Premises in Psychological Research: Obedience to Allah as a Determinant of Self-Concept and Self-Image

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Abstract

The aim of the research was to focus on the degree to which a social psychology student's self-concept is either positive or negative. A distinction was made between the self-affirmations that a person might tend to make about himself or herself independently of his/her relationships with other people – we conformed to the literature and called this a self-concept – and the self-affirmations that a person might make about himself or herself by means of social comparisons – for these self-affirmations we used the term self-image. In the spirit of Michael Polanyi, the researcher and her co-author approached the research with a professional commitment to let their religious beliefs set parameters for their approach to the data and hence maintained their conviction that any person who defies or ignores the Will of Allah cannot truthfully develop a positive self-concept or a positive self-image.

Out of 40 social psychology students, the responses of all 40 matched a positive self-concept without any direct social comparison; 38 of the 40 students reflected a positive self-image when comparing oneself with others. Only two of the 40 students betrayed a negative self-image; this was indeed in the realm of

social comparisons. Even these two students manifest a positive self-concept when not directly comparing oneself with others.

Given the content of the research questionnaire, the results of the present study reveal that a person's concept of the self may modify his or her beliefs and attitudes towards others and towards God, and may even be determinative in the person's manner of choice-making and consequent effort to act. The great propensity for persons to develop a positive self-concept is consistent with studies that have been conducted throughout the world. This study likewise explained the factors that influence social comparison and the formation of a self-image and ways to change both the self-concept and the self-image. In the final analysis, this essay anchored itself in the premise that neither self-concept nor self-image can stabilize self-confidence in the vicissitudes of the present moment or buttress the hopes for a desirable eternal destiny if the Will of Allah is not instrumental in the formation of both the self-concept and the self-image.[1]

Introduction
What Is a Self-Concept? What Is a Self-Image?

Can a human being simultaneously spurn the Will of Allah and develop a sense of self-esteem and a positive self-concept? If I am constructing for myself a self-concept that does not in any way correspond to Allah's concept of me, am I not engaged in a process that is futile, doomed to meet with frustration, disappointment, discouragement, disillusionment and despair? May I develop a concept of myself that does not correlate to the truth of who I am? Who is to decide? Who is my criterion of truth, the truth about myself, the truth about Allah and the truth about my identity within the milieu of eternity?

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[1] Throughout this article, Allah and God are used interchangeably since Allah is the Arabic word for God. We place a certain emphasis on fidelity to the will of the just and merciful Allah with the recognition that many would express their religious conviction as fidelity to the will of the just and merciful God. In all cases, we stress a continuing habit of obedience, after the manner of Abraham, to the requirements of the divine Truth as a *sine qua non* for the formation of a positive self-concept and a positive self-image. See John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis [On Social Concern],* n. 47.

May I compare myself favourably with other people and so develop a positive self-image if my attitudes and behaviour would seem to be displeasing to the Almighty, All-Knowing God, who is the Lord of Truth? Is it possible for me to compare myself unfavourably with the people who rub shoulders with me in my social milieu and in fact be very pleasing to the All-Gracious Allah who is everlastingly Merciful and Sustains all by his mercy?

1. Definitions

1.1 Self-Concept and Self-Schema

A person's answers to the question, "Who am I?" define our *self-concept* (Myers, 2010, 39). My self-concept is the personal sense of who I am. One's self-concept (also called self-construction, self-identity, self-perspective, or self-structure) is a collection of beliefs about one's self (Leflot et al., 2010). This does not mean, however, that I grow in my sense of self independently of other people.

We are; therefore, I am. This is to say that we evaluate ourselves at least partly by our group memberships. Having a sense of "we-ness" strengthens our self-concepts. We seek not only respect for ourselves, but also we take pride in our groups (Smith & Tyler, 1997). This feeling of pride may begin with our families, extend to our religion, and then expand even further in a wholehearted embrace of the nation. My self-concept may bring me to the crucial juncture in my life where I say, "I am ready to sacrifice myself for my family, for my nation and for my religion."

When two people love each other in a true love of friendship, their personal self-concepts intertwine in a self-other integration (Slotter & Gardner, 2009). I love not only you but I love those whom you love.

My co-author and I share the conviction that human persons cannot harbor true beliefs about the self if they do not pay attention or accept wholeheartedly the Will of Allah – the Will of God – in their lives.[2] Allah is the Truth. We can only have an internal, true

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[2] Miss Raniya Mohammed, the primary author, and Father John Gibson, the co-author, collaborated in the production of the present article by integrating Miss Mohammed's research objectives and presuppositions,

understanding of ourselves when we abide in the Will of Allah. We recognize the fact that people may develop a self-concept that on the surface seems very positive even though they are not paying attention to the Will of Allah. Actors, actresses and musicians are by and large notorious for refining both their self-concept and their self-image without recourse to Allah. Our interest, however, is not primarily how positive a self-concept is but rather how thoroughly it harmonizes with the truth of the person's declared relationship with Allah.

The elements of our self-concept, that is to say, the beliefs by which we define ourselves, are our "self-schemas" (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Schemas are mental templates by which we organize our worlds. Our self-schemas powerfully influence how we perceive, remember, and evaluate other people and ourselves.

If psychology is central to my self-schema, for example, I may focus my attention on how other people express their feelings, how they show peculiarities in their gestures and body language, how their personal idiosyncrasies cast them into a unique self-image, how they habitually ignore others by phubbing, or – in contrast – how they involve themselves with others by empathizing with them, assisting them thoughtfully in their problems or laughing with them in moments of joy and relief.[3]

If money is central to my self-schema, I may absorb myself in job applications, set up meetings with people who seem to have good business connections and are making good money in the

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literature review and research findings from her study on self-concept and self-image with Father Gibson's own research on the confusion engendered about the notions of self-concept and self-image when a secularist attitude governs the approach of the social scientists who are doing the research. Miss Mohammed's convictions dovetail marvellously with Father Gibson's convictions on this issue. They both realize that those who ignore or defy the Will of Allah cannot cultivate a self-concept or a self-image that coheres with Goodness and Truth. Both the principal author and her co-author give glory to God as the One who gives a positive self-concept and a positive self-image to the human person. Whether one calls it personal self or personal identity – it is a gift from God.

[3] For a definition of "phubbing" see, R. Richard – J. Gibson, "Internet Involvement: Poison for the Heart?", *Africa Tomorrow,* 19/1-2, 37-38.

market place or as a woman sharpen my sensitivities to determine who is a trustworthy, industrious man with a healthy bank account.

If my love for you as a true friend is central to my self-schema, then I manifest a special reverence, respect and affection for you and for those whom you love. When I organize my daily life patterns, you are an axis of consideration for the choices that I am making about what to do each day. Your self-schemas begin to intertwine with mine so that your manner of being a friend, your manner of organizing your world and your manner of perceiving, remembering and evaluating others become integral not only to your self-concept but also to mine. I see not only with my eyes, but with your eyes; I think according to my thinking patterns and according to yours; I love according to my manner of loving and according to your manner of loving.

If Allah is central to my self-schema, I may search for every opportunity to pray and to read with reverence the Holy Qur'an. I will recite the Moslem creed with reverence. I will abide by the fast during Ramadan, look for the opportunity – if it is possible – to make the pilgrimage to the Holy City, and always be mindful of the needs of the poor. I may strive with sincerity and diligence to learn Arabic. I will persevere in my fidelity to the Will of Allah in all my choices about the present and the future. I will look forward to the Last Judgment with trust in Allah's all-merciful and all-sustaining sovereignty. I will pay special attention to how other people express their faith in Allah or in God and seek solidarity with those who manifest themselves to be pure of heart, steadfast in their convictions about divine truth, and faithful in their religious practices.

1.2 Self-Image

Up to this point we have been concentrating on self-concept. When we cultivate a notion of ourselves by comparing ourselves with others, we are beginning to form a *self-image*. Sociologist Charles H. Cooley (1902) spoke of self-image as the "looking-glass self" because we use how we think others are perceiving us as a mirror – a looking-glass – for perceiving ourselves. His colleague, sociologist George Herbert Mead (1934) refined Cooley's terminology by explaining that what matters for our self-

image is not how others actually see us but the way we *imagine* that they see us.

Social psychologists have demonstrated that when we human beings process self-relevant information, we give ourselves a good reputation (Myers, 2010, 63). We believe that others admire us for our successes and good deeds and that they excuse us for our failures and deeds that are ill-advised. In other words, we place ourselves in favourable positions within social comparisons by cherishing our successes and giving ourselves credit for them – "I earned an A on the test because I am competent" – and by blaming our failures on external factors for which we are not responsible – "I received a C on the test because the lecturer did not explain the material very well."

Schmitt & Allik (2005) conducted a study involving 53 countries and 16,998 participants and used as their research instrument the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which they translated into 28 languages. The design of the scale did indeed achieve cross-cultural success in its factor structure since it was largely invariant across nations. This means, for example, that RSES scores correlated with neuroticism, extraversion, and romantic attachment styles within nearly all nations. Even though this cross-cultural attempt was not completely successful because the negatively worded statements on the Scale were interpreted differently by various cultures, the results did show with clarity that the average self-esteem score was above the midpoint in every single country. This means that people typically do not register a negative self-image regardless of their culture or their country. Psychologists call this tendency to boost one's self-esteem when one is forming an image of himself or herself, a "self-serving bias" (Myers, 2010, 63). As we have already indicated, actors, actresses and musicians are notorious for doing this. By way of simple observation, we may add politicians.

