PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT AND LIFE SUCCESS

Introduction

"Personality" is an important topic in theory and practice of human behaviour. It is also a major concern in Psychology, Biology, Management and other Social Sciences. Personality is also closely associated and practically important in decision making at individual level, house hold level, and institutional level and even at country level. Enhancement of the personality of an individual is an important determinant of the effectiveness and the efficiency of the numerous decisions that a person makes in the day to day life. Such effectiveness and efficiency will reinforce the person and thus will affect the future activities as well. Understanding and comprehending different dimensions of personality with better meaning will help in life success despite the differences in its applicability. Therefore the development of an outstanding personality will be useful for any individual such as children and adults, students and teachers, citizens, employees and employers, managers and their subordinators, workers, etc. In this article attention will be paid to the theoretical explanation of personality (in line with updated knowledge) while giving due consideration to the relationship between personality and life success.

What is Personality?

The word "Personality" came from "persona" a Greek term which means the mask.
Following are some of the selected definitions of personality.
"The sum total of the behevioural and mental characteristics which are distinctive of an individual" (Oxford Dictionary).

"Personality is the supreme realization of the innate idiosyncrasy of a living being. It is an act of high courage flung in the face of life, the absolute affirmation of all that constitutes the individual; the most successful adaptation to the universal condition of existence coupled with the greatest possible freedom for self-determination"
"Personality is not an existing substantive entity to be searched for but a complex constructs to be developed and defined by the observer."(Smith & Vetter, 1982, p.5)
"Personality is a dynamic organization, inside the person, of psychophysical systems that create a person's characteristic patterns of behavior, thoughts, and feelings", Carver & Scheier (2000, p.5)

Freud says that the infancy and child- hood periods affect the personality greater than the other stages of life since the experiences collected during these periods make a greater impact on the unconscious mind.

Biological Explanation

The personality of an individual, in the point of view of biology is determined by genetic factors. It says that the behavioural changes with respect to the personality can be observed from the evolutionary history. Human behaviour of an individual is determined by the individual's biological system where hormones and neurotransmitters are the major ingredients. So according to the bio medical model there is a lower tendency for the personality to be changed from its original composition unless there is a pathological influence.

Psychodynamic Analysis

According to Sigmund Freud and other pro psychoanalytic scholars the personality of an individual depends on the experiences of the individual collected at different stages of life. Freud says that the infancy and child- hood periods affect the personality greater than the other stages of life since the experiences collected during these periods make a greater impact on the unconscious mind.
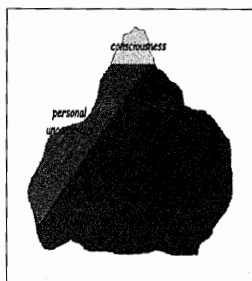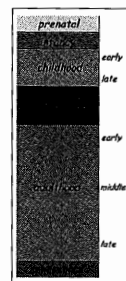
Diagram 1   Diagram 2

Source : C. George Boeree(2006

Behavioural Model

According to the behavioural model, personality is based on what the individual learns from the environment. Therefore, according to this point of view personality is an accumulated set of learnt tendencies over a lifetime (Carver & Sheier, 2000). The word learning refers to the traditions of behaviourism and social psychology. Concepts related to social learning comprises of areas such as modeling, reinforcement, social norms. This perspective implies that the personality is susceptible to molding, grinding, and polishing by the different events of life. The events and experiences that an individual meets with are unique because of the individual's history. (Carver & Scheier, 2000, p. 311). The underlying assumption of the learning perspective is that all behavior is learnt through experiences and by interactions with the environment. The learning perspective views a person as entering the world as a tabula rasa (blank slate), although it acknowledges that there are instincts and pre-set responses to stimuli, as well as a preference for pleasure and a desire to avoid pain. However, the learning perspective primarily differs from the perspectives which propose that a person is born with an innate nature or personality structure, such as the biological theories (call it temperament), trait theories (call it dispositions), psychoanalyses (call it drives or instincts) and humanism (call it drives).

