General Psychology and Life Skills (*PsyL 1011)*

October, 2019

Chapter One: Essence of Psychology

- Definition of Basic Concepts
- Goals of Psychology
- Historical Background of Psychology
- Theoretical Perspectives in Psychology
- Branches of Psychology
- Research Methods in Psychology
- Applications of Psychology

1.1. Definition of Psychology and Related Concepts

Brainstorming Questions

- ***What comes to your mind when you hear about the word psychology?***
- ***Have you ever heard about, read or listened to anything related to psychology?***
- ***What was its content about?***
- ***Did you appreciate it? Why?***
- ***What do you expect from the course in psychology?***

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- The word "psychology" is derived from two Greek words '***psyche***' (Ψ) and _***logos***". ***Psyche*** refers to mind, soul or sprit while ***logos*** means study, knowledge or discourse.
- *Psychology is the scientific study of human behavior and the underlying mental* process
  - **Science**: psychology uses scientific methods (scientific procedures and empirical data to study behavior and mental processes.
  - **Behavior**: *overt* or observable actions, such as talking, facial expressions, movement, etc and *covert* or unobservable behavior such as thinking , feelings and memory which are hidden, and generally considered as a mental process.

What makes psychology different from other behavioral Sciences?

- Unlike some behavioral sciences like sociology and Anthropology, psychology deals about individual's behaviours than the behaviors of a group.
- Unlike other sciences that deals about one or some dimensions of human behaviour, psychology deals about all dimensions of human behaviour.

1.2. Goals of Psychology

- ***Why do you think is psychology important?***
- ***What do you think a psychologist is doing when studying behavior and mental processes?***

As a science, psychology has four goals;

- *Description:* describing individuals behaviour
- *Explanation:* understanding and telling the cause
- *Prediction:* determining what will happen in the future *and*
- *Control:* modifying or changing the behavior from undesirable to a desirable one

1.3. Historical Background and Major Perspectives in Psychology

Dear student, can you imagine how long has psychology been around and where did it begin?

- Psychology is a relatively new field in the realm of sciences.
- It began as a science of its own in 1879 in Leipzig, Germany, with the establishment of a psychology laboratory in the University of Leipzig by Wilhelm Wundt (father of modern psychology).
- Wundt developed the technique of objective introspection to scientifically examine

Schools of thoughts in psychology

What do you think is a school of thought?

- In psychology, a school of thought is a system of thinking about human behaviour.
- Once psychology begun to use the scientific method, it then went through successive developments in which different schools of thought emerged at different times.
- These schools of thought can be categorized as old and modern as described below.

1.3.1. The five early schools of psychology

1. **Structuralism**
   View - psychology is a study of structure of mind.
   Founder - Edward Titchener based on Wundt‘s ideas
   Goal - to analyze the units or elements of mental process such as; sensations, images, & feelings.
   Method - introspection (looking inward into our consciousness)
2. **Functionalism**
   Views - psychology is a study of *function of the mind*
   Founder - William James.
   Goal - examine how the mind allows people to function in the real world; – how people work, play, and adapt
   Methods - methods other than introspection including questionnaires, mental tests & objective descriptions.

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3. Gestalt psychology

View - psychology is a study of the whole mind than its parts (images, sensations, and feelings).

Founders - Max Wertheimer and his colleagues.

Goal - studying the whole pattern of sensory activity and the relationships and organizations within their pattern.

- All the three schools of though try to examine the conscious human mind; which is an internal, no-visible, and hidden experience of human beings.

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4. Behaviorism

View - psychology is the study of observable and measurable behaviors: not about hidden mental processes.

Founder - John B. Watson is the founder of behaviorism. Other proponents include E. Thorndike and F. Skinner.

Goal - to observe the effect of the environment on behavior.

Method - observation and experiment

- All the four schools of thought discussed so far were focusing on human mind and behavior as conscious experiences

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5. Psychoanalysis

View - psychology should study about the components of the unconscious part of the mind: not about the tips of mental iceberg.

Founder - Sigmund Freud.

