THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
OF VARIABLES IN THE STUDY

Introduction

The present chapter has been devoted to a brief discussion on the theoretical and conceptual framework in respect of the variables - self concept, vocational and educational aspirations and academic achievement.

Interest in the self can be traced back to early writings of Aristotle and other Greek philosophers. An individual's conception of himself is often considered to be an important determinant of his performance in the cognitive effective or physical domain. The interest of psychologists in the self, as an area of empirical study, has greatly increased over the past several years.

Of the various recent theories, the theory of 'self' occupies an important place for understanding, explaining an predicting the human behaviour. A person's behaviour in any situation mostly depends upon the way he perceives the situation, his self being the part of that perceived situati Some researchers are of the opinion that a large part of behaviour that constitutes personality is self-oriented behaviour. What a person does or how he behaves is thus,
determined by his self-concept. They maintain that not only the behaviour and self-concept go together and mutually interact, but all behaviour is motivated and caused by the self-concept. The self gives to the personality its dynamic and unique character. In fact, much of what we say and do, centres around or derives from an awareness of the self. Therefore, without proper understanding of self, the understanding of human behaviour may be incomplete. The self determines in a large measure the goals for which one strives, the likes and dislikes one has and satisfaction one obtains. This suggests that to understand behaviour, the study of self-concept is essential for unfolding the unique characteristics of human nature.

2.10 **Self-Concept Defined**

To begin with it may be worthwhile to see how self-concept has been defined by various scholars and the way it helps in unfolding and understanding the personality characteristics of man. Psychologists believe that the core of the individual's perceptual field is his self-concept and that a person's life experiences result in relatively complex set of expectancies. This includes certain aspects of the inner world of his own feelings, wishes and thoughts. As a by-product of his experiences,
especially his experiences with people he develops a perception of himself in the sense of 'who he is' and what sort of a person he is. The self is one's inner world which results from the evaluational interactions with others, becoming the consistent personal perception of 'I' or 'Me'.

The self-concept is a system of attitudes, feelings and perceptions that the individual has about himself. All attitudes are important determinants of behaviour, but attitudes concerning the self are much more basic than those in which the individual is less ego-involved and are therefore, more potent in determining the behaviour. The patterns of stimulation which produce feelings of well-being, hope, mastery and control mediate recognizable patterns of perceptions, variously called the self-structure or the self-concept. The self-structure is the individual's perception of his general habits of thinking and acting, whereas the self-concept is perhaps better reserved to mean the individual's way of looking at himself in an evaluative sense. So self-concept means simply an individual's view of himself or herself.

In one of the earliest considerations of self-concept, James (1950) observed that "a man's self is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his horse, his wife and children,"
his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account\(^1\). It is believed that the term 'self-concept' was originally proposed by Lecky (1945)\(^2\) and adopted by Rogers (1961)\(^3\). In Lecky's basic structure, all of an individual's values are organized into a single system nucleus of which is his evaluation of himself. As he undergoes new experiences, he accepts or rejects them in terms of their compatibility with his personal evaluation of himself. Thus, the self-concept is best conceived as a system of attitudes towards oneself.

Self-concept is further defined by Jersild (1963)\(^4\) as the sum total of all that he can call his. The self, to him includes among other things, a system of ideas, attitudes, values and commitments. The self is thus, a person's total subjective environment, it is the distinctive centre of experience and significance.


Human behaviour has been explained in a quite distinctive way by Snygg and Combs (1949). According to them, we must observe and explain behaviour from the point of view of the individual himself. People do not behave according to the facts as observed by others but as they view them. This unique perceptions of the individual helps him in formulation of his decision. Behaviour is always relevant, purposeful, and pertinent because it has some meaning for the particular individual in a particular situation as he sees it. The situation as it appears to the behaviour is referred to as 'phenomenal field'. Since the behaviour of an individual is reasonable and necessary result of this phenomenal field, it is important to understand the phenomenal field or the field of operation of an individual and its inter-relationships. The phenomenal field which governs behaviour, is the more personal part of the total physical environment in which the individual finds himself. This is his total universe of experiences and so it is the individual's real world - his reality. The subjectively apprehended world is known as the phenomenal field. The phenomenal field is, in consequence both fluid - constantly changing - and organized differently for different individuals. Some what more close is the 'Phenomenal Self' which

includes those aspects of the phenomenal field to which we refer when we say 'I'. The phenomenal self includes the physical self, evaluation of self and definition of self. All behaviour is a function of the phenomenal field, but not all parts of this field are equally important in determining the behaviour. Those parts of the phenomenal field which are part of or characteristic of the individual himself make up the self-concept. Thus, according to them, the self-concept 'includes those parts of the phenomenal field which the individual has differentiated as definite and fairly stable characteristics of himself'.

