Social Cognition and Moral Development

- *Social cognition*
- *Personality*
- *Personality Determinants*
- *Personal and Social Development*
- *Self-concept, Self-esteem*
- *Moral Development, Social responsibility and self control*

Social Cognition--- *The process that involves people's learning from observing others and acquire control over their behavior.*

According to Social Cognitive theorists, learning is an internal mental process that may or may not be reflected in immediate behavioral change. Moreover, a person's behaviour is influenced not only by the stored information in his memory but also other factors such as belief, expectations etc. behavior, the environment, and the personal factors influence each other. For instance a student scores low in a subject (environmental factor) influences his belief (personal factor) of inability to cope with that subject. His belief in turn influences his behavior, he adapts his study habits and his behavior influences the environment ---the result.

Reinforcement and punishment---.according to SC consequences causes people to form expectations about the outcome. For instance, if you study hard and do well on a test, you expect to do well on a second test with similar amount of study.
People form expectations about consequences means that they are aware of the behavior that well be reinforced. Although merely observing the actions of other people can affect a learner, the effects are amplified if the learner also observes the consequences of those actions. This is called Vicarious learning, and it occurs when people observe the consequences of another person's behavior and adjust their own behavior accordingly.

Personality--- *personality means a dynamic concept describing the growth and development of a person's whole psychological system. More explicitly speaking as Gordon Allport describes " personality is the dynamic organization, within the individual, of psychological systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environments". In view of the above we could think of "personality" as the sum total of ways in which an individual reacts to and interacts with others.*

An individual's personality is generally considered to be made up of the hereditary and environmental factors, moderated by situational condition.

Heredity--- Refers to those factors that genetically transmit form parents to children. Physical stature, facial attraction, gender, temperament, muscle composition and reflexes, energy level and biological system are characteristics that are genetically influenced by the parents, that is their biological, physical and inherent psychological makeup.

Evidence demonstrates that traits such as shyness, fear, and distress are most likely caused by inherited genetics characteristics. Researchers have found that genetics accounts for about 50% of the personality differences and more than 30% of the variation in occupational and leisure interests.
But personality characteristics are not completely dictated by heredity.

Environment--- That is the culture in which an individual is raised is another important determinant of his/her personality. The early conditioning, the norms among family, social groups, friends and other influences that an individual experiences play an important role in the formation of his/her personality.

Culture establishes the norms, attitudes, and values that are passed along from one generation to the next and create consistencies over time. Heredity sets the parameters or outer limits but an individual's full potential is determined by how he/she adjust to the demands and requirements of the environment.

Situation---A third factor, the situation, influences the effects of heredity and environment on personality. An individual's personality, although generally stable and consistent, does change in different situations. The different demands of different situations call forth different aspects of one's personality.

Personal and Social Development (Erikson's theory):

Erikson's theory is based on five important ideas. These are

- *People in general have the same basic needs*
- *The development of the self occurs in response to these needs*
- *Development proceeds in stages*
- *Each stage is characterized by a psychological challenge that presents opportunities for development*
- *Different stages reflect differences in motivation of an individual*

Erikson's description of these development stages is outlined below. Notice how each stage involves a challenge that the person resolves through interaction with others.

(1) Trust vs. Mistrust (Birth to 1year): Developing a sense of trust or confidence in the honesty and justice of others. At this stage an infant who receives consistent and predictably good care from parents develops a sense of trust; an infant who is left to cry and who receives inconsistent and unpredictable

care can develop basic mistrust that leads to fear and suspicion of other people and the world in general.

2) Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt (1to3years): *Children at this stage learn how to be indipended and self-reliant. They learn to feed and dress themselves, and demonstrate goal-directed behavior and begin to communicate verbally. They no longer want to depend totally on others. However those children, who get punishment for minor accidents, lead them doubt their own abilities, and develop a lasting sense of lake of confidence to deal with the world.*

3) Initiative vs. Guilt (3to6years): *Having developed a sense of autonomy, children are now ready to expand and respond to their curiosity. This is the stage at which children make enormous cognitive leaps, and those developing abilities provide the impetus for exploration in all areas of their lives. Children at this level offer help to elders in minor activities. Parents, teachers, and other elders who welcome and value children's contribution help them develop a sense of initiative and self-belief. On the contrary, children who are criticized or punished by elders cause them to feel guilt about their self- initiated activities.*

4) Industry vs. Inferiority (6to12years): *At this stage the challenge is to develop a sense of industry, or the enjoyment of mastery and competence through success and recognition of accomplishment.*
In a longitudinal study of development, vaillant and vaillant (1981) found that of intelligence, family background, and industry, a health sense of industry was the most significant factor in later personal adjustment, economic or professional success, and interpersonal relationships. A sense of success, and challenge helps in developing a sense of industry. According to Erikson at this stage the main challenge of the individual is to develop a sense of competence. Although they don't realize it, if that competence doesn't occur at this point, a fully functioning personality is less likely.

