

RESEARCH NOTE

NEPALESE PERCEPTION OF SELF

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Introduction

The self may be thought of as an "image"- the impression it makes on others. The "self-image", is referred as to the impression aspects of the self. It is a product of our interaction with others (Mead, 1934) in that we can perceive ourselves only as a reflection in the eyes of others. Cooley (1909) noted that "we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manners, deeds, characters, friends and so on, and are variously affected by it. "Self-concept as the centre of a system of percepts that Combs and Snygg (1959) call the "phenomenal environment". It is perceived as being related or somehow involved with the self. The person organizes his phenomenal world in ways that enable him to enhance and maintain his phenomenal selves. He tends to notice only those persons or events that are somehow related to him, that is, have meaning for him. Structuring his environment in this way enables him to make predictions and to determine meaningful relationships between himself and to others as well as past, present and future life expectations, hopes and despair (Cantril, 1950).

Perception projects a person's awareness of his experiential world. Studies on Nepalese perception of self (Regmi and Asthana, 1981; Regmi, 1988) have revealed the perceived stage of social and political development of Nepalese people and provided for comparisons across national and cultural boundaries.

Problem

The present paper reports the findings of the Nepalese perception towards self and business man. This study gives a clear comparative picture of Nepalese self-perception between 1981 and 1993. A comparison between two perceptions is being investigated here.

Sample

It was decided to sample 9 districts out of the total 75 districts of the country-4 districts comprising Urban centres and 5 rural districts. The districts were sampled on the basis of probability proportional to population size (PPS); from the sampled district only one village development committee (VDC) was randomly selected and from the selected VDC only a few wards were collected. The target population for this study was the age group 15-49 regardless of gender. The field work began in the third week of March, 1993 and was completed by the end of May, 1993.

In all 1,017 respondents were successfully interviewed out of the targeted 1,050 yielding the overall response rate of 96.9% (rural = 93.3%, Urban = 97.6%).

Sample Size by Residence and Sex

Rural Areas	Total	Male	Female
Taplejung	53	43	10
Siraha	151	119	32
Dhading	160	129	31
Nawalparasi	130	104	26
Surkhet	113	89	24
Total	607	484	123
Municipality (Urban)			
Dharan	77	62	15
Kathmandu	207	161	46
Bharatpur	65	51	14
Mahendranagar	61	48	13
Total	410	322	88
Grand Total	1017	806	211

The remaining 33 cases of the total targeted sample size, which are treated as non-response cases could not complete the questionnaires for a variety of reasons respondents not found at home, refusals and vacant household.

Distribution of Respondents by Ecological Regions and Residence

Ecological Region	Total %	Rural %	Urban %
Mountain	5.2	8.7	n.a
Hill	47.2	45.0	50.5
Tarai	47.6	46.0	49.5
Total %	100	100	100
Total Respondents	1017	607	410

n.a = Not available

Distribution of Respondents by Gender:

Gender	Rural	Urban
Males	484	322
Females	123	88
Total	607	410

Distribution of Respondents by Mother-tongue:

Mother-Tongue	Total (%)
Nepali	60.0
Newari	16.6
Bhojpuri	7.1
Maithili	6.6
Tamang	1.6
Rai/Limbu	1.6
Magar	1.5
Gurung	1.2
Tharu	0.4
Awadhi	0.3
Marwadi	0.1
Others	3.0
Total	100

Procedure

All the respondents were administered the self-anchoring scale (Cantril 1965) to indicate their own position and that of their businessman friend as of the present, five years ago, and five years hence on an eleven point ladder scale, the extreme ends of which represented the best and worst possible life respectively. The respondents were questioned in Nepali language. The illiterate indicated their response with their index finger on a ladder scale.

Results and Discussion

Some outstanding features of the findings were noted. This can be best accomplished by the comparisons between the modal self-perceptions between 1981 and 1993.

The self is the representative of entire personality of respondent.

The self and businessman perceived on the same self-anchoring ratings (2)* in the past, the present being seen some what worse by the Nepalese (4)* as compared to the businessman's present (5)*. Interestingly, however, the future of businessman is perceived as bright (8)* as compared to self (6)*. Optimism about self in 1981 sample was unexpectedly high (8)* which was found moderated (6)* in 1993 sample. Nepalese perceptions of self in both years, 1981 and 1993, shown the trend of regression in the present to past perceptions (See Table 1). Due to economic and political diffusion in the country, people of Nepal felt depressed in their self perception of present, past and future life situations (See Appendix Tables i, ii, iii). In 1993 sample, the rural people perceived themselves low in all past (1)*, present (3)* and future (5)* anchoring- ratings when compared with the Urban Nepalese (See Table 1).

