



# A Study On Societal And Social Group Implications On Personality Development

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## ABSTRACT

According to the American Psychological Association, “Personality refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving.” This study specifically attempts to investigate the complex interrelationships among personality development, social group dynamics, and societal influences. It explores how social organizations either support or contradict society norms and ideals, as well as how these factors shape individual identities. The study also makes an attempt to show how primary groups like family and close friends—and secondary group factors like community, group cohesion, and social identity—affect the development and maturation of personality. The study also emphasizes how important cultural environment is in determining what constitutes appropriate conduct and values in a community and how this influences people’s personalities. The results highlight how crucial it is to comprehend these dynamics in order to build wholesome relationships and encourage personal development. This study advances our knowledge of human behaviour and the dynamic nature of personality as it changes in many social settings.

### Keywords:

Personality development, Individual differences, American Psychological Association, Study, Social groups and Factors

## 1.0 Introduction

Humans cannot survive in seclusion. The rules and conventions of society need him to adapt. The 21st-century educational system aims to help students develop their personalities. One cannot adapt to any civilization or handle the ever-changing and dynamic issues and challenges of society without the development of their personality. The Latin term “persona,” which refers to a mask an actor wears when portraying a character on stage, is where the word “personality” originates. Regarding the widespread idea of personality among laypeople in society, there is a misperception that personality refers to the unique pattern or habits of an individual that are revealed by his appearance. External traits include things like a person’s clothing, voice, body language, postures, habits, and facial expressions. It follows that a person with favourable outward characteristics is also seen to have a positive personality, and vice versa. Those with knowledge and awareness, however, are aware that this is untrue. A personality cannot be formed just by external traits. And if we follow this idea, how and where would we rank the personalities of notable educators, philosophers, psychologists, and social workers from India and around the world, such as Paulo Ferreira, Rabindranath Tagore, Jean Piaget, Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein, and many others whose outward appearance was not particularly impressive? Although these people certainly do not inherently

possess ideal external features, their behaviour, attitude, thinking, goals, social behaviour, characteristic traits, knowledge, and capabilities were very unique. As a result, it was recognized that personality encompassed more than just outward characteristics, and the idea of outward appearance in personality was pushed to the side.

### 1.1 Meaning of Personality

The entire pattern of distinctive thought, feeling, and behaviour patterns that make up a person's unique manner of interacting with their surroundings is referred to as their personality. A system with both psychological and physical components is called personality. Traits, emotions, intellect, temperament, character, and motivations are the primary components of this system, which is made up of interdependent parts. Despite being psychological, all of these components have their roots in the body's neurology and endocrinology.

Every person has distinct characteristics and behavioural patterns, and personality is said to be dynamic and varies from person to person. Their beliefs, perspectives, decisions, passions, and life goals are distinct and diverse. Extroverts, introverts, carefree, fun-loving people, and those who prefer to be in their own space are all possible. Some people are antisocial, while others are gregarious. While some people enjoy interacting with others, others do not. While some may be inactive, others are active. While some people are driven and disciplined, others may be the complete opposite. However, with the right support and guidance from parents, educators, the community, schools, colleges, universities, the workplace, friends, coworkers, and life experiences in general, these kinds of behavioural patterns may be altered. Therefore, one's personality changes as a result of external experiences with the passage of time. The following cites some viewpoints about the definition of personality:

- ❖ Gordon Allport in 1939 defined - "Personality is the dynamic organisation within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment."
- ❖ According to American Psychological Association, "Personality refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving." It further states that, "the study of personality focuses on two broad areas, one is understanding individual differences, in particular personality characteristics, such as sociability or irritability. The other is understanding how the various parts of a person come together as a whole."
- ❖ According to Morton Prince (1924) - "Personality is the sum total of all biological, innate dispositions, impulses, tendencies, appetites and instincts of the individual and the acquired dispositions and tendencies acquired by experiences. Although all encompassing, it is criticised on the basis of this being highly subjective and complex."
- ❖ According to Eysenck, 1952, "Personality is the more or less stable and enduring organisation of a person's character, temperament, intellect and physique that determine his unique adjustment to his environment."
- ❖ Sheldon (1898–1977) proposed that personality could be determined by 'body types', namely ectomorphs (lean and thin people), endomorphs (high body fat and rounder physique) and mesomorphs (well-built and muscular). This approach was known as somatology. Both the ideas, phrenology and somatology were rejected because of unscientific methodology.
- ❖ Walter Mischel, (1981), opines - "Personality usually refers to the distinctive patterns of behaviour (including thoughts and emotions) that characterise each individual's adaptations to the situations of his life or her life."
- ❖ Personality is also defined as "an enduring characteristics that may change in response to different situations" (Schultz and Schultz, 2013).
- ❖ Cagan and Haveman defined – "personality as the total pattern of characteristic ways of thinking, feeling and behaving that constitute the individual's distinctive method of relating to the environment."

