Total Reflection of Self Concept

PROF. MADYA DR AZIZI BIN YAHAYA

Faculty of Education Education
University Technology Malaysia

ABSTRACT: In short, this articles generally orientate readers about a total reflection of self concept. Basically, the topic discuss upon the term normally used to describe self concept, it different components and it relationship toward academic achievement in specific. Finally, last but not the least to make this total reflection a reality, it should also cover briefly regarding the structure and development of self concept plus the methods of assessment and the global versus domain specific models.

We reflex on what we have done and can do in comparison to our expectation and the expectation of others and to the characteristics and accomplishments of others Self concept is not innate, but is developed by the individual through interaction with the environment and reflecting on the interaction. Of cause there are variety of ways to think about the self . . The major issue here is the direction of the relationship. Does self concept produce achievement or does achievement produce self-concept? Self concept is inherently phenomenological, that is, it refers to the person's own view of him or herself.

Apparently, there are several different components of self concept which include physical, academic, social and transpersonal. This component thus in turn give a greater influence to the definition. Accordingly , definition is the first consideration in the assessment of self concept and then choose a method or instrument consistent with that definition

Self concept is one of the most popular ideas in psychological literature. Unfortunately, self concept is also an illusive and often poorly defined . Terms such as "Self concept" , "Self esteem", "Self worth", " Self- acceptance" and so on are often used inconsistently and interchangeably, when they may related to different ideas about how people view themselves. Accordingly , definition is the first consideration in the assessment of self concept and then

choose a method or instrument consistent with that definition .There are variety of ways to think about the self . Two of the most widely used term are self-concept and self- esteem. Self-concept generally refer:

> "the totality of a complex, organized and dynamic system of learned beliefs,
>
> attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence " (Purkey,1988)

Self-esteem generally refer to how we feel about or how we value ourselves. Self-concept can also refer to the general idea we have of ourselves and self esteem can refer to particular measures about components of self-concept. We develop and maintain our self-concept through the process of taking action and then reflecting on what we have done and what other tell us about we have done. We reflex on what we have done and can do in comparison to our expectation and the expectation of others and to the characteristics and accomplishments of others (Grigham,1986) . That is, self concept is not innate, but is developed by the individual through interaction with the environment and reflecting on the interaction. This dynamic aspect of self-concept (and, by corollary, self-esteem) is important because it indicates that it can be modified or changed. Franken stated:

> "there is a growing body research which indicate that it is possible to change the self-concept. Self-change is not something that people can will but rather it depends on the process of self-reflection. Through self-reflection, people often come to view themselves in a new, more powerful way and it is through this new, more powerful way of viewing the self that people can develop possible selves" (p.443)

There are several different components of self concept ; Physical, academic, social and transpersonal. The physical aspect of self-concept relates to that which is concrete . What we look like, our sex, height, weigh etc. What kind of cloth we wear. What kind of car we drive. What kind of home we live in and so forth. Our academic self-concept relates to how well we do in school or how well we learn. There are two levels; a general academic self-concept of how good we are overall and a set of specific content-related self concepts that describe how good we are in math, science, language, art, social science etc. The social self-concept describe how we relate to other people and the transpersonal self-concept describes how we relate to the supernatural or the unknowns.

Marsh, (1992) showed that the relationship of self concept to school achievement is very specific. General self-concept and non academic aspects of self concept are not related to academic work. General academic achievement measure are related moderately to academic success. Specific measure of subject related to self-concept are highly related to success in that content area.

Using linear discriminant analysis , Byrne,(1990) showed that academic self-concept was more effective than was academic achievement in differentiating between low-track and high-track students. Hamachek, (1995) also asserts that self –concept and school achievement are related. The major issue is the direction of the relationship: does self concept produce achievement or does achievement produce self-concept. Gage and Berliner, (1992) state,

"the evidence is accumulating, however, to indicate that level of school success, particularly over many years, predicts level of self and one's own ability (Bridgeman & Shipman,1978: Kifer,1975) whereas level of self self-esteem does not predict level of achievement. The implication is that teachers need to concentrate on academic successes and failures of their students. It student's and failure that gives them the information with which to assess themselves"

If academic achievement leads to self-concept /self-esteem, but self concept is better predictor of being a low track or high track student, it would appear that there that there is some intervening variable. James, (1890) state that the intervening variable is personal expectation.