According to Rogers (1951), an organism always wants to satisfy itself and it always functions with a view to maintain, enhance and actualise itself. In his view self-concept is 'what I am'. The self-concept develops out of one's interaction with environment. "It is composed of such elements as the perceptions of one's characteristics and abilities, the percepts and the concepts of the self in relation to the others and to the environment, the value qualities which are perceived as having positive or negative values". Donald Felker (1974) has defined self-concept as 'the sum total of the view one has of one's self, a unique

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set of perceptions, ideas, and attitudes that differ to
varying degrees from the view that other people have of
the individual'\textsuperscript{7}.

More recent literature on self-concept has been
reviewed by Jersild, Telford and Sawrey (1975)\textsuperscript{8}. They
consider self-concept as a very important 'determinant'
of an individual's social interactions and personality
adjustment. An individual's self-concept embodies many
components - cognitive as well as affective. Cognitive
component includes 'his perception of his physical attri-
butes and his conception of himself, of his qualities as
a person, his abilities, the purposes, beliefs, moral
commitments and values.' His conception of himself
incorporates not only his present situation but also views
its roots in the past and is able to project himself into
the future. Affective components of self-concept include
'the full range of human feelings, sentiments and moods.'
These cognitive and affective aspects develop in the self
a capacity for self evaluation, a capacity for viewing
oneself, or a facet of oneself with approval or disapproval.

\textsuperscript{7} Donald Felker (1974), 'Building Positive Self-Concept':
Minneapolis. In S.J. Owen, H.P. Blount, and E. Moscov, 
Educational Psychology: An Introduction, (Boston: Little,

\textsuperscript{8} A.T. Jersild, C.W. Telford, and J.M. Sawrey, Child
2.11 Dimensions of Self: Screening of literature yields a number of terms in the context of self-concept. They include terms such as dimensions of self, aspects of self, characteristics of self, components of self, constituents of self and so on. Very often these terms are used interchangeably. Jersild (1963)\(^9\) mentioned three main dimensions of Self: (i) ideal self, (ii) real self; and (iii) social self. Smith (1961)\(^10\), however, classified dimensions of self into 'ideal', 'perceived' and 'real self'. James (1950) enumerated what he described as material self, social self, spiritual self and pure ego. There is also a mention of 'basic self-concept', 'transitory perception of self', 'conscious self', and 'unconscious self' available in the literature.

From among the above, three aspects of self were taken in the present investigation viz., Perceived Self (what a person thinks he is), Ideal Self (what a person wants to be), and Social Self (what a person thinks others perceive him). Self-Perception is taken to include all the three aspects.

Perceived Self: Perceived self is the way one perceives and describes oneself or what one may think about oneself. It refers to that trait and characteristics which an individual perceives to be a part of himself. It may be influenced by his physical self, his appearance, his dress, his abilities and dispositions, his values, beliefs and aspirations.

Ideal Self: The ideal self is the image a person has of the kind of person he would like to be. It may be defined as the organised conceptual pattern of characteristics and emotional states which an individual consciously holds desirable (or undesirable) for himself. The ideal self refers to the ideological plan and its aim is to know what an individual wants to be irrespective of what he really is. Scholars regard Ideal Self as the highest level of self which provides a standard against which the rest of the self may be judged (Smith, 1961; Jersild, 1963).

Social Self: The social self is what a person thinks how others perceive him, i.e., it is a person's idea of his impression by others. Although the degree of impression may not correspond with their actual perceptions, yet it leaves an important effect on a person's behaviour.

