Chapter – I

Introduction: Statement of the Problem
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Identity formation, personality and wellbeing of an individual are intimately interconnected from a very early age. The events of the life cycle acquire significance when we seek to understand the elements that contribute to the construction of identity. From my experience of working with various communities using group work and individual case-work techniques as part of the curriculum of Social Work I have understood that the situations in which children find themselves mould the mechanisms of adjustment/coping; interaction with others within and outside their environment and these shape their expectations and aspirations. As societies become more and more intermingled and come to share common hopes and aspirations, individuals need to be able to present themselves as well as think of themselves as ‘capable’ and ‘prepared’ for the understanding of modern goals of life in their individual ways with which they feel ‘comfortable’ and ‘content’. As the child grows, their interaction with the society also grows. The child will face the wider range of human relationship. An individual has to match up with the expectations of the society and cannot be deviant. This way one will learn to discover oneself. The social aspects in our life play a role in moulding our personality.

**Personality** as a term is derived from the Greek word ‘persona’ which literally means mask implying in lay terms that personality is the mask that we present to the outside world and that this mask is reinforced or challenged continuously through interaction and feedback from others. Personality describes the individual’s characteristics and traits that are organized around the self. The self of each individual is unique and the ways in which the self organizes the characteristics and traits is also unique. It is the personality that sets us apart from another individual. However, it must be remembered that there are only a finite number of traits but these traits in various forms, degrees and use are infinite and endless. This is how the individual’s uniqueness is created and manifested. Personality is not directly inherited. What is inherited is a tendency to develop in certain ways which implies that he/she does not inherit a predisposition to develop in particular direction. In general, there is said to be a connection between individual’s personality and
tendency to behave in certain ways. For example, if one is classified to be an extrovert then that individual tends to be more sociable in comparison to an introvert.

Personality is the characteristic pattern of behavior and ways of thinking. Usually an understanding of personality tells us about the individual’s appearance and attributes, interest, capabilities and capacities, attitudes, motives and emotions and ways of adjustment. All of us do not react in the same manner to situations. We all react differently. Characteristics and traits have two properties. 1. Consistency and 2. Distinctiveness. Consistency refers to the tendency of an individual to act or think in a particular way regardless of the situation while distinctiveness refers to those features by which one individual can be distinguished from another.

- Appearance and physical attribute: We must assume that the personality is a purely psychological in nature but our appearance and physical attributes shape the way in which we perceive our self and also the way in which others perceive us. Our ideas of self are shaped by what activities we are able to do and how well we do them. Physical appearance attracts the attention of others in the first look and helps in forming the initial assessment of personality. Similarly, our physical appearance and attributes mould the way in which we look at our self.

- Abilities, attitudes and interest are characteristics that add meaning to traits. Abilities are things or activities that an individual can do; interests refer to whether the individual likes doing those activities while attitudes refer to the tendencies to respond favorably or unfavorably towards objects, persons and situations in the environment of the individual.

- Motives or the inner urges to behave in particular ways are very important in describing personality. Motivation tells us the reason why we behave as we do. There are many kinds of motives that steer our behavior. Motivation is made up of the components of need, drive, goal-seeking behavior and goal. Need or lack of something is felt physically, psychologically and socially for which need satisfying behavior occurs. Drive is the inner energy released by the sense of need and this acts as a motivating force and directs behavior.
Directed or driven behavior is called goal-seeking behavior or those actions by which the individual can reach his/her professed goal or aim by which in turn satisfy their need. The goal is the end of behavior by which the individual can feel comfortable and at ease and is prepared for the next motivation cycle. Motivation is a continuous cycle; one need is satisfied and another goal is created. Hunger, thirst, sleep, sex, movement, prestige, security, affection, friendship, generosity, power are some of the important needs of human beings.

- Modes of adjustments: this refers to accommodating oneself to circumstances in such a way that one’s interests, abilities, motives etc. are fully expressed and the sense of self is reinforced. We are continuously making adjustments to the situations that we meet throughout our lives and how we do it determines the health of our personality.

When we look into its definitions of personality, Zimbardo & Weber (1997: 381) describes personality as “the complex set of unique psychological qualities that influence an individual’s characteristic patterns of behavior across different situations over time”. It is the combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual’s distinctive character. The other definition given by Gordon Allport (1937: 48) mentions “Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment”. When we look into the key terms of this definition, dynamic tells us about the changing nature of personality over time, circumstances and experiences. Personality changes due to growing up, the situations that are faced and experiences one acquires. Organization refers to the pattern in which the traits and characteristics are arranged around the self of the individual not just a mere aggression of traits. In certain situations, some traits become prominent while some go to the background and this may be reverse in different situations. Psychophysical forces refer to the body and mind of the individual. This is to emphasize the importance of the body and mind in the formation of personality.