- He realized that some physical illnesses of hysteria patients has emotional non-physical causes. He called these " conversion reaction" or illnesses due to conversion of emotional problems.
- He also underscored that that conflicts and emotional traumas that had occurred in early childhood can be hidden or unconscious and then will remain to affect later behavior.

Goal – to uncover the hidden wishes, passions, guilty secrets, unspeakable yearnings, and conflict between desire and duty.

Method - clinical case studies (hypnosis, free association, & dream analysis)

- We are not aware of our unconscious urges & thoughts; they make themselves known in dreams, slip of the tongue, accidents & even jokes.

1.3.2. Modern schools of psychology

- Perspectives are the different assumptions or ways of explaining behaviors. Take the following case to see different explanations by those different perspectives.

Case: On the playground, a 6 year old Sam pushes little Sara off her bicycle and rides away on it.

1. Psychodynamic perspective

It has its origins in Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, but many other psychodynamic theories exist. It emphasizes on;

- the unconscious dynamics within the individual such as inner forces, conflicts or instinctual energy.
- The role of childhood experiences in shaping adult personality
- The role of intrapersonal conflict in human behavior

Psychodynamic view tries to dig below the surface of a person's behavior to get into unconscious motives; psychodynamists think of themselves as archaeologists of the mind.

2. Behavioral Perspective

- It emphasizes on the role learning experiences play in shaping the behavior of an organism. It is concerned with how the environment affects the person‘s actions.
- Behaviorists focus on environmental conditions (e.g. rewards, & punishments) that maintain or discourage specific behaviors.
- The behavioral perspective is sometimes called the "*black box*" *approach in psychology* because it treats the mind as less useful *in understanding human behavior.*
- This means, behaviorists are only interested in the effects of the environment (input) on behavior (output) but not in the process inside the box.

3. Humanistic Perspective

- According to this perspective, human behavior is not determined either by unconscious dynamics or the environment. Rather it emphasizes the uniqueness of human beings and focuses on human values and subjective experiences.
- This perspective places greater importance on the individual‘s free will.
- The goal of humanistic psychology was helping people to express themselves creatively and achieve their full potential or self-actualization (developing human potential to its fullest).

4. Cognitive Perspective

- It emphasizes what goes on in people's heads; how people reason, remember, understand language, solve problems, explain experiences and form beliefs.
- This perspective is concerned about the mental processes.
- The most important contribution of this perspective has been to show how people's thoughts and explanations affect their actions, feelings, and choices.
- Techniques used to explore behavior from a cognitive perspective include electrical recording of brain activity, electrical stimulation and radioactive tracing of metabolic activity in the nervous system.

5. Biological Perspective

- It focuses on how the body affects behavior, feelings, and thoughts. It holds that the brain and the various brain chemicals affect psychological processes such as learning, performance, perceptions, the experience of emotions, etc.
- This perspective underscores that biology and behavior interact in a complex way; biology affecting behavior and behavior in turn affecting biology.
- It also emphasizes the idea that we are physical beings who evolved over a long time and that genetic heritage can predispose us to behaving in a certain way.
- In a manner that our eyebrows evolved to protect our eyes, we may have evolved certain kinds of behavior patterns to protect our bodies and ensure the survival of our species.

6. Socio-cultural Perspective-

- It focuses on the social and cultural factors that affects human behavior.
- As a fish cannot leave without water, human behavior cannot be understood without sociocultural context (the social and cultural environment) that people "Swim" in every day.
- For instance, social psychologists examine how group membership affects attitudes and behaviors, why people (like spouse, lovers, friends, bosses, parents, & strangers) affect us
- Cultural psychologists also examine how cultural rules and values affect people's development, behavior, and feelings.
- This perspective holds that humans are both the products and the producers of culture, and our behavior always occurs in some cultural contexts.

1.4 Branches /Sub fields/ of Psychology

Where do psychologists employed to work after graduation?

