

Introduction to Psychology

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Learning Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, the learner should be able to;
 1. Define psychology
 2. Describe the goals and scope of psychology
 3. Outline the history of psychology
 4. Demonstrate an understanding of the different perspectives of psychology
 5. Explain the importance of psychology in health care



Definition

- The word psychology has its origin in Greek; **Psyche** meaning **soul** or **mind** and **logos** means **study**. Therefore the basic meaning of psychology is the study of the mind.
- Psychology is the science that studies behavior and the physiological and cognitive processes that underlie behavior.
- Psychology is defined as the scientific study of behavior and mental processes



The Goals of Psychology

- **Description:** Identifying and classifying behaviors and mental processes as accurately as possible
- **Explanation:** Proposing reasons for behaviors and mental processes
- **Prediction:** Offering predictions (or hypotheses) about how a given condition or set of conditions will affect behaviors and mental processes
- **Influence:** Using the results of research to solve practical problems that involve behavior and mental processes



Psychology focuses on;

- Mostly Internal sources of behavior of individuals
- Effects of physiological functions on behavior of individuals
- Personality; behavior and attitudes that are characteristics of a person regardless of the situation
- Impact of group on individual behavior and of individuals on group behavior.



History of psychology

- Psychology's intellectual parents were the disciplines of **philosophy** and **physiology**
- Scholars in both fields were actively exploring the questions about the mind.
- Some of the questions psychologist address and have remained constant over time include:
 1. **Nature versus nurture:** to what extent does the environment(nurture) and genes(nature) influence behavior?



History of psychology

2. **Free will versus determinism:** Concerns the extent to which people have control over their actions; is it from forces out of control(determinism) or we are able to choose(free will)?
3. **Conscious versus unconscious processing:** to what extent are we conscious of our actions and their causes?
4. **Individual differences versus universal principles .** How much of our behavior is a consequence of our unique and special qualities, and how much reflects the culture and society in which we live? How much of our behavior is universally human?



History of Psychology

Greek philosophers Plato (428–347 BC) and Aristotle (384–322 BC).

- They questioned the distinction between **nature** and **nurture** and the **existence of free will**.
- **Plato** argued on the nature side, believing that certain kinds of knowledge are innate or inborn.
- **Aristotle** and 17th-century British philosopher **John Locke** was more on the nurture side, believing that children were born into the world with minds like “blank slates” (**tabula rasa** in Latin).



History of Psychology

- French philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650) also argued in favor of **free will**.
- The fundamental problem that these philosophers faced was that they had few **methods for settling their claims**.
- The formal beginning of psychology as a scientific discipline is generally considered to be in the late **19th century**, when, in Leipzig, Germany, **Wilhelm Wundt** (1832–1920) established the first experimental laboratory devoted to psychological phenomena in 1879. At about the same time, **William James** (1842–1910), was setting up his laboratory in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



History of psychology- Early schools of psychology

1. Structuralism

- Wundt's approach, focused on uncovering the fundamental mental components of consciousness, thinking, and other kinds of mental states and activities through **introspection**; A procedure used to study the structure of the mind in which subjects are asked to describe in detail what they are experiencing when they are exposed to a stimulus
- Structuralism was later questioned by many psychologist e.g. Watson who proposed behaviorism
- Behaviorism was thought to be measurable and observable as opposed to structuralism which was more subjective



History of psychology - Early schools of psychology

2. Functionalism

- An early approach to psychology that concentrated on what the mind does, the functions of mental activity and the role of behavior in allowing people to adapt to their environments.
- William James was a member of the school of **functionalism**.
- The functionalist school was influenced by Charles Darwin's *theory of natural selection, which proposed that the physical characteristics of animals and humans evolved because they were useful, or functional*
- The work of the functionalists has developed into the field of **evolutionary psychology**.



History of psychology - Early schools of psychology

3. Gestalt psychology

- Emphasizes how perception is organized. Instead of considering the individual parts that make up thinking, gestalt psychologists took the opposite tack, studying how people consider individual elements together as units or wholes.
- Led by German scientists such as Hermann Ebbinghaus and Max Wertheimer, gestalt psychologists proposed that “The whole is different from the sum of its parts,” meaning that our perception, or understanding, of objects is greater and more meaningful than the individual elements that make up our perceptions.
- Substantially contributions to our understanding of perception.