5) Identity vs. Confusion (12to18years): *During adolescence youngsters experience major physical, intellectual, and emotional changes. The magnitude of physical change and the lake of knowing how to respond frequently confuse youth. They are concerned with what others think of them; they are preoccupied with their looks. They are caught in the awkward position of wanting to assert their independence, yet longing for the stability of structure and discipline.*
During this phase the youngsters fight with identity crises. Most however negotiate successfully, and most maintain positive relationships with their parents and other adults. Erikson, however, suggest that youngsters who have basic sense of trust, can function on their own, aren't afraid to take initiative, and feel competent, overcome the uncertainty of adolescence and develop a firm notion of who they are and what their role in society should be. Failure to resolve the crises results in role confusion, which prolongs the behavioral traits characteristic of adolescence and inhibits successful functioning as adults.

6) Intimacy vs. Isolation (young adulthood): During Erikson's sixth stage, individual wrestle with relationships and with other people. A person with a firm sense of identity is prepared for intimacy, or giving the self over to another, based on something other than a basic need. Giving for the sake of giving without expecting something in return characterizes a positive resolution of the crises at this stage. In contrast, people who fail to resolve the crises remain emotionally isolated, unable to give and receive love and affection freely.

7) Generativity vs. Stagnation (middle adulthood): The key characteristics of generativity are creativity, productivity, and concern for and commitment to guide the next generation. Generative adults try in their own way to contribute to the betterment of society by working for principles such as a clean physical environment, a safe and drug-free social world, and adherence to the principles of freedom and human dignity.

8) Integrity vs. Despair (old age): Erikson describes people who accept themselves, conclude that they have only one life to live, live it about as well as possible, and have few regrets as having integrity. The accept responsibility for the way they have lived and face and accept the finality of death. A person filled with regret for things done or let undone, worried that there is no turning back and that time is running out, is filled with despair.

Conclusion: Erikson's work in spite of leaving certain questions unanswered helps identify the psychological problems or crises that an individual goes through. He also points out the factors, which play a significant role in personal and social development such as family, environment, and situation. Thus it becomes relatively easier to help students develop a confidant, calm, mature and well rounded personality.

stage	Approximate age	characteristics

Trust vs. Mistrust	Infancy (0-1 Year)	Trust in the world is developed through consistent and continuous love and support.
Autonomyvs.shame and doubt	Toddler (1-3 years)	Independence is fostered by successful experiences formed by support and structure
Initiative vs. Guilt	Early childhood (3-6 years)	An exploratory and investigative attitude results from meeting and accepting challenges.
Industry vs. inferiority	Middle Childhood (6-12 years)	Enjoyment of mastery and competence comes through success and recognition of accomplishment.
Identity vs. Confusion	Adolescence (12-18 years)	Personal,social,sexual,and occupational identity comes from success in school and experimentation with different roles.
Intimacy vs. Isolation	Young Adulthood	Openness to others and the development of intimate relationships result from interaction with others.
Generativity vs. Stagnation		

Self-concept: *People not only grow in age, size, knowledge and skills but also in their awareness of themselves as persons. This awareness is called development of the self or self-concept. Self-concept includes the total of people's perceptions about their physical, social, and academic or professional competence. With self-concept or self-recognition the process of self-definition begins, and people also start differentiating between the ideal-self and the real-self. The ideal-self is what a person would like to be ---strong, brave, smart, attractive etc. The real- self is a person's perception of what he/she actually is.*

*People also start developing **self-esteem**---their education or knowledge of themselves derived by comparing their ideal and real selves. In other words it is the degree of one's like or dislike of himself/herself that is called self-esteem.*

Several factors influence a person's self-concept. The most important is environment; and environment includes parents, close associates, friends and teachers etc. Researchers have found that self-concept has at least three subcomponents---academic, social, and physical (Marsh-1989).

Culture plays an important role in the development of self-esteem. Like self-concept, self esteem is multifaceted composed of two major components; personal and collective (Wright & Taylor-1995). Collective self-esteem refers to people's perception of the relative worth of the group to which they belong. For all of us, our membership in families, peer groups, and ethnic group all contribute to our sense of self worth. When we perceive these groups as valued and possessing status, our self-esteem is inhanced and vice versa.

*The research on self-esteem offers some interesting insights into organizational behavior. For instance, self-esteem is directly related to expectations for success. Individuals having high self- esteem believe that they posses the ability, they need to succeed at work. They are innovative and confident, as compare to those having low self- esteem. **Self-monitoring** is another important personality trait refers to an individual's ability to adjust his/her behavior to external situational factors. It also emanates from self-concept.*

Development of Morality, Social Responsibility, and Self-control:
(Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development)

Mr. A, a college student, is working at a night job to help support his mother, a single parent of three. A is a conscientious student who works hard in his classes, but he doesn't have enough time to study.
History isn't A's favorite subject, and because of his night work, he has a marginal D average. If he fails the final exam, he will fail the course, won't receive credit, and will have to alter plains for working during his senior year. He arranged to be off work the night before the exam so that he could study extra hard, but earl in the evening his boss called, desperate to have A come in and replace another employee who called in sick at the last moment. A had to reluctantly go to work, and came back at 2:00 a.m. He tried to study but fell asleep on the couch, with his book in his lap. His mother woke him for college at 6:30 a.m.
A went to his history class, looked at the paper, and went blank. Everything seemed like a jumble. B, one of the best students in the class, happened to have his answer his paper so positioned that A could clearly see every answer by barely moving his eyes.
Is A justified in cheating on the test?