An important question while looking at personality is: what determines it? The main determinants of personality can be classified into three different factors which
includes: Heredity, Environment and Situational factors. **Heredity** consist of those factors that are determined of conception/idea and includes physical characteristics and gender in addition to personality factors. It is said the mind is divided into three main domains. Firstly, the cognitive domain which includes skill and learned behavior; the affective domain which includes emotions and lastly the conative domain which is described as inherited pattern of unreasonable and unalterable response to particular response and changes. The second determinant i.e. **environmental factor**: culture plays a crucial role in the development of individual’s personality and behavior. Social aspects in our life play a role in moulding our personality. Lastly the third determinant is the **situational factor**: it is very important to change the individual’s behavior in different circumstances at different situations. One cannot behave in the temple the same way he behaves at social gathering.

**Figure 1: The self-concept**

![Diagram showing incongruent and congruent self-images.](image)

- **Incongruent**
  - Self-Image
  - Ideal-Self
  - The self-image is different to the ideal self.
  - There is only a little overlap.
  - Here self-actualisation will be difficult.

- **Congruent**
  - Self-Image
  - Ideal-Self
  - The self-image is similar to the ideal self.
  - There is a more overlap.
  - This person can self-actualise.

If we consider the idea of the pattern of personality, we can identify two central parts - the core of personality or the self-concept and the traits organized around the self-concept. The core is constructed with the concept of self, based on who they think they are (the real self) and a concept of who they think they would like to be (the ideal self). An integrated and healthy personality is that in which the two components of the core are not too dissimilar or disjointed from each other and also in which the traits are harmonized and used in expression of the self. If there is a mismatch between the real self and the ideal self, then there is likely to affect the individual’s value of oneself. A person’s ideal self may not be consistent with the reality or what actually is happening in the person’s life and what the person is actually experiencing. This state is called incongruence.

The state of congruence exists where a person’s ideal self and actual experience are consistent and not too dissimilar. Rarely, does a total state of congruence exist; all people experience a certain amount of incongruence. Rogers (1951: 487) believed that for a person to achieve self-actualization (the full realization of one’s potential) they must be in the state of congruence. For Rogers, people who self-actualize are called fully functioning persons. This means that the person is in touch with the here and now, his or her subject experiences and feelings, continually growing and changing.

Personality is shaped by various factors and conditions. These factors do not function in isolation but in combination with each other. The factors are early life experiences, later life experiences, culture and society, physical condition and intelligence.

**Early life experiences:** Human beings are born in a most vulnerable state and it is in the family where there are adult care givers that a child grows up. The child is born helpless and needs care and attention for its survival and existence. The family is the immediate environment that is encountered by the child. The child bonds first with the parents, first with the mother and then the father followed by the other members of the family. The family dynamics or the relationships between the members of the family are very important and significant. The child can grow in a healthy way when the family relationships and the atmosphere in the family are supportive and secure or else there is the possibility of the child’s personality being harmed. The relationships between the parents, between the parents and their other children, and between the
older children, have a direct impact on the child’s personality. When there are tensions between the members of the family, the child experiences the tension and anxiety. The family type – whether the family is a single-parent family or a family in conflict or the family members are themselves disturbed; become disturbing experiences for the child. Parents are models for the child as are other members older than the child; thus the child imitates the adult’s behavior.

**Later life experiences:** After the family, the school becomes the next most important factor that influences the child’s personality. Teachers take the place of parents and the class mates become the peer group for the child. Within the family the child experiences love, affection and security because of the responses of the members of the family to the child. In the school the situation may not be so simple – the teacher has to divide attention between all the students and therefore may not be able to fulfill the child’s wishes. The child in the family is the center of attention while in the school the child has many more ‘competitors’. The parents consider the child as the ‘best’ while in school the child has to compete with others. The child experiences both success and failure. The child has to learn to assess its own capacities and abilities; has to develop interests and take part in a variety of activities of the school in order to gain positive attention from teachers and other adults. The child has to become independent and develop self-control over emotions, fears, anxieties and learn to cope with failures and disciplines imposed on the growing child.

**Culture and society:** The child grows up in a family that is part of different societies and cultures. Societies and cultures have norms and values that determine the behaviors that the child learns to do or not to do. Human beings are social animals; they form groups and it is seen that groups influence individual behavior. Culture determines the life experiences that individuals have and learn throughout their lives. Cultures and societies are transmitted from one generation to the other through families, schools, groups and communities. Besides these three major factors the other factors and conditions are:

**Physique, physical condition** or body type and state of physical health determine the activities that the individual can engage in and through these activities develop interests and abilities. Personality is expressed through interests and abilities. A
A healthy child can participate in all the activities of its age-group and thus develop a favorable self-image. This image gets the attention of others who then give the child a positive feedback on its abilities that strengthens its personality as personality is developed through perceptions of the child about itself and its understanding of the perceptions of others about itself, i.e., personality is dependent on how others see us. The endocrine system or the glandular system influences the expression of personality especially during the adolescent years when some glands start secreting hormones and these secretions are not that regulated.

**Intelligence** is the capacity of the individual to solve problems in effective and efficient way as possible. Intelligence is helped by learning and experience. Individuals need to have a variety of experiences and learn from them. Personality is about coping with the environment and therefore the more experience the individual has the better able he/she is to solve problems.

