

## Background

*Personology*- the branch of psychology that focuses on the study of the individual's characteristics and of differences between people

Allows us to re-examine our thinking about human functioning, and could very well leave us with a better understanding of our own and others' functioning.

## Personology and Everyday Knowledge of Human Nature

*Everyday knowledge of human nature*- the ability to judge, understand, explain and predict behaviour of fellow human beings.

Ability to judge people depends on four sources:

1. Cultural Tradition
2. Direct communication from others
3. Observation of others' behaviour
4. Self-observation

Personologists aim at improving such everyday knowledge about people by basing their theories on scientific methods.

*Personality Theory*- the outcome of a purposeful, sustained effort to develop a logically consistent conceptual system for describing, explaining and/or predicting human behaviour.

## The Complexity of Human and their Behaviour

Human behaviour is a highly complex phenomenon that is determined by a wide range of interdependent factors such as:

1. Biological factors

## The Complexity of Human and their Behaviour (cont)

2. Environmental circumstances
3. Social factors such as people's expectations, social milieu and culture
4. Psychological and spiritual factors

A complete description and explanation of behaviour would only be possible on the basis of a thorough understanding of all the factors which determine behaviour, including the complex ways in which these factors interact with one another.

## Key Concepts

*Person*- an individual human being who can act independently

*Personality*- the constantly changing but nevertheless relatively stable organisation of all physical, psychological and spiritual characteristics of the individual that determine his or her behaviour in interaction with the context.

*Character*- those aspects of the personality involving the person's values.

*Temperament/nature*- emotional aspects of the personality.

*The self* is used in so many different ways that it is not possible to provide a single definition. It is sometimes used to refer to:

- a. People's views of themselves;
- b. At other times it is a synonym for personality;
- c. The core of personality;

## Key Concepts (cont)

- d. Many other aspects of the personality

## Personality, Situation and Behaviour

*Personism*- the view that behaviour is influenced chiefly by the individual's personality.

*Situationalism*- the view that the situation is the most important determinant of behaviour.

*Interactionalism*- the view that behaviour is the outcome of the interaction between the individual's characteristics and the situation in which the behaviour occurred.

*Transactionalism*- the issues involved are even more complex, the interaction is invariably threefold: between the person, the situation and the behaviour.

## Personality Theories: A Systematic Overview

### Depth Psychological Approaches

Depth psychologists contend that behaviour is determined by forces within the person of which he or she is mostly unaware.

### Behavioural and Learning Theoretical Approaches

They emphasise the study of observable behaviour and consider learning and environmental influences to be the most important determinants of behaviour.

### Person-oriented Approaches

The theorists in this group try to include and explain all aspects of the person in their theories.

### Socially-contextualised Approaches

Individuals can only be understood as parts of the complex totality of more encompassing systems in which they are embedded.

### Background

Contains useful background information for the understanding of a particular theory.

- Including:
- The historical background to the theories,
  - Biographical information about the theorists,
  - The social and philosophical influences the theorists were subjected to
  - Influences arising from the theories.

### The Structure of the Personality

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The hypothetical basic units or working parts that make up the personality, and that work together in some way to produce behaviour.

### The Dynamics of the Personality

A personality theory has to explain what enables the personality to function or what motivates behaviour.

A theory should explain the motivating energy, or what provides the drive in behaviour and how the parts 'work together'.

### The Development of the Personality

When a personality theory includes a complete developmental theory, it usually explains how the structural and dynamic aspects of the person develop and how children's behaviour gradually changes until they reach adulthood.

### Optimal Development

The theorist's basic view of the person and indicates what he or she regards as optimal human development or as the full realisation of one's life goals.

### Views on Psychopathology

Explain how a psychologically-disturbed person differs from a mentally healthy person and how psychopathology develops.

### The Interpretation and Handling of Aggression

The implications of the theories/perspectives/approaches for understanding and dealing with aggression are also examined in some depth.

The *aim* of this is:

- To discuss the same theme/topic in terms of all the various theoretical perspectives, and in this way to point out the similarities and differences between the perspectives.

- To investigate the relevance of personology with regard to current social problems in South Africa

### Implications and Applications

Personality theories contain useful information for every individual's own life, and may help people to develop their abilities and to understand themselves and others.

Particular attention is given to the implications and applications of the theories in the context of areas such as education, psychotherapy, society in general, measurement and research.

### Evaluation of the Theory

Highlights the most important positive and negative features of these theories.