Some Psychologists and their contributions

- Charles Darwin(1809-1881)-British naturalist whose theory of natural selection influenced the **functionalist** school and **evolutionary psychology**
- Wilhelm Wundt(1832-1920)-German psychologist who opened one of the first psychology laboratories and helped develop the field of **structuralism**
- William James(1842-1910)-American psychologist who opened one of the first laboratories and helped develop the field of **functionalism**



Some Psychologists and their contributions

- Ivan Pavlov(1849-1936)-Russian physiologist whose experiments on learning led to the principle of **classical conditioning**
- Sigmund Freud(1856-1939)-Austrian psychologist who founded the field of **psychodynamic psychology**
- John B. Watson(1879-1958)-American psychologist who contributed to the field of **behaviorism**
- B. F. Skinner(1904-1990)-American psychologist who contributed to the field of **behaviorism-operant conditioning**



Contemporary Theoretical approaches/ Perspectives of Psychology

- An approach is a perspective (i.e. view) that involves certain assumptions (i.e. beliefs) about human behavior.
- Each perspective has its strengths and weaknesses, and brings something different to our understanding of human behavior.
- There may be several different theories within an approach, but they all share common assumptions



1. Behaviorism

- Theoretical orientation based on the premise that scientific psychology should study observable behavior- **An overt response or activity by an organism.**
- All behavior is learned and that when we are born we are like a blank slate, or *tabula rasa*.
- Behaviorism view people (and animals) as controlled by their environment and specifically that we are the result of what we have learned from our environment by association.
- Behaviorism is concerned with how environmental factors (**called stimuli**) affect observable behavior (called the **response**).



1. Behaviorism

- The behaviorist approach proposes two main processes whereby people learn from their environment: namely **classical conditioning** and **operant conditioning**.
- Classical conditioning involves learning by **association**, and operant conditioning involves learning from the **consequences** of behavior.
- Behaviorism also believes in scientific methodology (e.g. controlled experiments), and that only observable behavior should be studied because this can be objectively measured.



1. Behaviorism

- **Practical contributions**
 - Behavior therapy
 - Biofeedback uses operant techniques
- **Principal contributors**
 - John Watson
 - Ivan Pavlov
 - B. F. Skinner



2. Psychodynamic approach

- Attempts to explain personality, motivation and mental disorders by focusing on unconscious determinants of behavior.

Principles/ Assumptions

- The unconscious contain thoughts, memories and desires that are below the surface of conscious awareness but nonetheless exert great influence on behavior
- Much of what is unconscious has been made so through repression where threatening or unpleasant experiences are forgotten
- Sexual instinct(libido) or drive is active from birth and develops through a series of five psychosexual stages

