THEORETICAL ORIENTATION
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION : CONCEPTS OF PHYSICAL - MENTAL HANDICAP, ADJUSTMENT, SELF CONCEPT, ALIENATION AND ALTRUISM

As present investigation is focussed on the study of adjustment, self concept, alienation and altruism in normal siblings of the handicapped & normal children, the present chapter reviews the concept of handicap alongwith other variables.

Physical - Mental Handicap

The word "disabled" implies the loss, to some degree of power of body or mind. A disable person is any person who is unable to ensure by himself or herself a normal life, as a result of a deficiency in his or her physical or mental capability (Kohli, 1981).

In the 1980, the WHO defined handicap as a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal for that individual. WHO also differentiated the terms handicap, disability and impairment. Impairment is defined as any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure and function. The disability refers to any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an
activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.

The meaning of the word "Handicap" changed through the years reflecting the society’s changing attitude towards Handicapped people. In the past, a handicapped person meant a person with permanent bodily injury, and was looked upon as deviant from a accepted norm. Such persons were generally cured by special institutions and organizations. In the 1960’s the mentally retarded were included among the handicapped. Today, "a handicap" is a relative and dynamic concept which varies from individual to individual depending on his resources and special situations. Consequently, the handicapped person is not primarily an abnormal person but an ordinary person with special needs (Kohler, 1984).

Disability conditions may be found among children or adults everywhere in the world. The disabled may be severely mentally impaired, deficient, retarded or handicapped. Some children may slow in learning while others may have speech or language defect. Individuals may be partially or totally deaf or totally blind or partially sighted. Still some may be orthopaedically handicapped who cannot move about normally. Children may have specific types of learning disabilities or some may have behaviour problems. Individuals may be affected with various combinations of such conditions as accidents, infectious diseases, defective genes etc.
Thus handicaps in childhood are classified into two basic categories i) Physical Handicap and ii) mental Handicap. A physical handicap affects the child’s physical functions and general mobility and a mental handicap affects intelligence and ability to learn new skills.

Orthopaedic handicaps are considered to be one of the major physical handicaps. Persons disabled because of defects in bones, joints, muscles, tendons, ligament of spine and the limbs fall in the category of orthopaedically handicapped. Orthopaedically handicapped are those whose physical capacity is impaired by the loss, deformity or paralysis of one or more limbs. They are the victims of diseases or injuries which leave behind a certain disability that is permanent and life long. Louttist (1957) has used the term orthopaedic impairment to cover the neuromuscular disabilities including cerebral-palsy and poliomyelitis. The Associations of Physically Handicapped, Bangalore,(1966) has further explained that the orthopaedically handicapped are persons who have defects which cause deformity or an interference with normal functions of the bones, muscles or joints.

As regards mental handicap, mental retardation is a multidimensional phenomenon that involves overlapping physiological, educational and social aspects of human functioning and behaviour. Tredgold(1982) defined mental retardation as a state of mind and degree that individual
was incapable of adopting himself to the normal environment of his fellows in such a way as to maintain existence independent of supervision, control or external support.

In Heber’s (1961) view mental retardation referred to the subaverage general intellectual functioning which originated during developmental period and was associated with impairment of the following ways given here - i) maturation, ii) learning and iii) social adjustment.

Most comprehensive definition of mental retardation is that by Grossman (1977), who defined it as significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behaviour and manifested during the developmental period.

The levels of mental retardation are expressed in various terms. The international classification of diseases (WHO, 1978) classified the mentally retarded into four different categories taking into consideration the I.Q. and development of the individual.

**Mild Retardation (I. Q. 50 - 70)**

The development of an individual in this category is slow, he can be educated to some extent and with training he would be capable for earning, at least partially, his livelihood living.

**Moderate Retardation (I. Q. 35 - 49)**

Individuals in this category are slow in their development but are capable of learning to look after their
personal needs. They can be trained to some extent to work in sheltered workshops and to live in a protected environment.

**Severe Retardation (I. Q. 20 - 34)**

Individuals in this category are often unable to manage their own affairs. Their motor development, as well as speech and language may also be affected in many cases.

**Profound Retardation (I. Q. 19 and below)**

The degree defectiveness of the individuals in this category is of very serious nature rendering them unable to guard themselves even against common physical danger. Most often they are also physically handicapped and need constant special care for survival.

