

## Chapter 6

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# Adler's System of Individual Psychology

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### INTRODUCTION

Born in Vienna in 1870, Alfred Adler began his career as an ophthalmologist. He joined Freud's school of psychoanalysis in 1902 and became one of his prize pupils. He broke away from Freud mainly over the latter's overemphasis on sex and founded a new school of psychology. His system is called *Individual Psychology* because it lays emphasis on the individuality of human beings in terms of their unique characteristics at the time of birth, the availability of an exclusive environment for growth and development and adoption of a specific style of life to achieve power and attain perfection.

### WHAT THE SYSTEM TELLS

Adler, in his system for explaining behaviour, replaced the life instinct or sex motive advocated by Freud with the motive to seek power or attain superiority and perfection. According to him, for the satisfaction of the power motive, one follows one's own path in one's own way and thus develops a unique style of life, depending upon the order of birth, early life experiences and the requirements of the creative self. Success or failure in the satisfaction of the power motive by adopting his own style turns a person into an adjusted or a maladjusted personality. The individual then further learn the ways of striving and making adjustments and this is how, according to Adler's system, one behaves and leads one's life.

### MAJOR CONCEPTS OF INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY

#### Power Motive and Striving for Superiority and Perfection

How and why one behaves in a particular fashion may be explained in terms of one's striving for the satisfaction of one's urge to dominate, to gain superiority and to achieve perfection in one field or the other. This urge to dominate or to strive for superiority or perfection, as Adler says, is innate. It is part of one's life and in fact may be termed as life itself.

Why, one may ask, did Adler select the power motive as the only motive to explain human behaviour? The genesis of this may be traced to the experiences to which a child is exposed in his early childhood

1. Every child is born as a helpless mass, entirely dependent upon grown ups for the satisfaction of his needs. Consequently, he may have a burning desire to seek power, to dominate and to attain superiority in order to overcome and compensate for his feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.
2. He may be brought up in such a way that he may develop attitudes for ruling and dominating over others and as a manifestation of this trait, he may crave for superiority and the desire to surpass others.
3. He may be the victim of negligence or develop some inferiority feelings. The urge to strive for superiority helps him overcome his feelings of inferiority and inadequacy.

### Style of Life

If one wants to live, one has to strive to or establish superiority in one way or the other and consequently one has to adopt one's own style of life. This style of one's life has been the key point in Adler's system of individual psychology. One is known and judged by one's style of life. According to Adler, all human beings have the same goal—that of gaining superiority over others but may adopt different ways and means to fulfil their power motive, strive for superiority and reach the goal of perfection. The manner in which they strive and the ways and means they adopt collectively constitute the style of life. Accordingly, one person may try to become superior through developing as a political leader; an other may strive to become a renowned author, writer, artist, scientist or wrestler. One's style of life thus depends on the areas or fields in which one chooses to strive for superiority. The whole of one's time schedule, habits of work, personal and social contacts, comprising one's style of life then, will naturally be tailored to the ways and means one chooses for striving towards superiority and perfection.

Adler has mentioned four types of life styles for the development of personality, namely, (a) the ruling type, (b) the go-getting type, (c) the escaping type, and (d) the struggling type.

What makes them develop these distinct styles of life may be influenced by the following factors:

1. **The order of birth.** According to Adler, the order, place and position of the child in the family when he is born is to a great extent responsible for fashioning his style of life.
2. **The type of children.** Adler has pointed out that different types of children pick up different styles of life for their personality development. For example, the pampered child may adopt a life-style to get his wishes accepted and for him to be treated as prince. On the other hand, the unwanted or neglected child may either turn into a timid, shy and insecure person or become a drunkard and criminal.
3. **Fictional finalism.** The style of one's life also depends upon the mechanism of fictional finalism which means that men live by many purely fictional ideas

which do not necessarily conform to reality. We can cite examples such as the following: "Stars or lines on our palm decide our future or destiny", "Female child is a curse to the family", "Women are made to be governed or ruled by men", and so on. The belief in such fictional ideas is sure to affect the philosophy and style of one's life.

**4. Compensation for inferiority.** In many cases, one's style of life is fashioned in relation to some compensatory behaviour for a particular kind of inferiority. For example, the life-style of Demosthenes who became the world's greatest orator was the outcome of the compensation for the inferiority he suffered on account of his stuttering as a child. Similarly, the conquering style of Napoleon was fashioned as a compensation for the feeling of inferiority he suffered because of his small physical stature.

**5. The creative self.** The creative power of the individual is responsible, to a great extent, for determining and shaping his style of life. According to Adler, it is the creative self which gives meaning to life by creating goals as well as suggesting means to achieve the goal. This creative self grows and develops in an individual out of his hereditary endowments and environmental experiences. He tends to solve problems and act according to the dictates of his creative self. His style of life is, therefore, said to be fashioned in accordance with the development of his creative self.

**6. Social interest.** Man is a social creature and his style of life is also determined through the varying social interests he shows in maintaining social relationships, extending cooperation, sympathy and kindness and thus in a wider sense helping society to attain the goal of perfection. Striving for superiority, in this case, becomes a socialized rather than a selfish need and the life style gets fashioned through one's innate social interests.

## How Adler's System Operates

Based on the above-mentioned tenets, the operation of Adler's system of studying behaviour or personality make-up can be outlined as follows:

1. There is a strong inner urge in all human beings to seek power or strive for superiority. As the child grows and develops, this urge is also increased.
2. Besides this, hereditary, constitutional and other environmental factors operating during the first four or five years may give rise to many complexes, particularly feelings of inferiority in the child. To overcome or compensate for inferiority, one may resort to seeking power or striving for superiority.
3. The creative self, or the need for creative expression, may also force the individual to strive for superiority or perfection.

All the above-mentioned situations may force the individual to seek power or strive for superiority and perfection. For the fulfilments of this urge, he may then adopt a relevant life style suiting his specific environmental situation. He

continues to strive for superiority by picking up the means and material through his life style. In doing so, he may succeed, or fail depending upon the inner and outer forces operating in such effort. In case of failure he often has to slightly modify his goals or style of life in keeping with his self or his environment. If he succeeds in such adjustment, he remains normal, otherwise he may drift towards mild or severe mental illness, needing urgent suitable treatment to bring about a change in his life style and goals of life.