The word image points to the fact that others may form a picture of us – an image – and we may form a picture of them by means of social comparisons. We bolster our self-confidence by attributing success to our ability and effort while attributing failure to external factors such as the incompetence of other people, an unfriendly environment, or unanticipated obstacles. This manner of fortifying

our self-esteem places us in a favourable light when we compare ourselves with others. Myers (2010, 63) informs us that in 1977 *Toronto News* reported that drivers who have to explain their car accidents to the police and to insurance companies wrote the following: "An invisible car came out of nowhere, struck my car, and vanished"; "As I reached an intersection, a hedge [i.e., a bush] sprang up, obscuring my vision, and I did not see the other car"; "A pedestrian hit me and went under my car." *No one* said: "I suffered a car accident because I made a mistake while I was driving."

Besides our way of attributing responsibility for our successes and failures, we enhance our self-image by overestimating how many people agree with us in our opinions. This is called the "false consensus effect" (Krueger & Clement, 1994; Marks & Miller, 1987; Mullen & Goethals, 1990). Krueger and Clement indicated that their experiments were showing that the bias was almost universally present but that it could be a simple process of inductive reasoning: "I am manifesting an example of what other people are probably manifesting, too. Because I am this way, others must also be this way…"

Others show the same effect and give themselves a more positive self-image by exaggerating how many people make the same mistakes and commit the same sins that they do. In a study that Sagarin, Rhoads, and Cialdini conducted in 1998, respondents that told a lie to a partner were then asked to evaluate the honesty of the partner who received the lie. It was observed that those who told lies consistently perceived their partners to be dishonest as well even though they had no evidence for it. This was true even if the partner did not know that he or she had been lied to. In other words, the attitude of the persons who told the lies was: "Yes, I lied… but doesn't everyone?" The researchers explored the underlying dynamism of this false consensus effect and observed that the effect was operating as a self-protecting, self-justifying mechanism.

Keeping in mind the researcher and her co-author's fundamental conviction that a truly positive self-concept and a truly positive self-image develop only in harmony with the Will of Allah who grants the gift of a self, of an identity to each and

every person, but also remaining aware of the deviant patterns that researchers have discovered in the formation of self-concept and self-image, the authors of the present study used a cross-sectional comparison to survey the development of university students' self-concept and self-image at Jordan University College.

2.   Background of the Study

If one were to scan the history of the recent centuries to thread together the important moments in the development of science, one would find an emphatic focus on the merits of the process of induction and an equally emphatic reluctance to allow extra-scientific authorities to dictate conclusions that are not easily derivable from inductive methods. Sadly, among these authorities that scientists seemed to have declined to accept is God Himself.

It is our privilege to refresh the memory of the reader about the expertise and prestige of the Hungarian scientist Michael Polanyi. Polanyi accepts God's authority as the source of the wisdom and grace that guides scientific research. When the scientist accepts God's authority, she understands that she does not have the prerogative to fabricate conclusions about the meaning and the significance of the data. The one who has the final say about what the data mean is Allah. The scientist understands that when she approaches her data from within the milieu of her lifelong relationship to Allah as *His servant*, then she is a "discoverer", not an "inventor". Allah is the Truth. The one who evades Allah, evades the truth. The one who serves Allah, serves the Truth.

As a scientist, I have a positive self-concept when I understand that the truth is my firm ground to stand on. The truth inherent in my data reveals to me what is insightful, innovative, and – to put it simply – helpful for the human family. It is a truth that coincides beautifully with God's manner of willing and acting (Polanyi, 1962, as cited in Richard & Gibson, 2017, 44, 46-47).

> The freedom of the subjective person to do as he pleases is overruled by the freedom of the responsible person to act as he must.
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> … Within its commitments the mind is warranted to exercise much ampler powers than those by which it is supposed to operate under objectivism; but by the very fact of assuming this new

freedom it submits to a higher power to which it had hitherto refused recognition. Objectivism seeks to relieve us from all responsibility for the holding of our beliefs. That is why it can be logically expanded to systems of thought in which the responsibility of the human person is eliminated from the life and society of man…. We cast off the limitations of objectivism in order to fulfil our calling, which bids us to make up our minds about the whole range of matters with which man is properly concerned.

… Those who are satisfied by hoping that their intellectual commitments fulfil their calling, will not find their hopes discouraged when realizing on reflection that they are indeed truly hopes. … Commitment offers to those who accept it legitimate grounds for the affirmation of personal convictions with universal intent… Our subjective condition may be taken to include the historical setting in which we have grown up. We accept these as the assignment of our particular problem. Our personhood is assured by our simultaneous contact with universal aspirations which place us in a transcendent perspective.

… [The human being] stands rooted in his calling under a firmament of truth and greatness. Its teachings are the idiom of his thought: the voice by which he commands himself to satisfy his intellectual standards. Its commands harness his powers to the exercise of his responsibilities. It binds him to abiding purposes, and grants him power and freedom to defend them.

When I accept wholeheartedly my calling as a scientist and act according to the responsibilities intrinsic to that calling, I enter into the joy of discovering God's will for my life. When I say, "Yes,," to God's will, my science becomes a service to my Creator.

It is no doubt clear to *Africa Tomorrow* readers, that my co-author and I share the same convictions about the scientific enterprise that Richard and Gibson (2017) articulated in the most recent issue of that journal. They were putting into practice what Michael Polanyi explained to be the soul of the scientist who works with conviction and commitment.

Just as Richard & Gibson noted in their article (2017), Polanyi was nominated three times to receive the Nobel Prize, twice for Chemistry and once for Physics. Even more noteworthy is the fact

that his own son, John, actually won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1986 for his discoveries concerning the dynamics of chemical elementary processes. Two of Michael Polanyi's students, Melvin Calvin and Eugene Wigner were also Nobel Prize winners. Calvin received the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1961 for his discoveries about the carbon dioxide assimilation in plants, and Wigner was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1963 for his elucidations concerning the theory of the atomic nucleus and the elementary particles particularly through the discovery and application of fundamental symmetry principles.

The kind of scientific attitude for which Polanyi argued, namely, an attitude of moral and religious commitment to each concrete scientific endeavour gave my co-author and myself the insight that researchers cannot learn from the data if they labour within a routine of cold objectivity that focuses exclusively on the ability of the data to verify, nullify or attach a certain degree of probability or improbability to a carefully worded hypothesis. Scientists make discoveries by harvesting meaningful insights into data that they have collected and organized in response to an interior call, a call that comes from God (Polanyi, 1962). In other words, they are approaching data with specific moral and religious convictions that give the data a vitality and a meaning that would not be easily discernible to the person who focuses only on logical processes and correlations that may tie data together.

My co-author agreed with me that we should commit ourselves to our data about self-concept and self-image by anchoring ourselves in the core conviction that what corresponds to the Will of Allah gives positivity to the person's self-awareness while that which defies the Will of Allah or poses a contrast to his Will gives negativity to the person's self-awareness. This is not a hypothesis but a conviction. It is a fundamental principal of our research. This conviction guided the formation of our hypotheses.

A collage of issues impinge upon our present study concerning self-concept and self-image if we position our research within our convictions about Allah's investment in a person's development of self-consciousness. If we accept as data Allah's revelation of who He is and Allah's revelation of who we are, then we may suffer accusations from our colleagues who will note our lack of

objectivity because we have already pre-determined what a positive self-concept and a positive self-image should be according to our religious convictions.

2.1 The Vacuity of Self-Concept and Self-Image if Allah Is Ignored

A film that has caught the attention of many is entitled *The Count of Monte Cristo* (Reynolds [director], 2002). A very talented and respected actor named Jim Caviezel plays the lead role of a sailor who goes by the name of Edmond. Edmond carries a very positive self-concept: he knows that he can convince his enemies not to harm him and to allow him to find help for his dying Captain. He feels the same extraordinary degree of self-confidence in his dialogues with Napoleon Bonaparte who has already made himself notorious as a world conqueror. At the peak moment in his life when he receives a promotion precisely because he did his level best to save his Captain, unjust and ill-founded accusations – all based on jealousy – bring him to a prison cell in one of the worst prisons of Europe. In spite of the unjust imprisonment, Edmond is able to say to the prison warden, who is about to strip him of his clothing and give him a severe scourging, that God will certainly bring him justice. The warden, who is a non-believer, scoffs at his new prisoner and says, "Let's see if God shows up."

Over a period of years, Edmond, who lives in complete isolation in the dark prison cell loses his faith in God. His self-concept deteriorates to the point that he tries to hang himself. There is no meaning for him in his life. He has no significant place in the lives of other people – he is abandoned and in actuality is simply awaiting his death. His self-concept is that of someone who has been betrayed, forgotten and left to die a needless death.

By God's miraculous intervention, an elderly gentleman who has also suffered unjust imprisonment enters Edmond's cell by crawling up through the floor from the underground. His name is Abbé Faria, and he is a man of God. The truth is that the elderly Faria has been trying to escape, but he was digging a tunnel in the wrong direction. Edmond is happy now to have a companion; indeed his new friend is willing to teach Edmond how to read and write and to begin his research in economics and science. Edmond

has a special request to make of him: he wants Faria to teach him how to use a sword. Faria had fought in Napoleon's army so he knows very well how to manoeuvre with a sword, but he hesitates because he does not really want to take part in Edmond's plan to exact vengeance on those responsible for his imprisonment. After some hesitation, however, Faria accedes to his request.

The elderly Faria suffers a lethal accident while he and Edmond are continuing to dig their way through the underground to the outside world. Before he dies, knowing that Edmond is obsessed with the idea of revenge, Faria says, "Do not commit the crime for which you are already serving the punishment – vengeance is mine, says the Lord God." Edmond responds: "I no longer have any belief in God." The dying man in his turn responds back to Edmond: "Maybe you don't believe in God, but God believes in you."

The Holy Qur'an and the Christian Bible both carry an important message about Allah, the All-Merciful, the Sustainer, the one who creates because he wills to create. The message is that Allah only creates what he loves. Each of us have the potential to live always with a positive self-image because Allah is the one who created us: we exist because Allah is Good, Allah is Loving, and Allah is Powerful. Allah believes in us. By the way we pray and by the way we submit ourselves to Allah's gracious will, we become positive signs in this world of Allah's goodness in eternity.