Mr. C has a tough job with strict routine, great demand of work, and meager rewards. He has to support a family of 10 people including a sick father, and often finds difficult to make both ends meet. Once he came across the opportunity to steal Rs. 500,000, with ought most certainty that he won't be caught or detected.
Is he justified in stealing the money?

*These and such other situations are called **moral dilemma**---an ambiguous situation that requires a person to make moral decision. Let us analyze these questions in the light of Kohlberg's theory of morale development.*

Kohlberg's theory of Morale Development:

According to Kohlberg, morals develop in stages and all the people pass through all the stages in the same order but at different rates.
Kohlberg describes moral development as existing in three levels consisting of two stages each. These levels represent different perspectives that people can take as they wrestle with moral dilemmas.
The reasons a person gives for making the decision determine the stage or level of moral development he /she is passing through.

***Level 1) Preconventional Ethics:** This level bears egocentric propensities, focusing on consequences for the self. The consequentialist and utilitarian approaches to ethics are essentially influenced by preconventional ethics. The level consists of two stages: punishment-obedience and market exchange (reciprocity of action).*

***STAGE I) Punishment- Obedience:** At this stage the moral right or wrong is determined by the consequences of an action. People make moral decision based on their chances of getting caught and being punished. A person encountering an unguarded wallet and not taking it because of fear of getting caught is influenced by stage I. A person who argues that Mr. A should cheat is reasoning at stage I.*

***STAGE II) Market Exchange:** At this stage people focus on the consequences for themselves, but reciprocity is involved. "You do something for me and I' ll do something for you" is the key characteristic at this stage. A naive hedonism is used to judge the moral right or wrongness of an action. From this perspective, "The right thing to do is what makes me the happiest." The reasoning again focuses on the self.*

***Level 2) Conventional Ethics**: As development progresses and egocentricism declines, people acquire the ability to see the world from others points of view. Morality is no longer constrained by the immediate effects of punishment or reward, instead becoming linked to the perspectives and concerns of others.*

Values such as loyalty, others approval, family expectations, obedience to the law, and social order become prominent. The following stages manifest this orientation.

STAGE III) Interpersonal Harmony: This stage is characterized by conventions, loyalty, and living up the expectations of others. The stage III person is oriented toward maintaining the affection and approval of friends and relatives by being a "good" person.
A person reasoning at stage III might argue in Mr. C's case somewhat differently. He might justify C's stealing to help his family and ailing father. He might suggest that he should not steal, because people would think badly of him if they knew about it. Accepting that cheating on one's taxes is okay because "everybody cheats" is an example of stage III (i.e.caught up in the majority opinion is the danger of this stage).

STAGE IV) Law and Order: The focus at this stage IV is on adherence to laws and rules for their own sake rather than on pleasing particular people, as in stage III. A person at this stage may reason that Mr. A or C are not justified in cheating or stealing because it is against the rules and law.
Concern for the orderliness of society is also characteristic of this stage, such as a person arguing that A should not cheat, because " What would our country be like if every body cheated under those same conditions?" Concern for others is still the focus, but not for the sake of self but the whole society.

Level 3) Postconventional Ethics: This level is also known as principled morality. A person this stage transcended both the individual and societal levels and makes decisions based on principles. This level implies that follow rules but also see that at times rules need to be changed or ignored. According to Kohlberg only a small portion of people attains this level and most don't reach until their mid to late 20s. Socrates' drinking of hemlock or Nilson Mendala's serving life ling prison are examples of Postconventional ethics. It has the following stages.

STAGE V) Social contract: At this stage the law is not accepted blindly or for their own sake, rather for their principle of utility or " the greatest good for the greatest number", and are followed because they adhere to rights such as life, liberty, and dignity of the individual.
In most constitution of the world the portion concerning the rights reflect stage V. As they guarantee people's right to life, liberty, rule of law etc, and the judiciary is conceptually committed to interpret laws in this light. In addition the provisions for changing or amendments in light of changing situations also manifest stage V. A person reasoning at stage V would not allow Mr. A or C to cheat and steal for it violates the agreements.

STAGE VI) Universal principles: People at this stage define rightness in terms of internalized universal standards that go beyond concrete laws. Moral

reasoning at this stage is based on abstract and general principles above society's rules.

Conclusion: *In the light of the above discussion we can conclude that people not only grow in age, size or skills but development of morality, social responsibility, and self-control also takes place. Various factors contribute to their level of personal, social, and moral development. A conducive environment or culture could help an individual achieve a calm and mature center, that is a prerequisite for social as well as professional success.*

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