These are the factors that shape personality. Personality is the totality of the person. It develops with socialization and becomes shaped in such a way that there is consistency and continuity of the pattern. Pattern here refers to the ways in which the traits are organized and used around the concept of self that lies at the core of personality.

Social learning theories help us in clear understanding of personality of these children in vulnerable situation. This is not a single theory but a cluster of theories that are emerging under the label **Cognitive Social Theories**. The psychologists who are associated are Bandura, Mischel, Hull, Dollard, Miller, and Skinner all of who owe their origins to Behaviorism and to the tradition of American experimental psychology.

The cognitive social approach to personality is directed at the cognitive processes and structures that underlie individual differences in meaningful, personally relevant patterns of thought, judgement, emotion and social behavior.

A little less than half a century ago, the field of personality was divided into three theoretical camps – the psychoanalytic; the trait approaches and the behaviorists who were radical in their views by choosing to analyze personality in terms of stimulus-
response mechanisms. These theoretical camps and their proposed theories were found unsatisfactory in explaining, predicting and understanding what people actually do in specific life situations. Radical behaviorists had ignored the ‘thinking’ or ‘cognitive’ processes in human behavior relying more on conditioning principles. It was found that the person’s private expectations and ideas about what was happening turned out to influence actions much more than the external reinforcements in the situation. The person’s awareness facilitates human learning implying that if you are aware of the consequences of your responses, you learn better and faster. Like in the case of children, rewarding appropriate behavior and to specify the underlying rules and principles help children to learn the standards or norms they are supposed to adopt. This view also supports the idea that from a very early age human beings are active thinkers who form theories about the world rather than being just a passive learner shaped by external conditions or rewards.

Another important factor in understanding resultant behavior is individual differences in processing stimuli – the personal variables that help the individual interpret the social world. People are confronted with a potential flood of stimuli; the question is how these stimuli are selected, perceived, processed, interpreted and used by the individual. The personal variables are the psychological qualities of the person that help us to answer these questions from the cognitive and social perspective. The personal variables are:

1. Encoding strategies and personal constructs: These include units for categorization of events, people and the self.

2. Expectancies: These include behavior outcome and stimulus outcome relationships in particular situations based on self-efficacy, or confidence that one can perform the necessary behavior.

3. Subjective values: These include motivating and arousing stimuli, incentives and aversions (likes and dislikes) in other words, the values imposed by individual perceptions of the type of activities preferred and selected by them.

4. Self-regulatory systems and plans: Even though most of our behavior is guided by externally administered consequences for action, we regulate our own behavior by self-imposed goals of performance standards. Self-regulation
provides options of influencing environment – we can select the situations to which we expose ourselves. There is also the possibility of transforming situations psychologically.

5. Competencies: These include the ability to generate particular cognitions and behaviors through learning and cognitive development. They also refer to the individual’s abilities to transform and use social information and knowledge actively and create thoughts and actions through problem solving.

The cognitive social perspective of personality has several areas of focus which are:

1. Cognitive focus: Mental processes are crucial explanatory links for understanding how different people process incoming information that is personally relevant. It explores differences among individuals in cognitive problem solving strategies and styles.

2. Social-interpersonal focus: Patterns of social behavior meaningful for the individual, contextualized in his/her real world are addressed in this approach.

3. Behavioral focus: This is achieved through efforts to understand the “why” and “when” of the person’s actions by examining the mental processes that underlie individual differences in social behavior across different situations or contexts.

4. Focus on human potential: Every human being has potential to adjust, master or encounter situations. Human beings have the potential to change and look for alternatives. All human potentials can be analyzed so as to describe psychological as well as physical health and well-being.

5. Focus on the active organism: There is a continuous mutual interaction between the qualities of the person (personal variables), the behaviors generated by the person and the environment. This interaction is mediated by cognitive structures in a person. People do not function in isolation - judgement and actions occur in social contexts and interact with them.

6. Focus on self-regulation: Social behavior is guided with reference to the massive social knowledge one acquires about the world and particularly about the behavior of other people. “Success” and “failure” are not objective facts
but self-defined in terms of the evaluation one applies to oneself, in terms of self-efficacy. Large amounts of social knowledge are internalized and these influence expectancies. Rewards and punishments are both external and internal factors helping us to modify our behavior.

7. Focus on processing of social information: The organism that receives stimuli and makes response is active in processing and generation of information and social action. It is thus important to focus on what people are doing physically and mentally.

8. Focus on individual’s uniqueness: Consistency in behavior can be predicted across situations when situations are encoded similarly but when situations at different times are encoded differently individuals use their sense of discrimination in deciding their response mechanism. Thus it is possible for a person to display contradictory responses in different situations and to display also behavioral specificity or consistent patterns across a range of situations.

Contributions and limitations of this approach: Cognitive social approaches are unique in that collectively they offer a reconceptualization of personality integrating many approaches into a larger framework. They adapt concepts and findings from behavioral approaches, trait approaches as well as psychodynamic approaches. However, this eclecticism is a point of criticism.