My co-author John Gibson and I carry the same conviction that a person arrives to have a positive self-image if the person is doing God's will and hence showing visible signs through his or her conduct, speech and attitudes that Allah is infinitely Good, Merciful, Loving, and Peace-Giving. The person who does not choose to submit to Allah's ever-gracious will, on the other hand, is not presenting a positive self-image to those whom Allah has given him or her to be brothers and sisters in humanity.

2.2 Self-Concepts and Self-Images that Ignore God: Secularism

One form of psychological mindset that seems to prevail in many corners of the developed and developing world is that of *secularism.* The secularist may be so intent on separating religion from the ordinary business of everyday life that she or he habitually

neglects to ponder what God may want in the specific situations within which she or he must make a decision.

My co-author examined the writings of two intellectuals who speak of the dangers of secularism in today's milieu because he, too, is convinced of the necessity of obedience to the divine Will in order to develop a positive self-concept and a positive self-image. The two intellectuals that Father Gibson chose to investigate speak critically of secularism as a life-style motivated by an attitude that militates against a positive self-concept precisely because it represents a resistance to the all-gracious will of Allah.

2.2.1 An Islamic Critique of Secularism

One of the critics of secularism is a prominent member of the Islamic Brotherhood, Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, who enjoys the honour of having founded and directed the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization and has served for many years in the capacity of a university professor of Islamic Thought and Civilization at the International Islamic University of Malaysia.

Father Gibson notes Al-Attas' discouragement at seeing contemporary Muslim specialists who rely exclusively on human reason at the expense of a humble search and submission to the will of Allah and so show a manifest tendency of what is called "levelling". "Levelling" means to see all human beings as equal in every way including in their ability to think wisely and in their ability to exercise authority with sagacity and integrity. This particular mindset ultimately refrains from taking the position that a person's station in life depends on God's plan and purpose for the person. This mindset rather focuses on the person's ability to carve out a niche for himself or herself as if God intended the person to be entirely autonomous.

Al-Attas put it this way (1993, 116):

All are prone to levelling everyone to the same level of equality, notwithstanding the fact that even in God's Sight we are not all the same and equal. Indeed, we are all the same in point of being creatures of God, in point of being human beings, cast in flesh and blood. But our spirits, our souls, though derived from that One Spirit, and though *essentially* the same are, in point of *power* and

magnitude, not the same, not equal. We are like so many candles of varying lengths and shapes and hues and sizes; the tallow they are made from is essentially the same and the light they burn is essentially the same, but the greatness of the flame, the light each sheds is not the same in power and magnitude. And we judge the value of the candle by the light it sheds just as we judge a man by those qualities by which he is not the *same,* but *excels* another such as by intelligence, virtue, and spiritual discernment. So it is neither correct nor true to regard such a man as merely a man of flesh and blood *like any other*, for he is not like any other in that his intelligence, virtue, and spiritual discernment transcend the limitations of his flesh and blood, and his greatness of spirit manifests his excellence over others. *Adab* is the recognition and acknowledgement of such lights in man; and acknowledgement entails an attitude expressing true reverence, love, respect, humility – it entails knowing one's proper place in relation to him who sheds such light.

What secularists destroy, therefore, is the person's ability to receive and give the light of wisdom according to the place Allah has given him or her within the human fabric. Secularists wish everyone to see themselves as having the same abilities as everyone else and so rely on themselves in order to develop and excel. *The notion that one is a servant of Allah evaporates.* Such independence from the will of Allah is precarious indeed: when an unforeseen event disturbs the spiritual life of this person, his or her desire for spiritual discernment may dissolve since he or she never really had either the experience or the spiritual backbone necessary to perceive the mysterious workings of Divine Providence in everyday situations, both good and bad.

Al-Attas gives me the insight that I may cultivate a positive self-concept and carry within my soul a positive self-image of who I am as a woman in my family, as a believer in the Islamic community, and as a psychologist by my profession if I learn humbly from those who are wiser than I am, that is to say, from those who are able to communicate to me convincingly the Truth about Allah, about the human person, and about the human family. Concurrently, I may fortify my positive self-concept and my positive self-image if I humbly accept from Allah the ability to express myself wisely to others, that is to say, to communicate with integrity and convincing

clarity to other humble learners the Truth I have come to understand and revere about Allah and the human person.

2.2.2 A Christian Critique of Secularism

My co-author also explored the beliefs and convictions of another intelligent critic of secularism, a bishop from Malawi who goes by the name of George Tambala. Tambala's convictions and those of Al-Attas seem to dovetail quite handsomely.

Similar to Al-Attas, Tambala perceives the perversion of the social fabric and the exaltation of a false sense of equality to lie in an exclusive dependence on human reason. When the human being recognizes God as the Absolute Allah who gives the human being the capacity to be wise, to adhere to the truth, and to will what is good, the human being recognizes at the very same time the Unlimited Freedom of Allah to choose how he is going to give his gifts, to whom he is going to give his gifts, when he is going to give his gifts, and for what purpose he is going to give his gifts. This is the position of Al-Attas; it is also the position of Tambala.

Indeed, my co-author, John Gibson, wrote an appendix to Tambala's article that appeared in *Africa Tomorrow*, the June, 2014, issue, and cited a man who is revered for his wisdom in Christian circles. His name is Robert Bellarmine. Apparently Bellarmine inspired Thomas Jefferson in his writing of the American *Declaration of Independence*. In his famous declarative statement, "All men are created equal; they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights," Jefferson was looking at a memorable script that came from the heart of Bellarmine: "All men are equal, not in wisdom or grace, but in the essence and nature of mankind."[4] Can a person fail to see the resemblance between Bellarmine's conviction and that of Al-Attas?

It is true that instead of using the words "Wisdom" and "Grace", Al-Attas emphasizes the terms "Power" and "Magnitude". When

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[4] The citations from Jefferson and Bellarmine are to be found in G. Tambala, "Will Africa Survive Secularism?", *Africa Tomorrow,* 16/1 (June 2014), Appendix, p. 58. For the full-length article that explains Jefferson's reliance on Bellarmine and other Catholic sources, see J.C. Rager, "Catholic Sources and the Declaration of Independence", *The Catholic Mind,* 28/13 (8 July 1930).

one contemplates his analogy with the variations in the candle lamps that are giving out light, on the other hand, it becomes clear that, according to Al-Attas, the person with power and magnitude is the one who is wise and is able to disseminate her or his wisdom in a manner that is graceful. Bellarmine's use of the word "grace" puts the accent on the fact that the wisdom is a gift. Al-Attas certainly would not disagree with that since he believes that the power invested in the workings of wisdom is indubitably a gift from God.

But there are those who are unwise – their fire is a beacon that points people in the wrong direction. These are the secularists who shun the Will of Allah and exalt their own personal will with the contention that they are extraordinarily reasonable people. If on the surface they seem to have a positive self-concept, one can be sure it is of their own fabrication. If on the surface they seem to exude a positive self-image, one can be sure that it is a depiction of their own imagination.

The secularists who ignore the fact that God gives the person her or his identity are the ones who ignore the notion that God has a plan for each and every human being and that the human person ought to entrust himself or herself to God's wisdom, ought to submit graciously and humbly to the divine Will, and accept from God his or her own rightful place in society even if it does not coincide with what is glamorous, influential, popular, attractive, powerful, luxurious or admirable.

Tambala affirms the position of Al-Attas that lack of respect for the supremacy of Allah's wisdom and his divine governance of the universe leads human beings to think that they can manipulate technological enterprises in order to satisfy their own wills. In the same *Africa Tomorrow* article to which we have already alluded, Tambala expresses his own convictions and makes reference to other upright critics of secularism to reinforce a fundamental notion that for us is a premise for the research we have conducted, namely, that those who cut the religious roots that are in their hearts, those who forget God, those who deem the Will of Allah as inconsequential, those who may retain God as a theoretical idea but do not worship Him or pray in His Presence, those who blatantly reject Him and begin to adore various idols – the human body,

money, sexual pleasure, delicious food, jewels, political power, academic achievement – are the same people who are tempted to divorce their wives or husbands, suffer from suicidal ideation, live with an obviously oblivious attitude to what happens after death, and hence leave themselves with a self-concept and a self-image that are constantly waxing or waning according to the phases of their emotions, capricious interests, and shifting social relationships. Death for them is not a final act of humble and trustful submission to Allah, an act that looks forward to eternal peace and blessing; rather for them death is a horror show or a lapse into a depression that does not seem to go away.

2.2.3 Personal Understandings of Self-Concept and Self-Image

When we are told to describe ourselves, words or phrases that describe the most important features of who you are, some of the items on your list may involve social roles: student, son, daughter, employee, and so on. Or you could define yourself through physical characteristics: fat, skinny, tall, short, beautiful, or ugly. You may focus on intellectual characteristics: smart, stupid, curious, inquisitive. Or perhaps you may describe yourself in terms of moods, feelings or attitudes: optimistic, pessimistic, critical, and energetic. Or you could consider your social characteristics: outgoing, shy, defensive. You may see yourself in terms of a belief system; Muslim, libertarian, Christian. Finally, you could focus on professional skills, a sports identity, particular skills or lack of them: swimmer, artistic, carpenter, football player.

One way to understand self-concept is to imagine a special mirror that not only reflects physical features, but also allows you to view other aspects of yourself like your emotional state, dislikes, talents, values, roles and so forth. The reflection in that mirror would be your self-concept. Even though how the self-concept develops may be a matter of dispute, researchers generally agree that the self-concept does not exist at birth (Fitts, 1971).

