

The Lecture Contains:

- Self-concept
- The structure of self concept
- Self-reference effect
- Self-esteem
- Antecedent and consequences of positive and negative self-esteem
- Self-efficacy

- In the mainstream social psychology, several concepts related to self as an autonomous and rational individual have been propounded to understand its various aspects and functioning. In this lecture, we are going to learn about the following such concepts :
 - Self-concept
 - Self-esteem
 - Self-efficacy

Self-concept

- As per Baron and Byrne (2000), self-concept is understood as a schema (mental frameworks that are based on the information that help interpret an event, a person or a situation) constituted of one's beliefs and feelings about oneself. Self-concept is not a permanent or an unchangeable entity. With time, and situations it may change too. One important question that arises about self-concept is whether it is a multi-faceted phenomenon where it has various components. Rentsch and Heffner (1994) provided some useful answer with the help of their systematic research.

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The structure of self concept

- Rentsch and Heffner (1994), asked more than 200 students to respond to the question, “Who are you?” by providing twenty different to this question. The researchers, after the analysis of data, revealed that there was a structure to self-concept that could be statistically derived from the diverse nature of responses given the student participants. Let us take a look at the eight-factor structure of self-concept developed by these researchers:

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The structure of self concept (continued...)

1. Interpersonal attributes: "I am a brother"; "I am a basketball player".
2. Ascribed characteristics: "I am a woman"; "I am Stuti".
3. Interests and activities: "I enjoy singing"; "I like to read books on philosophy".
4. Existential aspects: "I am one of the nature's creations"; "I feel at one with fellow living and non-living beings".
5. Self-determination: "I am a Marxist"; "I am certain about getting a job in Indian Navy".
6. Internalized beliefs: "I am totally against racial discrimination"; "I support decentralization".
7. Self-awareness: "I have a positive attitude towards life"; "I am an honest person".
8. Social differentiation: "I am an Asian immigrant to the USA"; "I am a South Indian".

Self-reference effect

- As we observed above, there are many ways in which information about one's self-concept are constituted in one's memory. Social psychologists also observed and explained another related phenomenon that indicated that self-relevant information is better processed than other types of information. For example, if one's name is Kamal (louts), one is able to easily remember people or celebrities with same first or last name. Furthermore, one may also easily remember events or objects where the symbol of Kamal is used.
- Klein and Loftus (1988) explained the phenomenon of self-reference effect by sharing the findings of their research that indicated that self-relevant information is not only better organized in memory (categorical processing) but also better related to other information contained in the memory (elaborative processing).

Self-esteem

- William James (1890) held self-esteem as one of the most important attitudes that is directed towards person's own self. Attitude towards oneself or self-esteem can be on the continuum of positivity and negativity.
- Social comparison is an important process associated with self-esteem. Usually, we compare ourselves with people who possess lesser qualities than ourselves. This is known as contrast effect that may lead to higher or positive self-esteem.
- However, while comparing favourably (perceiving oneself being better than others), one's self-esteem may be higher where the comparisons are made with one's own group members than with the members of some other group. On the contrary, when compared unfavourably, one's self-esteem may be lower where the comparisons are made with one's own group members than with the members of some other group.

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Antecedent and consequences of positive and negative self-esteem

- According to Sedikides (1993), there are several reasons for engaging in self-evaluations, three of which are :
 - Self-assessment : A person needs to have honest and correct knowledge about one's self. Therefore, he/she is in search of what one's true characteristics are.
 - Self-enhancement : A person tends to search for positive self-knowledge or knowledge about self that make him/her feel good about oneself.
 - Self-verification : One also needs to verify that his/her knowledge about oneself is true.
- Several research findings about self-esteem have revealed the following consequences of having positive or negative self-evaluations :
 - High self-esteem is generally associated with good mental health but it is the honest self-evaluation that is strongly associated with positive mental health
 - Negative self-esteem is associated with less adequate social skills, depression and negative reactions to job in security (Baron & Byrne, 2000)

Self-efficacy

- Self-efficacy is the self-evaluation one engages in to assess one's ability to successfully reach a goal or overcome the obstacles in the pursuit of it.
- Social psychologists have found out that high self-efficacy is associated with success in physical or academic tasks. Bandura and Adams (1977) indicated that self-efficacy can be increased by giving positive feedback to the person.

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