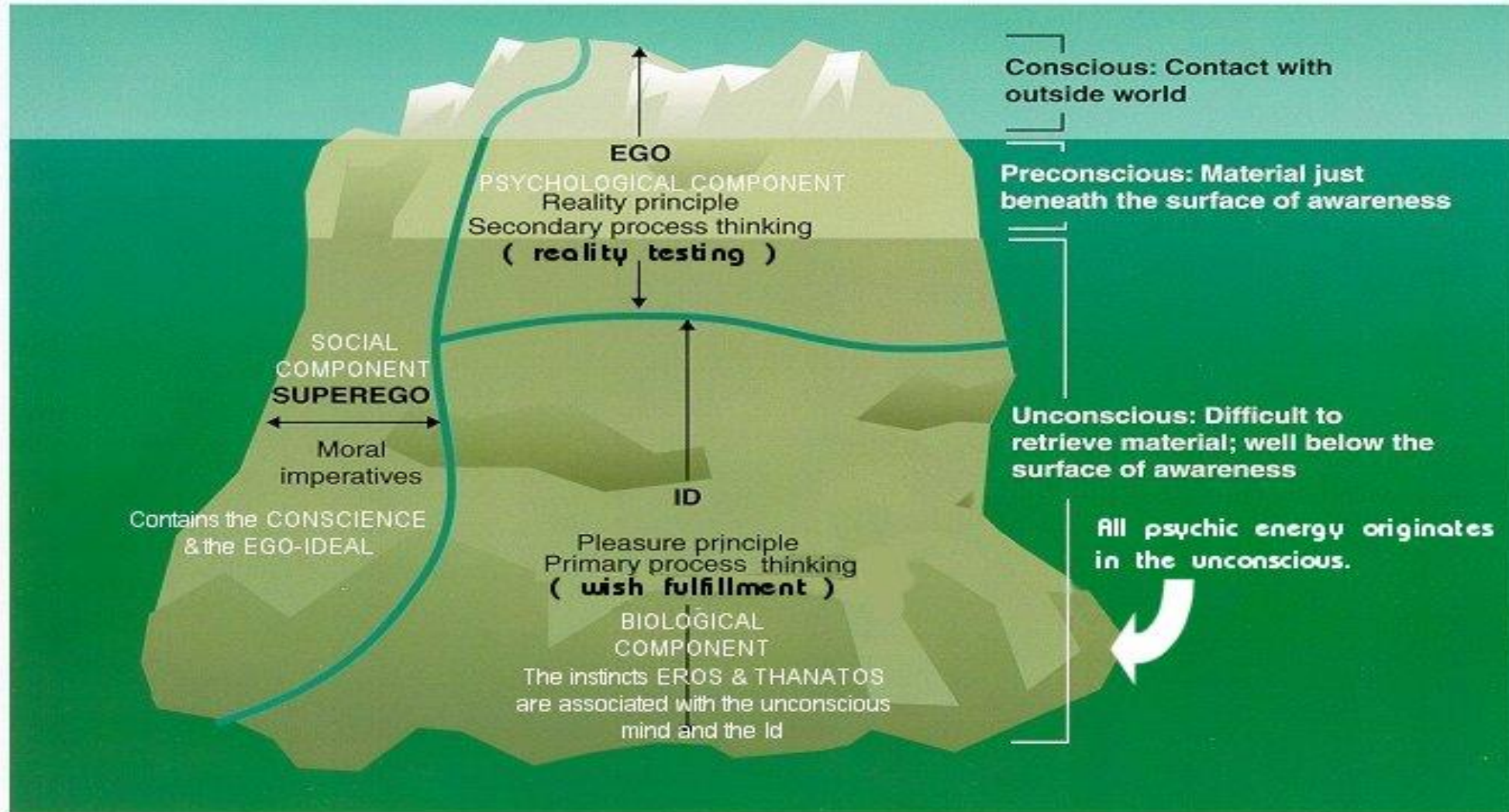


2. Psychodynamic approach

- At any time if drives are thwarted or not satisfied, the ego copes by using ego defence mechanisms such as **repression** and **denial**.
- Freud described personality dynamics in terms of various structures and stages i.e. The **id** is the primitive, innate part of your personality (concerned with basic motives), and
- The **ego** tries to deal with conflicts between the id and the **superego**.
- The **superego** is the moral part learned from parents and society.



Freud's model of personality structure



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2. Psychodynamic approach

Contributions

- Developmental psychology
- Dream analysis
- Hypnosis

Proponents

- Sigmund Freud
- Carl Jung
- Alfred Adler

3. Humanistic Approach

- Theoretical orientation that emphasizes the unique qualities of humans, especially their freedom and their potential for growth.
- It takes an optimistic view of human nature.
- Believes that research in animals has little relevance to the understanding of human behavior
- Believes in **free will** and people's ability to choose how they act as long as they have positive self regard and Unconditional positive regard(**UPR**).
- Humans have actualizing tendency; an intrinsic property of life reflecting the desire to grow, develop and enhance capacities



3. Humanistic Approach

Contributions

- Psychotherapy
- Counseling psychology

Proponents

- Carl Rogers
- Abraham Maslow



4. Cognitive approach

- The cognitive approach looks at internal mental explanations of behavior.
- The word “cognitive” comes from the Latin word ***cognitio*** meaning “apprehend, understand, or know”.
- These are all *internal* processes that involve the mind (brain)—processes such as those involved in perception, attention, language, memory, and thinking.



4. Cognitive approach

Assumptions

- Behavior can largely be explained in terms of how the mind (or brain) operates.
- The mind works in a manner that is similar to a computer: inputting, storing, and retrieving data.
- This information-processing system works in an integrated way, meaning that its various parts (e.g., attention, perception, memory) co-operate with each other to understand the environment and behavior appropriately.
- Psychology is a pure science, based mainly on well-controlled laboratory experiments.