Early social psychological research concerning level of aspiration and reference groups contributed to Leon Festinger's social comparison theory, proposed in 1954. He argued that humans have a tendency to evaluate their own opinions and

abilities in an objective manner that requires a degree of self-detachment. It also requires a criterion for self-evaluation. Festinger mentioned that if objective standards are not available, then they compare themselves with other people. According to Festinger's hypothesis, people prefer to compare themselves with others who are similar to themselves. He also noted that people have a drive to improve themselves, which often results in upward comparisons, comparisons with others who are superior to themselves or more advantaged in some way.

A number of philosophical and psychological theories suggest the true self is an important contributor to well-being. We are accentuating the fact that for a self to be true, the human person must submit herself or himself to the wisdom and grace of Allah. The present research examined whether the cognitive accessibility of the true self-concept would predict the experience of meaning and a sense of well-being in life. What is it that really sustains the true self-concept and self-image?

3   Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following objectives:

3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to examine whether social psychology students at Jordan University College enjoyed a positive self-concept or entertained a negative self-concept and then to ascertain in a rudimentary way the possibility of a correlation between their self-concepts and the outcome of their comparison of themselves with others.

3.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically the study has sought:

1. To examine whether students think of themselves in a positive light or a negative light at this stage of their identity formation.
2. To find out whether students think of themselves favourably or unfavourably when they compare themselves to others.

3. To find out the challenges students face in the course of finding themselves especially to accept the truth about themselves.

3.3 Research Questions

The researcher of this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Are students thinking about themselves in a positive or in a negative manner in the course of finding their true identity?

2. Is their disposition positive or negative when they compare themselves with others?

3. What are the challenges that the students face in the course of finding their true selves?

3.4 Research Presuppositions and Hypothesis

1. It is presupposed that most social psychology students have a tendency to maintain a positive self-evaluation by distancing themselves from their negative self and paying more attention to their positive one.

2. It is further presupposed that social psychology students may maintain a self-concept and a self-image that are at the same time positive and truthful if they make the effort to cohere their attitudes and conduct with the Will of Allah.

3. The general hypothesis of the researchers is that social psychology students interpret themselves in a favourable light both independently of social comparisons (self-concept) and within the matrices of social comparisons (self-image).

3.5 Significance of the Study

The study is expected to encourage each social psychology student to have a positive attitude towards himself/herself, and see other people in a new, more positive, more loving light. Our research, however, can also carry broader implications for human beings in general since we all carry traces within us of the almighty, all-merciful, all-sustaining Allah who created us. We have

approached our data collection and analysis with the moral conviction that the value of our personal self-concept and self-image is inalienably linked to the reverence, respect and adoration that we render to Allah and his Will. We are approaching our research with the moral and religious attitude that Richard & Gibson (2017) discussed in the article they published in the most recent issue of *Africa Tomorrow*. Gibson, of course, is the same social scientist who is my co-author.

Self-concept is a very important aspect of the self; it affects a person's choices, mood, social relationships and psychological well-being. It is valuable in that it provides a structural analysis of the self; it correlates with self-esteem – and both influence similar outcomes. To recognise self as multidimensional helps one to organise one's self-evaluation and self-beliefs.

If psychology is to strive for a complete understanding of the self in relationship to others, it must place a greater emphasis on a number of equally important properties of the self: self-awareness, self-complexity, self-reflection and self-regulation. The present study concentrates on self-concept clarification. Self-concept clarification can be defined as the degree to which an individual feels that the content of his or her self-concept is well-defined, comprehensible, consistent and perennially stable (Myers, 2010, 39-76).

An infant in the crib has no notion of self: consider what it would be like to have no idea of your characteristics moods, physical appearance, social traits, talents, intellectual capacity, beliefs or important roles. If you can imagine this "blankness" in your experience, you can start to understand how the world appears to someone with no sense of self, with no idea of who he or she is.

Soon after birth the infant begins to differentiate among the things in the environment such as familiar faces and unfamiliar faces, the noises that frighten and the voices that soothe: the infant is making a multitude of distinctions within her or his milieu that probably precede a recognition of self. At about six months, the child begins to recognise "self" as distinct from surroundings. When you watch this child, you would notice that she is looking at herself with great fascination as a foot, a hand or other body part

floats into view, as if they were strange objects belonging to someone else.

As the child experiences mental and emotional states, however, she or he grows to be aware of the self. The joys and hopes, grief and anxieties she feels belong to her, not to anyone else. The clarity of mind about others and about the self as well as the questions of existence belong to her. When she prays, she knows that she is the one who is praying, no one else. When she does the holy and gracious will of Allah, she knows that she is the one who is Allah's servant.

The woman or the man grows to be aware of the self through the questions she or he raises and the truth that he or she seeks. The student asks, what is a human person? What is this sense of sorrow, of evil, of death, which continues to exist despite so much progress and development? What can I as a human person contribute to my family and to my society; what can I expect from my family and my society? What will life be like after death? These questions involve the self. I also come to understand that Allah does not will that I be isolated, a solitary, a person without a family. Allah has created each and every one of us for the formation of social unity.

Perhaps the most fundamental question is: If I act in harmony with Allah's plan and his most gracious will, will I completely harmonize with the genuine good of everybody, of the whole human race… and in doing so, will I fulfil my self-identity? Will my self-concept correspond to Allah's concept of me?

These questions motivate the present study.

4. A Literature Review of the Notions of Self-Concept and Self-Image

Not surprisingly, in our effort to define self-concept and self-image, several references to the literature have already occupied our attention for the principal reason that these definitions themselves can be elusive in a global social milieu where there is a persistent pressure to conform one's self-concept and self-image to the constantly shifting norms of a public forum dominated by wealth, pleasure, power, and influence. What follows here is simply an augmentation of the literature survey that we began in the first chapter.

4.1 The Phenomenon of Self-Concept

Many people research the self. In 2009, for example, the word "self" appeared in 6,935 summaries of articles and books in the online archives of psychological research (Myers, 2010, 38).

Self-concept, broadly defined, is the cluster of a person's perceptions of himself or herself. The habitual perceptions that a person may have of herself may cluster according to more secularist tendencies. When this happens what motivates the person is not God's will but rather self-interest and self-concern. A person may be excessively concerned, for example, about being the center of attention particularly when she makes a mistake while other people are present, for example, spilling her tea. In fact, others are not really paying attention to her. This is called the *spotlight effect* (Myers, 2010, 38). Similar to the spotlight effect is the illusion of transparency. A person may experience this when she thinks that the physical symptoms of her fear, anxiety, anger, guilt or sadness are visible to everyone around her when in fact only she is aware of what her body may be going through because of these painful emotions.

Other attitudes towards the self that may grow in dominance if the person as adopted a secularist attitude towards life are the following (Myers, 2010, 38):

➢ *One allows social surroundings to affect self-awareness.* If one notices that she is one of the few women on a bus almost full with men, she may feel self-conscious. This is only one example.

➢ *One allows self-interest to colour her judgment of social situations.* If a person is suffering misunderstanding with her friends, she may blame her friends for the misunderstanding even when she is the one who provoked it. If she is happy with her friends, she may attribute the happiness to her own pleasant, outgoing personality.

➢ *What motivates a person's social behaviour is self-concern.* We worry about our physical appearance because we are not sure whether others will be pleased with us. In our conversations we may pay careful attention to what other people like to hear, and then choose our words according to their expectations.

> *We allow our social relationships to help define ourselves – we fail to give Allah the prerogative of defining us even though He created us with a special purpose for our lives.* Consequently we may be one self with a parent, another self with a husband, another self with an employer… we act according to a self-definition that is going to link us in a favourable and gratifying manner to the person with whom we are interacting at the moment.

It is not difficult to comprehend that the phenomena that I have been describing about self-concern, self-interest and self-definition are a form of humanism. Within the context of our exposition of secularism, one may conjecture that because Allah is not at the center of the programme, human beings replace him – the persons in one's social environment and the person herself/himself are the ones who are the fulcrum upon which one's concept of the self is balanced.

It is the premise of the non-secularists such as Al-Attas and Tambala that a person becomes aware of what is really important in life through an experience of a prayer relationship with Allah, an experience that is not solitary but flows forth from attentiveness to the Word of God and unity of mind and heart with others, especially within the family, about topics that concern the truth about God, about the person, and about everyone's eternal destiny. When a person is growing in self-awareness within this kind of environment, the development of the self-concept and the self-image do not easily fluctuate with momentary preoccupations and passing surges of feeling.

Having perceived oneself within the mystery of Allah's perception – i.e., within the mystery of the God who is Truth and wills Goodness, Mercy and Sustenance – one comes to distinguish what is true about the self and what is false, what is good about the self and what is not good. As these perceptions develop, the person forms an interactive relationship with her environment: at times she experiences events as something happening to her which draw forth her reaction; at times she experiences herself as a person who is acting efficaciously upon the environment by doing something that will change the way things are at the moment. She will not, however, feel compelled to keep redefining herself.

If she remains faithful to her prayer and praises God daily throughout her life not only with her lips but with her actions that bring forth the good in a good manner, and if she remains faithful to her religious beliefs in the vicissitudes of life that test her fidelity to the good – if she remains faithful, she will feel Allah's reinforcing presence. She will also feel the reinforcing presence of true believers. She will know who are the significant others whose evaluation she can trust, and she will grow in a concept of self and in an image of self that resonate vibrantly with the truth. This is the religious and moral conviction that motivates this present research.

The construct that we are calling self-concept can be further defined by seven critical features (cf. Shavelson et al.,1976: see fig.1).

1) It is organised or structured in such a way that people categorise the vast information they have about themselves and relate these categories to one another.

2) It is multifaceted; and the particular facets reflect the category system adopted by a particular individual or shared by a group.

3) It is hierarchical with perception of behaviour at the base moving to inferences about the self in subareas (e.g., academic—English, math, history) and non-academic areas and then to general self-concept.

