INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion. What a man thinks of himself, that it is which determines ... his fate.

Thoreau, Walden, 1854

In the post independence period in India, various constitutional and other administrative provisions had been introduced for the educational advancement of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Article 17 of the Indian constitution specified that "untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form forbidden, thus enabling the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes get not only equal treatment but also further encouragement".

Article 46 under the Directive Principles of State Policy Specified that "the State shall promote with special care, the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, shall protect them from special injustice and all forms of exploitation". Fifteen Presidential orders were issued under Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution of India to specify the Scheduled Castes and Schedules Tribes, who would qualify for the prescribed protection and safeguards either directly of by way of insisting on their general rights as
citizens. This was done with the objective of promoting the educational and economic interests of SC/ST and thereby removing their social disabilities. In addition, Article 15(4) states that the state may make special provisions for the advancement of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

In the National Policy on education 1986, one section of the document was devoted to the strategies for making education accessible and benefiting the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The emphasis was laid on removal of disparities and providing of equal educational opportunities to all, by particularly to attending to the specific needs of those who had so far been denied such consideration. The policy proposed the measures like encouraging and increasing community awareness through adult education, encouraging of educated ST youths to take up teaching in tribal areas, provisions for residential schools, scholarships in higher education to encourage Study of technical, professional and para-professional courses, Special remedial courses and other Programmes to remove Psycho-Social impediments affecting their performance in various courses and create awareness cultural identity of the tribal people and their enormous creative talent.

The reservation percentage for Scheduled Castes was fixed at 15% and for Scheduled Tribes at 7.5% in all higher educational institutions. Adequate representations were attempted by lowering
the entry standards, lowering the required grades, provision of remedial courses and other support. Periodic instructions and guidelines were issued by the UGC and the Ministry of Education to colleges and universities to achieve the match between reservations and the number admitted with the purpose of educational development of SC/ST. In 1989, Article 334 of the Constitution was amended (62nd Amendment Act) to extend the period of reservation of seats for SC (15%) and ST (7.5%) in job and educational institutions for another ten years i.e., upto the year 2000 A.D.

Inspite of various measures for the education of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by the government, it had been at various forums that these students lagged behind in their educational, social and professional achievements in comparison to the general students. An important reason in addition to poverty was that these socially and educationally disadvantaged were not psychologically geared to take full advantage of changing conditions or increased opportunities. Before analysing the cognitive factors that resulted from such deprivation. The concept of disadvantage in the psychological literature has been defined (Havighurst, 1964) to include three Criteria :

(A) Family Characteristics :

These included the absence of childhood as a specially prolonged and protected stage in the life-cycle, early initiation in to sex, strong predisposition to authoritarianism, lack of
privacy, sibling rivalry, and competition for limited goods and maternal affection.

(B) Social Group Characteristics of the Family:

The social group characteristics of the culturally disadvantaged included:

(i) The coping mechanisms and skills invented and used to survive in a culture of poverty, which may be dysfunctional and self-defeating when viewed in the context of a larger ambient culture.

(ii) The higher rates of mental illness, physical disease, delinquency, unemployment, under employment, blocked and blunted aspirations and loss of hope for future.

(C) Personal Characteristics:

The personal characteristics of a socially disadvantaged reflected:

1. Strong feeling of marginality, of helplessness or powerlessness, of dependence and inferiority (Lewis, 1968).


3. Low aspirational level and a low motivation for change (Wheat, Slaughter and Frank, 1967).

4. Low self-esteem - psychologically the most pervasive and irreparable damage caused by membership of a lower-status
group, the difficulty experienced by the individual in establishing satisfying anchoring points for his developing personality (Bloom, 1971).

The education of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India has been the focal point of concern in the post-independent India. Although, visible progress has occurred in the life of these students, the educational system failed to enable and encourage them to take full advantage of the available opportunities. The causes of failure to achieve and to prolong their stay at the educational institutions were economic, social and psychological. Curle (1969) pointed out that the economic causes were more apparent as poor families often needed the labour of even young children. On social level the parent's occupational status, educational level, parents' educational and occupational aspirations for their children, their attitude's and values and the demands of the school affected the performance adversely. On psychological level the student's own drives, motives, ideals, interests, aspirations, self-perception and need achievement influenced their achievement negatively.