Real Self: The real self is what we actually are. It includes both what an individual is aware of and what he is
not aware of. An individual attempting to describe his own self, can at any given moment provide only an approximation of his 'Real Self' because only a part of the real self is visible to the individual. Real self, therefore, is the perceived self plus the unconscious self (Smith, 1961; Jersild and Sawrey, 1975). Though, no attempt is made to measure real self in the present study, the above description does indicate that some sort of distinction exists between what an individual feels he actually is (Real Self), what he feels ought to be or he would like to be (Ideal Self), and what a person thinks he is (Perceived Self).

2.12 Determinants of Self-Concept: It is difficult to say in precise terms as to how the self-concept begins. 'Is the self-concept influenced by heredity and fixed for all time, or is it learned?' Actually, it is acquired both ways, but the part of it that is learned is what concerns us most.

There are three major determinants of the self-concept, viz., genetic inheritance, family, and the external environment.

Although one's genetic inheritance is largely fixed, its effects may be altered to some extent in specific cases.

For example, nutritional factors may sometimes significantly alter the growth patterns of individuals. Medical or therapeutic treatment may sometimes offset the effects of certain kinds of physical handicaps, and the self-concept could be seriously eroded by a temporary crisis involving physical development.

A child's closest family members - his primary group - are the first who usually extend the greatest influence on his self-concept. The way parents and others in the family regard the child, is largely responsible for his attitudes toward himself.

As the child grows and interacts with the environment, his teachers, friends and neighbours become contributors to the development of his self-concept. Later, in his adolescence, he comes into contact with individuals and social groups whose influence contributes to his personality development through the setting of competitive standards and especially the inculcation of social values and attitudes.

2.13 Development of Self-Concept: Psychologists believe that self-concept is something which develops and which is not present on or immediately after birth. Every infant is born without the knowledge of himself or the world around him. At first, his world is totally undifferentiated. As he experience
hunger, dampness, and pain and as he gains control over physiological functions, he begins to differentiate between 'me' and 'not me'. As he becomes more a person and less a mere organism, the process of living itself becomes as important to him as the actual satisfaction of his needs.

Erikson (1963) postulated that, if an infant's needs are met fully and dependably, he becomes aware of the world as a good, stable, and encouraging place to be trusted. But when his needs are not met, the world for him becomes a frustrating, threatening place where no trust is possible. Thus, the infant's basic attitudes of trust or distrust are formed and these in turn, determine how he would regard others and view events of life.

It is, however, difficult to draw a definite line as to when the child first becomes aware of himself as distinct from objects or from others. Psychologists like Nash believe that the awareness of self begins at about fifteen months of age. It is commonly observed that a two-year-old child often misuses the first, second and third person pronouns. But to Murphy (1947), culmination of all the children's experiences

before two years marks the emergence of the awareness of the self. In late infancy period, the child's self-concept starts becoming much more precise as he learns to speak and understand the meaning of 'mine'. Eventually, the child is able to differentiate things of special meaning to him. For the three year old, increased awareness of himself is developed into an integrated self-concept. This is a very important stage, because he is now capable of a wide variety of behaviour, including some that must be corrected by his parents. Although what he does, may often be a 'no - no', he himself is loved and accepted no matter what his actions are.

The transition from infancy to childhood is not a sign of crystalization of self-concept. The process of the development of self, which is considered to be continuous, enables the vague image of "I" to be sharpened, out-lined and modified. Any break in this continuous process i.e., a sudden loss of self-awareness results in what Hilgard would describe as 'depersonalisation'. As a child develops a picture of himself, he also strives to maintain and protect it by ordering his behaviour accordingly.

The 'middle' years' in the process of growing up are the period that most of us appear to understand least. One reason is that frequently the adolescent turns his back on adult and actively shuts them out from his world. Even if the child
wishes to communicate his feelings and perceptions, he often does not have enough command of the language to do so. He is more likely to 'act out' his emotions in ways that are hard for adults to understand and accept.

The physiological changes experienced by the adolescent stimulate self-doubts about his appearance, behaviour, morality and relationship with others, and therefore, directly or indirectly, may affect the development of self-concept in him. Investigators have often singled out adolescence as the period when the problem of identity is most acute. It is typically a period in which old labels are no longer applicable. Because of the learned need to conceptualise and accompanying fear at no longer having applicable labels, adolescence may well be a time in which an 'identity crisis' occurs.