4) The general self-concept is stable; but, as one descends the hierarchy, self-concept becomes increasingly situation-specific and as a consequence less stable.

5) Self-concept becomes increasingly multi-faceted as the individual develops from infancy to adulthood.

6) It has both a descriptive and evaluative dimension such that individuals may describe themselves (e.g., I am anxious; I am happy) and evaluate themselves (e.g., I do well in school; I am faithful to prayer).

7) It can be differentiated from other constructs such as academic achievement.

Figure 1 synthesizes the research reviews on substantive topics related to self-concept (e.g., Wylie, 1979) and on methodological issues in self-concept research (e.g., Shavelson et al., 1976; Shavelson, Burstein & Keesling, 1977). One notices from Figure 1 that the researcher has added essential elements that connect the phenomenon of the self-concept to one's relationship with Allah. This addition seems appropriate since researchers customarily have worked within paradigms that are secularist whereas the personal self-concept of the present authors is non-secularist, i.e., linked inextricably to their prayerful praise and gratitude to Allah and a daily behaviour that links their actions to the Will of Allah.
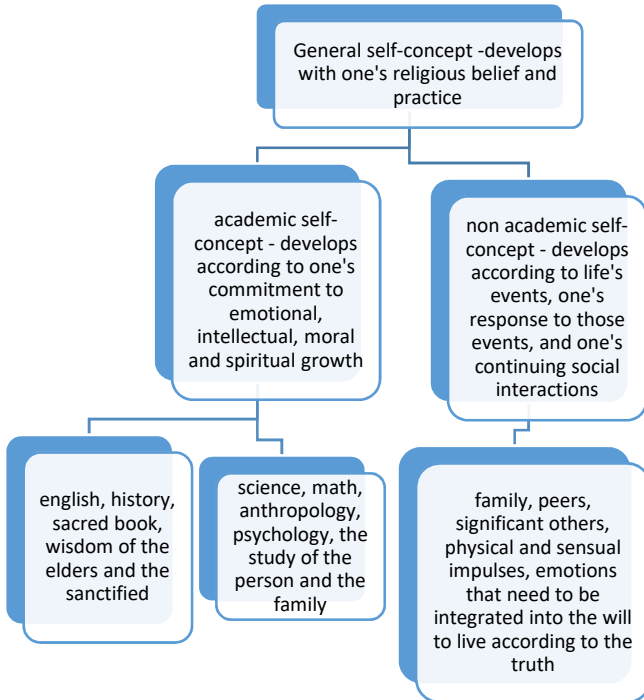
General self-concept -develops with one's religious belief and practice

academic self-concept - develops according to one's commitment to emotional, intellectual, moral and spiritual growth

non academic self-concept - develops according to life's events, one's response to those events, and one's continuing social interactions

english, history, sacred book, wisdom of the elders and the sanctified

science, math, anthropology, psychology, the study of the person and the family

family, peers, significant others, physical and sensual impulses, emotions that need to be integrated into the will to live according to the truth

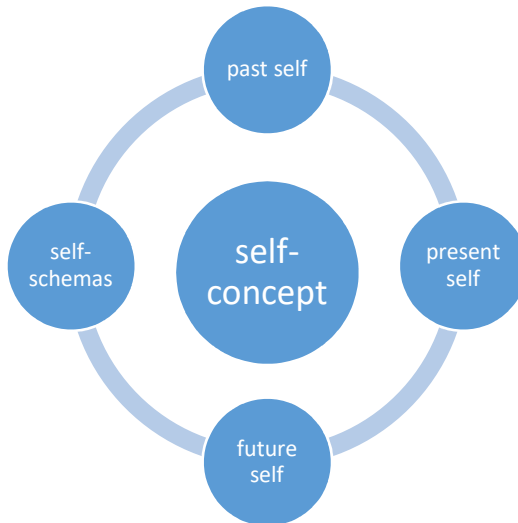**Figure 1: Critical Features of Self-Concept**

Self-concept, then, is directly related to what one does and achieves, and at the same time to what happens to the person – both the physical and social events that take place in the environment and the internal happenings of physical and sensual impulses and

emotions. The person's self-concept develops according to the progress the person makes in integrating his or her activity and "happenings" into his or her will to determine the self in harmony with the norms of divine truth and goodness (John Paul II, 1979, 189-260).

Self-concept is made up of one's self-schemas, and interacts with self-esteem, self-knowledge, and the social self to form the self as whole. It includes the past, present and the future selves. Future selves represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, or what they are afraid of becoming. Future selves may function as incentives for certain behaviours (Myers, 2010, 51).

The perception people have about their past or future self is related to the perception of their current self.

Figure 2: Perception of the Past or Future Selves Affects the Perception of the Current Self

The temporal self-appraisal theory (Wilson & Ross, April 2001) argues that people have a tendency to maintain a positive self-evaluation by distancing themselves from their negative self and paying more attention to their positive one. In addition, people have a tendency to perceive the past self, less favourably (e.g. "I am

better than I used to be") and the future self, more positively, (e.g. "I will be better than I am now" [Wilson et al, 2012]).

4.2 Characteristics of the self-concept

Now that we have a better idea of how one's self-concept has developed, below is the table that shows some of its characteristics.

Table 1: Differentiating between the positive and the negative self-concept

#	Persons with positive self-concept	Persons with negative self-concept
1.	Are likely to have an active prayer relationship with Allah and a close bond as believers to their families	Are likely to have an inadequate prayer life and a complicated relationship as believers to their families
2.	Are likely to strive to harmonize their decisions and activities with the gracious will of Allah	Are likely to struggle with their decisions and activities with a habitual negligence to seek the will of Allah
3.	Are likely to think well of others.	Are likely to disapprove of others.
4.	Expect to be accepted by others.	Expect to be rejected by others.
5.	Evaluate their own performance more favourably.	Evaluate their performance less favourably.
6.	Are inclined to feel comfortable with others they view as superior in some way.	Feel threatened by people they view as superior in some way.
7.	Are able to defend themselves against negative comments of others	Have difficulty defending themselves against others' negative comments, are more easily influenced.
8.	Work harder for people who demand high standards of performance	Work harder for undemanding, less critical people
9.	Perform well when being watched, are not afraid of others reactions.	Perform poorly when being watched, are more sensitive to possible negative reactions.

4.3 Social Comparison Concept: Self-Image

The self-concept is an internal image that we hold of ourselves that may not be dependent on what others may think of us. When we allow others to shape our self-concept by their verbal and nonverbal messages, we are engaged in a process of social comparison, i.e., a process of evaluating ourselves according to what others seem to be thinking about us. This process is what we have been referring to as *self-imaging*.

Two types of social comparison need highlighting. (1) In the first, we decide whether we are superior or inferior by comparing ourselves to others. Are we attractive or ugly? A success or failure? Intelligent or stupid? It depends on whom we measure ourselves against. You might feel just ordinary or inferior in terms of talents, friendships, or attractiveness if you compare yourself with an inappropriate reference group. There are things that we tell ourselves that we can never be, for example, as beautiful as a certain celebrity, or as wealthy as a millionaire or as fit as a professional athlete. When you consider the matter logically, these facts do not mean you are worthless. Nonetheless many people judge themselves against unreasonable standards and suffer accordingly.

(2) In addition to the feelings of superiority and inferiority, social comparison provides a way to decide if we are the same or different from others. Research by psychologists William McGuire and Alice Padawer-Singer (1976) revealed that children were more likely to focus on characteristics like birthplace, ethnic background, height, weight, or other physical features when those traits were different from the majority of their classmates. This distinctiveness illustrates the power of social comparison to shape identity. The person who shapes his or her identity entirely by social comparison depends on family and friends and people who surround them to give them messages, verbal or nonverbal, that are liable to clear interpretation. It is easy to recognize that the reference groups against which we compare ourselves play an important role in shaping our view of ourselves. Using the reference groups to determine whether we are different from others can get tricky because those others do not always reveal how they really think and feel.

Thus it is important to remember that people do not always act the way they feel and that you may not be as different as you think.

The literature offers evidence that individuals occupy themselves with self-images according to two other forms of self-awareness activities: (1) self-presentation and (2) self-monitoring.

Self-presentation usually refers to our effort to present a desirable image to an external audience, i.e., other people, and to an internal audience, i.e., ourselves. This effort to "manage" our self-image is often an offshoot of our desire to boost our self-esteem. Some people not only use others to act as a "looking-glass"; rather they use an actual mirror to create a self-image. Eye shadow, face powder, lip stick, eye liner, hair styling, choice of earrings, necklaces and bracelets all combine to form a physical self-presentation. Men can do the same thing with the way they style their beards or hair.

In some of the more secularist countries, surgical nurses in the operating theatres have complained about prepping clients for surgery, giving the directive not to wear any metal since operating instruments may not function properly with metal accessories, and then finding rings in the most unusual places of the bodies of the patients during the actual performance of the surgery. One would wonder for whom they are presenting their self-image.[5]

In explaining that we work at managing the impressions we create, Schlenker & Weigold (1992) observed that we excuse, justify or apologize as necessary to buttress our self-esteem and confirm our self-images. We are careful not to brag too much about ourselves because others may not accept bragging as a favourable personality trait (Anderson et al., 2006).

Self-presentation does not have to be a conscious process: we do it automatically in order to "blend in" in many social situations. If we are in a social situation where we are with important people that we do not know too well or if we are in a more private situation with someone with whom we may wish to share our life in the future, for example, through marriage, our effort at self-

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[5] Conversation with John Gibson, 1 November 2018. This was the experience of my co-author during his two-year sojourn, 1997-1999, at New York University Medical Center on the East Side of Manhattan in the USA.

presentation may, on the contrary, be a very conscious enterprise. In these situations we may try to appear better than we really are (Leary et al., 1994; Tice et al., 1995).