II

Identity, on the other hand is the way in which the individual presents himself/herself to others. Identity becomes ‘active’ at certain points of the life cycle. Some of those points are: when the child grows and is able to interact with the peer and face wider range of human relationships then the question of ‘defining’ and ‘describing’ oneself arises. It is at such time that we see the emergence of identity. If personality is the totality of the person, identity is that aspect of personality that comes into focus during interactions and primarily contains ideas of self. If personality is the pattern, identity is the highlighted pattern by which a person is identified. Personality is a construct whereas identity is the manifestation of the construct which is nurtured and created through interaction. In this particular problem a distinction has been made between personality and identity with a clear focus on the later. This is because
personality and identity are two different terms in which ‘Identity’ is ascribed by culture, society, education etc. thereby making identity much more contentious.

**Identity** and **Identity Formation** are important aspects of growing up. One essential task of the adolescent is the achievement of Identity. Identity is the fact of being who or what a person is. It is defined as the coherent sense of individuality formed out of the adolescent’s traits and circumstances. According to Erik Erikson (1980: 347), “the adolescent’s identity develops silently, over time, as many bits and pieces of the self-come together in an organized way. These elements may include inborn aspects of personality; developed aspects of personality, such as passivity; aggression and sensuality; talents and abilities; identification with models, whether parent, peer, or culture figures; ways of handling conflicts and regulating conducts; and the adoption of consistent social, vocational and gender roles. Identity formation is a lifelong task that has its roots in early childhood, but it becomes central around the time of adolescence. At that time, a youngster’s physical development, cognitive skills, and social expectations mature enough to make the formation of a mature identity possible.” He believed that the essential crisis of adolescence is discovering one’s true identity amid the confusion of playing many different roles for different people in an expanding social world. Resolving this crisis helps the individual develop a sense of a coherent self. Failure to resolve the crisis adequately may result in the self-image that lacks a stable core. Resolution of the identity crisis is both a personal process and a social experience (Erikson, 1968: 141).

Now I shall discuss another term **Socialization** which plays a vital role in identity formation. Socialization is the process of internalizing the norms and ideologies of society and is a central influence on the behavior, beliefs and actions of adults and children. It is the process of absorbing the attitudes, values and customs of the society. The more we socialize and interact with people, the more we discover ourselves and form judgements about ourselves as well as others. It is the process of social interaction through which people acquire personality and learn the way of life of their society. One is only able to discover his true self when he interacts with others and reacts in certain ways that are different from others. This is what gives an individual his identity.
Socialization is the vital link between the individual and society. A link so vital that neither individual nor society would survive without it. There are many agents of socialization and each of them influence the personality of an individual in their own ways. The most influential agents of socialization are family, school, peer and mass media.

**Family** as an active agent of socialization plays a significant role in a growing child’s life. In a family parents contribute to the interactive socialization process through their roles as love provider and care giver, identification figure, and active socialization agents. As a care giver, the parents’ primary responsibilities are to meet their baby’s needs and provide him or her with love. The dependability of the loving care giver helps the baby meet the major development task of infancy-developing basic trust (Erikson, 1963: 219). The loving relationship may provide the toddler with the capacity to form emotional relationship (Bowlby, 1951: 219). During the process of identification, children internalize their parents value and standards. This occurs during the phallic period, the children imitate models who are warm, powerful and competent as most parents seem to their children. Whether children identify with parents or simply imitate them, the process occurs without the parent’s awareness and or intention. As an active socializing agent, parents controls the behavior of the children through reward and punishment. Parents pass down skills and values to their children. For e.g. teaching how to make cookies, do knitting or passing values like not to steal, to respect elders etc. They also provide the bulk of the child’s experience and affect the child’s developing self-concept.

The official purpose of **school** is to transfer knowledge of the subjects and teach life skills like following routine, managing time, meeting deadlines etc. But the students don’t just learn the academic curriculum prepared by the school authorities. The students learn social skills through interaction with teacher, staff and other students. In school the children carry out tasks, relate to other people, and live within the confines of rules that differ in many ways from those of the family system. The child’s performance is periodically and publicly compared with others. Competition begins from school. For every parents their child is the best but in school the children learn to know where he stands, through failure and success.
Another influential agent of socialization are peers. **Peer** groups gives an individual the opportunity as children to form relationship with others in their own terms and also to learn things without the direction of an adult. When children enter the peer group, they run the risk of rejection. Some become leaders in the group and some are dominated. They learn to make rules of their own. Asher & Parker (1991: 251), writes “by interacting with peers, children learn many essential social skills. They learn how to dominate or protect someone, how to assume responsibility, how to reciprocate favors, how to appreciate another’s viewpoint, and how to access their physical, social and intellectual skills."

Children usually watch **television** for entertainment and sometimes for instructions or information but what they get from this screen is continual socialization into the attitudes, values and behavior they see before them. The children learn to act like their favorite character on television. Children learn to perceive what society thinks is right or wrong. This way it influences the behavior of the children.