**Table 1: Perception of Self, Businessman,
Urban and Rural Nepalese**

Median Ladder			
Perception	Past	Present	Future
Self (1981)	4	5	8
Self (1993)	2	4	6
Businessman (1993)	2	5	8
Urban (1993)	2	4	7
Rural (1993)	1	3	5

* Ladder step

Median ladder distribution shows that the optimism is higher among Urban people. The Urbans still show more optimism for businessman's life in present and future anchorings.

These findings reveal the humble perception of Nepalese for their past, present, and future life situations. The magnitude of discrepancy between the past, present and future anchorings also seems to vary inversely with the level of the development of the country (Regmi and Asthana 1981). This study confirms the previous findings of Nepalese perception of self (Regmi, 1988) and pinpoints that Nepal has not been able to free itself from the syndrome of underdevelopment.

References

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Appendix 1

Perception of His/Her Own Life Situation (March, 1993)

(N = 1017)

Ladder Scale			Rural			Urban		
	Past	Future	Past	Present	Future	Past	Present	Future
0	18.9	1.1	24.0	5.5	1.2	11.5	2.2	1.0
1	25.9	3.0	30.7	14.3	4.4	18.9	7.9	1.0
2	17.5	6.4	15.1	22.1	7.8	21.1	10.3	4.3
3	15.2	11.6	11.9	15.9	15.6	19.9	15.7	5.6
4	9.2	9.0	8.6	13.9	11.7	10.1	17.2	5.1
5	7.3	14.4	4.5	13.3	14.2	11.3	23.8	14.7
6	1.7	11.0	2.0	5.9	11.2	1.2	12.8	10.6
7	1.8	11.6	1.0	3.2	9.5	2.9	5.7	14.7
8	1.0	13.9	1.2	3.7	9.5	0.7	3.2	20.5
9	0.4	6.5	0.2	1.2	5.3	0.7	0.7	8.4
10	1.1	11.5	0.8	1.0	9.7	1.5	0.7	14.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total cases	1003.0	985.0	596.0	596.0	590.0	407.0	407.0	395.0
Mean	2.2	7.2	2.0	5.0	7.0	2.4	5.6	7.6
Std dev	2.0	2.6	1.9	2.2	2.6	2.1	2.0	2.4

Appendix II

Perception of a Businessman's Life Situation (March, 1993)

(N = 1017)

Ladder Scale			Rural			Urban		
	Past	Future	Past	Present	Future	Past	Present	Future
0	19.9	4.6	22.2	2.9	5.2	16.5	2.5	3.8
1	26.6	0.9	28.4	2.6	0.9	24.0	3.0	1.0
2	19.3	2.1	18.8	8.1	2.6	20.0	4.4	1.5
3	13.1	2.8	12.2	11.4	2.9	14.3	6.7	2.5
4	7.8	4.9	7.2	12.7	5.7	8.6	14.5	3.8
5	6.4	6.8	5.5	27.5	7.9	7.7	20.0	5.3
6	3.1	8.7	1.9	12.2	9.5	4.9	14.5	7.5
7	1.5	14.2	1.7	8.6	15.7	1.2	12.8	12.0
8	0.8	17.2	1.0	6.5	15.5	0.5	10.3	19.5
9	0.7	10.8	0.2	3.4	9.3	1.5	5.4	13.0
10	0.7	27.0	0.7	4.0	24.8	0.7	5.9	30.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total cases	985.0	979.0	580.0	581.0	580.0	405.0	406.0	399.0
Mean	2.2	7.2	2.0	5.0	7.0	2.4	5.6	7.6
Std dev	2.0	2.6	1.9	2.2	2.6	2.1	2.0	2.4

Appendix III

Perception of His/Her Own Life Situation
(Nepalese Urbans n = 635)
(June 1981)

Personal Ladder Distribution Per cent.			
Ladder Scale	Present	Past	Future
10	2	3	17
9	3	3	22
8	7	5	16
7	14	5	14
6	15	6	12
5	25	15	5
4	14	15	4
3	9.5	20	3
2	5	15	2
1	4	9	2
0	1.5	4	3