

The science of human behaviour

Psychology divides human behavior into external and internal aspects. Typical characteristics of human behavior include:

External behavior can be observed by an outsider and measured objectively. It is made of actions, gestures, positions, expressions, brain activity, and bodily reactions.

Mental processes refer to cognitive-affective activities that individuals do with their minds. They are subjective, i.e. only expressed and appraised by persons themselves. They comprise cognitive processes (thinking, observation, attention, memory, and learning) and affective factors (emotions and motives).

Adaptation to the environment: people adapt their behavior to perceived circumstances and expectations.

Intentional, conscious, unconscious: all behavior is intentional, regardless if the individual is aware of it.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOUR - NOTES

Human behavior is internal and external, adaptive, intentional, and conscious and unconscious:

internal = mental processes (thinking, emotions, motivation)

external = actions (e.g. a smile)

adaptation of species, adaptation of senses, adaptation to a situation, learning facilitates adaptation

behavior is always goal-oriented, or "sensible"

conscious is voluntary

psychoanalytic view of the unconscious

cognitive view of the unconscious

behaviour is based on brain activity

Neural circuits develop and reorganize due to environmental stimuli and individual behaviour.

The frontal lobe is fully developed around 25 years of age.

Lateralization means that some brain functions are more dominant in either the right or left hemisphere.

Neuroplasticity makes learning possible throughout life.

social theories

According to behaviorists, learning can be passive or active. In classical conditioning, environmental regularities and automatic reactions to them, for instance fear, pleasure, or reservation, shape learning passively. On the other hand, operant conditioning views the learner as an active participant, who based on positive and negative reinforcement, changes his or her behavior. During the socialization process, operant conditioning is a more significant type of learning.

social theories (cont)

B. F. Skinner was a leading researcher on the effects that reinforcement has on behavior and learning. In brief, rewards increase and punishments decrease a behavior. The theory of operant conditioning is useful for instance in animal training. Unlike animals, human beings do not need concrete rewards; instead, a smile that provides enough positive attention may be considered a reward. Similarly, a punishment can be anything from discipline to ignorance or disapproving looks. Disciplinary practices with children are often based on the principles of operant conditioning.

Albert Bandura continued the work of early American behaviorists and studied the importance of vicarious reinforcement. He explored reasons behind aggression and noticed that behavior is learned from the environment through observational learning and that people imitate the behavior of others. An actual person, a media or literature character, or written instructions can constitute a behavioral model. Vicarious reinforcement, i.e. learning through observing the consequences of behavior for other people, increases behavioral conformity. That is, we tend to repeat behaviors that others are rewarded for and avoid behaviors for which other people are punished. Bandura named his theory social learning theory.



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Psychological schools of thoughts

Psycho-dynamic psychology is based on Freud's ideas

Emphasis in human behaviour: The structures of the psyche (id, ego, superego) develop in early childhood and will shape human behavior consciously and especially unconsciously in later life.

Behaviorism wanted to include psychology among natural sciences

Emphasis in human behaviour: Behavioral responses and habits are learned through conditioning or modelling. The strength of a behavior can be increased with positive reinforcement (rewards) and decreased with negative reinforcement (punishments).

Humanistic psychology generated an optimistic view of human nature

Emphasis in human behavior: Individuals are unique and use the meanings they give to their life to direct personal behavior

Psychological schools of thoughts (cont)

Cognitive psychology sees the individual as an active processor of information

Emphasis in human behavior: Individual schemas direct the active information processing and cognitive control of an individual.

psychological/cognitive

schema: a pattern of thought or behavior that organizes information of the environment and the self

script: a sequence of accepted behavior in social situations

self-concept: a schema of the self; involves physical characteristics, personality traits, knowledge and skills, and group roles

self-esteem: an evaluation of one's own worth and an ability to trust personal capacity

self-regulation: any strategy to maintain mental balance

P = perception
T = thinking
M = memory
A = attention
L = learning
L = language

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

psychological factors

cognitive processes, emotions, motivation

biological factors

evolution, nervous system and hormones, heredity

social factors

culture, situational factors, social environment

The core ideas of evolutionary psychology

Genes show variation between individuals. Genes pass characteristics on to the next generation.

The strongest, best adapted individuals survive the struggle for existence. Successful mate selection and the production of healthy offspring are also signs of strength and good adaptation. The strongest, best adapted individuals can spread their genes more widely to the next generation.

Therefore, the characteristics improving adaptation become more and more prevalent with every new generation, eventually developing into a dominant or universal characteristic of the species.

nature vs nurture

Nature	Nurture
Identical twins share genetic inheritance and physical appearance.	The social environment explains differences between identical twins raised apart.
Intelligence is partly inheritable.	The social environment, e.g. attitudes, education, and practice, influence performance.
Musicality gene	Musical parents typically create a music-rich environment.
"Warrior gene"	A mere gene does not cause aggressive behavior but must be combined with the use of alcohol.
Mental health problems	A mere gene does not cause a mental illness, but a life situation triggers the illness.
Temperament forms a biological foundation for reactions.	Upbringing and individual development shape reactions to match environmental needs.

social perspective- classical conditioning

Unconditioned stimulus. This is the thing that triggers an automatic response. Food is the unconditioned stimulus in Pavlov's dog experiment.	Unconditioned response. This is what response naturally occurs when you experience the unconditioned stimulus, such as salivating from the food.
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social perspective- classical conditioning (cont)

Conditioned stimulus. This is considered a neutral stimulus. When you're presented with it over and over before the unconditioned stimulus (e.g., food), it will start to evoke the same response. The bell before the food is the conditioned stimulus.	Conditioned response. This is the acquired response to the conditioned stimulus (the bell), which is often the same response as the unconditioned response. So, the dogs salivated for the bell the same way they salivated for the food in front of them.
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If you pair a neutral stimulus (NS) with an unconditioned stimulus (US) that already triggers an unconditioned response (UR) that neutral stimulus will become a conditioned stimulus (CS), triggering a conditioned response (CR) similar to the original unconditioned response.

social - terms

conformity: a tendency to modify behavior and opinions in order to fit in

culture: a system, which is composed of the shared beliefs, values, and behavior of a group and passed on to the next generation.

ingroup: a group that an individual identifies with

norm: communal rules that can be publicly declared or quiet assumptions

social - terms (cont)

outgroup: a group that an individual does not identify with

social identity: the human tendency to define the self through group memberships; a result of categorization, identification, comparison, and ingroup favoritism

socialization: the process of growing into a member of a society or community



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