Hence, it can be inferred from the definitions and interpretations of personality given above that the study of personality is centred on two main areas: first, comprehending individual variations in specific and personality traits like sociability. The second is realizing how a person's many components work together to form their total.

## 2.0 Societal and Social Group Implications on Personality Development

Compared to other creatures, humans have unique traits and attributes, such as the capacity for language, communication, cognitive abilities, physical activity, emotional capacity, and many more. People's lifestyles and ways of living have evolved significantly over time, and they will continue to alter in response to their changing wants and expectations. In order to avoid falling behind, one must adapt to the current expectations and necessities of society. People are social creatures.

### 2.1 Societal Implications on Personality Development

We are socially raised from birth. The importance of other pertinent individuals, groups, and organizations in particular, organizations that significantly impact a person's personality is becoming more widely acknowledged. This process is sometimes referred to as socialization. Socialization is the process by which an individual learns from the incredibly diverse array of behavioural possibilities that are available to him or her, those that are eventually combined and taken in. The formation of personality will therefore be influenced by social circumstances, social institutions, including family, school, marriage, religion, peer groups, and the neighbourhood, among other social groupings and it plays a prominent role in the development of personality. Several of the more significant social elements are as following:

- a. **Parents and their guidance:** An infant has the natural capacity to learn even if they don't have all of life's experiences at that point in their lives. They are constantly learning and adjusting to the circumstances. From an early age, they will absorb the information that their parents teach them. Prior to entering formal educational institutions, this is a crucial time in a person's life. The education he/she receives from their parents is informal and it is lifelong. Their parents will both directly and indirectly instil beliefs, information, and behaviours in them. Parents are considered as the first teacher of the child and they are the first individuals to interact with a child. Different parents treat their children in different ways. Some people are so forgiving and indulgent that they try to assist the child in any manner they can while ignoring his flaws and abandoning him. Children of such parents not only lack confidence but often behave in a distant, demanding, and exploitative manner in social settings. In addition to lacking confidence, children of such parents become aloof, demanding, and exploitative in social situations. On the other hand, children of severe disciplinarian parents become docile, timid, and emotionally unstable. As a result, parents have an important impact on how each person develops their personality. They possess the capacity and ability to influence their child's personality in ways that are desired. They must be handled with love, care, concern, and compassion; they cannot be coerced, commanded, or forced. They need to be amiable with their children so that they may express their emotions without reluctance or fear. Children's behaviour will undoubtedly change for the better if they receive this sort of treatment and proper guidance.
- b. **Home environment:** Our social behaviours, social skills, socialisation skills, adjustment skills, emotional skills and personalities are greatly influenced by the type of environment that prevails in our families. Strong emotional ties between parents and siblings characterize families that encourage and support their children's development. Children from these households are proactive, emotionally secure, and self-assured. The kind of environment in a family exists affects our personality a great deal. Families which enjoy strong emotional tie among siblings and parents, are supportive and encouraging to their children. Children from such families are self-confident, proactive and emotionally stable.
- c. **Birth order of the child:** The child's personality is significantly influenced by their birth order. It has an enormous impact on developing and altering the child's personality. In his personality theory, Alfred Adler provided a comprehensive description of how a family's birth order shapes each child's unique personality. Indeed, Adler was the very first psychologist to advocate that a child's birth order, or ordinal place among his siblings, also influences how personality is formed. Based on his research, Adler stated that whereas the youngest or lastborn experience emotions of being inferior, lack of confidence, and self-reliance, firstborns are frequently introverted and reclusive. Dependency and self-centeredness are characteristics of single or only children. They are also sophisticated and exploitative in nature. Children in the middle order are driven to succeed and possess a strong sense of self-worth.
- d. **School as a factor of Personality:** School is a miniature of any society. The second factor that has a significant impact on personality development after family is education. The cornerstone of any society's progress and growth is its educational system. When it comes to changing children's personalities and society, schools are crucial. The curriculum should be created in schools in a way that supports students' holistic and personality development. A child's personality is significantly

impacted by school in general. Schools are an institution that aids in the development of children's personality qualities. Furthermore, education aids in children's development of a variety of social skills, including self-assurance, communication, behavioural, life, emotional, intellectual, teamwork, and managerial abilities, among others. The principal, instructors, and—above all—the school environment all have a significant part in forming a child's personality. Children watch and emulate their teachers' personalities, classroom dynamics, disciplinary procedures, and academic performance, all of which have an impact on their own personalities. Therefore, in order to bring about the desired changes in the children's personalities, educators need to be aware of their social background and psychology. Children acquire up social skills including sharing, adjusting, and cooperating. They cultivate a realistic view of themselves.