As a social worker I have noted the special importance of socialization during the formative years of a child, i.e., middle childhood onwards till the end of the teens or adolescence. The reason lies in the circle/ripple effects of the child’s increasing interaction outside the home. In the case of the children observed (the children of sex workers), their interaction with the unknown (in terms of the customers etc.); gives them a different impact from a child growing up in a normal family. It is during this long period of time that the child not only discovers the various facets of his/her self but also because of the increasing interactions outside the family the ideas of the self-undergo most changes before they are stabilized to some extent. The facets may be in harmony or in conflict. It is variously interpreted in different interactional situations. In Erikson’s psychosocial theory, personality develops through a progressive resolution of conflicts between needs and social demands. He has divided the life cycle into 8 stages and in each stages, conflicts must be resolved, at least partially, before progress can be made on the next set of problems. At any stage, a failure to resolve the conflict can result in psychological disorders that affect the rest of the life span (Hoffman, Paris & Hall, 1994: 33).
Therefore, there is a very direct link between the quality of life experiences and integration of personality in identity formation. Thus these are two perspectives - ‘Construction of Identity’ and ‘Quality of the events of the Life Cycle’ on the basis of which I have chosen the present problem as outlined below.

III
For the purpose of this study, I have broadly focused on the elements that can be identified as **contribution to the construction of identity of the children of a particularly marginalized segment of society: sex workers.** In a society where matters regarding sexuality are not a part of open social discourse and in which sex work is stigmatized and women sex workers face discrimination at various levels, children of sex workers experience discrimination and social bias. Men as procurer of women, as pimps and even working as male sex workers are integral parts of this trade but it is found that they too do not spare women sex workers from discrimination and exploitation. The men in this trade escape the tarring by stigma to some extent. Apart from the madams and landladies almost all people who profit from the sex trade are men and what is more important is that their attitudes towards women and sex work are biased with strong patriarchal values. They generally consider women as weak, dependent, immoral or irrational - who need to be directed, controlled and disciplined. Women sex workers thus experience multiple layers of stigma and discrimination-social, cultural, personal, economic and even more, having to be invisible. It is only recently that there is political engagement with the question of accepting the legitimate premises of sex work and to ensure that like all workers, their security and rights be protected.

In 1995, Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC) was created in India with 12 sex workers as the founding steering committee members. An approach towards sex workers to become self-organizing was developed and this principle was adopted as an important initiative towards justice by DMSC. This approach involves respect towards sex workers; reliance on the knowledge and wisdom of the community of sex workers and recognition of sex work as an occupation, for protecting sex workers occupational and human rights. By and large sex work is regarded as a profession without having any dignity. The answer to the question whether sex work is a profession is still unanswered in India. It is yet to be legalized
as a profession. Sex workers argue that their job is to entertain people and that it should be counted as work. Even if this counter logic is problematic, acknowledging the same is a serious challenge to established values and perception around morality (Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, 2013: 24).

In India, sex workers are passively and actively denied full rights even though the laws and regulations are in place. The last two-three decades have been significant because of the global focus on AIDS and the forced recognition of the necessity to create interface with sex workers, drug users and those sections of society that hitherto have been or are cloaked in silence and denied rights and services. Also, liberalizations of markets created the atmosphere of greater exchange of goods, ideas and awareness. Sex, sexuality, individual choice, human rights and mechanisms for their implementation and protection, rights of representation in democracy and issues of identity is now part of mainstream discourse in civil society. However, sex work is yet to be accorded the status that it seeks.

Sex work is seen as co-existent with human civilization, often described as the world’s oldest profession (Varela, 1995: 219). It has been so described as it has continued to meet an important and consistent social demand. Sex work is present in all forms or other in all stratified societies all across the world. It embodies a complex form of social relationship in which morality, ethics, the pattern of economic inequality, gender relationship, etc. are interwoven farther to form a multi-dimensional, multi-layered institution (Waltman, 2011: 219). Sex trade is found in all strata of society, but the sociological process is very complex. We cannot draw a simple connection between social determinants and entry of women in sex trade. There is a belief that women from low social status are prone to sex work, which is not fully true. In most cases women, from lower strata are driven into this stigmatized profession due to extreme poverty (McGregor, 2011: 219-225). But of course, there are also other causes like broken family, false sense of security or the condition in which close relatives also push women into the trade. We also notice that more often than not, in factories, trucker’s checkpoints, markets, the sex work is seen as an option and red light areas come up. The same system of productive relations and logic of profit maximization which drives men from their homes in villages to towns and
cities also make women turn to sex trade (Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, 2013: 12)

Women from all social class, caste and religion are found in this trade. In a country of patriarchal values where new born baby boy is preferred over a baby girl, women are marginalized from economically productive activity and are treated only as a reproductive machine. In a country where virginity before marriage is highly respected, we can clearly understand the status of the sex workers. There is too much diversity in the life of women in sex trade. But again it is widely recognized that sex work is here to stay and will continue to be stigmatized unless there is major change in social attitudes and social orientations. The sex workers and their situation is further complicated when the women have children in the profession they are in. At least now children are not labeled ‘illegitimate’ and mother’s identity is recognized for most official services but in the social scenario, these children are born affecting their identity that is carried as a burden all their lives. They are individuated through the predominant culture, because it does not allow them to become subjects and form an identity independent of their parentage and social background. The sex workers have varied life experiences and so do their children. The life of the children of sex workers are mystified in a society where they are stigmatized and socially isolated from the so-called mainstream society. Sex worker is very rarely looked on as a person; she is a commodity that has a price and limited shelf life. However, when she is able to share the living space with others of the same profession she gains in expression of identity within the environment where she may demand satisfaction of her needs. But the stigma continues even when she leaves the profession, the identity as a former sex worker is hard to erase. This can be referred to what Allport, one of the first psychologist to focus on the study of personality had said that most of what we do in life is a matter of being who we are (Gordon, 1937: 48).