### Merits and Contribution to Education

Adler was a practical psychologist and he laid more emphasis on the problems of children, their proper education and adequate upbringing. He was so interested in applying his day to day psychology to the field of education that he himself started an Institute of Pedagogy at Vienna, with its branches at different places. He also directed his energies to provide guidance and counselling to parents and teachers to help them in providing better education and upbringing to their wards at home and at school. It is for these reasons that he is often remembered as a pedagogist and child psycho-therapist. The contributions of his system of psychology may be summarised as follows:

1. Adler played down the Freudian concept of sex urge as the only motive behind human behaviour. He replaced it with the urge to seek power or to attain superiority or perfection. In other words, he brought into the realm of psychology a useful urge or motive, namely the power motive or self-assertion. Every individual, from the very beginning, wants to satisfy this inner urge by asserting himself and wishing to be more powerful, to dominate somebody and be recognised as superior and of some value or importance. Parents and teachers must be very careful in recognizing this inner craving of children in the course of their upbringing and education. Every child should be given due recognition and the opportunity to do something and feel important. His distinctive self should not be attacked, but given due respect and means for proper expression.
2. Adler's system opposed the Freudian overemphasis on the unconscious, rather, it asserted that man lives and behaves through his conscious and is not merely a toy in the hands of his unconscious. He is always conscious of his strengths and weaknesses and strives to achieve his goals with full awareness. These views provided an impetus to all conscious efforts on the part of students, parents and teachers to strive for realization of the goals of life as perfectly as possible rather than to become mere instruments in the hands of the unconscious.
3. Adler's assertion that every man acts and behaves according to his own style of life helped in the growth of individualistic tendencies in education. It underscored the need to know and study every child as a separate individual and to plan his education and the development of his personality through ways and means suited to his individual self. 'Child centred education' and 'individualized instruction' are thus the direct outcome of Adler's work.

4. Adler's system emphasized the importance of the first four or five years of one's life in the shaping of one's personality. He tried to make the parents and teachers understand the possible impact of the birth order, size of the family and methods of rearing on the behaviour and personality of the children. He warned them to be very cautious in rearing as well as in educating their children so that they do not develop an inferiority complex or unwarranted need for compensatory behaviour which might give rise to some mental illness or behavioural problem. A few of his findings and suggestions in this regard are worth mentioning:
  - (a) Every precaution and all preventive measures should be taken to safeguard the children so that they do not become physically or mentally handicapped. In case this happens, the child should be so treated and reared that he is not subjected to feelings of inferiority. He may be provided with other channels along which to strive for superiority and thus compensate for this deficiency. But, in doing so, he should not be made conscious or aware of his handicap.
  - (b) No child should be reared so as to develop as a pampered child. Every child should be brought up in such a way that while showing affection and tenderness to him and meeting his needs, he is made to stand on his own feet and learn to strive for superiority by using his own strength.
  - (c) No child should be brought up in such a way that he feels, neglected, unwanted or insulted. Every child needs due attention and respect for his self and sense of security, for his proper growth and development. In case the environmental situation at home does not provide what is needed by the child, alternative arrangement in terms of a foster home, greater care and affection by the teacher and members of society, should be provided so that he does not turn into a problem child.
  - (d) As far as possible, negative means like nagging, warning, reprimanding, putting blame, scolding, severely beating and whipping etc., for making the child behave in some specific and desirable ways should be avoided as these do not yield favourable results and only deepen the child's feeling of inferiority and discourage him from striving for supremacy. Therefore, Adler feels positive measures in the form of praise, rewards and incentives should be used for shaping the behaviour of children.
  - (e) In no case, should the parents and teachers encourage rivalry and unhealthy competition among the children as this may enhance the feelings of inferiority, insecurity and anxiety and give rise to serious behavioural problems.
5. Adler rendered a great service by emphasizing the role of social interests and other social determinants in shaping one's style of life and personality make-up. This helped in providing due recognition to the various social agencies for acting as means of imparting education to the youngsters as well as realising the need for mutual cooperation, cohesion, group dynamics and organisation of an improved environment for the better growth and development of children's personalities.

6. Adler's emphasis on the role of the creative self in the shaping of one's personality and unique style of life opened up a new dimension in the field of education. It gave due importance to the identification and nurturing of the creative faculties in the child.
7. Adler's system laid stress on prevention, early diagnosis and timely treatment of behavioural problems of the children so that these do not grow into severe mental illnesses or threats to the individual and to society. The trend for understanding the real cause of behavioural problems, treating every case on an individual basis, paying due attention, providing timely care and realizing the need for a well established guidance clinic are some of the well-known contributions of Adler's system of individual psychology.

## SUMMARY

The system of psychology propagated by Alfred Adler, a prize disciple of Freud, is known as Individual Psychology. The operation of this system revolves around the following two key concepts:

**Power motive.** Every individual has a strong urge to seek power or attain superiority and perfection in one field or the other. This power-seeking behaviour is either a compensatory behaviour for overcoming feelings of inferiority and inadequacy or may be a sort of reinforcement behaviour the roots of which may lie in the individual's earlier experiences.

**Style of life.** To fulfil the motive of seeking power or achieving perfection, one has to choose one's own style of life, i.e. ways and means for striving towards superiority and reaching the goal of perfection. Adler names four personality types depending upon the different life styles viz., the ruling type, the getting type, the escaping type, and the struggling type. Why and how one chooses a particular type of life style depends on one's individual make-up and earlier experiences. These are influenced by factors such as, (a) the order of birth, (b) the manner in which one has been brought up during childhood, (c) fictional finalism, i.e. the deep-rooted beliefs in some ideas prevalent in society, (d) compensation for inferiority, (e) the demands of one's creative self, and (f) one's innate social interests.