His formula is:

Self-esteem = Success/ Pretensions

That is , increasing self-esteem results when success is improved relative to expectations. An interesting corollary to this equation is that success is limited by expectation and self-esteem.

Success = Pretensions * Self- esteem

This equation states that success, especially the limit of one's success, can be improved by increasing expectation and or self esteem. However, as noted Gage and Berliner (1992), the research on the relationship between self-esteem/self concept and school achievement suggest that measure of general or event academic self-academic self-concept are not significantly related to school achievement . It is at the level of specific subjects (eg, reading, mathematic and science) that there is a relationship self concept/self esteem and academic success. Given the above formula, this suggests that success in a particular subject area is not really changing one's

self-concept (knowledge of one's self) or even self esteem (one's subjective evaluation of one's value or worth) but rather is impacting one's expectation about future success based on one's past experience. Seligman's (1996) work on explanatory style suggests that the intervening variable connecting self-esteem and achievement is the student's level of "optimism" or the tendency to see the world as a benevolent (good thing will probably happen) or malevolent (bad thing will probably happen). Franklen (1994) has develop a flow chart that provides a visual model of how some of the most important affect and conative

(regulatory) variable are related to personal success .

Global versus domain specific models

Perhaps the most important distinction that differentiates various conceptualization is whether self-concept is viewed as an overarching, global characteristic of the person, or as a set of self-evaluation specific to different domains of behavior. The global view, sometimes conceptualized as "self-esteem" or "general self-

concept" is the older and probably the more common view among counselors and therapists.

In contrast to the traditional model of global self-concept, multifaceted models stress self evaluations of specific competencies or attributes, for example, academic- self concept, physical self-concept, and so on.   Although some theoretical model are hierarchical, with global-self at the apex, most of these models stress the distinctiveness of various self-concept facets. Extensive empirical research in developmental and educational psychology over the past 15 years has strongly supported the multifaceted view. Consistent with research finding, most published self-concept measures now emphasize domain specific self concepts.

Methods of self-concept assessment

Self concept is inherently phenomenological, that is, it refers to the person's own view of him or herself. In fact, one leading scholar in the field (Wylie, 1974) has argued that comparisons to external events are not particularly relevant in the assessment of self concept. Accordingly, self concept is almost always assessed through self report. Four commonly used self-report methods are described below (Burns,1997)

1. "Rating   scales" are the   most frequently used type of instrument. Most of the currently published instrument of this type. Rating scales typically are composed of a set of statements to which the respondent expresses a degree of agreement or disagreement. Five and seven point Likert scales are common. Typical item might be

"I am good at math" or "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself". Responses are then summed to form a scales (e.g, math self concept) or a measure of global self-concept.

2. "Checklists" involve having respondents check all of the adjectives that they believe apply to themselves. Because the adjectives have been assigned to a category, such as "self-favorability", based on either rational or empirical criteria, the person's choices can be tabulated to form a self-concept measure.

Checklists provide interesting qualitative information, but have two shortcomings. First respond are dichotomous (yes / no) : there is no way for the respondent to indicate degree of agreement. Second, the categorization of the adjectives is done by an external party, without knowing what exact meaning the adjective has for the individual.

3. "Q-sort" have been used extensively in self concept research but are seldom used by practicing counselors because they are time consuming and required considerable commitment from the client . In Brief, the Q- Sort technique involves having the person sort cards that contain self descriptors (e.g, "I am strong") into a pre defined number of piles ranging from "most like me" to "least like me" Typically, 100 or more cards would be used qualitative method can be used to evaluate the results of the sorting task .

4. In "Free respondents" methods respondents typically complete partial statements. (e.q, I feel best when……………….) Although some set of these sentence-completion tasks have published formally, complete with qualitative scoring schemes, responses more frequently are evaluated qualitatively.

Free-response methods are seldom used in self–concept research but have favor with many counselor because the open ended, qualitative nature of the task lends itself to facilitating discussion with the client. The rather low reliability of such methods, however, argues against interpreting the result as a "measure" of Self-concept

Although most of the self-concept measures compare the person's response against some set of norms, one researcher (Brahm,1982) successfully used a "criterion-referenced approach" in which the child" self efficacy beliefs were assessed repeatedly in reference to an external criterion of accuracy. Brahm argues that this assessment approach

integrates self-concept with mastery learning more effectively than does the traditional norm-referenced self-concept scale. Although this is a promising idea, it remain undeveloped.