The socio-psychological causes of failure appeared to be the most potent (Curle, 1969). The type of social interaction experienced during one's childhood determined the educational aspirations and achievements during later life. The disadvantaged students found the educational institutions different than what they experienced in early life (Soares and Soares, 1969). These discontinuities had psychological repercussions for their
adjustment in the classroom and thus academic achievement (Jenson, 1973).

Karlekar (1975) observed that the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes enrolled in universities and institutions of the higher education, but due to the economic distress and a different academic milieu for which they had not been trained, they tended to opt out of the system. Further, they created the image of substandard students who were pushed in to the system due to the positive discrimination in their favour, but were not upto the expected standards. This invariably acquired a caste bias which hindered integration of SC/ST and provided no solution to their educational problems.

The problems of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes students were essentially linked to missing of their socialization into the dominant norms of the educational system. General category/majority students with better family background, language and standard schooling had definite edge over the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students, who had poor background, restricted language and unsatisfactory/daybed schooling. They perhaps developed low academic self-concepts and higher stress and had lower academic performance. Poor self-concept had of late been found linked with problems of anxiety, social withdrawal, and poor academic performance (Merrell, 1994).

There was little research on academic self-concept, stress and academic performance of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled
Tribes despite the unquestioned, theoretical and empirical relevance of probes using the theoretical models related to these constructs. The theoretical constructs of academic self-concept, stress and academic performance are discussed below.

1.1 ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT - THE CONSTRUCT AND MODEL

One’s subjective inner experiences happen to be the sources of individual behaviour. A person’s own beliefs about oneself influenced one’s behaviour and actions. A positive self-concept was known to lead to constructive and socially desirable behaviour. Conversely, a distorted self-concept could lead to deviant and socially inadequate behaviours. Self-concept was a source of motivation and helped in one’s perceptual and cognitive organization. At its core, it had the human capacity for reflexivity, frequently considered the quintessential feature of the human condition. Reflexivity or self-awareness was the ability of a person to be both subject and object to oneself and was conceptualized as the dialogue between ‘I’ (the self-as-knower) and the ‘me’ (the self-as-known), an internal conversation, which emerged with the emergence of language (Mead, 1934).

This made self a continuum rooted in the past and influencing one’s behaviour in the future (Eaper, 1973). The self was explicitly viewed as having evaluative as well as knowledge components (Campbell 1990). The evaluative component of self-esteem was a global self-reflexive attitude toward how one felt
about the self when it was viewed as an object of evaluation. This conceptualization did not deny the fact that feelings of self-worth could vary over time and that different roles could be differentially important in affecting one's self-regard (e.g., Burke, 1980 and Campbell and Tesser, 1985).

Many of the current theories viewed self-concept as a cognitive schema which organized the abstract and concrete memories of self and the controlled the processing of self-relevant information (Kihlstrom and Cantor, 1983; Markus 1980). Rosenberg (1979) defined self-concept as the sum total of the individual's thoughts and feelings about oneself as an object—a physical, social, moral and existential being [cognitive, conative and evaluative components].

The two aspects self-concept focused on were important-identities and self-evaluations. The concept of identity focused on the meanings. Constituting the self as an object, it gave structure and content to the self-concept, and anchored the self to social systems. Thus identity referred to who or what one is, and to the various meanings attached to oneself by self and others. Self-evaluation (or self-esteem) occurred with regard to specific identities which an individual held or with regard to an overall evaluation of self.

The structure of the self-concept can be viewed as the hierarchical organisation of a person's identities, reflecting in large part the social and cultural systems within which it
existed (Stryker, 1980). Prior to the 1980s, the self-concept was conceptualized as a simple and unitary phenomenon. In recent years however, self-concept was chosen to be described as: organised, multifaceted, hierarchical, stable, developmental, evaluative and differentiable (Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton, 1976 and Byrne, 1984).