**How the system of individual psychology operates.** Persuaded and motivated to seek power or superiority (on account of seeking compensation, reinforcement or satisfaction of one's creative self), one is forced to adopt the relevant life style suited to one's environmental situation. One continues to struggle for achieving one's goals through the ways and means provided by one's life style. While striving, however, one has to maintain a proper balance between one's needs and efforts. In case one succeeds in making such an adjustment, one remains normal, otherwise one may drift towards maladaptive behaviour.

**Merits and contribution to education.** The major contributions of individual psychology may be summarized as:

2. In case an individual possesses a weak ego, he is bound to have a maladjusted personality. Here two situations may arise. In one situation, the superego may be more powerful than the ego, and so does not permit desirable fulfilment of the repressed wishes and impulses which results in a neurotic personality. If, on the other hand, the id is more powerful than the ego, the individual may indulge in unlawful or immoral activities leading to the formation of a delinquent personality.

In addition to the above structure of the personality, built around the concept of the id, ego and superego, Freud tried to provide an explanation of the development of human personality through his ideas about sex. He held that sex is a life energy. The sexual needs of the individual are basic needs which have to be satisfied for a balanced growth of the personality. A knowledge of the sex needs of a person and the status of their satisfaction is sufficient to tell us all about a person's personality. He will be an adjusted or maladjusted personality depending the extent to which his sexual needs are satisfied.

So much was his emphasis on sex, that he linked the whole development of the personality with the sex behaviour by putting his theory of psycho-sexual development. In this theory, he outlined the five different psycho-sexual stages for the development of personality namely, oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital. Here we would not provide the description or explanation about these stages as it has been already presented earlier in Chapter 5.

*I Neo-analytic Perspective → Adler, Horney, Fromm, Erikson.*  
**Adler's individual approach to personality.** Adler opposed the Freudians' structure of personality. He held that sex is not the life energy or the centre of human activities; the power motive is the central urge and human beings are motivated by the urge to be important or powerful. All of us strive towards superiority put each individual strives in a different way. He called it the style of life. Therefore, the kind of personality one possesses can be understood by studying one's style of life, i.e. the goals of life one has set for oneself and the way one strives to achieve these goals.

He thus initiated the individual approach to the study of personality patterns and maintained that there are no distinct personality types or classes. Each individual is unique in himself because everybody has definite goals and style of his life. Adler's concepts and ideas related to the description and understanding of personality development have already been discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

## The Humanistic Approach

This approach to personality came from a group of psychologists subscribing to the humanistic school of psychology. Humanistic psychology, the so-called third force in psychology (the other two being behaviourism and psychoanalysis) reflects a humanistic trend in dealing with and understanding human behaviour. It believes in the goodness of man and reposes optimistic confidence in man's positive nature. Contrary to the unconscious of psychoanalytical psychology here, a person's conscious experience (what he or she feels and thinks) forms the basic structure of his or her personality. Consequently, the approach adopted by the humanists does not assume that personality is governed by biological forces from

within or that destructive drives are inherent in human beings but instead points out that every one of us has the potential for self-actualization through spontaneity, creativity and personal growth. A number of theories, such as those of Godlstein, Angyal, Rogers and Maslow subscribe to the approach advocated by humanistic psychology. We shall now discuss the viewpoints of the highly influential humanistic thinkers, Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers.

1. *The self-actualization theory of Abraham Maslow.* Abraham H. Maslow, an American psychologist, has been the major theorist adopting the humanistic approach for studying human behaviour and personality. According to his theory, human beings are basically good or neutral rather than evil and there lies in every one an impulse craving towards growth or the fulfilments of one's potentials. The goal is to seek self-actualization, that usually comes from the pursuit of knowledge, the appreciation of beauty, playfulness, self-sufficiency, insight into the truth or other constructive and creative expression. The behaviour or personality of a human being thus depends upon his style of striving towards the ultimate goal of self-realization. However, the path leading towards the ultimate goal may have sub-goals in the form of satisfaction of the lower-order needs. In this way, Maslow's theory of self-actualization suggests a hierarchy of needs for which reference may be made to 'Psychology of Motivation' in Chapter 11.

Thus, the pattern of human behaviour is always governed by the satisfaction of our needs from the lower, base level to the upper, top level. We have to satisfy our biological needs for our survival and for our social and psychological needs, we have to strive for the satisfaction in the socio-psychological context. The satisfaction of these need is, however, not the end of man's pursuit for excellence. His craving for the actualization of his inner potential continues till he reaches his ultimate goal of attaining fine humanistic values.

These values or characteristics of a self-actualized person to which one's efforts are directed in terms of the development of his personality have been enumerated by Maslow through sixteen basic characteristics. These characteristics have been arrived at by him through the study of a selected group of thirty-eight persons. This select group had included the well-known personalities past and present, e.g., Albert Einstein, Abraham Lincoln, Roosevelt etc., and also his own professors and persons who were known for self-actualization in their respective fields. From this study Maslow concluded that the self-actualized people have the following common characteristics which distinguish them the average person (Source: Maslow, 1962):

1. Ability to perceive reality accurately.
2. Willingness to accept reality readily.
3. Naturalness and spontaneity.
4. Ability to focus on problems rather than on themselves.
5. Need for privacy.
6. Self-sufficiency and independence.
7. Capacity for fresh, spontaneous, nonstereotyped appreciation of objects, events and people that they encounter.
8. Ability to attain transcendence.



9. Identification with humankind and shared social bonds with other people.
10. They may have few or many friends but have deep relationships with at least some of these friends.
11. A democratic, egalitarian attitude.
12. Strongly held values and a clear distinction between means and ends.
13. A broad, tolerant sense of humour.
14. Inventiveness and creativity with the ability to see things in new ways.
15. Resistance to confirm or succumb to social pressures.
16. Ability to go beyond dichotomies and bring together opposites.

Thus, the goal for personalty development according to Maslow's theory is self-actualization, i.e. realization of one's basic human potential to the maximum extent and as effectively as possible. The theory, thus, presents a very bright picture of human behaviour and personality by setting an ultimate motivating goal of self-actualization. However, it is criticised on account of its not being objective and scientific in its approach, especially in view of its subjective criteria for self-actualization.