The literature provides mixed evidence about working to present one's self-image in a way that is quite preoccupying. Such labour can deplete energy and make it more difficult to control one's emotional expressions (Vohs et al., 2005). There is strong evidence, on the other hand, that self-presentation can improve mood especially if the person or persons that one is trying to impress react favourably to the self-image that the presenter is manifesting to them (Dunn et al., 2008).

Some who involve themselves with Facebook and other social networking sites may occupy themselves laboriously with presenting a good self-image. They are careful in their decision-making about the pictures, activities and interests to highlight in their profiles. Some have come to realize that the friends they link with on the social networks affect their own self-image: those with more attractive friends are perceived as more attractive themselves (Walther et al., 2008).

Finally it has to be noted that there are people in societies in every part of the world who determine their self-concept entirely by the self-image they are trying to present: "I am what other people expect me to be." These people are said to be *self-monitoring*. They always adjust their behaviour to the external situation (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1987). Because they have measured their behaviour to the situation, they are more likely to espouse attitudes they don't really hold (Zanna & Olson, 1982). Those who belong to the group of those who measure and attune their attitudes and behaviours to the people with whom they associate are often less committed to their relationships and more likely to be dissatisfied in their marriages (Leone & Hawkins, 2006).

At first glance, social comparison theory seems rather deterministic. Besides being influenced by how others see us, we are also shaped by how we measure up to others. The deterministic position collapses at the moment the person chooses not to make decisions according to the norms set by others. When I integrate what happens into my life into my will to act efficaciously and

creatively according to the norm of truth in love – in other words, in a non-secularist manner – I freely determine who I am by the action that I am choosing independently of what others are thinking, feeling, or doing (John Paul II, 1979). In the process of making free decisions, I may make social comparisons, but only in order to choose those upright people who are exemplifying for me what it is like to live according to the truth in love. Hence to some degree I am in control of who is available for comparison, and I am in control of how I intend to perceive myself.

It is possible that we befriend those with whom we compare favourably: this technique may bring to mind a search for a community of idiots in which you could appear as a genius. There are, however, healthier ways of changing your standards for comparison. For instance, you might decide that it is foolish to constantly compare your looks with a famous celebrity, your intelligence with the most intelligent people in class. Once you place yourself alongside a truly representative sample of good people, and recognize your propensity to belong to that group of people, in constructive, loving interaction, **your self-concept and your self-image may improve**.

In other words, you can use social comparisons to fool yourself or to help yourself. For instance, suppose you wanted to think of yourself as the best communicator, you could only achieve your goal by choosing a best friend who was tongue tied. You could hang out with extremely shy or ignorant people, and thereby assure yourself of seeming to be a natural leader. Another way of using comparison to boost self-esteem unrealistically would be saying that those who don't approve of you have worthless opinions, whereas others that agree with you in most matters have excellent judgment.

You could, on the other hand, use social comparison to place yourself next to those who know how to forgive their enemies, serve the poorest of the poor, love the unloved: with the help of Allah, you can realize that you can do the same and so cultivate a very positive self-concept. We refer to a saying of Mother Teresa of Kolkata: "Give yourself fully to God. He will use you to accomplish great things on the condition that you believe much

more in His LOVE than in your weakness" (cited in Richard & Gibson, 2017).

4.4 Changing Self-Concept – Exhortative Principles

You've probably begun to realise that it is possible to change an unsatisfying self-concept. In this final section of our literature review, we will discuss some methods for accomplishing such a change that find their rationale in the principles of logotherapy discussed in *Man's Search for Meaning* (V. Frankl, 1992). The attentive reader will notice that we present these principles in an exhortative style. In every principle that we articulate, we keep in mind that all formations of self-concept and self-image take place within the authoritative wisdom of Allah who is the source and summit of all Truth.

4.4.1 Let your expectations correspond to the truth of who you are

Victor Frankl's principles suggest that some of your dissatisfaction might come from expecting too much of yourself. If you demand that you handle every act of communication perfectly, you are bound to be disappointed. Nobody is able to handle every conflict by means of resolutions that eliminate all aspects of the problem. Sometimes it's easy to be hard on yourself because everyone around you seems to be handling themselves so much better than you.

In Frankl's insistence on finding meaning by accepting the truth about oneself, it becomes important to realise that much of what seems like confidence and skills in others is a front to hide uncertainty. Other people are not always avenues for finding the truth. They may be suffering from the same self-imposed demands for perfection that you place on yourself. Even when others seem more competent than you, it is important to judge yourself in terms of your own growth and what God seems to expect of you, and not against the behaviour of others. There is the more fundamental fact that the true judge of who you are is Allah. Rather than feeling miserable because you are not talented as an expert, realise that you are probably a better, wiser, or more skillful person than you used to be and that this growth is a legitimate source of satisfaction.

Above all, realize that Allah created you for a purpose that conforms to his gracious will: Allah does not bring forth trash.

4.4.2 Have the will to change

Often we say we want to change, but are not willing to do the necessary work. Frankl emphasizes accepting responsibility for one's values and the life project that blossoms forth from those values. The values ought to cohere with the truth and the goodness that abide in Allah. In such cases the responsibility for growing rests on our shoulders. Responsibility is precisely response-ability: the ability to respond to the gracious will of Allah. Often we maintain an unrealistic self-concept by claiming that we cannot be the person we would like to be, when in fact we are simply not willing to do what is required.

4.4.3 Have a realistic perception of yourself

From everything that has been said so far, it becomes logical to conclude that one source of a poor self-concept is a perception of the self that does not correspond to the truth. As you may have already noticed, unrealistic pictures about who you are sometimes come from being overly generous to yourself by giving yourself credit for accomplishments that may have involved the gracious assistance that others gave you so that in fact you cannot attribute your success entirely to yourself. It can so happen, on the other hand, that you are excessively harsh on yourself, believing that you are worse than the facts indicate. Of course it would be foolish to deny that you could be a better person than you are, but it is also important to recognise your strengths.

An unrealistically glamorous self-concept or an unrealistically pitiable self-concept can also come from the inaccurate feedback of others. If you are in a milieu that transmits to you day after day messages about how wonderful you are, you may begin to believe that you do not need anyone except yourself. In other words, you may feel immune from disappointment, discouragement or disillusionment. Perhaps you are in an environment where you receive an excessive number of negative messages, many of which are undeserved; and no one is there to encourage you. If you fall into this category, it is important to put into perspective the unrealistic evaluations you receive, and then to seek out more

supportive people who will acknowledge your assets as well as point out your short comings. Doing so is often a quick and sure boost to the self-concept.

4.4.4 Have the skills to change

Trying is often not enough; there are times when you would change if you knew how to do so.

Victor Frankl reminds us that the will for meaning opens our minds and hearts to insights about our life purpose that pull us forward into a future that has hope for its horizon. We have conducted this present research under the canopy of the conviction that the one who gives us this purpose and hope is Allah. Hence prayer is paramount. Begging God to give you true insights and then devoting yourself to reading the word of God is one manner of praying that keeps you connected to eternal goodness and mercy and consequent hope for the future.

You can seek advice from the books written by those acknowledged to be sincere and intelligent seekers of the truth, instructors, counsellors, and other experts, as well as from friends. Of course, not all advice you receive will be useful, but if you read widely and talk to enough people, you have a good chance of learning the things you want to know.

Another method of learning how to change is to observe people around you, how they handle themselves and situations. Watch what people you admire do and say, not so that you can copy them, but so you can adapt their behaviour to fit your own personal style. If you are praying in the way we just described, then it becomes easier to discern which voices in the environment deserve your attention and which ones should be ignored.

At this point you might be overwhelmed by the difficulty of changing the way you think about yourself and the way you act. Allah is not overwhelmed. Even though changes may seem difficult, change is possible if you are prayerful, devoted to helpful forms of self-denial, and generous in your works of charity. You do not need to be perfect, but you can improve your self-concept and as a result, your self-confidence in your self-presentation.

5. Brief Résumé of the Methodology for the Present Research

Our literature review has shown that many of the studies conducted in my research area were using questionnaires in order to obtain their data. The questions asked were based on the notions of self-concept and self-image. We have done the same.

5.1 Research Design

In this research the researcher used a design that places respondents within a controlled setting, i.e., a lecture hall. They all filled out the questionnaires under the same environmental conditions at the same time of day. The instrument for research, i.e., the questionnaire, was composed in such a way that students could indicate their opinions and judgments about themselves in a number of life situations. Possible responses were framed in a Likert-type scale. The researcher deemed *forty questions* as adequate for getting a rough idea of how positive or negative the respondents' self-concept was at the time of the questionnaire. Some questions were deliberately formulated to assess self-concept in contrast to self-image. This means that the self-concept questions were worded in such a way that the student-respondent could indicate how positive or negative her/his notion of the self might be independently of any social comparison. Other questions, on the other hand, were deliberately formulated to evaluate self-image and so were phrased in such a way that comparisons with others were necessary to respond to the question.

5.2 Description of the Population under Study

This study was conducted at Jordan University College in Morogoro Municipal. Jordan University College is a constituent college of Saint Augustine University in Tanzania. The college was once known as the Salvatorian Institute of Philosophy and Theology but in 2010 was transformed into a university as a constituent of Saint Augustine.

The targeted population for this study was that of Jordan University College social psychology students. These students are familiar with the notions of self-concept and self-image from their

normal study routine; hence they seemed ideal for doing this kind of pilot study that intended to seek information about how positively or negatively students are feeling or thinking about themselves.

This study was open to all of the social psychology students in the first semester of the 2017-2018 academic year. Fifty students attend this class and so fifty students were given the questionnaire. In other words, instead of choosing a sample group that represents a larger population, the researcher chose to invite all the members of a small target population to participate in the study.

All respondents answered questions on the questionnaire provided to them for the purpose of meeting the objectives of the study. In some of the received forms, however, there were irregularities: questions were left unanswered. Hence only 40 questionnaires were accepted as valid.