IV

I have chosen to understand the factors that contribute to the construction of ‘Identity’ of the children of sex workers between the age group of 6-14 years with reference to the life cycle and ecological perspective. The ecological conditions within which children of sex workers is not only the geographical location and its physical environment but a more complex web of intersecting environments constructed along
socio-political-economic lines. It is envisioned that the years of 6-14 of a child’s life are crucial for laying the foundation of personality; traits are crystallized and patterns of adjustment displayed in adulthood are set during this period. The children articulate his/her identity. This makes the individual find an identity, which means developing and understanding of self. Children whose self-concepts are poor because of unfavorable treatment by others, find it difficult to accept these concepts, and as a result their self-adjustment as well as their social adjustment suffers (Hurlock, 1956: 535).

It is important that ‘attention’ from various stakeholders in society is available during these years. The stakeholders in this research includes the following individuals and groups: the child’s mother (who works as a sex worker) and her counterpart or the child’s biological father, peer group, schools, teachers, private tutors, people of influence like religious institution and NGOs. Children require favorable treatment from the stakeholders for their development. Their development cannot be done in isolation and they are too young to be independent. Therefore, they require attention from the stakeholders.

Also, these are the years when the rights of children are to be exercised and protected. The Children are to be skilled in responding to these measures for which they need to be aware of what their rights are and the ways in which they are to be exercised. Children require life skills which is an integrated set of critical thinking, personal, and interpersonal competencies that help them to live productive and fulfilling lives, they are the core component of a child’s development. From the moment a child is born they are on a journey to independence. But to live independently as adults, children should learn essential life skills which are not taught in books. These are the things that the children learn from their parents and from other important adults in their lives. These skills equip children to manage their thoughts, feelings and expressions in their daily life and in difficult situations like poverty, crisis, conflict and marginalization. Good life skills are the basis for getting along with others, fitting in to society and having the confidence to believe “I can”. This will help the child to have a positive start of life. Passing on and teaching life skills is usually a parental responsibility. But some children are unfortunate, they are born without parents or their parents neglect them. In a constantly changing and demanding
world, not having life skills will add difficulties in life. Therefore, organizations working with children in India like World Vision, Sanlaap, Freedom Firm and many others focus on ‘Life Skills Development’ in children and adolescent for their holistic development.

Talking about how vital is the ‘Life Skills’ for the development of children, equally important is the social relationship of the child and the world around them. Now, how a child’s development is affected by their social relationships and the world around them is answered by the Ecological systems theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 37-41). He believed that the person’s development was affected by everything in their surrounding environment. He divided the person’s environment into five different systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macro system and the chronosystem.

The innermost structure, the microsystem is the system closest to the person and the one in which they have direct contact for example home, school or daycare. This system typically includes family, peers or caregivers. Relationships in a microsystem are bidirectional. In other words, your reactions to the people in your microsystem will affect how they treat you in return. This is the most influential level of the ecological system theory. The interrelations between microsystems make up the mesosystem.

The mesosystem is where a person’s individual microsystems do not function independently, but are interconnected and assert influence upon one another. These interactions have an indirect impact on the individual. One example of a child’s mesosystem would be the relationship between the child’s mother and the teacher. If the mother takes an active role in the child’s school, such as attending parent-teacher meeting. This brings a positive impact on the child’s development because the different elements of the child’s microsystem are working together. On the other hand, if the different elements of the microsystem work against one another the child’s development could be affected in a negative way.

The third system known as exosystem, refers to the setting that does not involve the person as an active participant, but still affects them. This includes decisions that have bearing on the person, but in which they have no participation in the decision
making process. An example would be a child being affected by a mother (sex worker) making lot of money by attending many clients or losing money by receiving few or no clients.

The macro system involves the cultural environment in which the person lives and all other system that affect them. Examples could include the economy, cultural values and political systems. This system can either have a positive or a negative effect on the person’s development.

The chronosystem refers to the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course. For example, divorces are one transition. An example with reference to my study would be a child being affected by the mother’s (sex worker’s) decision to leave the sex trade and participate in other income generating occupation.

This theory has formed a foundation for this study because this theory was developed in response to the concern that the most developmental studies isolated children from their natural settings and therefore missed the interaction between children and environments which is very essential as development is a joint function of a person and all levels of the environment. In this theory, a child typically finds himself simultaneously enmeshed in different ecosystems, from the most intimate home ecological system moving outward to the larger school system and the most expansive system which is society and culture. Each of these systems inevitably interact with and influence each other in every aspect of the child’s life.