Adolescence is the stage at which the effects of a positive or negative self-concept can become more noticeable. How the adolescent views himself influence his behaviour in quite obvious ways. It is now that the self-concept functions as a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. His expectations, which are so much related to his positive feelings about himself, help him over the rough moments in class. Combs (1962)\textsuperscript{14} commented upon

Having a positive view of self is much like having money in the bank. It provides a kind of security that permits the owner a freedom he could not have otherwise. With a positive view of self one can risk taking chances; one does not have to be afraid of what is new and different. A sturdy ship can venture farther from port. Just so, an adequate person can launch himself without fear into the new and the untried, and the unknown. This permits him to be creative, original, and spontaneous. What is more, he can afford to be generous, to give of himself freely or to become personally involved in events.

Conversely, the child with a negative self-concept half-expects to do poorly and therefore may work at his responsibilities with little enthusiasm.

2.20 **Vocational and Educational Aspirations**

Aspirations refer to goals and ambitions which an individual strives to attain. These goals range from trivial to significant things in an individual's life. The importance and value attached to them vary from one goal to another which further affects the pursuance of goals. The goals set by an individual are related to the normative structure and value system of the society in which he lives. These values, norms and standards are internalised in the process of socialization which influence the level of aspiration.
To study the aspirations in the present work, two areas have been selected which are considered to be significant for the pupils studying at secondary school stages, namely - Vocational Aspirations and Educational Aspirations.

2.21 **Vocational Aspiration**: By Vocational Aspiration is usually meant what an individual considers to be the ideal vocation for him. The individual gives expression to his vocational aspiration through his best liked occupation. Occupations may be defined as relatively continuous patterns of activities that provide individuals a livelihood. Functional specialisations within the family, tribe, and other units that are mediated primarily as ascribed relationships are not generally regarded as occupations. Occupation is defined by the American College Dictionary as 'one's habitual employment, business, trade or calling'. The term vocation indicates one's occupation, business or work in which one is regularly employed or engaged.

More occupations emerge whenever division of labour is associated with a monetary considerations. In modern societies, the type and number of specializations are increasing constantly. The demand of such
specialization requires formal training in knowledge and skills. Education thus, becomes an important condition for getting occupational opportunities.

Occupational structure may be thought of as a series of more or less permanently related occupational families that are hierarchically ranked according to complexity of skills. Typical classifications used today include professional, technical, managerial, clerical, sales, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled. These, in turn, may be endlessly subdivided into particular vocations. The industrial structure on the other hand, represents broad economic activities or areas, such as agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, communication, government, trade and services of various kinds.

For every young child, the world of work is remote and without immediate meaning. But about the age of 14 or 15 years a young person, with a growing perception of the world around him, becomes aware that school life is in many ways a preparation for his future life. One very important aspect of this is his future career. It is not desirable that he should at this stage select a particular job. Indeed, it may very well be unwise to be too specific. However, what does matter is that he is thinking about the future and therefore, provided that proper use is made of vocational motive, a strong education force is available on which to plan his future course.
Researchers have long been concerned with the question of occupational choice but the development of an understanding as to how a career should be chosen is the real problem they face. By the wise choice of an occupation one may find a large share of life's pleasures and satisfaction in one's work. The choice of an occupation influences every other aspect of life. It determines where the family will live, the type of school where the children will go, and so on. In the words of Morris Ginsberg (1963) 'an individual's occupation is generally a fair index of his mode of life and educational attainments, the sort of people whom he would meet on equal terms, the range of individuals from among whom he would normally choose his or her partner in marriage, and so forth.

In the modern society every individual has to choose an occupation. Thus, both males and females engage themselves in some or the other type of occupations to earn a living. Therefore, occupation distinguishes one person from another. It gives a feeling of independence and at the same time unites equal men and women of different origin and background. In the present set-up occupations are specific functions with a social division of labour. "Occupations now are not hereditarily

determined but they depend upon individuals's choice and
interest and changes of occupations are a frequent occurrence
of the day"$^{17}$.