5.3 Data Collection

A *primary source* of data consisted principally of the first-hand information obtained by means of the questionnaire. Because the data obtained through this research instrument lay at the heart of the research, questions were carefully formulated to cover as many dimensions as possible of a person's concept of himself or herself, and the person's recourse to social comparison to form a self-image. Each respondent was free to reply to the questions without interference. Another primary source of data collecting was that of observation: the researcher and her supervisor took careful note during the research period to make sure that students were giving authentic responses and not just treating the questionnaire as insignificant or as a nuisance.

A *secondary source* of data were the pertinent studies that had already been conducted in the researcher's area of interest. Hence she utilized the second-hand information that she was able to obtain from already written materials like books, magazines, articles and websites. Besides familiarizing herself with the conclusions that others had reached about self-concept and social comparisons, the researcher made valuable use of secondary sources by ensuring that the questions on her questionnaire were appropriate for

accomplishing her research objectives. The supervisor assured her of the validity of this approach for a pilot study because there was no instrument on hand that has been standardized in Tanzania to study her particular research topic.

6. Data Analysis

In order to assess the degree of self-esteem that the respondents were feeling at the time the experiment was conducted, four scores were obtained for each respondent. The researcher labelled them as follows: (a) positive self-concept; (b) negative self-concept; (c) positive self-image in comparison with others; (d) negative self-image in comparison with others. Each received points from 1 to 4: the points allotted always corresponded to the degree that the respondent was showing a positive self-concept in the way he or she answered the question. The methodology was as follows:

(A) Positive self-concept – three examples:

1. I feel I'm a person of worth, a person of value, at least on an equal plane with others. Strongly Agree = 4 points, Agree = 3 points, Disagree = 2 points, Strongly Disagree = 1 point.
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities. Strongly Agree = 4 points, Agree = 3 points, Disagree = 2 points, Strongly Disagree = 1 point.
3. I'm able to do things as well as most other people. Strongly Agree = 4 points, Agree = 3 points, Disagree = 2 points, Strongly Disagree = 1 point.

(B) Negative self-concept – three examples:

1. All in all, I feel like I'm always a failure. Strongly Agree = 1 point, Agree = 2 points, Disagree = 3 points, Strongly Disagree = 4 points.
2. I feel I do not have much to be proud of. Strongly Agree = 1 point, Agree = 2 points, Disagree = 3 points, Strongly Disagree = 4 points.
3. I wish others would show me more respect. Strongly Agree = 1 point, Agree = 2 points, Disagree = 3 points, Strongly Disagree = 4 points.

(C) Positive self-image in comparison with others – three examples:

  1. I feel better about myself when I'm with other people. Strongly Agree = 4 points, Agree = 3 points, Disagree = 2 points, Strongly Disagree = 1 point.
  2. I feel good about myself when I'm with older people. Strongly Agree = 4 points, Agree = 3 points, Disagree = 2 points, Strongly Disagree = 1 point.
  3. I feel better about myself when I'm with people younger than me. Strongly Agree = 4 points, Agree = 3 points, Disagree = 2 points, Strongly Disagree = 1 point.

(D) Negative self-image in comparison with others – three examples:

  1. I feel inferior when I'm with other nationalities. Strongly Agree = 1 point, Agree = 2 points, Disagree = 3 points, Strongly Disagree = 4 points.
  2. I feel inferior to others because of my skin tone. Strongly Agree = 1 point, Agree = 2 points, Disagree = 3 points, Strongly Disagree = 4 points.
  3. I feel morally less good with people from my religion. Strongly Agree = 1 point, Agree = 2 points, Disagree = 3 points, Strongly Disagree = 4 points.

It is to be noted that some of the self-concept questions may seem to be self-image questions in disguise. Questions A1 and A3, for example, seem to be requesting the respondent to compare herself with people-at-large. Closer analysis, however, indicates that the wording of the self-concept questions may include a reference to other people merely to give the respondents a norm for articulating accurately their self-concept. These questions are not asking for a social comparison.

If a person scored over 50% on all categories, he or she would have a positive self-concept and at the same time a positive self-image when comparing oneself with others. If a person scored less than 50% on all categories, he or she would have a negative self-concept and at the same time a negative self-image when comparing oneself with others.

If a person scored over 50% on the two self-concept scales but under 50% on the two self-image in comparison with others scale, the person would be considered to have a positive self-concept but a negative self-image. Similarly, if a person scored under 50% on the two self-concept scales but over 50% on the self-image scales, the person would be considered to have a negative self-concept but a positive self-image (this would be quite rare indeed).

The results are tabulated as follows:

Table 2: Positive self-concept and positive social comparison

Scores	Frequency	Percent
Very high positive self-concept/ Very high positive social comparison	7	17.5
Very high positive self-concept/ High positive social comparison	2	5.0
High positive self-concept/ Very high positive social comparison	5	12.5
High positive self-concept/ High positive social comparison	24	60.0
High positive self-concept/ Low positive social comparison	2	5.0
Low positive self-concept/ High positive social comparison	0	0.0
Low positive self-concept/ Low positive social comparison	0	0.0
Totals	40	100.0

Source: Class Exercise, April, 2018

The data from Table 2 clearly indicate that social psychology students enjoy a positive self-concept: all 40 scored over 50% on the positive self-concept scale. Thirty-eight of the 40 students scored over 50% on the positive self-image scale which entailed comparison with others. For comparison purposes, any student who scored 80% or higher on any scale was considered "very high" on that scale. The table makes it clear that seven students scored very high both on the self-concept scale and the self-image when

comparing oneself with others scale. This result is very encouraging since 7 students actually make up more than 15% of the class.

Table 3: Questions that received a near-consensus in responses

Question posed	Frequency	Percent
Q3: I feel like I'm always a failure.	No: 38	95.0
Q6: I take a positive attitude towards myself.	Yes: 39	97.5
Q8: I wish others would show me more respect.	Yes: 38	95.0
Q16: Others can decide – I do not trust my opinions	No: 37	92.5
Q22: People treat me badly because of my behaviour	No: 37	92.5
Q23: People treat me badly – I'm less attractive	No: 38	95.0
Q27: I feel inferior because of my skin tone	No: 37	92.5
Q32: I feel morally less good with co-believers	No: 36	90.0

Source: Class Exercise, April, 2018

Out of the 40 questions posed, the eight referred to in Table 3 seem worthy for discussion: Q3, Q6, Q8, Q16, Q22, Q23, Q27, Q32. These particular questions usually drew forth the same responses from everyone with notable exceptions. To be specific:

- Question Eight: **I wish others would show me more respect.** The researcher expected that those showing a very positive self-concept in their overall scores on the questionnaire would disagree with this statement. The opposite happened. Everyone except two agreed that they were not getting enough respect from people.

- Question three: **All in all, I feel like I'm always a failure.** Out of the forty respondents, only two, both females, agreed with this statement. Since 95% disagreed, one may conclude that even if a person has a weak positive self-concept he or she would disagree that he or she is always a failure. When one examines more closely the two who agreed with the statement, one notices that one of these two female respondents not only felt like a failure but also felt inferior to others because of her skin tone and felt that she did not deserve more respect from others.

- Question six: **I take a positive attitude towards myself.** Everyone except one person, 97.5%, agreed, i.e., almost everyone perceived themselves as having an unequivocally positive self-concept.

- Question sixteen: **I prefer to let people decide for me in everything I do, because I do not trust my own opinions.** Because 92.5% disagreed with this, we find that even those that struggle with a positive self-concept still feel positive about their ability to trust their own opinions.

- Question twenty-two: **People treat me badly because of my bad behaviour.** Ninety-two point five percent disagreed with this which seems to indicate that student respondents ordinarily do not feel shame about their behaviour. They may tend to perceive themselves as morally upright.

- Question twenty-three: **People treat me badly because I am less attractive.** Ninety-five percent disagreed with this statement which seems to indicate that individuals do not feel shame about their physical appearance or their ability to attract.

- Question twenty-seven: **I feel inferior to others because of my skin tone.** The 92.5% who disagreed with this statement seem to parallel in their response those who disagreed that they are mistreated because they are less attractive. The three people who agreed with it would seem to be tending towards a negative self-concept.

- Question thirty-two: **I feel morally less good with people from my religion.** There were four people, 10%, who agreed with this statement. Because the vast majority, 90%, seem to disagree with it, we can reinforce the conviction that a positive self-image includes freedom from shame about one's moral character. It is worth pointing out that one person who agreed with this statement also expressed the opinion that others treated her badly because she is less attractive.

Even before entering a discussion of insights that may be gleaned from these results, a thorough scan of the data offers

a logical backbone to our premise that a positive self-concept and a positive self-image may only develop in coherence with a faithful regard for the gracious will of Allah. This is why those who scored high on the positive self-image and positive self-concept also showed signs that they are free from shame when they compare themselves with others from their religion. Indeed the fact that people who otherwise scored positively both on self-concept and self-image believed they deserved more respect is yet another indicator that they were in earnest about corresponding their choices, attitudes and behaviour to God's will. Those who tend markedly to disregard God's will cannot easily conclude that they deserve respect. At least this may be a psychological implication of our presentations in Figure 1 and Table 1.

7.   Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation

7.1 Summary

The self-concept is a relatively stable set of perceptions that individuals have of themselves. The self-concept consists of three dimensions, the perceived, the desired, and the presenting selves. In some cases these three dimensions are closely integrated, while in others they are quite different.

Each person's self-concept is shaped early in life and is modified later by the reflected appraisal of others, as well as by social comparisons with reference groups. These social comparisons help form a self-image.