Along with this theory, there are other two theories that stand out in regards to this research. Erik Erikson’s theory of Psychosocial development (specially “the identity versus role confusion” stage of his theory) and James Marcia’s Identity status theory (Marcia, 1966).

Erik Erikson (1982: 33), psychoanalyst, has proposed stages of development that call attention to problems of social adaptation. As children grow up, they face a wider range of human relationships. The solution of specific problems at each of the 8 psychosocial stages determines how adequate they will become as adults. Erikson focuses on broad social and cultural forces rather than the psychosexual stages (oral,
anal, phallic and genital with the latency period in between phallic and genital) proposed by Freud in connection with the development of personality. At each stage of life Erikson hypothesizes a psychosocial crisis. This crisis arises from the person’s efforts to solve the problems at that stage. For example, in the first stage of life (oral sensory) the crisis involves ‘trust vs. mistrust’. Erikson hypothesizes that at this stage the child’s relation to its mother form basic attitudes to ‘getting’ and ‘giving’. If the crisis is properly resolved, the experiences at this stage lay the foundation for later trust, motivation and hope.

Table 1: Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development as designed in accordance to this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage and Age</th>
<th>Psychosocial Crisis</th>
<th>Optimal outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Infancy (0 – 18months)</td>
<td>Trust vs Mistrust</td>
<td>Basic trust and optimism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Early Childhood (18 months to 3 years)</td>
<td>Autonomy vs Shame, doubt</td>
<td>Sense of control over oneself and the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Play age (3 - 6 years)</td>
<td>Initiative vs. Guilt</td>
<td>Goal-directedness and purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. School age (6 -12 years)</td>
<td>Industry vs. Inferiority</td>
<td>Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Puberty and adolescence (12 -18 years)</td>
<td>Identity vs. Role confusion</td>
<td>Reintegration of past with present and future goals, fidelity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Early adulthood (18 - 40 years)</td>
<td>Intimacy vs. Isolation</td>
<td>Commitment, sharing, closeness and love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Young and Middle adult (40 – 65 years)</td>
<td>Generativity vs. Self-absorption</td>
<td>Production and concern with the world and future generations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Mature adult (65+)</td>
<td>Integrity vs. Despair</td>
<td>Perspective, satisfaction with one’s past life, wisdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As we shall see from the Table 1, Erikson’s stages extend beyond infancy to include crises of adolescence and adulthood. He sees development of personality and life cycle as a process that extends throughout life, rather than being entirely determined in the early years. This is in contrast to what Freud hypothesized in the case of development of personality. He had laid a great stress on the early life experiences of children as laying the foundation of later personality.

The age group of the children for my research study i.e. 6-14 years falls on the fourth and fifth stages of psychosocial development.

The fourth stage of development is about the time children go to school in which their task is to develop discipline, industry while avoiding feelings of inferiority apart from other cognitive skills. Industry which is essentially the realization that they will gain recognition by producing things, fosters the desire to learn the technical skills that characterize adults and prepares children to take on adult roles. If children are not praised for their achievement, they may develop a sense of inadequacy or inferiority.

In the fifth stage, there is a rapid growth in the body of adolescents along with genital maturation as they stand on being an adult. In this stage, the adolescents search for a sense of identity, a continuity and sameness within themselves, while avoiding the role confusion that can develop in young people who do not learn who they are as human, as sexual being, as parents, as adult workers. If this search fails, they will be unable to commit themselves to any goals.

These stages are very important for the development of children and their identity. The particular stage relevant to identity formation takes place during adolescents. The children learn to identify themselves and perceive the perception of others about them. Having a clear sense of identity is an important aspect of life. Erikson believes that all young people must generate for themselves some “central perspective and direction” that gives them a meaningful sense of unity and purpose. The perspective talks about the integration of the remnants of childhood with the expectations and hopes of adulthood. In this perspective the sense of individual identity is intertwined with the awareness of what the other important people in his/her life expect him/her to be. Therefore, considering these stages I have chosen the age group of 6-14 years for my study.
Based on Erikson’s idea’s two tasks are central in identity formation, exploration (originally called crisis) and commitment. **Identity Crisis** is defined as a period of identity development during which the adolescent is choosing among meaningful alternatives along the pattern of personality and the characteristics that surround the core of personality. It entails seeking out, elaborating and utilizing potential identity alternatives. It refers to some period of re-thinking, sorting through and trying out various roles and life plans. **Commitment** refers to the degree of personal investment the individual expressed in a course of action or belief. It entails the decision to accept particular alternatives as part of the self-orientations in various life domains like religion and politics. Thus, on any particular personality component, the developing adolescent can be in any four stages of development (Marcia, 1966: 551-558).