2. *Carl Roger's self theory.* Carl Ransom Rogers, an American psychologist, in 1947 propounded a new theory of personality called the self theory quite distinct from the earlier theories of personality. He stressed the importance of an individual's self for determining the process of his growth, development, and appropriate adjustment to his environment. There are two basic systems underlying his personality theory—the organism and the self. Rogers considers them as systems operating in one's phenomenological field (a world of subjective experience, the personal and separate reality of each individual). The organism is an individual's entire frame of reference. It represents the totality of his experience—both conscious and unconscious. The second system, the 'self' is the accepted, aware part of experience. The self as a system of one's phenomenal field can perhaps be best understood in terms of our concept of I, me or myself.

What we recognize as the personality of an individual is the product of interaction between the above-mentioned systems of one's phenomenological field. The acquisition of the concept of self is a long and continuous process. Human beings have inherited the tendency to develop their self in the process of interpersonal and social experiences which they acquire in the environment. In other words, our inner world (in the form of our natural impulses) interacts with our total range of experience to form the concept of our self. For example, if one is told that one is a handsome person, one tends to include in the concept of one's self, the idea that one is handsome. We are in a continuous process of building the concept of our self in this manner. The concepts of self thus developed may differ from person to person as they are based purely on one's own personal experiences. The concepts of self are sometimes based more on personal needs than on reality, and at other times as Rogers believes, we develop an ideal self, i.e. the kind of person we would like to be.

Rogers does not advance a set of specific stages in the development of personality as proposed by Freud, rather, he advocates continuity of growth in

terms of a continuous evolution of the concept of 'self'. Once a concept of self is formed, the individual strives to maintain it by regulating his behaviour. Whatever is consistent with the concept of his self is readily accepted and maintained at the conscious level while that which threatens that image may be totally ignored or buried deep in the unconscious.

The most unfortunate results in the development of personality occur in cases where an individual develops some false self-image. This false image is sometimes so strong that even indisputable reality is vehemently denied. Inconsistency between one's actual image and a false self-image, may then lead to abnormality in one's behaviour. Similarly, the development of an ideal self, too unreasonable and unattainable or too different from one's real self, may result in maladjustment and serious personality disorder.

An individual's adjustment, happiness, growth and development all depend upon the union and harmony between the image of his self and the organism i.e. the experience or situations he meets in his life. Stressing the psychological personality theory, Rogers emphasizes that a person normally possesses considerable capacity for growth and the realization of his individual potential and thus tries to advance continuously towards the development of his self (i.e. self-actualization) to lead to harmony between the concept of his self and his real life experiences resulting in feelings of self-integrity, self-fulfilment and a satisfying sense of psychological growth. The development, however, runs into trouble when the self fails for some reason to incorporate, and learns to live with its own new thoughts, feelings or behaviour. The goal of a therapist as Rogers advocates in his therapy, in such cases lies in bringing the individual in a unified way, from what he or she is not, to what he or she really is.

VII  
Social

## Learning Theories of Personality (Social Learning Persp)

The learning theories of personality depict a new developmental approach quite different from psychoanalytic and phenomenological theories of personality in the sense that they emphasize the importance of learning and objectivity to understand personality. The notable psychologists who are known to have developed personality theories are Pavlov, Watson, Guthrie, Thorndike, Skinner, Dollard & Miller; Bandura & Walters, etc. The theories developed by Dollard & Miller and Bandura & Walters are worthy of mention in this context.

1. **Dollard and Miller's learning theory of personality.** By combining the psychology of learning with aspects of psychoanalytic theory, John Dollard and Neil Miller (1950) in the institute of human relations at Yale University put forward their theory of personality. In this theory they tried to substitute Freud's concept of a pleasure principle with the principle of reinforcement, the concept of ego with the concept of learned drive and learned skills, the concept of conflict with competing reinforcers etc.

The theory of Dollard and Miller tries to describe the development of personality from simple drives to a complex function from a learning theory angle. It emphasizes that what we consider as personality is learned. The child at birth is equipped with two types of basic faculties: *reflexes and innate hierarchies of*

terms of a continuous evolution of the concept of 'self'. Once a concept of self is formed, the individual strives to maintain it by regulating his behaviour. Whatever is consistent with the concept of his self is readily accepted and maintained at the conscious level while that which threatens that image may be totally ignored or buried deep in the unconscious.

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*responses and a set of primary drives, which are internal stimuli of great strength and are linked with known physiological processes which impel him to action. Thus impelled by drives (both conditioned and unconditioned) one acquires responses to the extent that they reduce the drives. Drive reduction results in reinforcements or rewards which in turn may give birth to many other drives or motives and impel the individual to learn new responses and new behaviour patterns. Since our social environment is a major source of reinforcement, it plays a key role in creating new drives and motives, our learning new responses and consequently developing our personality. Dollard and Miller's theory stressed the development of a personality on the basis of the responses and behaviour learnt through the process of motivation and reward. Dollard and Miller's theory of personality did not really ascribe any static structure to personality, and emphasized, instead, habit formation through learning as a key factor in the development of personality. Habits are formed by S.R. connections through learning. As one's fund of learning grows on the basis of experiences and interaction with one's environment, one's habits are reorganised, new habits are learned and consequently one's personality is modified and developed in terms of learning new behaviour and picking up new threads or styles of life.*

**2. Bandura & Walters' social learning theory.** Albert Bandura and Richard Walters (1963) came out with an innovative approach to personality in the form of their social learning theory. They advanced the view that what an individual presents to the world at large as his personality, is acquired through a continuous process of structuring and restructuring of experiences, gathered by means of social learning and later imitated in corresponding situations. Social learning may involve real as well as symbolic models. Children, for example, pick up etiquette and attitudes by watching their parents and elders; viewers garner traits and mannerisms from popular actors and models whom they see on television or in films. The imitation of the model's behaviour is further reinforced in the viewer's mind by the recognition or reward the model receives as a result of his actions. An individual thus acquires numerous traits and modes of behaviour from many sources, and all these together contribute to the formation and development of his unique, distinctive personality.