The present study attempted to harvest rough approximations about the extent to which a social psychology student's self-concept and self-image may be either positive or negative. The researcher utilized a Likert-type scale to evaluate the extent to which the respondents' self-concept and self-image were either positive or negative. All respondents presented themselves with a positive self-concept, and 95% presented themselves with a positive self-image. Three statistics link to our research presupposition about the development of a positive self-concept and a positive self-image within fidelity to God's Will:

1) Ninety-five percent believe they deserve more respect than they receive. This indicates a conviction about their own moral uprightness.

2) Only ten percent believe they are morally less good than their co-believers.

3) Seven and one-half percent believe that others treat them badly because of their bad behaviour. These statistics indicate a moral earnestness that fits within our research presuppositions.

Our results, therefore, are consistent with the research presuppositions and hypothesis. The research is also consistent with the theoretical underpinnings provided by:

➢ *Shavelson and his colleagues (1976)*: their stress on the fact that a person actively constructs a positive self-concept meshes neatly with our results that indicate that social psychology students typically fashioned for themselves a positive self-concept.

➢ *Wilson & Ross (2001)*: their suggestion that a person works to maintain a positive self-concept by putting a distance between themselves and negative events meshes with our results that show that social psychology students are not allowing negative events to dominate their perceptions of themselves.

➢ *Schlenker & Weigold (1992)*: their observation about self-justification as a means of confirming a positive self-image explains the possibility that the social psychology students in our research were making an effort to make their own self-image look positive.

➢ *Leary and his colleagues (1994); Tice and his colleagues (1995)*: their observation that a person may consciously labor to present a positive self-image – for example, with a potential spouse – may bring forth the effect that the person appears better than she really is meshes with the possibility that our respondents presented a self-image on the questionnaire that is better than their true self. This kind of

insight falls into the category that has been known traditionally as the Hawthorne effect.

Both my co-author and myself have noticed that what social psychologists have called the *Hawthorne* effect can be very possible in the kind of self-concept, self-image study that we have conducted. The attribution of the term goes back to the fact that at the Hawthorne Works in Cicero, Illinois, very close to Chicago, studies were conducted between 1924 and 1932 to decipher whether workers worked more productively with lower levels or higher levels of lighting. Other experiments unrelated to lighting were conducted at the same facility to determine other variables that may affect productivity. Lighting and the other variables studied, however, did not seem to be the only distinguishing variables for productivity. Landsberger (1958) surmised that an important motivator for working more productively seemed to be the fact that researchers were taking an interest in them. He argued that when the research reached its conclusion and the researchers departed, the workers seemed to produce less, primarily because they were no longer a focus of interest.

This kind of optimal self-presentation in order to impress an important person such as a researcher, an employer, or a possible future spouse hinges on the interest that the important person is investing in the self-presenter. Controversies surround Landsberger's observations about the Hawthorne effect because, if the truth be known, it is difficult to determine which variables were really operative in the effects that the Hawthorne Works studies reported. Just one example: the effect may not have been due to researcher interest in the respondents but rather to the fact that respondents were getting feedback about their rate of productivity in a manner that was much more informative than before the research began. These controversies, however, are beyond the scope of our present study.

When the focus shifts to our present research, my co-author and I believe that perhaps the students exaggerated the positivity of their self-concept and self-image in their attempt to present themselves with grace and elegance to us, the researchers. These are our observations from the contact we have had with these social

psychology students immediately after they completed the questionnaires.

> *Gangestad & Snyder (2000); Snyder (1987); Zanna & Olson, (1982)*: the observation that these researchers made that there are many individuals who determine their self-concept entirely by the self-image they intend to present – "I am what other people expect me to be" – supports the possibility that among our student respondents there were individuals who were trying to guess what we, the researchers, may expect them to be and answered the questions accordingly.

The dynamic of which we are speaking corresponds to a remark made by none other than the original Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1850: "No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself and another to the multitude without finally getting bewildered as to which may be true" (as cited in Myers, 2010, 132). A person who gives priority to what others are thinking of her may eventually become so fragile in her attempt to retain her original self-concept that she may simply accept her true self-concept to be nothing other than the image that others have of her. This is what Nathaniel Hawthorne is suggesting.

It is our conviction that one's self-concept is much less fragile if one forms it in harmony with one's continuing fidelity to the Will of Allah. When one is faithful to Allah's Will both in conviction and in practice, one does not depend on what others are thinking in order to cultivate a positive self-concept or self-image. The person, of course, may depend on what she thinks Allah is thinking of her, but in this case her norm for self-perception is originating with the One who gave her a self. Allah is the Creator of the human person.

7.2 Conclusion

While establishing the heuristics for the present research, my co-author and I introduced a premise that is not usually found in research about the self. On the basis of Allah's revelation of himself as one who creates a person to be submissive to his all-gracious, all-merciful and all-sustaining will, we posited as our conviction the premise that the positivity of a person's self-concept

and self-image correlates with the fidelity of the person in attitude and in religious practice to the will of Allah. This would be true of all human beings regardless of their religion. Of fundamental importance is the prayer relationship that one has been developing with Allah, particularly in the family context. The person's self-concept develops in a wonderfully patterned fabric if the person, even as a child, is learning to pay attention to the gracious will of Allah.

The fact that just about every respondent in our research responded positively to those questions that have moral connotations indicated that they were not feeling the shame or the guilt that usually accompanies interior confusion about one's fidelity to the Will of Allah. Six questions that we posed to our respondents linked to a self-concept or a self-image to notions that could have a moral dimension:

1. I feel I'm a person of worth, a person of value, at least on an equal plane with others.
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
8. I wish others would show me more respect.
22. People treat me badly because of my bad behaviour.
31. I feel morally better with people from my religion than from another religion.
32. I feel morally less good with people from my religion.

The self-concept has several important characteristics. The beliefs we have of ourselves may be strong, but they may be distorted either positively or negatively. Although the self-concept is resistant to change, a healthy self usually evolves over time, which is to say, that in many respects we are not the same people we used to be. The self-concept reflects this evolution. Finally the self-concept is shaped in part by the society in which we have been raised. Even the notion of selfhood and individuality vary from culture to culture.

Changing one's self-concept is not easy, but it is possible. Some important considerations begin with a realistic perception of oneself instead of being overly critical, having a realistic

expectation about how much change is possible, being determined to invest the necessary effort in changing, and learning the skills necessary to change. The bottom line is Allah can do anything He wishes – and He wishes you to become the best person you can be.

What you see in people may be deceptive; it may be something they want you to see, something beautiful about their lives, as if everything is perfectly okay. It may be a matter of relationships, appearance, knowledge, skills or abilities. It may be a matter of spiritual bearing, of happiness with life and full trust in the will of Allah. But sadly this can all be a façade. It affects everything when we compare ourselves with others – without the truth and goodness that emanate from Allah as our reference point. When we over-depend on ourselves or on others, our trust in Allah dissipates. With Allah, we are a beautiful and sublime mystery to ourselves; we have a positive and stable self-concept. Without Allah, we are confusion and chaos.

By way of conclusion, therefore, we highlight the following:

- Self-concept plays a crucial role in encouraging students to perform better and to understand themselves better by loving and valuing themselves. The most important thing they can do is admire the beauty in others without questioning their own.

- Everybody is different. Some people are naturally positive and optimistic and maintain equilibrium when faced with relentless difficulties while others grow fearful, wither in discouragement and disappointment, and sink into loneliness and self-pity even when life is not so challenging.

- Some people are good at appearing to be positive and optimistic on the outside while they struggle with low self-esteem and feelings of self-doubt on the inside.

- A common symptom of low self-esteem is the feeling that one cannot sustain interpersonal relationships with people who differ greatly from each other in personality and temperament. Gaining confidence to function in relationships with ease depends largely on previous personal experience and one's foothold in the goodness of Allah. If

one lives each moment by the conviction that "with Allah everything is possible", then every moment becomes an opportunity, not a threat; an invitation, not a refusal; an entrustment of self to God, not a lapse into loneliness.

7.3 Recommendations

Based on our findings, we offer the following recommendations for future implementation:

- ❖ The present research was obviously limited in its generalizability. At the same time it gave a picture of how social psychology students conceive of themselves and how they compare themselves with each other. By and large this particular group of students exhibited a highly positive self-concept and a highly positive self-image when comparing themselves to others. This study ought to be replicated throughout the universities of Tanzania and abroad.

- ❖ The wisest researchers among us remind us constantly that identifying trends and verbalizing generalities are not the precious jewels that make psychology a valuable social science. The one or two people who show some extraordinary or unusual signs of deviation from the mean… these are the ones who deserve the attention of psychologists. More to the point: in our research there were individuals who felt mistreated because they perceived themselves as behavioural misfits. There were individuals who perceived themselves as mistreated because they did not believe they are attractive. Further study should be done to identify what is eating at the heart of these people that would give them this negative conviction about themselves so that such individuals may find a way to recover and develop their self-concept.

- ❖ Those who were revealing themselves to be very positive in their concept of themselves and in their self-image when they compared themselves with others still believed that others should show them more respect. Further studies could investigate what motivates people to believe that they are not receiving the respect they ought to get.

❖ The researcher integrated her own convictions and experiences from her Islamic beliefs into her own understanding of self-concept and self-image. Her co-author performed this same cognitive process of integration according to his own Christian beliefs. The conviction of both authors about the correspondence of self-concept and self-image to the Creator's plan for the person seemed to indicate that there was no contradiction in the researchers' approach to this issue in spite of a difference in religion. There is no study available, however, that integrates the notions of self-concept and self-image with fidelity in conviction and practice to the gracious Will of Allah. Those who compose questionnaires and other research instruments should exercise the courage and effort necessary to pose direct questions about one's religious convictions and practices. Further study needs to uncover the hidden value that prayer and fidelity to Allah's Will gives to the development of a positive self-concept and positive self-image when comparing oneself to others. Allah is the beginning and end of our existence. To Allah be praise, glory and adoration forever and ever!

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