The organised or structured nature of self-concept had been emphasised Jersild (1952) and Sears (1963). An individual's experiences diverse constituted the data on which one based one's perceptions of oneself. To reduce the complexity of these experiences, a person receded them into simple forms, or categories. The categories represented a way of organizing experiences and giving them meaning.

The self-concepts is multifaced. The particular facets reflected the category system adopted by a particular individual or shared by groups. Sears (1964) emphasized the category system to include such areas as the school, social acceptance, physical attractiveness and ability. Brookover et al. (1965) accepted the hierarchical nature of self-concept. They agree that facets of self-concept form a hierarchy of individual experience in particular situations at the base, to a general self-concept at the apex. The general self-concept was stable, but at the base of the hierarchy. The self-concept varied with variations in situation, (Ludwig and Maehr, 1967), and becomes increasingly differentiated with age and experience.
The self-concept was evaluative in character. Not only did an individual develop a description of oneself in a particular situation, one also formed an evaluation of oneself in these situations (Shavelson et al. 1976). These evaluations were made against absolute standards such as 'Ideal', or against relative standards such as 'peers' or perceived evaluations of 'significant others'. The importance of these evaluations depended upon the individual's past experience in a particular culture, society etc. Brookover and Thomas (1965) also found it having differentiability. Self-Concept was influenced by specific experiences, so the more closely the self-concept was linked with the specific situation, the clearer will be the relationship between the self-concept and behaviour in the situation. Thus, an academic self-concept would be a better predictor of performance in college than non-academic self-concept.

In Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton's model there was a general facet at the apex of the self-concept, which was hierarchically divided into academic and non-academic components of self-concept.

Academic Self-concept was then divided into self-concepts related to particular subject areas (e.g., Mathematics, English) and the non academic self-concept is divided into social, emotional, and physical self-concepts. The social self-concept was divided into two components (peers and significant others) and the physical self-concept also had two components like
ability and appearance). Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976) hierarchical self-concept model is shown below in Figure 1.

Fig. 1: Structure of self concept. ("from "Self-Concept: Validation of Construct Interpretations" by R.J. Shavelson, J.J. Hubner and J.C. Stanton, Review of Educational Research, 1976, 46, 407-441."

11
Coopersmith (1967) defined academic self-concept as the belief a student had of his or her academic behaviour in the classroom. Students with higher self-concept were active, exploratory, and persistent. They participated fully in daily activities at home and school. They usually experienced a great deal of care and affection in their lives. Their parents’ rule setting and disciplinary practices provided a clear social structure. They displayed traits of self-confidence and social attractiveness which usually led to success of their efforts, yet they coped well with failure. The demonstrated verbal behaviour appropriate to the social setting.

Coopersmith (1967) conceptualized five dimensions (Student initiative, social attention, ability to accept failure, social attraction and self-confidence) of academic self-concept on which student differed.

The importance of academic self-concept in education was acknowledged because it affected the academic performance of students. Numerous researchers (Hansford and Hattie, 1982; Shavelson and Bolus, 1982; Marsh, 1986, 1987) indicated that the academic self-concept was different from the general self-concept and it correlate positively with academic achievement and other academic behaviour than the general self-concept. Academic behaviour in classroom influenced teachers’ preferences for students and, in the process the quality of interaction. The positive academic outcomes were associated with academically
oriented behaviour reflecting high levels of interest in school work, effort to earn higher grades, and active attempts to master subject matter independently (Corno and Mandinach, 1983; Sivan, 1986; Pressley, Borkowski and Schneider, 1987 and Zimmerman and Schink, 1989). Teachers preferred cooperative, conforming, cautious and responsible students. They found negative, aggressive behaviour highly detrimental to classroom order (Brophy and Good, 1974; Safran and Safran, 1985 and Kedar-Voivodas, 1983).

This research proposed to use Coopersmith's model as it afforded to possibility of differentiating between students having high and low academic self-concept in terms of classroom behaviours. The model also provided a rationale for intervening in the academic lives of students, who might need motivational stimulation.