Psychology has very diverse fields/branches/sub fields which psychologists can pursue. Some of which are;

A. *Developmental psychology* – It studies the physical, cognitive and psychological changes across the life span.
B. *Personality Psychology* – it study about individual differences which focuses on the relatively enduring traits & characteristics of individuals.
C. *Social Psychology* –deals with people‘s social interactions, relationships, social perception, and attitudes.
D. *Cross-cultural Psychology* - examines the role of culture in understanding behavior, thought, and emotion.
E. *Industrial psychology* – applies psychological principles in industries & organizations to increase the productivity.

F. Forensic psychology - applies psychological principles to improve the legal system (police, testimony, etc.

G. Educational Psychology - concerned with the application of psychological principles & theories to improve education process

H. Health Psychology - applies psychological principles to the prevention and treatment of physical illness and diseases.

I. Clinical Psychology - is a field that applies psychological principles and psychotherapeutic techniques to the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of psychological disorders.

J. Counseling Psychology - has the same concern as clinical psychology but helps individuals with less severe or milder (simpler) emotional & personal problems.

1.5. Research Methods in Psychology

Definition of terms

- ***Research –*** is a scientific method of acquiring knowledge and solving problems.
- ***Scientific method*** - a process of testing ideas through systematic observations, experimentations, and statistical analysis.
- ***Hypotheses*** - is a tentative proposition about the relationship between two or more variables or phenomena.
- ***Theory*** - is an integrated set of principles about observed facts that is intended to describe and explain some aspects of experience.

Steps in scientific research

1. **Defining the Problem** - noticing something attention catching in the surrounding for which one would like to have an explanation. E.g., Students' dropout
2. **Formulating the Hypothesis -** after having an observation on surroundings (perceiving the problem), you might form an educated guess about the explanation for your observations, putting it into the form of a statement that can be tested.
3. **Testing the Hypothesis -** at this step, the researcher employs appropriate research methods and collects ample data (information) to accept or reject the proposed statement.
4. **Drawing Conclusions -** the step in which researchers attempt to make generalization or draw implication from tested relations
5. **Reporting Results -** at this point, the researcher write up exactly what s/he did, why s/he did, and what s/he found. So that, others can learn from what s/he already accomplished. The findings allows others to predict and modify behavior.

Major types of research methods

ADescriptive research - in this type of research, the researcher simply records what s/he has observed. It includes;

i. *Naturalistic observation*: it is a method in which subjects are observed in their natural environment to get a real (not artificial) picture of how behavior occurs. Limitations of naturalistic observation are observer effect and observer bias.

ii. *Case study:* is a technique in which an individual is studied in great detail. It provides tremendous amount of data about a single case or individual. But the result can‘t be applied to others

iii. Survey: is used to collect data from a very large group of people. It enables to address hundreds of people with the same questions at the same time, but it needs a careful selection of a representative sample of the actual population.

B. Correlational research

- **I**s a research method that measures the relationship between two or more variables.
- A variable is anything that can change or vary - scores on a test, the temperature in a room, and so on. For example, a researcher might be curious to know whether or not smoking is correlated to life expectancy.
- Though correlation tells researchers if there is a relationship between variables, how strong the relationship is, and in what direction the relationship goes, it doesn‘t prove causation (which means it doesn‘t show the cause and effect relationship).
- For example, if there is a relationship between smoking and lung cancer, this doesn‘t mean that smoking causes lung cancer.
- Relationships may be positive, negative, or zero.

C. Experimental Research

- It is a research method that allows researchers to study the cause and effect relationship between variables. In experimental research, one or more factors are believed to influence the behavior being studied, while all other factors are held constant.
- Experiments involve at least one independent variable and one dependent variable. The independent variable (**IV**) is the manipulated, influential, experimental factor. The dependent variable (**DV**) is the factor that is measured in an experiment. It can change as the independent variable is manipulated.
- For example, a researcher may need to know whether or not class size ***(IV)*** has an effect on students achievement ***(DV).***
- Experiments also involve randomly assigned experimental/ treatment groups and control/baseline groups. An experimental group is a group whose experience is manipulated.
- Although experimental research is useful to discover causes of behaviors, such research must be done cautiously.