Counselors or others who wish to assess self-concept must keep several consideration in mind, including demand characteristics of self-report measure, technical adequacy of the assessment procedure and whether the assessment is being used for research or clinical purposes. Self-report measures make several requirements of the respondent (Burns,1979) . First, the person must have a sufficient level of awareness. Young Children may lack confidence but may not be consciously aware of their own perceptions. Second, self-report measure also require substantial verbal competence, a skill that can not be assumed. Third, even children are aware that some responses are more socially acceptable than others. The accuracy of self-reports is often decreased by this "social desirability" response tendency.

Technical quality of self- concept instruments demands serious consideration . Reliability and validity coefficients for personality tests are frequently consideration lower than for performance measures such as those for cognitive ability . For some of the older self-concept measures internal consistency reliabilities , especially for subscales, are only in the 70 range.

Some newer instruments ,however ,attain internal consistency coefficients in the . 90's. to help in choosing a test ,prospective test users   should consult technical manuals and test reviews carefully before making a final choice.

Finally , most empirically scored self-concept measures were developed more for research than for clinical use. Normative sample are seldom anywhere near as useful as for tests of achievement or ability. Information relating test score to problem behavior is virtually absent.. Counselors should use scores from self concept measures very cautiously when working with individual clients.

Structure and development of self concept

In a recent review, Markus & Wurf (1987) state that the most dynamic advances in the last decade of research on self concept can be found in work on its structure and content. Historically, one of the major stumbling blocks to linking the self concept to behavior has been the view of the self concept as a stable, generalized, or average view of the self. More recent research in social psychology (Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984) has resolved this problem by conceptualizing of self-concept as a multifaceted phenomenon composed of a set of images, schemas and prototypes (Markus & Wurf, 1987) There has

been a similar movement in sociology where the self is defined in term of multiple identities. Identities include personal characteristics, features and experiences as well as

Role and social statuses. In both streams of research, author define the self –concept in terms of various self representations. Their work indicate that some self-representation are more important than others (Schlenker, 1980);. Some are representation of what self is perceived to be, versus what the self would like to be (Markus & Wurf , 1987) ; some are core conceptions (Gerden, 1968); or salient identities (Stryker, 1980) ; Whiles others are more peripheral; and some are relatively stable (sullian, 1989) whiles others are dynamic (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

In the self-concept base model of motivation, one's concept of self is composed of four interrelated self perceptions, that is the perceived self., the ideal self, one's self esteem and a set of social identities. Each of these elements play a crucial role in understanding how the self-concept relates to energizing, directing and sustaining organizational behavior.

a.   The perceived self

Most models and description of the self involve elements of self perception, however most are unclear as to what aspects of the self the individual hold the perceptions of. One of the earliest theorists writing on the nature of the self was Willian James (1890). He saw the self consisting of whatever the individual views as belonging to himself or herself, which includes a material, a social and a spiritual self. The perceptions of the material self are those of one's own body, family and possession. The social self includes the views others have of the individual and the spiritual include perception of one's emotional or desires. Kihlstorm, Cantor and their associate suggest that individual hold perception of themselves in term of traits and values (kihlstrom & Cantor 1984) their attributes, experience, thought and action and their physical appearance, demographic attribution and disposition of various sorts. Gecas (1982) asserts that the contents of self-concept c0nsists of perception of social and personal identities, traits, attributes and possession.

