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Module 2

**Approaches and History of
Psychology**

Lecture 1: Approaches to
study Psychology

Approaches

- Approaches refer to broad ways of understanding behavior
- Approaches are the different perspectives to study behavior
- Some approaches have direct roots in schools of psychology

Major Approaches

- Behavioral
- Cognitive
- Psychoanalytic
- Humanistic
- Socio-cultural
- Biological

The Behavioral Approach

- Human behavior can only be studied in terms of observable stimuli and observable responses to stimuli
- Human mind cannot be studied and is not a valid subject matter of scientific psychology
- According to behaviorists, only those aspects of behavior can be studied through scientific psychology that are overt and amenable to measurement

Behavioral Approach contd...

- The behavioral perspective lays emphasis at the role of environment in determination of behavior
- Behaviourists studied and developed laws of learning and emphasized that human beings are a product of the learning experiences occurring in their environment
- John B. Watson, Ivan Pavlov and B. F. Skinner were noted behaviourists.

Behavioral Approach contd...

- Ivan Pavlov, one of the early behaviourists demonstrated that learning occurs due to association of events
- John B. Watson showed that environmental events or stimuli led to specific behaviours i.e., responses
- Criticism of behavioral approach

Cognitive Approach

- Cognitive processes such as attention, perception, memory and decision making etc. are important to human existence
- Focus on mental processes is important for understanding behavior
- Behavior cannot be understood only as mechanical chains of stimuli and responses

Cognitive Approach Contd...

- In 1950s, the study and research in cognitive processes started getting prominence
- Information processing approach provided a metaphor to psychologists for understanding mind as an information processing system
- As per cognitive perspective, behavioural aspects and human action cannot be understood without taking into account mental processes

Psychodynamic Approach

- According to the psychodynamic approach behavioral aspects are determined by the unconscious processes that are beyond our awareness
- Sigmund Freud's approach - major psychodynamic approach
- As per Freudian approach, anxiety, depression or other mental problems can arise due to painful experiences in early childhood that a person suffering from the problem cannot consciously remember

Psychodynamic Approach Contd...

- The terms psychodynamic and psychoanalytic both refer to Freudian approach. However, psychoanalytic approach refers specifically to Freud's theory
- Theorists other than Freud who made important contributions to the psychodynamic perspective are Carl Jung, Alfred Adler , Karen Horney, and Erik Erikson among others

Humanistic Approach

- Deterministic view of behavior (that behavior was determined by the factors beyond our control) was not acceptable to Humanists
- Humanists viewed human beings as masters of their own will and they emphasized the ideas of *free will* and *personal growth*
- Humanists such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers believed that human beings have a striving to achieve their full potential

Humanistic Approach Contd...

- Maslow emphasizes *self – actualization*, which has been understood as the inherent capacity to realize one's potential fully and become an actualized and enhanced person
- Carl Rogers developed client centered therapy in which the therapist is a facilitator of the client's self growth. It is a non – directive form of therapy

Socio-cultural Perspective

- Human beings are socially situated. The social aspects and cultural contexts determine behavioral responses, conceptualization of reality, thoughts and cognitions
- The socio – cultural approach is concerned with the study of how behaviors and thoughts are impacted by the social and cultural aspects
- Psychologists study the differences determined by social norms and culture of different groups

Socio-cultural Perspective contd...

- Psychologists interested in culture study behavioural differences and similarities among people of different cultures
- Psychologists have questioned the view of behavioural similarity and invariance across cultures
- Both uniformity and variation in psychological processes and behaviours occurring due to socio-cultural factors are important and need to be studied

Biological Approach

- This approach is concerned about studying how brain and physiological processes and other bodily aspects influence behaviour
- This is a much advanced approach now and includes behavioural neuroscience and evolutionary psychology
- Psychologists using the biological approach study physiological aspects of behaviour through experimental method.

- After going through this lecture you should be able to articulate how different approaches study behaviour.
- In the next lecture (Lecture 2 of Module 2) we will begin the discussion on historical origin of psychology and the advent of scientific psychology

Thank You