- e. **Neighbourhood:** Children's personalities are significantly shaped by their neighbourhood. One's personality is significantly influenced by their neighbourhood. Neighbourhood families are similar in terms of socioeconomic status, etc., and facilitate a seamless transition from home to culture. The children are exposed to many family styles, cultures, language, religion, community and learns how to cope with the diversity, despite their almost identical ideals and parenting approaches. Neighbourhoods differ in how they emphasize children's behaviour, are more objective than parents, and consider each child as an individual, which makes them less critical and less approving. Whether a youngster grows up to be a sociable person, antisocial, disciplined or undisciplined, a robber or a priest, etc., depends on their neighbourhood. As you may have seen, criminals frequently originate from social environments where living conditions are appallingly poor and moral principles and values are marginalized. Children from these kinds of homes are not disciplined, responsible, sensitive, or self-respecting.
- f. **Social acceptance:** A key component of personality development is social acceptability. Desired changes in a person's personality might be brought about via social approval. In a literal sense, social acceptability refers to getting compliments and approval from important people. People have psychological and social preferences and anticipate social acceptability from their friends, parents, teachers, siblings, and neighbours. Therefore, we intentionally and unintentionally, shape our behaviour and attitude to win their acceptance. Greater social acceptability will lead a person with traits like leadership, self-assurance, and feelings of superiority, whereas lower social acceptance is frequently associated with introversion, low self-esteem, and poor social adjustment.

## 2.2 Social Group Implications on Personality Development

Individual personalities and actions are greatly influenced by social groupings. Members' self-perception and interpersonal interactions can be influenced by the dynamics inside these groupings. There are two types of social groups: primary and secondary. Primary groups, including family and close friends, are distinguished by long-lasting interpersonal bonds that have a significant impact on personality development. On the other hand, secondary groupings, such as professional associations, could influence individual personality traits more superficially.

According to Zajonc, an audience's enabling effects often only materialize when the job calls for the performer to exhibit dominant reactions that is, responses that are well-learned or derived from innate behaviours. The presence of others hinders performance if the task calls for nondominant responses, which are new, complex, or untried behaviours that the organism has either never done before or has done only seldom. Accordingly, students who work in groups rather than alone produce lower-quality essays on difficult philosophical topics (Allport, 1924), but they also solve simple, low-level multiplication problems with an audience or a coactor more accurately than when they work alone (Dashiell, 1930). Some of the important factors on personality are listed below:

- a. **Group Cohesion:** The integrity, solidarity, social integration, or unity of a group is known as group cohesion. Cohesive groups often have members who enjoy one other and the group as well as who are committed to pursuing common, group-level objectives. Cohesive groups often perform better than disjointed ones, and members tend to like their groups more when they are cohesive.
- b. **We-feeling:** Individual personalities have been shown to influence group dynamics and behaviour. Personality qualities can affect how the group functions as a whole in addition to how individuals interact with one another. Most significantly, social groups foster a sense of oneness, closeness, and weeness. The urge to belong is one of the basic psychological needs that groups satisfy. Leon Festinger's theory of social comparison states that people frequently join organizations in order to

compare their attitudes and views to those of others. Because people fit their self-perceptions with group norms, social comparison can strengthen personal identification and aid in personality development.

- c. **Decision making:** When it comes to decision-making, groups are especially helpful since they can access more resources than a single person can. Even if a single person may be quite knowledgeable about an issue and its solutions, the collective knowledge of a community greatly exceeds that individual's understanding. By talking about the issue, groups may not only come up with additional ideas and potential solutions, but they can also assess the possibilities they come up with more impartially. A group may demand that a solution be approved by a specific percentage of members or that it satisfies some other acceptable criterion. In general, people believe that a group's choice will be better than an individual's. One benefit of collective decision-making is the increased information availability for the group. During talks, group members can share their expertise and opinions and put their thoughts on the subject in search of a solution. However, far too frequently, rather than focusing on unshared information, groups spend a large portion of their discussion time on common knowledge—information that members of the group may share. If just a few individuals in the group know something crucial, this shared effect will have a negative effect.
- d. **Social Identity:** The social identity method states that a group is a group when its members feel good about belonging to it and experience social identity, which is defined in part by the group to which they belong (Hogg, 2010). The social identification might be interpreted as the person's propensity to speak well of the group to others, their overall satisfaction with belonging to the group, and the sense of pride that comes with being a member. Given how crucial identity is to belonging to a group, we can try to construct it in order to feel good about ourselves and our group.

## Conclusion

Personality development is greatly influenced by social group dynamics and societal factors. While secondary groups, such as companies and community organizations, offer a variety of experiences and can help to hone individual qualities, primary groups, such as family and friends, give emotional support and socializing. By striking a balance between individual characteristics and group identity, cultural environment shapes individual personalities and establishes acceptable norms and behaviours. Fostering wholesome relationships and encouraging personal development need an understanding of these forces.

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