Phenomenological explanation

According to this explanation individuals are different from each other. Each individual is with his or her own personality which is unique to him. According to the phenomenological approach personality is changing and growing. But still everyone is unique. Once we provide a nurturing outer and inner environment, the growth towards our higher selves occurs naturally. We have enormous potential, possibility, and choice. Uniqueness of individuals is one of the basic features of personalities. Therefore we view the world from our unique perspectives and subjective experiences of reality. Phenomenology means the subjective experiences of individuals. We can and must exercise our free will. Also some people think that they don't have the capacity or the ability to make life *happen* for their betterment. They may believe that past problems are insurmountable. They spend so much time regretting the past that they are blinded to the potentials of the present and the future. In short this is due to people losing sight of the free will they possess and not recognizing their own potential for change and growth in other words the lack of self confidence. The Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides some guidance for personality development under phenomenological approach. According to Maslow, the one who maintains a good personality also maintains self efficacy in the day to day activities and fulfills the needs of the hierarchy (refer to diagram 4 for the Maslow's hierarchy).

Cognitive Perspectives on Personality

The cognitive psychology has evolved almost directly from the social learning theory and extensions of the behavioural theory. It also has clear links to humanistic psychology in its focus on the "independent efforts based on the information stored in the inner self". It suggests that there is a considerable capacity for change in personality and mental health by altering the thinking patterns. This will eventually, bring about efficacy in the individual's decision making.

Essentially, the cognitive perspective of personality means the way an individual thinks, including how information is perceived, analyzed, interpreted, encoded and retrieved. People tend to have habitual thinking patterns which are characterized as personality. Your personality, then, would be your characteristic cognitive patterns. According to the cognitive perspective personality is the individual's mental organization. In order to cope up with all the information you receive from the environment, including sensory information, you need to integrate and organize them with appropriate actions.

The cognitive perspective is also known as the information-processing model, with the computer serving as a convenient metaphor. Basically, the computer's program is equivalent to the ways in which a human processes information. In cognitive psychology, these "programs" include methods for attending to, perceiving, representing, encoding, and retrieving of information, decision-making and problem-solving.

Issues of Personality

Personality in psychology has been frequently discussed in various fronts. The subject area of personality in psychology is identified as *Personalogy*. Different theories of Human behaviour have given different explanations for personality or *Personlogy* but it is yet to be supported with innovative explanations to bridge the gaps.

The personality referred here is that of a full grown person (an individual is considered to be full grown once he reaches adulthood-refer diagram 2) which is determined by the accumulated inputs of the individual organism and the environment with which the individual interacts. Even though the concept of personality is applicable in other stages of life (depicted in diagram 2) it cannot be empirically compared or evaluated. However the other stages before adulthood too are important as they are the developmental stages of personality. The period of senescence is not important because firstly, this period is shorter (one year or so in an average person) and secondly during this particular period all faculties of the body become weaker (and under such circumstances personality won't be significant). In general life, it is the adults who make deliveries   for the needs of life and thus for the success of a family, institution or sometimes a country. As hypothesized in this article, the success of life is determined by the personality of the individual. One who has a strong, balanced and a matured personality will be enabled to have a successful life. In this regard there are numerous limitations which can barricade this process. They can be both inner and outer (environmental) conditions. Even under these limitations an individual can improve his or her personality and thus lead his or her life to success.

Some theories of human behaviour emphasize on inner conditions while some others concentrate on outer conditions e.g. the behavioural ,psycho analytical and cognitive models give more attention to the environment in which the individual lives (outer conditions) while the bio medical model emphasizes on the inner conditions and the evolutionary process of human beings.

It is also important not to be rooted deep into the individual theories and consider them pure scientific so that all the existing as well as innovative theories can be given consideration (i.e. to have flexibility with respect to different theories).

Once giving attention to empirical and philosophical concepts on personality it seems that the religious teachings as well as other norms and traditions have given their own explanations on different types of personalities (e.g. Buddhism). They also provide religious counseling   when it is required to support personality issues.

When we look at the personality issues as a whole it is difficult to compare explanations for personality under different models/explanations in a competitive manner and therefore have to merge all of them complimentarily to understand and enhance the personality.

Challenges of life

Challenges of life can be identified in line with the different stages of life as the goals and objectives of life vary depending on the stage. Therefore we can draw attention to the life stages shown in the diagram 2 (given in page no.).Out of them the prenatal, infancy and senescence stages hold less or zero control over the life. Anyhow the prenatal and the infancy stages can make crucial impacts on the later life stages.

According to the different psychological models the success of a child in reaching his childhood goals and expectations will impact on how successful he is in his later life. Also according to psychoanalytical explanations childhood disorders affect on the personality and the later life.

Therefore during childhood (2-9 years) the child needs to be provided with certain conditions and the provision of these conditions will be important in the later life. The basic challenge that an average child faces is reaching the educational goals.
Therefore during this stage it is important to carry out the necessary activities with efficiency.