### **Conclusions about the Various Theories of Personality**

The theories of personality which we have so far discussed may be seen to have followed altogether different approaches to promote their viewpoints. Clearly, the difference lies in emphasis. The trait approach emphasizes behavioural consistencies and describes personality on the basis of certain basic personality traits while the type approach classifies people into definite types based on distinct personality characteristics or traits. The psychoanalytical approach emphasizes the unconscious motives and considers the nature of the human being to be basically animal nature. The humanistic approach, on the contrary, underlines the finer values of the human being and attaches maximum importance to the contents of consciousness. The social learning theorist, on the other hand, gives no credence to the heredity-cum-biological base of a person's personality for

# Assessment of Personality

## CHAPTER COMPOSITION

- Introduction
- Whether Personality is Measured or Assessed?
- Techniques and Methods Used for the Assessment of Personality
- Evaluation of Projective Techniques
- Summary
- References and Suggested Readings

### INTRODUCTION

Everybody is curious to know about his own personality or that of others. We want to describe it and know what type of personality or the personality traits are possessed by us or others. It needs the knowledge and skill for the assessment or measurement of personality. There are various methods and techniques which can help us in this task. But before discussing these methods and techniques, let us first decide about using the terms assessment and measurement since it is often argued that personality can't be measured, it can only be assessed.

### WHETHER PERSONALITY IS MEASURED OR ASSESSED?

The answer of this question lies in a question itself—Is the measurement of personality possible? If not then let us analyse difficulties that one faces while trying to measure it.

### Difficulties in the Measurement of Personality

There are three basic elements involved in any process of measurement which are responsible for the success or failure of this process. They are-

- (i) Nature of the thing we want to measure.

- (ii) Nature of the instruments with the help of which we have to measure it.
- (iii) Nature of the person who is going to measure.

Let us evaluate the personality measures on the above criteria.

### NATURE OF THE THING (PERSONALITY)

Nature of the thing (personality) is so complex that it is hardly possible to make it an object for measurement. Firstly, because, personality is not a thing, it is an idea, an abstraction. While attempting for its measurement, we wrongly try to give it a concrete shape. Secondly, what is there in the personality, which we want to measure, is not clear. Psychologists have no agreement about the dimensions or elements of the personality. Thirdly, personality is a dynamic phenomenon. It is not static. How can we measure a thing, which is ever in a process of change and modification. The measurement will certainly differ from time to time and hence it is not proper to call it measurement.

### NATURE OF THE INSTRUMENTS

The process of measurement, in addition to the subject of measurement, requires the tools and the satisfactory units of measurement. In personality measurement, we also encounter difficulties in this direction such as:

- (a) There is no zero (starting point) for reference as the base of personality. After all, no child is born with zero personality.
- (b) In measuring a rod, we can measure it in terms of the units of length like centimeters, inches etc. In measuring temperature, we have units in terms of degrees but in psychological measurement, we do not have any such equal or regular unit of measurement.
- (c) For measurement, we require scales or measuring instruments that are exact, reliable and valid in terms of their results. In the field of personality measurement, we do not find such satisfactory instruments.

### THE NATURE OF THE PERSON (EXAMINER)

To a great extent, the objectivity, reliability and validity in any process of measurement depends upon the competency and impartiality or objectivity on the part of the person who performs the task of measurement. After all he is a human being with his own beliefs, likes and dislikes, tastes and temperaments and hence we cannot check the influence of his subjectivity on any work of personality measurement.

In this way, the actual measurement (which defines itself in terms of objectivity, reliability and validity)

## TECHNIQUES AND METHODS USED FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF PERSONALITY

The methods used for the assessment of personality are often classified as (i) Subjective methods (ii) Objective methods (iii) Projective methods. But this classification suffers from many drawbacks. It is difficult to draw a straight line between subjectivity and objectivity, even projective techniques cannot be saved from the subjectivity and self-projection of the examiner. Actually speaking, there is nothing like absolute objectivity in these methods. Objectivity (if at all we can have it) is nothing but subjectivity pooled together. Therefore, it is proper to seek other ways of classifying the methods of personality assessment.

We can classify these techniques in the following five categories:

**Firstly**, there are techniques, where we can see how an individual behaves in actual life situations. The main techniques in this category are: (a) Observation technique, (b) Situation tests.

**Secondly**, there are techniques by which we can find what an individual says about himself. The main techniques in this category are: (a) Autobiography (b) Questionnaire and Personality Inventory (c) Interview.

**Thirdly**, there are techniques by which we can find what others say about the individual whose personality is under assessment. The main techniques in this class are:

(a) Biographies (b) Case history method (c) Rating Scales (d) Sociometric techniques.

**Fourthly**, there are techniques by which we can find how an individual reacts to an imaginative situation involving fantasy. All kinds of projective techniques are included in this class.

**Fifthly**, there are techniques by which we can indirectly determine some personality variables in terms of physiological responses by machines and technical instruments.

### Observation

Observation is a popular method to study the behaviour pattern of an individual in actual life situation. What personality traits or characteristics the observer needs to know are first decided by him and then he observes relevant activities of the subject in real life situations. The observation can be done in two ways. In one, the observer does not hide his presence. He rather becomes more or less a part of the group under observation. While in the other, he takes a position at a place where his presence is least disturbing to the group but from where he can observe in detail the behaviour of the individual under observation. To get a clear idea, the observer can make use of tape-recorder, photographic cameras, telescope etc. To ascertain whether the observer can rely on the observed results, he can repeat observations in the same situation a number of times, or the subject may be observed by a number of observers and the results may be pooled together.

### Situational Tests

Here the situation is artificially created in which an individual is expected to perform acts related to the personality traits under testing. For example, to test the honesty of an individual, some

situations can be created and his reaction can be evaluated in terms of honesty or dishonesty. Does he feel temptation of copying? Does he try to pick up the one rupee note in a given situation? All such instances can lead towards the assessment of the trait of honesty in the individual.

### QUESTIONNAIRE

What is a questionnaire can be understood by the following description:

#### Goode and Hatt

*In general the word questionnaire refers to a device for securing answers to questions by using a form which the respondent fills in himself.* (1952, p. 33)

This definition makes it clear that in collecting information from the subject himself about his personality characteristics, a form consisting of a series of printed or written questions is used. The subject responds to these questions in the space provided in the form under the columns yes, no or cannot say (?), etc. These answers are then evaluated and used for personality assessment.

