

LESSON 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY

SUMMARY

As human beings we are curious to understand the reasons behind our and others behaviour in different situations.

Anyone can speculate the reasons behind a behaviour or experience based on common sense, but a psychologist will study the reasons behind the behaviour in a systematic way and will provide scientific answers to these questions which can be tested time and again.

Nature of Psychology and its Definition

Psychology is a systematic and scientific study of mental processes, experiences and behaviours - both overt and covert.

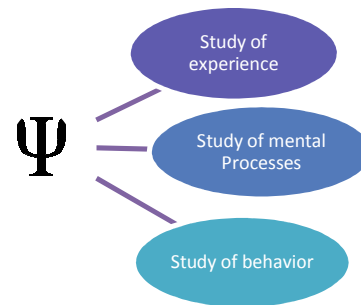


In India, soul and spirit has been studied from vedic and upnishadic period. Different schools such as Yoga, Samkhya, Vedant, Nyaya, Buddhism, and Jainism provided detailed accounts of mind. But the modern psychology started at Calcutta University in 1916 with establishment of the Department of Psychology.

In Western world, the formal beginning of psychology as an

independent discipline goes back to 1879 when Wilhelm Wundt established the first experimental laboratory at the University of Leipzig, in Germany.

In figure given below, the three components of psychology (Ψ) are mentioned.



The experience aspect involves – consciousness and altered states, dreams etc. Under mental processes cognition (thought, thinking, and memory) is studied. The third component involves study of any and every type of behaviour – simple or complex.

In psychology the main unit of investigation is the individual human being and his or her experiences, mental processes and behaviours.

Scope of Psychology

Psychology helps us to develop a basic understanding about human nature and facilitates us to deal with a number of personal and social problems.

The study of human starts with the biological system. Under biological perspective, we study the functions of nervous system, endocrine system etc. It studies how socio-cultural environment interacts with biological, intellectual and social attributes of a child and facilitates healthy development.

We come across through a lot of stimulation. Through Attention and perception, we process the information and store it in our memory and retrieve it later. All these processes come under cognition.

Psychology helps us to understand the processes involved in learning and attaining different level of accomplishment.

Psychologists study the motive behind the behaviour. Motivation focuses on the investment of mental energy and consistency of effort towards achieving the set goals.


Feelings such as anger, fear, love, joy, and sadness which we experience during the course of our life are studied within the realm of emotion.

Psychologists also study the individual differences such as intelligence, personality, aptitude etc., which facilitates them to select right person for a job and to provide guidance and counselling for various matters of personal or professional concern. The understanding of individual


differences also helps them to differentiate between normative and abnormal behaviours.

Basic Psychological processes


The psychological processes which collectively influence behavior are-




Learning
acquiring knowledge and skills
a relative change in behaviour




Memory
registrering and storing information




Thinking
using logic to solve problems in a rational manner



Sensation
awareness about stimuli through vision, hearing, touch, smelletc.



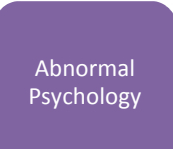
Attention
selectively focusing on a particular stimulus



Perception
processing information and the making the meaning out of it

Fields of Psychology

In contemporary times a number of specialized fields with focused area of application have developed. Some of the fields are – abnormal psychology, clinical psychology, counselling, as follows –



Abnormal Psychology

- tries to describe, assess, predict and control non-normative behaviours
- deals with mental health andd psychological disorders

Cognitive Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deals with thinking, memory and application of information • focus on the process of sensation, perception and attention
Clinical and Counseling Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concerned with diagnosis and treatment of psychological disorders • providing psychotherapy
Educational Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • studies factors that influence learning • assessing aptitude, skills and intellectual potential • methods to overcome Learning difficulties
Environmental psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study of interaction between physical environment and human behavior • studies different environmental factors impact on human performance
Health Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impact of various psychological factors on mental health
Organizational Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • application of psychological principles in study of selection and performance in organizational settings
Developmental Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focuses on the physical and psychological aspects across the lifespan
Emerging fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sports psychology, military psychology, aviation psychology, forensic psychology, peace psychology, neuropsychology, political psychology, feminist psychology, positive psychology

Do you know?

Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) was a German scientist who was the first person to be referred to as a psychologist.

Lightner Witmer, also called father of clinical psychology – coined the term “clinical psychology”.

Indian psychology is a twentieth-century phenomenon, though its

roots go back to the Vedic period of the Indian sub-continent.

Evaluate yourself

1. Describe the nature of Psychology.
2. What are the different components of psychology as a subject?
3. Explain the basic psychological processes that influence behaviour.
4. Write about any seven fields of psychology.