4. Cognitive approach

Applications

- Cognitive behavior therapy
- Counseling
- Education
- Cognitive development

Proponents

- D. P. Ausubel
- Jean Piaget
- Benjamin Bloom



5. Biological approaches

- The *two* key **assumptions** of this approach are that:
- All behavior can be explained and understood at the level of the functioning of biological systems
- Both behavior and experience can be reduced to the functioning of biological systems. E.g. role of **neurotransmitters**, **autonomic nervous system** and **hormones** in explaining behavior



5. Biological approaches

- The biological approach includes the following:
 - **Physiological psychology:** behavior can be explained in terms of bodily activity such as brain activity (e.g., Mohanty et al.'s (2008) research on hunger), neurotransmitters (e.g., explaining depression), and hormones (e.g., stress).
 - **The nativist approach:** behavior can be explained in terms of genes and heredity.



5. Biological approaches

- For example, some researchers have shown how behavior can be affected by altered levels of sex hormones e.g. Increased testosterone leads to increased risk-taking, whereas increased oxytocin leads to increased nurturing and social responsiveness
- **Contributions**
 - Chemotherapy especially for mental illness
 - psychopathology



6. Evolutionary approach

- Influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection

Assumptions

- Environments are always changing and change requires new adaptations for species to survive.
- Change occurs partly because of sexual reproduction and through chance **mutations** of the genes. In both cases new traits are produced.
- Competition between individuals for limited resources (such as access to food and/or mates) means that those individuals who possess traits best adapted or suited to the changing environment are more likely to survive to reproduce

(They are *naturally* selected.)



Subfields of psychology

- **Clinical psychology:** specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of mental and behavioral disorders.
- **Forensic psychology:** apply training in clinical psychology to issues involving psychology and law.
- **Counseling psychology:** deals with helping people who have adjustment problems (marital, social, or behavioral) that are generally less severe than those handled by clinical psychologists.
- **Physiological psychology, also called biological psychology :** study the relationship between physiological processes and behavior.



Subfields of psychology

- **Developmental psychology:** *the study of how people grow, develop, and change throughout the life span.*
- **Educational psychology:** *specialize in the study of teaching and learning.*
- **Social psychology:** *involved in investigating how the individual feels, thinks, and behaves in a social setting or in the presence of others.*
- **Industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology:** *the study the relationships between people and their work environments.*
- **Health psychology** *explores the relationship between psychological factors and physical ailments or disease.*



Importance of psychology in health care

Definition of health

- Health is a state of complete physical, **mental** and **social** wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (WHO 1946).



Importance of psychology in health care

Different approaches to medicine

1. Biomedical Approach

- This approach assumes that all disease can be explained in terms of physiological processes
- There is a linear progression of causality from the pathogen to the person and not the other way around.
- Psychological and social processes are separate and incidental.

Importance of psychology in health care

2. Biopsychosocial Approach

- The biopsychosocial approach is a framework that takes into account the effect of biological, psychological social and cultural factors on health.
- According to this approach personal and external factors have an impact on health.
- The external factors include the sociocultural and environment factors
- Personal factors include genetic make-up, learned behavior, developmental processes, and previous illnesses



Importance of psychology in health care

- Psychology helps health care provider in understanding;
 1. Health behavior and the link between psychosocial factors and health
 2. Abnormal aspects of development across the lifespan.
 3. Emotions, emotional disorders(psychopathology) and developing effective interventions



Importance of psychology in health care

4. How social and group processes influence our own and patients' behavior in medical settings.
5. The link and interaction between physiological and mental/psychological processes.
6. How medical organizations function.
7. How people's needs vary, so that we can try to ensure that the individualized care we provide is both appropriate and optimal



Importance of psychology in health care

8. Communication processes and ways of improving the therapeutic relationship as well as work more effectively with others
9. The factors that affect how people cope with illness, pain and loss, and the demands of everyday life; therefore help them cope better and reduce the risks of stress-related illness.
10. Application of evidence-based interventions to enhance health and well-being, and help people to change or modify their lifestyles.