**Adjustment**

Adjustment is a life-long dynamic process in which a living organism maintains a balance between its needs and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs. It involves the reconciliation of personal and environmental elements. Thus adjustment involves the fulfilment of potential for a personal and socially satisfactory life. Adjustment involves four main functions namely - i) learning about and understanding ourselves and our social and physical environment, ii) using our understanding to set realistic goals for ourselves, iii) using our abilities to control our environment and destiny.
so that we can attain our goals. and iv) being sensitive to the needs and concerns of others so that we also make positive contribution to the lives of other.

Eysenck (1972) defines adjustment as "a state in which the needs of the individual on one hand, and claims of the society, on the other hand, are fully satisfied."

Adam (1972) gave a behavioural definition of adjustment. He defined adjustment as "the efficiency with which the individual generates positive rewards and avoids negative rewards and punishment".

According to Haller (1975), "Adjustment involves a four way function of relationships - intrapersonal, person to person, person to group and person to object. Also human behaviour may be thought of going through following four stages of adjustment - i) the individual has some motive which is pushing him towards a goal, ii) he meets some difficulties, iii) to overcome the difficulties, individual makes varied responses and finally iv) he comes across a solution which particularly or completely satisfies the motive that started the adjustment process."

According to Worchel and Goethals (1985), "the process of adjustment involves knowing yourself, coping with the stresses of everyday life, understanding others and being aware of the influence of the environment on social behavior."
Concept of adjustment in general is studied in relation to different areas like home and family, social, emotional, health. Home adjustment refers to adjustment with different members of family and development of healthy behaviour of parents towards children, type of discipline, understanding, affection etc. Health adjustment refers to a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of a disease. An individual having good health, has a positive attitude towards oneself and life in general. Accepting one’s physique and developing a positive self concept helps to promote health adjustment. Social adjustment refers to adjustment with all those with whom an individual frequently comes in contact with others. An emotionally well adjusted individual is one, who can remain emotionally balanced while coping with the strains and stresses of day to day’s life and society or group to which one belongs.

Darwin’s theory (1959)

In Darwin’s theory of evolution, adjustment was termed as adaptation. The satisfaction of many of the body needs is such that a very fine balance is kept between output and intake in a process of homeostatis which helps to ensure stability of the internal environment. As a person adapts to his physiological demands, he also has to adapt to social demands. This concept of adaptation has been borrowed by the psychologists and named adjustment.
Self concept

Self is a technical expression given to definition of one's self. It is a dominant pattern in personality. There are several terms that are synonymous with self concept. These terms are "self image", the ego", self understanding", "self perception" and "phenomenal self". It is the concept by which the individual relates himself to the social environment.

According to Brissett (1972), self concept encompasses different socio physiological processes i) self worth and ii) self evaluation. Self worth representing a feeling of self, has to do with an individual's sense of security and personal worth as a person. On the other hand, Brissett defines self evaluation as a "process of making a conscious judgement of the social importance or significance of the self".

The concept of self has three major components i) the perceptual, ii) the conceptual and iii) the attitudinal. The perceptual component is the image the person has of the appearance of his body and of the impression he makes on others. It includes the image he has on others based on his attractiveness and sex appropriateness of this body, such as his muscles, his build, his behaviour and the prestige they give him in the eyes of others. The perceptual component is often called "the physical self concept".
The conceptual component is the person’s conception of his distinctive characteristics, his abilities and disabilities, his background and origins, and his future. It is often called the psychological self concept and is composed of such life adjustment qualities as honesty, self confidence, independence, courage and their opposites.

The attitudinal component of the self are the feelings a person has about himself, his attitudes towards his present status and future prospects, his feelings about his worthiness and his feelings regarding self esteem, self reproach, pride and shame. A person’s beliefs, convictions, values and ideas, his aspirations, and commitments compose his self by the time he reaches adulthood and lead him to form his philosophy of life.

Hall and Lindzey (1957) suggest that the term self has come to have two distinct meanings to psychologists i) self as object and ii) self as process. Self as object is defined simply as the total aggregate of attitudes, judgements and values which an individual holds with respect to his behaviour, his ability, his body, his worth as a person, in short how he perceives and evaluates himself. Self as process is defined in terms of activities, such as thinking and perceiving and coping with the environment.