Self perception are determine through interaction with one's environment Processes of attitude formation, attitude change, (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980) and self attribution (Jones, 1990) all contribute to the development of a set of perceptions. As indicated above, when feedback is unambiguous, plentiful, and consistent, a set of strongly held self perceptions in formed. Ambiguous, lacking or inconsistent feedback results in weekly held self perceptions

Two primary form of information one receives about self from the environment come in the form of task feedback and social feedback. Task feedback comes directly from observation of the results of one's effort on different task activities. Social feedback is probably the most prevalent type of feedback one receives regarding his or her traits, competencies and value. It is the feedback one derives from the behavior and communication, verbal and non-verbal, of others.

b.   The ideal self

While the perceive self describes the set of perceptions individuals hold of their actual traits competencies and values, the ideal self represents the set of traits, competencies and values an individual would like to possess (Rogers,1959). By possess we mean that the individual desires to believe that he or she actually has a particular trait, competency or value or want others to believe that the individual has the trait, competency or value.,

In the early stage of interaction with reference group, whether the reference is the primary group (i.e the family for young child) or a secondary (i.e one's peer or co-workers), choices and decisions are channeled through the existing social system. As an individual interacts with the reference group, he / she receives feedback from reference group members. If the feedback is positive and unconditional, the individual will internalize the traits, competencies and value which are important to that reference group. In this case, the individual becomes inner-directed, using the internalized traits, competencies and value as a measure of his / her own successes or failure. Internalize competencies and value have been suggested as the basis of ideal self (Higgins, Klein & Strauman 1987) and as an internal standard for behavior (Bandura 1986). If the individual receive negative feedback or positive but condition feedback, the individual may not internalize or only partially internalize the traits, competencies and values of the reference group. This type of individual becomes other-directed and will either withdraw from the group or seek constant feedback from group members.

Thus, the establishment of ideal self is determined through a mix of external, or other directed standards and internal or internal directed standards, depending on one's orientation to the world (Reisman 1996). The ideal self of other directed individual is developed largely through the established norms and role expectation of reference group members. The audience for one' actions become the reference group, in that it is important that reference group member see the individual as possessing accepted attributes. For the inner directed, the ideal self is

determined largely through the development of a set of internalized goal and standards, and the individual become his or her own audience. Gottfredson (1981) perspective on individual and social achievement on motivation is similar to this conceptualization. This later author asserts that in individual oriented achievement motivation , the individual strives to achieve some internalized standard of excellence. In contras, socially oriented achievement motivation reflects an individual's perseverance to fulfill the expectations of significant others.

c.   Social identities

According to Achforth and Meal (1989), social identification is a process by which individuals classify themselves and others into different categories, such as "Awek" "Haji" and "Askar" etc . This classification process serves the function of segmenting and ordering the social environment and enabling the individual to locate or define him or herself in that social environment. Thus, social identification provide a partial answer to the question, "Who am I ?" . Social identities are thus those those aspects of an individual's self concept that derive from the social categories to which he or she perceives him or herself as belonging (Tajjfel & Turner 1985).

Individual establish social identities through involvement with reference groups in the social situations. Reference groups provide three major function with respect to social identities. 1) The determination of profile of traits, competencies, and values for a particular social identity. 2) The establishment and communication of the relative values and status of various roles or identities. and 3) are the basic of social feedback regarding one's level of these trait, competencies and values.

There is two types of social identities; a global identity and role specific identities. The global identity is the identity one's wishes to portray across all situations, across various role and to various reference groups. The global identity exists independently of any specific social identity. The reference group for the global include those members of one's primary group, and the traits, competencies and value which are relevant to the individual are those which are reinforced by the individual's culture. The global identity is formed early in life, and one's family functioning as a primary reference group, perform the three functions mention above.

d   Self Esteem

The self esteem is the evaluative component of self concept (Gergen 1971). It is a function of the distance between ideal self and the perceived self. When the perceived self

matches the ideal self, self esteem is relatively high. Low self esteem occurs when the perceived self is significantly lower than the ideal self. Since the distance between the ideal self and the perceived self constantly varies depending on task and social feedback, self esteem is a dynamic component of the self concept and it is a state of change and development.

Korman (1970) suggests three types of self esteem: 1) chronic self esteem, which is defined as a relatively persistent personality trait or disposition state that occurs consistently across various situation. 2) task specific self esteem, which is one's self perception of his/ her competence concerning particular task or job. And 3) socially influenced self esteem, which is a function of the expectations of others. Chronic ia the result of past experience and focuses on one's competencies. An individual's confidence in his/her competencies directs the individual into situation which will require the use of those competencies. Task specific self esteem is the result of feedback which comes directly from observation of the results of one's efforts. Lastly social influence self esteem results from communication or feedback from reference group members or society as a wholes, concerning the value of an identity and the individual's ability to meet the expectation of the reference group and or society as a whole.

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