Items, like the following, are included in the questionnaires:

Do you enjoy being alone?	Yes, No, ? (not definite)
Do you enjoy seeing others successful?	Yes, No, ? (not definite)
Do you laugh at a joke on you?	Yes, No, ? (not definite)
Do you get along well with your relatives?	Yes, No, ? (not definite)

It is the most popular method and is quite useful in collecting quantitative as well as qualitative information.

### Personality Inventory

It resembles questionnaires in many aspects like administration, scoring, interpretation etc. The difference can be seen in two aspects.

Firstly, the questionnaire is a general device and can be used for collecting all kinds of information (not only connected with personality traits or behaviour of an individual). Personality Inventory is specially designed to seek answers about the person and his personality.

Secondly, the questions set in the questionnaire are generally addressable to the second person like:

Do you often feel lonely?      Yes, no, ?

However, in the personality inventory, they are usually addressed to the first person such as:

I often feel lonely.      Yes, no, ?

The best known Personality Inventory is the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). The questions, included in this inventory are such that their answers are known to indicate certain specific personality traits. It consists of 550 items. Some of these items are presented below for illustration:



- I sweat very easily even on cool days.
- There is something wrong with my sex organs.
- I have never been in love with any one.
- I like to talk about sex.

Each item is printed on a separate card. The subject reads the questions and then, according to the category of his response—yes, no or doubtful—puts it down in the space provided for the purpose. With the help of these responses, evaluation in terms of the important personality traits can be obtained.

The questionnaire and Personality Inventory suffer from the following drawbacks:

- (i) It is difficult to get response to all the questions.
- (ii) The subject may give selected responses rather than the genuine one (hide his weaknesses etc.)
- (iii) He may be ignorant of certain traits or qualities which he may possess.

### Rating Scale

Rating scale is used to know from others where an individual stands in terms of certain personality traits. Usually with the help of this technique, we try to have some specific idea about some of the personality traits of an individual (whom we do not know well), from someone, who knows him very well. It reflects the impression the subject has made upon the person who rates him. The three basic things involved in this technique are.

- The specific trait or traits to be rated.
- The scale by which degree of possession or absence of the trait has to be shown.
- The appropriate persons or judges for rating.

First of all, the traits or characteristics, which have to be evaluated by the judges, are to be stated and defined clearly. Then a scale for rating work is to be constructed. How it is done can be understood through the following example.

Suppose we wish to have rating on the 'Quality of Leadership' of the students of a class. We can have divisions of this quality into degrees such as very good, good, average, poor, very poor etc. Now the arrangement of these divisions along a line at equal intervals, from high to low or otherwise will be named as Rating Scale for assessing the quality of leadership. Usually the degrees are indicated by numbers, 1 to 3, 1 to 5 or 1 to 7, comprising three points, five points or seven points scale. The seven-point scale is of the following type.

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Below average	Poor	Very poor

Now the raters, who are in a position to rate the individuals properly, can be asked to rate them and give them scores, ranging from 1 to 7, according to the degree of leadership they possess.

Rating techniques suffer from some drawbacks like subjective bias and halo effect. In the former, the rater may have his own likes and dislikes and this may colour his estimates about the individuals under rating, whereas under the halo effect, he may rate an individual (on the basis of general impression) to be more honest or likeable than his actual potentialities.

To bring some reliability it has been suggested that instead of having rating by only one judge, we can assign the rating work to a number of judges, for example to different teachers, classmates, parents etc., who can pool in their judgements or ratings.

## Interview

Interview is a technique of getting information directly from the subject about his personality in face-to-face contacts. It gives an opportunity for mutual exchange of ideas and information between the subject and the psychologists. For this purpose, the psychologist tries to fix a face-to-face appointment with the person or persons under assessment. He makes sure of the personality traits or behaviour he has to assess and then he plans accordingly. Usually, a list of questions to be put is prepared and after taking the subject into confidence, the psychologist tries to seek answers to his pre-planned questions. He not only takes care of the content of the responses but the tone, behaviour and other similar factors, are also kept in mind for the proper evaluation of the desired personality pattern of the individuals.

The limitation of this technique is that it needs a well-trained competent interviewer. It is costly in terms of labour, time and money. It also suffers from the subjective bias of the interviewer. Here again, like questionnaire and personality inventory, we cannot have any safeguard to stop the subject to hide his feelings or to respond in terms of selective answers. On the credit side, cent per cent answers to the questions put to the subject, are obtained through interview. There is very little danger of not getting answers to the questions and moreover we can get the most confidential informations from the subject which he would have otherwise hesitated to reveal through writing.

In fact, interview is a relatively more flexible tool. It permits explanation, adjustment and variations according to the situation and thus proves one of the essential and important tools for personality assessment.

## Projective Techniques

So far we have discussed only those techniques which usually evaluate the overt or conscious behaviour of an individual. The covert or unconscious behaviour is not so insignificant; rather it is more significant than the former, as Freud believes that our conscious behaviour is only one-tenth of the total behaviour. Therefore, there should be some other techniques which not only emphasizes the observable part of the human personality but can reveal the inner or private world and go deeper in the unconscious behaviour of an individual to unearth the repressed feelings, wishes, desires, fear, hopes and ambitions.

Projective techniques are devised to accept the challenge. They try to assess the total personality of an individual and not in fragments. Let us see what these techniques are.

### WHAT ARE THE PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES?

These techniques are based on the phenomenon of projection. In these techniques relatively indefinite and unstructured stimuli (like vague pictures, ink-blot, incomplete sentences, etc.) are provided to the subject and he is asked to structure them in any way he likes. In doing so he unconsciously projects his own desires, hopes, fears, repressed wishes etc. and thus not only reveals his inner or private world but gives a proper clue to estimate his total personality.

The common Projective Techniques are:

#### THE RORSCHACH INK-BLOT TEST

This technique has been developed by Swiss psychologist, who was the son of an art teacher

Mr. Harmans Rorschach. Material of the test consists of 10 cards with ink blots. Five of them are in black and white and five are multicoloured. These ink-blots are completely unstructured, that is the shapes of the blots do not have any specific meaning as shown in Fig. 33.1.