Carl Rogers (1961) suggested self as the nuclear concept of the personality. It is concerned as something that develops as a result of the interaction of the individual with his environment.
"Snygg and Comb (1959) lean heavily on a perceptual approach" of explaining human behaviour. According to them, behaviour occurs in terms of how an individual perceives himself and his surrounding. The individual is more or less personally involved in what is called the "phenomenal self". The phenomenal self includes the self concept and those aspects of life which are not a part of "real self" but are in some way related to it: one's family, career, home, school, clothing and the like. The college we attend is to some degree a part of our phenomenal self: it is "our college" we are aware of its existence and we may have various kinds of attitudes towards it, depending on our values for it and our experience with it. The environment that the individual perceives or notices is termed as the phenomenal environment.

Roger's self theory

Self concept is the conceptual gestalt concerning oneself which need not always be in awareness, but available to awareness. A person may not be always aware of his feelings, or attitudes which may lie deep in his unconscious repertoire on which he can call back or and when he wants to use it. Roger's self theory is basically phenomenological in nature and depends heavily on the self as an explanatory concept. The theory looks upon congruence between the phenomenal field of experience and the conceptual structure of the self as a essential to healthy adjustment.
Epstein’s self theory

Epstein (1972) has made an attempt to differentiate between self and nonself. In his self theory, the most fundamental purpose is to optimise the pleasures or pain balance of the individual over the course of a lifetime. In the distinction of self and non-self made by him, there are overwhelming advantages. The distinction between self and nonself is useful for the individual to exercise control of his behaviour. For human to live harmoniously in social communities, it is necessary to have a concept of responsibility and such a concept would be meaningless without a distinction between self and nonself. It is thus apparent that in every day living, as well as in science, it is important to distinguish the subjective world of self from the objective world of nonself.

Alienation

The first volume of Oxford Dictionary published in 1988, gives the verbs "alien and alienate". The Latin origin of the term "alienation" is "alinatio." This noun derives its meaning from the verb "alienation".

Alienation points to two deep experiences. First, there is the sense of being a stranger within the circumstances of one’s own life. Second experience of alienation is in the definite sense that something essential to human life has been lost. According to Marx (1844), man’s
loss of independence, his impoverishment, his estrangement from his fellow men and his involvement in labour that is devoid of any originality, spontaneity or creativity are so many aspects of man’s estrangement from his true nature.

Josephson (1962) "Alienation is one of the major characteristics of modern times. It has been equated with loss of self, anxiety state, depersonalization, restlessness, apathy, social disorganization, loneliness, automation, powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, pessimism and the loss of beliefs and values.

Conger (1979) explains the concept of alienation as a profound rejection of the values of an adult in the society.

Scott (1964) describes alienation in regard to its sources seen as a series of deficiencies like i) lack of commitment to values, ii) absence of conformity to norms, iii) loss of responsibility in roles and iv) deficiency in control of facilities.

Prednag (1965) describes an alienated individual in terms of "as a man who does not feel himself a part of larger world" is the modern concept of alienation. The heavy emphasis on the individual aspect of the problem of alienation stressing that alienation is an individual experience. Another viewing the experience of alienation in the negative light as deprivation, loss, disintegration etc. (Sergejev, 1980).

According to Puthenpeedikail (1976), "Alienation refers to the distorted picture of man and the world
Seeman’s theory of alienation

Seeman (1959) identifies five alternative meanings of alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self estrangement.

Powerlessness is a social psychological view and the individual perceives a lack of control over the sociopolitical events. This view originated in Marxian’s view of the workers condition in capitalist society.

The individual experiencing a sense of meaninglessness is one who finds it difficult to judge the importance or use of actions and beliefs.

Normlessness is a condition in which the normal regulations of one’s behaviour seem no longer to hold. One does not feel bound by convention or by standards for achieving goals.

In isolation, persons come to expect little belongingness to others which results in a feeling of loneliness and despair of being a stranger in a strange land.