Anyhow in the present day globalized world children are pressurized with unnecessary competition exerted by parents, teachers and others in the society. Furthermore there is constant competition to shine out among the peer groups as well as among the siblings.This has eventually damaged the personalities of children and has created unfavorable impacts on their lives further ahead.

The next stage in life after childhood is the adolescence. Even during adolescence all the conditions discussed earlier are going to impact more intensively firstly because during adolescence the individual is physically and mentally grown and secondly since this is a transitional stage the experiences turn out to be more complex and crucial. Under these circumstances the inner developments as well as the environmental changes are deterministic as far as the personality and life success is concerned.

Adulthood is the next important stage of life. Firstly it is the period in which an individual reaches to the full grown state. Secondly it is during this period that a person reaches to the zenith with respect to productive contribution. Thirdly it is the most crucial period during which a person is capable of delivering the maximum contribution to the society or the environment in which he or she lives.

On the other hand at this stage of life the competition among the individuals is greater than that of the other stages. Furthermore the decision making of an individual at this stage leads to more backward (the decisions that can have an effect on or undo the decisions that were already made or events that have already occurred; for example an elected presidential candidate might decide to turn down the post) and forward linkages. Depending on how the particular individual is important in the collective entity which can be a household, an institution, an organization or a country, the effects of their decisions can be powerful. Thus the personality is going to matter significantly at this stage of life than the other stages

The period of later adolescence is important for the development of self esteem and spiritual life than the other stages because it is during this period that an individual is somewhat released from the responsibilities which were earlier laid upon him or her. Thus the individual gets an opportunity to look deep into his or her conscience and to think about the spiritual aspects of life. The success at this stage of life has got to be with self actualization and spiritual maturity. The inability to meet these requirements can make the individual be frustrated and full of self-hatred.
However in the modern world people have detached a lot from the natural environment and this particular fact has made it more difficult for them to reach spiritual maturity during the late adulthood and restricts the life success.

Personality Development and Life Success

The success of life can be taken as the success in the present life, as well as in the life after death (under the assumption that there is a life after death). However the attention is given here, only to the success that can be achieved during the present life.Though there is a wide variety of interpretations for life in different religions and psychological models, the success of the present life according to all of them means reaching the goals of life.

Personality development can be exploited in two ways.

1.   Finding   appropriate solutions for the personality problems.
2.   Developing the   personality by focusing on the efficiency of decision making

It is sometimes needed to restructure the personality in order to develop it (the extent to which you have to do the restructuring or whether you actually need to restructure the personality depends on the level of personality at the moment). Restructuring the personality means rearranging the components of personality. Here the components of personality include physical, intellectual, emotional, social, moral and spiritual.

There is a set of factors which can affect the above mentioned components of personality. They include heredity, learning, maturation and environment. In order to rearrange the components of personality it is required to change these factors.Though it is obvious that it is too hard a task to implement changes in heredity, maturation and environment they can still be manipulated for our betterment through proper management. However learning which includes studying, training and conditioning of habits can be changed and can develop personality.

The Cognitive model of psychology along with other appropriate explanations guide towards a rational base to understand and mold the personality. Thus it is possible to create a good self image and to see to the drawbacks of it. This will develop the personality and will finally lead to good decision making and better performance.Once understanding the our personalities we have to pay attention to the three self concepts

1. Actual self- the external self or the self in others' eyes,
2.   Real self the person who is inside or in other words the strengths and weaknesses,
3.   Ideal Self-what the person wants to be or (what the personality should be fitted with in order to have a good self image which will help the person to make efficient decisions and finally to perform efficiently).

Making the actual self, real self and ideal self balanced with each other to have a nearly perfect personality is not an easy task! It may perhaps take a life time exercise yet fail !!

However, at least a fair effort with an appropriate vision and a well planned mission will enable to bring about a relative balance in the three selves that lead to life success. We can even call this as reaching the goals of the present life.