Fig. 33.1 Two inkblots of the type used in Rorschach inkblot test.

#### Administration of the Test

- (i) The cards are presented one at a time in a specified order. When the subject takes his seat, the examiner gives him the first card with necessary instructions. He is asked to say what he sees in the card, what does it look like etc.
- (ii) The subject is allowed as much time as he wants for a given card and is permitted to give as many responses to it as he wishes. He is also allowed to turn the card around and look at it from any angle to find things in it.
- (iii) Besides keeping a record of the responses of the subject concerning these ink-blots on different pieces of paper, the examiner notes the time taken for each response, position in which cards are being held, emotional expression and other incidental behaviour of the subject during the test period etc.
- (iv) After all the cards have been presented, the second phase of inquiry follows. It is intended to seek clarification or addition to original responses.

#### Scoring, analysis and interpretation of the test

For the purpose of scoring, the responses are given specific symbols which are entered in four columns.

These scoring categories are named as:

- (i) Location, (ii) Contents, (iii) Originality, and (iv) Determinants.

**Location (the first column).** Location refers to the part of the blot with which the subject associates each response. The symbol W, D, d and s are used for scoring the location responses. The symbols stand for the things given ahead:

- W for that response which shows that the subject is seeing the card as a whole.  
D indicates large details.  
d indicates small details.  
s indicates the subject's response to the white spaces within the main outlines.



The relative frequencies of the different symbols within the scoring categories and among the several categories help the interpreter to decide the personality characteristics of the subject. For example, if

- (i) the number of Ws are greater than d or D; then the person is said to be mature, intelligent and is expected to possess the ability to synthesize,
- (ii) More frequency on the side of the colour at the expense of human movement indicates an extrovert nature while domination of M over colour, an introvert,
- (iii) Dominance of shading responses expresses anxiety, depressed attitudes and feeling of inferiority, and
- (iv) Relatively more emphasis on movement indicates richness of one's imaginative life.

It is not only the relative importance or occurrence of certain kinds of responses which help in interpretation, the various other factors like time factor, the behaviour of the subject at the time of reactions etc. also have their meanings.

Therefore, it is only through various kinds of relationships, observations, records and integration of results from various parts that a final global picture about a subject's personality can be drawn. The test demands a lot of training and skill in scoring and interpretation on the part of the examiner and therefore, the work should be considered as a serious one and should only be done by an experienced and trained psychologist.

#### TAT OR THEMATIC APPERCEPTION TEST

The test consisting of perception of a certain picture in a thematic manner (revealing imaginative themes) is called TAT or Thematic Apperception Test. This test was developed by Murray and Morgan (Fig. 33.2).



33.2 A sample picture from TAT.

**Test material and administration:** It consists of 30 pictures which portray human beings in a variety of actual life situations. Ten of the cards are meant for males, 10 for females and 10 for both. In this way, the maximum number of pictures used with any subject is 20. The test is usually administered in two sessions, using 10 pictures in each session. The pictures are presented one at a time. They are vague and indefinite. The subject is told clearly that this is a test of creative imagination and that there is no right and wrong response. He has to make up a story for each of the pictures presented to him, within a fixed time. He has to take care of the following aspects while knitting the story:

- (i) What is going on the picture?
- (ii) What has led to this scene?
- (iii) What would happen in such a situation?

In making up the stories the subject unconsciously projects so many characteristics of his personality. There is no time to think. Therefore, the stories express his own life-natural desires, likes and dislikes, ambitions, emotions, sentiments etc. Its special value resides in its power of exploring the underlying hidden drives, complexes and conflicts of the personality. An expert examiner can know much about the personality of his subject by carefully interpreting the given responses.

**Scoring and interpretation:** Originally Murray analyzed the contents of the stories according to the need and presses (the need of the hero and the environmental forces to which he is exposed). Today this way of interpretation is not generally followed. Nowadays, the system of scoring and interpretation takes into account the following:

- (i) **Hero of the story**— What type of personality does he have?
- (ii) **Theme of the story**— What is the nature of the theme or plot used in making the story?
- (iii) **Style of the story**— Length of the story, language used, direct or indirect expression, forced or poor expression, organisation of the contents, originality and creativity etc.
- (iv) **The content of the story**— What interests, sentiments, attitudes do they depict. In which manner (reality or fantasy) has the behaviour been expressed? What inner state of the mind does the story reveal?
- (v) **Test situation as a whole**— The subject's reaction to be listed as whole.
- (vi) **Particular emphasis or omissions**— The omission, addition, distortion and attention to particular details.
- (vii) **Subject's attitude towards authority and sex.**
- (viii) **Outcome.** Conclusion of the story—happy, unhappy, comedy etc.

As a whole, the recurring themes and features contribute more than a single response towards interpretation. Moreover, the global view of one's personality should be based on the responses of all the 20 pictures shown to the subject. There are so many chances of misinterpreting the stories contents by an immature examiner. Therefore, the future of TAT hangs on the possibility of perfecting the interpreter more than in perfecting the material. He should be given full opportunity for acquiring essential knowledge and training for this purpose.

### CAT (CHILDREN APPERCEPTION TEST)

TAT test works well with adults and adolescents but for children it is not suitable. For children between 3 to 10 years, the CAT was developed by D. Leopold Bellak.

**Description of the Test:** It consists of 10 cards. The cards have pictures of animals instead of human characters since it was thought that children could identify with animal figures more readily than

with persons. These animals are shown in various life situations. For both sexes, all the 10 cards are needed. The pictures are designed to evoke fantasies relating to a child's own experiences, reactions and feelings. Whatever story the child makes, he projects himself. It is a colour-free test but it demands some alterations according to the child's local conditions.

**Administering the test:** All the 10 cards are presented one by one and the subject is asked to make up stories on them. The child should have confidence and he should consider story-making a pleasant game.