1.2 STRESS - THE CONSTRUCT AND MODEL

The concept of stress was first used in life sciences by Han Selye in 1936. Stress defined it by referring to a set of circumstances in which an individual could not respond adequately or instrumentally to environmental stimuli or could respond only at the cost of excessive wear and tear on the organism, for example, chronic fatigue, tension, worry, physical damage, nervous breakdown, or loss of self-esteem. Stress was a relational concept, and involved factors in the environment combined with individual factors.
There were four stages identified in the development and manifestation of stress -

(i) To begin with there was an event in the individual's environment which exerts force on the person. (ii) This was followed by the individual's understanding and interpretation of the event. (iii) There was then a reaction or response to the causal event, which manifested itself in a physiological, psychological or behavioural form. (iv) Finally, there were the consequences of the response, both for the individual afflicted with stress and the environment in which one lives.

The stress with the same magnitude and direction could have differential effects on adults and children. Cox (1978), Peterson (1961) and Zimbardo (1979) gave a very comprehensive account of the behavioural, physiological and health of stress. Zimbardo (1979) reported that a person could manifest stress in various ways like (1) emotional manifestation or reactions like sadness, anger, irritation, frustration, rage and even elation etc. (2) The behavioural reactions or changes in performance, poor concentration, forgetting, lessened productivity or inability to get along with other people. (3) The induction of changes in physiological functioning, such as head-ache, back-ache, high blood-pressure, stomach upset and susceptibility to infection. and; (4) The cognitive level of the person's beginning to think of himself/herself in certain ways, that could lead to lower self-esteem and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.
In Hopkins' symptom checklist (1974) stress was defined in terms of somatization, obsessive-compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, depression and anxiety. Somatization reflected distress from perceptions of bodily dysfunctions, such as headaches, pains, soreness, and discomfort. Obsessive-compulsive reflected irresistible thoughts, impulses and actions not connected to ego drives like forgetfulness, worry about carelessness, indecisiveness, and difficulty concentrating, whereas interpersonal sensitivity reflected feelings of personal inadequacy and inferiority as compared to others such as being annoyed, critical of others and socially insecure. Depression reflected low spirit and dejections and was manifested in poor appetite, crying and feeling hopeless. Anxiety reflected apprehension, distress, and uneasiness and was manifested in shakiness, trembling, and being afraid. Thus stress affected emotional, behavioural, physiological and cognitive levels.

It was believed that the educational institutions subjected students to prolonged stress by forcing on them curriculum and teaching methods unsuited to their abilities and needs, thus condemning them to years of failure, low self-concept and low prestige among their age-mates. Students should learn to cope with occasional failures, but continued failure would breed harmful effects. The severity of stress also depended on the relative importance to the individual of the needs frustrated.

This model of stress had several educational implications. In practical terms it offered a means of assessing an
individual's modes of responding to stress and appraising the degree of one's stress due to the various educational conditions and interactions. Stress was an important factor in college adjustment. The stress might affect the educational development and scholastic achievement of students in the college. The social milieu was also significant source of stress. Societal norms, rules, conventions and practices restricted the accessibility of various resources to the person and become sources of hardship, threat and conflict.

Stress in students, contributed to their failure. Various researches indicated that the 'positive discrimination' of SC and ST students failed to retain them in the educational system, particularly at the level of higher education. This was negatively interpreted by students, although a stable feature of the academic environment, hampering student-student and student-teacher interactions. In course of time the SC and ST students internalised this and developed a belief system that they were not intelligent and motivated to compete with general students. They had the inability to concentrate, low motivation to learn, resentment and stress proneness.

Their origin in deprived social conditions and inadequate linguistic abilities, often exposed them to stress in coping with the classroom instruction. They did not feel accepted by general students and performed at a rather low level.

Roger's self-theory (1959) also emphasized the congruence
between self-concept and organismic experiences (actual experiences) in the person's adjustment, maturity and full functioning. An incongruence between self and organism made the individual feel threatened and anxious. One behaved defensively and one's thinking became constricted and rigid. The theory had educational implications as it explained student's stress related to discrepancy between self-perceptions and outcomes.

