharadwaj, 1998). It has been measured by a Perceived Parenting Scale by R.L. Bharadwaj, et al. (1998).
1.5 HYPOTHESES

H 1: The mean Self-concept Score of school children in the age range 14-18 years is above average.

H 2: The mean Test Anxiety Score of school children in the age range 14-18 years is above average.

H 3: The mean Academic Overload Score of school children in the age range 14-18 years is above average.

H 4: The mean Perceived Parenting Score of school children in the age range 14-18 years is above average.

H 5: Adolescent boys and girls do not differ significantly in their Self-concept scores.

H 6: Gender has a significant impact on the Self-concept scores of the adolescents.

H 6: Adolescent boys and girls do not differ significantly in their Test Anxiety scores.

H 6: Gender has a significant impact on the Test Anxiety scores of the adolescents.

H 7: Adolescent boys and girls do not differ significantly in their Academic Overload scores.

H 7: Gender has a significant impact on the Academic Overload scores of the adolescents.
H08: Adolescent boys and girls do not differ significantly in their Perceived Parenting scores.

H 8: Gender has a significant impact on the Perceived Parenting scores of the adolescents.

H09: The self-concept scores of adolescent children has no significant relationship with their Test Anxiety scores.

H 9: The self-concept scores of adolescent children is significantly related with their Test Anxiety scores.

H010: The self-concept scores of adolescent children has no significant relation with their Academic Overload scores.

H10: The self-concept scores of adolescent children is significantly related with their Academic Overload scores.

H011: The self-concept scores of adolescent children has no significant relation with their Perceived Parenting scores.

H11: The self-concept scores of adolescent children is significantly related with their Perceived Parenting scores.

H012: The collective effect of Test Anxiety, Academic Overload and Perceived Parenting has no significant impact on the self-concept of the adolescents.

H12: The collective effect of Test Anxiety, Academic Overload and Perceived Parenting has a significant impact on the self-concept of the adolescents.

H013.1: The effect of Test Anxiety, Academic overload and Perceived Parenting taken together has no impact on the Self-concept of adolescent girls.
The effect of Test Anxiety, Academic overload and Perceived Parenting taken together has an impact on the Self-concept of adolescent girls.

The effect of Test Anxiety, Academic overload and Perceived Parenting taken together has no impact on the Self-concept of adolescent boys.

The effect of Test Anxiety, Academic overload and Perceived Parenting taken together has an impact on the Self-concept of adolescent boys.

The effect of Test Anxiety, Academic Overload and Perceived Parenting taken together has no impact on the Self-concept of all ninth graders.

The effect of Test Anxiety, Academic Overload and Perceived Parenting taken together has an impact on the Self-concept of all ninth graders.

The effect of Test Anxiety, Academic Overload and Perceived Parenting taken together has no impact on the Self-concept of all tenth graders.

The effect of Test Anxiety, Academic Overload and Perceived Parenting taken together has an impact on the Self-concept of all tenth graders.

The effect of Test Anxiety, Academic Overload and Perceived Parenting taken together has no impact on the Self-concept of all eleventh graders.

The effect of Test Anxiety, Academic Overload and Perceived Parenting taken together has an impact on the Self-concept of all eleventh graders.
**H0 14.4:** The effect of Test Anxiety, Academic Overload and Perceived Parenting taken together has no impact on the Self-concept of all twelfth graders.

**H 14.4 :** The effect of Test Anxiety, Academic Overload and Perceived Parenting taken together has an impact on the Self-concept of all twelfth graders.

### 1.6 DELIMITATION

1. It is an established fact that test anxiety and intelligence are related to each other. That is why the study has been limited within adolescents having average intelligence, where intelligence is taken to be the controlled variable.

2. Adolescents falling in the age group of 14-18 years (middle adolescents) were considered for the study. Since they were facing the board exams and entrance examinations of various professional courses, they were expected to be under academic load, parental pressure and be test anxious.

3. The adolescents were restricted within the urban population. It was expected that people of divergent sets residing here would represent themselves as the population which might have some impact on the result, that may throw valuable insight about the personality makeup of today’s adolescents. The study therefore has been delimited to adolescent children residing in Kolkata metropolis.