**Table 2: The four stages of Identity characterized by commitment and exploration as designed in accordance to this study.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Exploration</th>
<th>No Exploration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Identity Achievement</td>
<td>Identity Foreclosure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Commitment</td>
<td>Identity Moratorium</td>
<td>Identity Diffusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Identity Diffusion:** during this identity status, there is low commitment to an identity as well as low exploration. Where adolescents have not yet experienced a crisis or made any commitment. **Identity Foreclosure:** adolescents have made a commitment to an identity but have not yet experienced a crisis. Foreclosure involves committing to an identity prematurely without exploration or choice. **Identity Moratorium:** adolescents are in the midst of a crisis, but whose commitments either are absent or are only vaguely defined; and **Identity Achievement:** identity is said to be achieved when adolescent undergo crisis and make a commitment.
Quite understandably, the children of sex workers are seen with having low self-esteem, and they have no opportunity for education and so on. There is a partial truth in this. But it will be an illogical reasoning if we say that the sex worker’s children with problems are one side and other children having a better life on the other side. Sometimes children facing many difficulties in their situation develop better survival skills and have more reflexive/spontaneous capability. On the contrary many over protected school children may have less coping skills. However, the specific problem of children of sex workers like the shame is felt when others despise them, the limitations that are created in their socialization, the isolation that grows along with their age and the unseen identity they form cannot be over looked and these need to be studied.

The reason for making a study of understanding the formation of identity as a facet of personality of the children of sex workers are derived from some of the findings of previous studies as well as the facts that are available to us about their condition. As reported in Statistics of Children In India, “according to Census 2011, India with 1.2 billion people constitutes as the second most populous country in the world while children representing 37% of the total population of the country, that means there are 444 million children in India. 1 in 4 children of school-going age is out of school in our country - 99 million children in total have dropped out of school. There are 10.13 million child laborers between the age of 5-14 years in India. Every 8 minutes, a child goes missing in India (District Crime Record Bureau, 2014). Child marriage is also prevalent. According to the same census of 2011, India has more than 45 lakh girls under 15 years of age who are married with children. Out of these, 70% of the girls have two children”. In a situation like this, where do the marginalized children of sex workers stand, whose identity is attached to their mother’s profession and is the major cause of all their problems since birth?

The identity of the children of sex workers are closely connected with mother’s profession rather than their individual characteristics or traits. Thus, there is a tendency to develop only coping skills at the cost of capacities, abilities and interest that form the core of the healthy personality. Identity that is the reflection of personality becomes limited in perspective and as a result does not explore itself. It
gets tied to circumstances and situation. These aspects of identity formation, especially the limiting and restricting factors have not been widely studied.

Also the literature on the children of sex workers, by contrast, is very small, largely qualitative and ethnographic, specific vulnerabilities that have been documented affecting children of sex workers include: separation from parents, sexual abuse, early sexual debut, introduction to sex work as adolescents, low school enrolment and social marginalization. There are many research focusing on the sex workers but very few have been made on their children. It is the need of the hour to draw attention to them. Children are the future of our nation and isolating, stigmatizing, discriminating and marginalizing the children of sex workers on the ground of ‘morality’ and on the perception of protecting so called the mainstream society’s interest is unjustified. Social work among these children will be justified and meaningful. There are legal measures of addressing some of the shortcomings like compulsory schooling and acknowledgement of mother’s identity alone but what remains is social integration and the development of the identity. It is this aspect that I seek to study.

This study is a right based approach to understand the identity formation of the children of sex workers. There is a need to highlight the presence of isolation and discrimination in the lives of the children of sex workers, who are innocent but fail to show their innocence due to the identity attached to the profession of their mother bigoted by the very system of policy making and the mainstream society. As a matter of fact, framing and making policies requires an understanding of the needs of the weaker section of the society at grass root level. But who would walk down the lanes of the red light area and spend time with the children and listen to their unheard voices. Nobody or hardly anybody, it’s because the sex workers are regarded as the marginalized and excluded community by the mainstream society and their rights are taken away or hardly visible. The rights of an individual cannot be alienable or divisible. These rights belong to the person not by virtue of his/her social acceptability or contribution, or citizenship, or gender or age or any other criteria but purely by the virtue of being human being. The rights of the sex workers and their children should be inclusive in the society. Therefore, this study also talks about inclusive development which is an inevitable component of social work.
1.1 Research Objectives and Questions

a) Research Objectives

The perspective of the study is life cycle

1. To explore interactional links between the sex worker’s children and their agents of socialization.
2. To study the role of socialization in identity formation.
3. To identify the areas in which social work intervention would be effective in bringing about better adjustment and crystallization of identity.

b) Research Questions

1. Who and what are the active and passive agents of socialization?
2. Identify the major challenges in socialization.
3. How do the children of sex workers identify themselves and present their identity?
4. How do the children of sex workers perceive the perception of others about them?
5. How could the significant theories of socialization and identity be adapted to explain the findings of the study?

1.2 Significance of the Study

1. The study can develop adequate intervention strategies and schemes by which children of sex workers and their families can be helped to overcome the limitations of their situations and be able to explore more constructive means of adjustment.
2. The study can help the children of sex workers to explore the possibilities of their personalities and try more options in life than following their mother’s profession.
References


Statistics Of Children In India. Retrieved from https://www.cry.org/statistics-on-children on 06/12/2017