**Interpretation:** Interpretation of the stories is centred around the following eleven variables:

- (i) **Hero:** The personality traits of the hero as revealed in the story.
- (ii) **Theme of the story:** What particular theme has he selected for the story building?
- (iii) **The end of the story:** Happy ending or unhappy, wishful, realistic or unrealistic.
- (iv) **Attitude towards parental figures:** Hatred, respect, devotion, grateful, dependent, aggressive or fearful.
- (v) **Family role:** With whom does the child identify himself with in the family.
- (vi) **Other outside figures introduced:** Objects or elements introduced in the story but not shown in the picture.
- (vii) **Omitted or ignored figures:** Which figures are omitted or ignored should be noted as they may depict the wish of the subject that the figures were not there.
- (viii) **Nature of the anxieties:** Harassment, loss of love, afraid of being left alone etc., should also be noted.
- (ix) **Punishment for crime:** The relationship between a crime committed in the story and severity of punishment given for it.
- (x) **Defence and confidence:** The type of defences, flight, aggression, passivity, *ted* regression etc. the child takes, nature of compliance or dependence, involvement in pleasure and achievement, sex desire etc.
- (xi) **Other supplementary knowledge:** The language, the overall structure of the stories, time taken for completing them and the reactions of the subject at the time of making the story etc.

With all this knowledge an expert interpreter can pronounce judgement on the various aspects of the child's personality.

### WORD ASSOCIATION TEST

In this technique there are a number of selected words. The subject is told that:

- (i) the examiner will utter a series of words, one at a time,
- (ii) after each word the subject is to reply as quickly as possible with the first word that comes to his mind, and
- (iii) there is no right or wrong response.

The examiner then records the reply to each word spoken by him; the reaction time and any unusual speech or behaviour manifestations accompanying a given response. The contents of the responses along with the other recorded things give clues for evaluating the human personality and thus help a psychologist in his work.

### SENTENCE-COMPLETION TESTS

These tests include a list of incomplete open-ended sentences, which require completion by the subject in one or more words. The subject is asked to go through the list and answer as quickly

as possible (without giving a second thought to his answers). For example, we can have the following sentences:

- I am worried over.....  
 My hope is .....  
 I feel proud when .....  
 My hero is .....

The sentence completion tests are regarded as superior to word association because the subject may respond with more than one word. Also there it is possible to have a greater flexibility and variety of responses and more area of personality and experiences may be tapped.

In addition to the projective techniques mentioned above, there are some others which may prove useful in many situations. These are play technique, drawing and painting tests etc. Both these techniques are very useful in the case of small children. In the former, the examiner observes the spontaneous behaviour of the children while playing or constructing something with the help of given material and in the latter, the natural free hand drawing and paintings of the children are the matter of the study. Both these techniques provide a good opportunity for the careful analysis of a child's personality.

## EVALUATION OF PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES

### Merits

Projective techniques have some outstanding features which give them some sort of superiority over the other techniques of assessing the personality. They are given below.

1. The nature of appraisals being made by these techniques is usually well-disguised. The subject is ordinarily not aware of the true purpose of the test and even if he has knowledge, he cannot know what aspects of his responses are significant or what significance do they have. Therefore, there is no danger of distortion of the response or to give selective responses by the subject.
2. In these projective techniques, the tasks presented to the individual are usually both novel and unstructured. The subject cannot depend upon an established, conventional and stereotyped pattern of responses. He is to respond quite independently. Therefore, by these techniques, we can be saved from the danger of practice and coaching effects from which most tests suffer.
3. Scope and area of their application is very wide. They make little or no demand on literacy or academic skills and are equally useful for children as well as adults.
4. Most of the essential aspects of the unconscious behaviour, of which the subject himself has no knowledge, can be revealed through these techniques. In this way, these techniques play a great role in disclosing the private world of the subject and hence have a unique advantage of evaluating the total personality of an individual.

### Limitations

Despite all these good points at their credit, the projective techniques also suffer from some weaknesses. They are:

- (i) Standardised projective tests are costly. Also there is a shortage of such tests.



- (ii) The standardised work suffers from many weaknesses. Proper norms and objective interpretation are hardly available for these tests. Also they are not highly reliable and valid.
- (iii) They are time-consuming both in administration and scoring.
- (iv) The interpretation task is subjective and needs well-trained and experienced persons, who are generally not available.

But these above mentioned limitations on the part of projective techniques do not make them less significant. In fact, with the essential training and knowledge at his command, an expert psychologist is sure to gain important information about the subject, which is otherwise not available. On the other hand, it is also true that the projective techniques alone are not the answer to all the questions regarding human personality and adjustment. They should always be supplemented with other techniques of the personality so that comprehensive and detailed picture of the personality make-up of an individual is obtained.

### SUMMARY

The task of actual measurement in the case of personality is not possible. We can only estimate and assess it by a variety of techniques like observation, situational tests, questionnaire, personality inventory, rating scale, interview and projective techniques.

In adopting observation technique, observer tries to observe the relevant activities concerning one or the other personality traits of the subject in real life situations. In the situational tests, situation are artificially created for the observation of one's behavior related to the personality traits under testing. Questionnaires as a technique of personality assessment refers to a form consisting of some questions related to the personality characteristics requiring responses on the part of the subject for the assessment of his personality.

Personality inventory resembles questionnaire in many aspects like administration, scoring, interpretations etc. However, it differs from questionnaires in the sense that it is specially designed for seeking information about the personality traits or behaviour of an individual rather than collecting all kinds of information like questionnaire. Rating scale refers to a technique of rating (telling where an individual stands in terms of some personality traits) on three, five or seven point scale for getting idea about some of the personality traits of an individual whom we don't know well from someone who knows him very well. Interview refers to a technique of getting information directly from the subject about his personality in face-to-face interactions.

Projective technique are based on the phenomenon of projection. In these techniques relatively indefinites and unstructured stimuli like vague pictures, ink blots, incompletes sentences etc. are provided to the subject and he is asked to structure them in anyway he likes. In doing so, he unconsciously projects his own desires, hopes, fears, repressed wishes etc. and then not only reveals his inner or private world but gives a proper clue for the assessment of his total personality. The various techniques involved in this category may be named as Rorschach Ink Blot Test, Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), Children Apperception Test (CAT), Word Association Test and Sentence Completion Test etc.

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