**Social Prestige of Vocations**: Social prestige is an impor-
tant consideration for making vocational choice. Every
society has some reservations towards the occupational
structure obtaining in it. Certain occupations are prevalent
in one society and certain others in another society. Likewise,
certain occupations are liked by most people and certain others
by a few people in the society. This means that in any society
vocations are rated as having high and low prestige values.
Sociologists have attempted to classify occupations according to
their general standing or prestige. Counts (1925)$^{18}$, was the
first person who worked in the direction of demonstrating the
social prestige of occupations. He selected 25 occupations
representing different occupational groups and asked his subjects
to rank them according to their preferences.

Deeg and Paterson (1946)$^{19}$ replicated the Count's
study on four groups of subjects. The ranking of both the studies
correlated to the extent of (Rho).97, indicating that there was

$^{17}$ Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Vol. XI-XII, p.423.
$^{18}$ G.S. Counts, 'The Social Status of Occupations: A Problem
$^{19}$ Deeg and Paterson (1946), 'Social Prestige of Occupations',
*Jr. of Vocational and Educational Guidance*, Vol.3, No.1, 1956-57,
pp.18-23.
almost no change in the social prestige of occupations in the intervening years. Undoubtedly, different segments of population value the income and education associated with various occupations differently, and, therefore, rank certain occupations differently. The studies made in this field show that there exists a social status hierarchy in the occupational realm. "Greatest prestige is usually associated with the professional and 'higher', business occupations. Skilled trades, technical and distributive occupations occupy an intermediate position followed by the semi-skilled and unskilled occupation ranked at the bottom of the hierarchy" (Brayfield et al., 1954).

Occupation correlates highly with class, status, income and education. It so permeates the lives of those engaged in it and colours their attitudes, values and goals. Degree of prestige of an occupation plays an important role in the choice of an occupation by an individual and adult members of society. The knowledge of social prestige values of different occupations prevailing in a particular society is useful from the standpoint of vocational counsellors and personnel workers.

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2.22 **Educational Aspirations**: Educational aspiration may be defined as an expression of the level of academic qualification an individual wants to attain. By the time pupils enter secondary school stage, they begin to aspire for certain vocations and consequently show preference for certain related courses of studies. An important aim of education is achieved if it prepares an individual for the type of job he is most suited.

Many factors such as socio-economic conditions of the parents, their occupation and occupational attractiveness are found to influence the vocational and educational interests of the subjects. The parents of the children belonging to low socio-economic status in most cases have little education, may even wonder whether or not a high school education is worthwhile. Thus, they tend to feel that their children might as well quit school and obtain jobs as soon as possible. The children belonging to low socio-economic strata of society may themselves often not like to attend school. The parents of the children belonging to high strata of society give due importance to the education and career making of their children whereas people belonging to backward classes and scheduled tribes generally show little interest in this regard. Their traditional
occupations which needed no formal training do not exist any more. Rapid developments made in the field of science and technology, and industrialization have brought about changes in the educational aspirations of the people, and therefore, have consequently affected the vocational aspirations too.

Boys and girls differ in vocational and educational aspirations. Most adolescent girls choose vocations and offer courses which will give them security, and at the same time prepare them for managing the household effectively. But the boys prefer practical and technical vocations and therefore, it becomes imperative for them to enter into some relevant academic programmes suiting their future vocations. Hence the educational system plays a significant role in affecting the vocational and educational aspirations of the individual both through formal and informal means.

2.30 Academic Achievement

Academic achievement refers to the knowledge acquired and the skills developed at school through subjects of study. In other words, academic achievement may be as the competence they actually show in the school or college subjects in which they have received instructions. Academic achievement plays a very significant and vital role in the attainment of the ideals
of harmonious development of the child. In this rapidly changing world and with the growing advancement in science and technology, the place of education has become so vital that every parent today sets high goals to educate his children. Good academic record speaks for the individual. At the time of admission, for entrance to any kind of jobs, for scholarships, for future studies and so on, the academic record is the main testimonial. It portrays the individual. An individual is mere organism without any academic worth.

