CHAPTER

ONE

INTRODUCTION
1. INTRODUCTION

During the period from 1900 to 1935, the study of individual differences became one of the most lively areas of investigation and discussion among psychologists. The approach of Stern, Lewin and others carried the strong implication that, although we might neatly identify specific dimensions of personality, the complete understanding of the person would remain elusive until such a time as we are able to understand trait in the context of environmental conditions.

By the late 1940s a considerable and diversified effort was obvious among personality researchers. Many studied personality along fairly traditional psychoanalytic lines, while many others used the conceptual framework of Allport, Murray or Cattell. During the past 25 years, personality research has been marked by a significant upswing in uniconcept dimension or trait research. Much impetus has been afforded this movement by a more sophisticated research methodology, and probably much more has occurred as a result of the variety of newer conceptualizations of personality ranging from those offered by the variety of learning theories, the research
of social psychology, and the growing framework for a
cognitive model of personality.

Contemporary personality research has
tended to favour experimental manipulations over
measures of personality dispositions to test hypotheses
about the determinants of behaviour. That the use of
experimentally manipulated variables allows the
investigator to draw causal inference from his results
makes that preference an understandable one. Yet, in
making experimental manipulations the research
strategy of choice, psychologists have overlooked the
potential value of personality variables as predictors
of behaviour. No doubt the behavioural tendency to
overlook the predictive value of personality variables
has also been maintained by earlier contentions
(e.g. Mischel, 1968, pp 62-83, 1969) that situational
factors are more powerful predictors of behaviour than
individual difference variable.

Cofe (1967) expressed one of the major
reasons which deter psychologists from undertaking
research into individual differences: "I remain to be
convinced... that there are but a few basic processes
underlying individual differences in learning, and that
the interactions of specific task characteristics with
highly specific individual propensities are not the basis of the enormous individual differences which everyone finds in most learning tasks.\(^1\)

The potential intertwinnings of individual difference and experimental variables are numerous and often intricate. The failure of many personality measures to predict behaviour reliability has been a major problem in the systematic study of individual differences. Although the poor performance of many measures is indisputable, the reasons for this phenomenon are open to question.

There are many other consequences which follow from the failure of learning theorists to take seriously the task of scientific investigation on the personality side. In the efforts made by psychologists to relate personality and learning, there seems to be the major emphasis on learning aspects, a strong learning bias to the exclusion of sound personality basis. As Eysenck puts it, "... Spence and Taylor, very much like Ewen and Miller, are strong on the side of learning theory, but weak in relation to personality theory."\(^2\)

\(^1\) Cofer, C.N. The specificity of individual differences in learning. In R.M.Gagne (Ed.), Learning and Individual Differences, Merrill, Columbus, Ohio (1967)

\(^2\) Eysenck, H.J. The Dynamics of Anxiety and Hysteria; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957; p. 69
this weakness, it can fairly be asserted that these
theories have set the ball rolling in respect of
accounting for human behaviour both in terms of
learning and personality.

Experimental personality research has
been stimulated by the appearance of limited domain
theories that emphasize a particular personality
construct. Research guided by such theories
typically focuses upon the measurement of a single
personality variable and seeks to determine its
antecedents, correlates and behavioural consequences.

Blass (1977) and London and Exner (1978)
have attempted to survey a number of such personality
dimensions and reviewed their effects on behaviour.
Some of these personality dimensions have been given
the status of narrow band theories by Peck and Whitlow
(1975). Need for achievement, Locus of Control, Field
dependence-independence, Repression-sensitisation,
Sensation seeking have been subjected to empirical
scrutiny but anxiety has undoubtedly received greater
attention than any personality dimension.

There has been an ambiguity in the
conceptual status of anxiety which resulted from the
more or less indiscriminate use of the term to refer
to two very different types of concept. Cattell and
Scheier (1958, 1961) on the basis of the factor analytic studies labelled these two different types of anxiety concepts as trait anxiety and state anxiety.

Two theories explaining the nature of anxiety and its effects on learning have been most successful 1) The Iowa Theory and 2) The Yale Theory. Most of the research on anxiety carried out by Hullian tradition have thought of anxiety as a drive and had used animals in their research. In order to extend this research to human level it became necessary to develop a measure of drive in humans and to meet this demand Taylor’s Manifest Anxiety Scale (MAS) was designed in 1952 as a measure of 'Drive' in the Hullian sense.

The study of human performance, a branch of experimental psychology, analyzes the processes involved in skilled performance, studies the development of skills, and attempts to identify factors which limit different aspects of performance. It seeks to analyze complex tasks into their simpler components and to establish quantitative estimates of man's abilities in each of the basic functions. In this way it makes possible predictions about man's capability in performing skills.

It has been said that the nineteenth century was the age of power and the twentieth century is the age of information. Since about 1950 the world has seen
a tremendous growth in the sciences dealing with information. Of importance to psychologists, has been the development of human-performance theory, which seeks an approach to the study of information processing within man's nervous system and communication between man and his environment. The complex human skills may be fruitfully studied through an analysis of the components, which involve different information-processing functions.

The field of Motor and Perceptual-Motor behaviour has become extremely interesting in the past few years, probably as a result of some rather severe changes in the way in which researchers have tackled their problems. American research on skills has tended to deal with behaviourally large units like tracking performance and has given less emphasis to the constituent mechanism that enter skilled sequences. British research, on the other hand, has taken a more molecular view, according to it the subject has a number of sensory input channels, the short and long-term memory stores and a decision mechanism of limited capacity to issue orders to a number of effector mechanisms.
Knowledge of results or feedback has been found to contribute importantly to the development of many perceptual-motor skills. It serves both to inform the subject of the effect of his actions and to motivate him to continue trying to improve.

The effect of anxiety on learning and performance has been established through experimentation by many personality psychologists. The relationship between these two has been affected by the kind of learning, the nature of the task, the motivating conditions and also the type of motivation, positive or negative, involved. Very few studies have been done to relate anxiety and perceptual-motor performance. Effect of feedback on the perceptual-motor tasks has been the focus of attention of many psychologists. The investigator therefore, attempted to study the following problem:

PERCEPTUAL-MOTOR PERFORMANCE AS A FUNCTION OF ANXIETY, TASK DIFFICULTY AND FEEDBACK.