1.3 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Academic performance was defined "as the knowledge attained or skills developed in the school subjects, usually determined by the test scores or by marks assigned by teachers or both" (Carter, 1959). The academic performance was contingent on learners, teachers, context and content characteristics. Many researchers have investigated the academic achievement of different groups of students. The relationship between social status of social groups and academic achievement was found strong. The value orientations, family atmosphere and peer group influence accounted for a great deal of variation in academic performance.

Festinger's (1954) theory of social comparison processes was used to examine the relative differences among students from SC, ST and general category. He maintained that people need to have stable, accurate appraisals of themselves. The theory posited that people preferred to evaluate themselves using objective and nonsocial standards, but if such objective information was
unavailable, then individuals will compare themselves using other people. One's self-concept developed through social comparison processes. Without the presence of other human beings, one lacked a guide to behaviour. The comparison was bidirectional rather than unidirectional, and it took a variety of forms to meet the individual's goals. The importance of social comparisons in self-evaluation and social behaviour was widely accepted.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Sharma (1978) concluded, in his review of over 176 studies on anxiety, that eighty three percent of the studies were concerned with school and college samples from urban setting only. Elementary school children, rural, socially disadvantaged, the minority and the SC/ST groups continued to be neglected by researchers. This made the applicability and generalizability of the findings restricted. The self-concept, emotional experiences and coping responses of the SC/ST and other deprived students were quite different from those of non SC/ST and non deprived students. The attention should thus be paid to the study of deprived students in comparison with non-deprived students.

Offer students responded to the institutional environments differently. What governs their behaviour from their point of view were their unique perceptions, and the world in which they lived, the meaning the things had for them. Thus the role, students play in their own education, through their perceptions, beliefs and behaviours, were important factors leading to
effective performance. Though all the students in a particular institution were exposed to the same expectations, and demands they did not perceive these in the same manner. Those having more favourable perceptions of oneself were more successful in college as compared to those who had less favourable perceptions.

Also environments had differential impacts on students' academic self-concepts. Students with definite vocational aspirations perceived the environments and their academic behaviours as more favourable than those who were undecided. The students choice of major field reflected differences in socialisation and exposure to different reference people, academic ideals and values. This made for differential perceptions of oneself in the different academic environments having effects on their performance.

Specifically in India when SC/ST students on coming to college, make many social psychological adjustments, which affected their academic performance directly. They realised that they have low academic self-concept and low intelligence and could not compete with the non SC/ST students. They were unable to concentrate on studies, feel non motivated to learn, become resentful, rebellious and stress prone.

Moreover the teachers, parents, neighbours and peers put pressure on these for better performance which increased their stress. At times one reached a point of stress where one was not even able to perform to match one's abilities. This was
particularly intense for students who were close to the university degree examination and had to compete with a large number of general category students. The graduating students were aware that their poor performance will affect their onward admission into higher courses and their future job perspectives. The present study thus aimed to find out relationship between academic self-concept and stress and its effect on academic performance of SC/ST and the general category college students of arts and science stream.

The comparison of the academic self-concept of final year SC, ST and general category students of arts and science stream and its effect on their performance should be helpful in attaining the objective of understanding the problems of SC and ST students and their maximizing the educationally effectant behaviour. An understanding of the deficits in academic self-concept and the consequent stress could be used in designing programmes of their counselling and guidance and enhance, their academic self-concept and get the best out of their capabilities. The SC and ST students may be able to replace their earlier identity with a new identity and improve their self-image.

The following analytical model was formulated to examine the relationships among academic self-concept, stress and academic performance in this research.
1.5

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Personal and Social Variables
1. Age
2. Sex
3. Subject Stream
4. Socio-economic Status
5. Institution Type
6. Family Type
7. Family Size
8. Place of Residence
9. Place of Schooling

Academic Self-concept
1. Self-confidence
2. Initiative
3. Ability to Accept Failure
4. Leadership Qualities
5. Social Attention

Stress
1. Anxiety
2. Somatization
3. Mental Weakness
4. Depression
5. Lack of Efficiency
6. Obsessive-Compulsive
7. Psychological Fatigue

Academic Performance

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