Modern researches in this area accept the viewpoint that the criterion of learning and learning itself are very complex processes involving many factors and depending on many conditions. However, these principles are neither rigid nor universally applicable. The concept of learning has of late been enlarged to include acquisition of knowledge and skills, habits and attitudes, ideas and values. Recently the interest of the researchers has been focussed in finding out the relationship between scholastic achievement and factors responsible for it. The success or failure at school depends upon various factors. It will be of immense interest and importance to know these factors.

Self-concept - Determining Factor for Academic Achievement, Vocational and Educational Aspirations

There is considerable interest in the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. Self-concept
is found to play a significant role towards adjustment, estimation, intelligence, etc. These in turn, affect academic achievement of pupils. Sinha (1966) reported that low achievers were more dissatisfied with themselves. The low achievers tended to perceive themselves in a more favourable light. High achievers, on the average tended to under-estimate their qualities.

In expressing vocational preference, a person puts into occupational terminology his idea of the kind of person he is; in entering an occupation, he seeks to implement his concept of himself; in getting established in an occupation he achieves self-actualization. The occupation thus, makes possible the playing of role appropriate to the self-concept. This conceptualization of the vocational development process was stimulated by the theory of the development of vocational attitudes which Carter (1940)\textsuperscript{21} derived from his research on interests in adolescence. Leona Tyler (1951)\textsuperscript{22} studied the relationships of aptitudes and interest in young children in which she made use of self-concept theory to explain her findings. She followed up the same study (1955) with more data on the development of interest in the same children as they grow older, building her theory of vocational development.


around the concept of identity. Super (1953) identified 'self-concept development' and 'vocational self-actualization' as the essential elements of the theory of vocational development. He suggested the following for the process of vocational choice: "In choosing an occupation one is, in effect, choosing a means of implementing self-concept. ... The choice of an occupation is one of the points in life at which a young person is called upon to state rather explicitly his concept of himself to say definitely I am this or that type of person." 

An exploratory study conducted by Dillon (1949) gave further support to Super's concept of vocational choice from somewhat different frame of reference. She concluded that 'the profession which an individual selects is one that, according to his concept of it and as he sees himself in it, seems to him to satisfy most adequately the needs that he feels the strongest pressure to fulfil.'

Ginzberg and his co-workers suggested that the process of decision-making of occupational choice seems to have three periods: (i) a fantasy period; (ii) a tentative period; and

(iii) the final period of realistic choice. These periods are marked off by the way in which the individual 'translates' his impulses and needs into an occupational choice. In fantasy period, the child perceives an occupation simply in terms of his wish to be an adult; he shall be whatever he wants to be. But in the tentative period, the individual begins to see the problem as one of choosing a specific occupation, although he has little in the way of reality to temper his subjective estimates. The reality period apparently permits the individual to compromise with all that has gone before in his thinking. 25

Choice of an occupation also depends upon interest. According to Strong (1954) interest is an aspect of behaviour, a response to a liking. Since interests involve reactions to specific things, they must be learned. Vocational interest is defined as not a single choice but as a sum total of many interests that bear in any way upon the occupational career. Occupational interests mean that we have some original feeling for certain jobs. Interest is indispensable, it is an accomplishment of those movements which lead to a choice. ... a choice that is the expression of life and expression of life is growth. 26

Thus vocational choice is the result of a process happening over a period of time, perhaps several years during which a series of factors affect the decision of an individual towards the choice of certain types of vocations and restrict his choice of others.

Human behaviour is motivated towards attainment of aims and goals which an individual sets for himself. The goals aimed at by the individual are related to the normative structure and value system of the society in which he lives. The goals which an individual selects for himself are related to self-conception. An individual who perceives himself highly will set a high level of aspiration while a person who has a low self-conception will be satisfied with mediocre achievements. In specific conditions, however, this relationship is modified. Research evidence gives support that level of aspiration does not appear unless an individual develops an awareness of 'self'. Aspirations emerge when the child has acquired some conception of himself and a sense of pride that must be maintained and enhanced through his efforts.

Since vocational and educational aspirations play an important role in crystalization of human potentialities, it is worthwhile to study these aspirations in respect of pupils in schools as a necessary condition for their future career.