Diagram 3
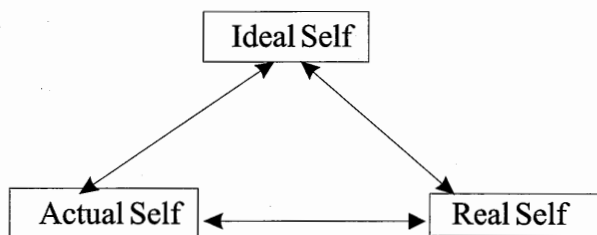
In an individual with a perfect (fully functioning) personality there will be no differences among the actual self, real self and the ideal self. This means that they will be perfectly congruent. In such a situation the outer world will observe the individual the way he needs him to be (actual self = the ideal self) and he himself will also observe that he is ideal (real self = ideal self).Thus he will have no regrets whatsoever and will be quite confident of whatever he does. He will also have no fear as to what he does in front of the world outside and he will be fully content and extremely blissful.This is how he will be prized with a perfect personality.
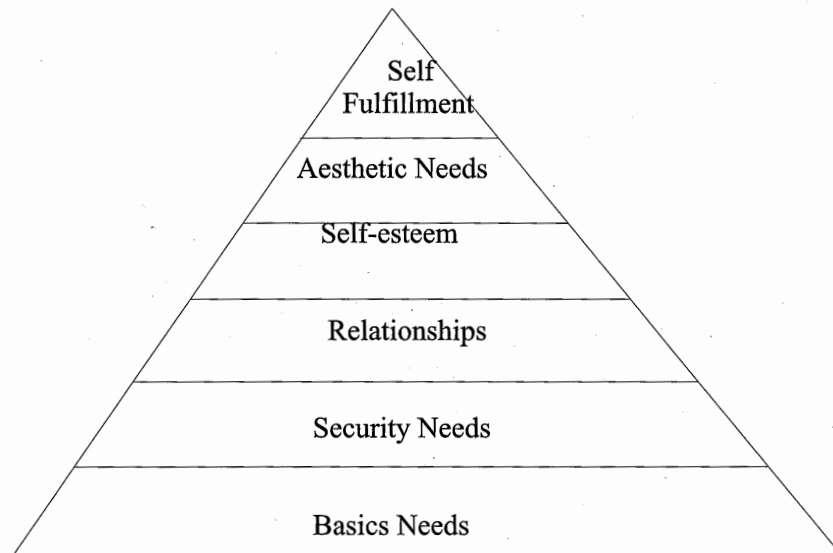
Such a personality will be able to utilize the life energy to the maximum and thus accomplish the goals of life SMART ly.

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Results oriented
Time-bound

A person with a good personality having sufficiently fulfilled "SMART" with respect to the life goals will be motivated up the hierarchy of needs identified by Maslow.

Diagram 4

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                    Self
                 Fulfillment
              Aesthetic Needs
               Self-esteem
              Relationships
              Security Needs
               Basics Needs
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An individual with a satisfactory level of motivation will be able to fulfill the needs of each level of hierarchy shown in the diagram no.4.

Such person will be a **SUCCESS** in his life.

Sense of direction
Understanding
Courage
Charity
Esteem (good self image)
Self confidence
Self acceptance

The **FAILURE** of an individual in the above areas will lead to frustration aggression etc. as given below.

Frustration
Aggression
Insecurity
Loneliness
Uncertainty
Resentment
Emptiness

With the failure due to frustration, aggression etc. the individual may become weaker, vulnerable and finally incongruent with respect to the real self, ideal self and actual self .For a person with a good personality having fulfilled all the necessary conditions without getting trapped in frustration, aggression, and insecurity etc. the life will be successful. If the individual shares his success with the others around him he will be appreciated by the environment and will enable him to sustain such success with more results at both individual and collective level.

In this regard interpersonal relationships are important.Human beings are naturally sociable, frequently get together and are willing to perform together rather than isolated e.g. the family, school, work place, and societies. Here, the one who is with better inter-relationships is efficient and successful in maintaining and sharing the life success. Thus his success will be solidified at both individual and collective level. Naturally the one who holds a good personality is also effective in inter-relationships and benefited from the collective activities.

Here communication skills of an individual are also important.
The one who is with effective communication skills will always **SOFTEN** and therefore it is easier for him to move in the society both horizontally and vertically.

Smile
Open posture
Forward
Touch
Eye contact
Nod

Concluding Remarks

Success in life is the supreme goal of all human beings. Some are conscious about this while the others are not. Personality and life success are closely associated with each other. Since life success and personality is essentially a complex, there is a need of complementary interpretation and explanation to understand these concepts. In this regard scientific explanations as well as other explanations such as religious interpretations (which are usually not within the purview of empirical experiences) are applicable.

Therefore there is a need of integration of religious and spiritual beliefs and knowledge of spiritual life to bridge the gaps with respect to the targeted efforts of good personality and life success. Under such circumstances the real self, the ideal self and the actual self which are the triangle components of life can be made compatible and balanced in order to reach the life success. Though it is usually impossible to reach this condition 100%, attempting alone can improve the qualities that are needed for a better personality and eventually for the (relative) success in life.

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