Self estrangement implies the state of an individual who engages in behaviours that do not truly reflect his values, needs or desires. The person becomes separated even from self.
**Hegel's theory of alienation**

Hegel (1949) was the first one to speak of the concept of alienation. He used the term in two different ways. At times he used it to refer to a separation or discordant relation, such as might obtain between the individual and social substance or between one's actual condition and essential nature. The second type of alienation is, as it was for social contract theorists, something deliberate. It involves a conscious relinquishment or surrender with the intention of securing a desired end.

**Marx's theory of alienation**

Marx's version (1844) was to conceptualize alienation as a state produced by the savages of a particular economic system viz. capitalism - which separated the individual i) from the products of his labour, ii) from the process of work, iii) from the fellowship of his mankind and ultimately iv) from himself. This alienation, Marx contributed to society and specifically to the exploitation of the worker by the non worker i.e. the capitalst. Marx describes three critical aspects of alienation - powerlessness, isolation and self estrangement.

**Altruism**

The term "altruism" is derived from the Latin word "alter" or other literally meaning altruism. Altruistic means peace, harmony, solidarity, unselfishness. In the
opinion of Leeds (1963), an altruistic act is an end in itself, it is not directed at gain. It is committed voluntarily and does good.

Caulay and Berkowit (1970) defined "Altruism as behaviour carried out to benefit another without anticipation of rewards from external sources."

As defined by Latane and Darley (1968) "Altruism is any behaviour which benefits another in need regardless of the helper's motives, is altruistic". A very different kind of answer to this question is given by Aronfred (1969). He identified a basic motive for altruism usage of the term to behaviour which meets the motivational standards. He regards altruism as a dispositional component (not a specific form) of behaviour which is controlled by anticipation of consequences of another individual. While the former concept of altruism by Latane and Darley is too general, that given by Aronfred is too narrow as several kinds of empathic reactions may influence helping. Moreover, to confirm the usage of the term altruism to behaviour motivated by empathic experiences of another's satisfaction or need is arbitrary. However, third edition of Webster's dictionary (1976) again defined altruism as "an uncalculated consideration or devotion to other's interests. Some times in accordance with an ethical principle."

In behaviour terms, altruism is defined as a social behaviour carried out to achieve positive outcomes for another rather than for self (Rushton, 1980).
Altruistic behaviour is viewed as part of a three way reciprocal interaction involving characteristics of the person, the situation and the person's behaviour.

Rosenhan (1969) indentified two types of altruism - the autonomous type governed by the forces of reward and punishment and second is normative type. Normative altruism appears earlier and possibly from the former, it seems characterized by the cluster of variables associated with social conformity while autonomous altruism reflects what is often called commitment (Smart and Smart, 1977).

Altruism is a moral value, perhaps an aspect of more general social responsibility norm. According to Berkowitz and Deniel (1963), the social responsibility norms prescribe that people should help those who are dependent upon them. It is quite clear that both social institutions and large number of individuals are dependent upon and supportive of, the altruistic behaviour of others.

However, the psychological rewards of altruism are innate is not proved, it is known that altruistic male ancestors did share their skills and that empathy is present to some degree in most if not all humans. (Clairborne, 1974).

In altruistic behaviour people do help others in circumstances in which there seem to be no gains and even considerable risk to themselves for doing so. Sometimes individuals, in fact, get rewards for altruistic act. One
line of argument is that the sight of a person in distress arouses sympathetic or empathic feelings in an observer: termed as "Primitive passive sympathy". The observer, in helping the victim, helps himself. He is motivated not to relieve the victim's suffering but to alleviate his own sympathetic feelings. Whether this primitive passive sympathy is instinctive or is the result of complicated classical or instrumental conditioning, its arousal motivates a person to helping action. On the other hand, if a properly socialized individual within a culture violates the helping norm, he subjects himself to negative consequences which punish him for his failure to help. As such onlooker acts altruistically because of the fear of negative consequences of doing otherwise. The negative consequences are anticipated in the future rather than in the immediate present and no empathy feelings are aroused in the observer.

**Mc Dougall's theory**

In his theory personality Mc Dougall has given a special place to altruism. He regarded altruism as an extension of the sentiment of self regard, developed through the identification of the self with other persons. An altruistic personality behaves consistently more honestly, persistently and with greater self control as compared to a non altruistic one. A consistently altruistic person is likely to have an integrated personality, strong feelings of personal efficiency and well being and what generally may be called integrity (Rushton, 1980).