Shikha Dixit

Professor of Psychology, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, Kanpur- 208016, U.P., India Email: shikha@iitk.ac.in

PSY151: Introduction to Psychology Lecture 3: The Nature of Psychology Areas of Psychology

Concepts covered in Lecture 2

- Themes/debates in psychology
- Nature vs. nurture, commonalities vs. differences, automatic vs. controlled processing of information, free will vs. determinism
- We also discussed some aspects of the work of psychologists
- Difference between psychologists and psychiatrists (partial overlap)
- Difference between basic and applied psychology (interdependence)
- Ecological validity

Subfields/ areas of Psychology

- Psychology covers a large range of human behaviours
- Work in diverse contexts such as understanding human cognition, educational processes and learning problems among children
- Psychology has many areas of study

Areas/ subfields of Psychology

- Clinical Psychology
- Counselling Psychology
- Developmental Psychology
- Educational Psychology and school Psychology
- Experimental Psychology
- Cognitive Psychology
- Community Psychology
- Social Psychology
- Cross cultural Psychology
- Health Psychology
- Industrial Organizational (I/O) Psychology
- Positive Psychology
- Biopsychology
- Personality Psychology

Clinical Psychology

- Important field of psychology
- Clinical psychologists deal with mental disorders
- Specialize in diagnosis, causes and treatment
- Trained in assessment of emotional problems and psychotherapy
- Employ various types of psychotherapies and provide counselling to their clients

- Clinical psychologists work in mental hospitals
- Some work along with psychiatrists
- Clinical psychologists might also have private practice
- All clinical psychologists are not involved in practice
- Many of them are in academics. They teach and conduct research on clinical issues

Counselling Psychology

- Counselling psychologists provide counselling and therapy to people
- Counselling psychologists deal with psychological problems that are mild in nature
- Marital problems, family issues, career choice, vocational counselling, personality development, communication and social interaction issues etc.
- They use psychological testing for assessment

Developmental Psychology

- Developmental psychology studies how human beings develop
- Child development and also development over the entire life span
- Physical, intellectual and cognitive development, moral development, social development etc.

Educational Psychology and School Psychology

- Educational psychology is related to the study of all psychological aspects of the instructional and learning processes
- Educational psychologists also study the ways to enhance the learning and teaching contexts
- Educational psychology is a much larger field of study and deals with macro level issues. On the other hand school psychologists work directly with schools. Many of them work as school counsellors

Experimental Psychology

- Experimental psychology is a basic area of psychology. These psychologists are not directly concerned with application related aspects such as school, clinical or counselling psychologists
- They use the experimental method and controlled observation to study behavioural processes. They look for universal laws related to fundamental aspects of behaviour such as learning, perception, memory and other cognitive processes

Cognitive Psychology

- Cognitive psychologists use sophisticated and advanced experimental methods to study cognitive processes such as perception, memory, thinking, language etc.
- Cognitive psychology has emerged as a major area in the interdisciplinary field of cognitive science

Community Psychology

- Community psychologists study the problems of communities and the reciprocal relationship between individuals and community groups
- They generally use principles of clinical and social psychology to deal community and social problems

- They deal with issues such as attitudes toward education and health in communities, relationships among subgroups in communities, health promotion, mental health issues in communities etc.
- Some community psychologists work as clinical psychologists, counsellors and mental health professional in communities. Many others work as social psychologists and provide solutions and counselling for social issues

Social Psychology

- Social psychologists study the individuals in the context of society. They study the beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, perception etc. of people in the actual or imagined presence of others
- Social psychologists study social and group behaviour, attribution process, person perception, attitudes and their measurement, stereotypes, prejudice, social influence, conformity among many other topics

- It sometimes appears that there is some overlap between sociology discipline and social psychology
- It is important to note that the focus of social psychology is individual in social context whereas the focus of sociology is social institutions in the society

Cross Cultural Psychology

- Cross cultural psychology is the area of psychology that studies behavioural differences and similarities among people of different cultures
- It is now recognized that there could be universal laws that govern some aspects of behaviour among different cultures, but many behavioural and experiential aspects can be explained through the cultural norms existing in a particular culture

- Both universalistic and relativistic trends exist in the study of culture and psychology
- Psychologists who investigate the relationship between culture and psychology study both uniformity and variation in psychological processes

Health Psychology

- Health psychology studies various behavioural and experiential processes related to the domains of health and illness that are psychological in nature
- Behaviours related to illness perception, prevention of disease conditions, treatment adherence, health promotion etc. are studied by health psychologists among many other aspects of illness experience

- Health psychologists study behaviours related to chronic conditions such as diabetes and life threatening illness experiences of cancer, HIV, heart disease etc.
- They also study gender and health, health related quality of life, health and illness related social cognitions, individual differences in responses to illness conditions and stress and coping in the context of illness

- Health psychology also draws from clinical psychology, social psychology, medical sociology and other applied areas of psychology
- In modern times with the increasing disease burden globally and issues of social inequality and stigma related to disease, health psychology has gained more importance

Industrial – Organizational (I/O) Psychology

- I/O psychology applies theories and principles from psychological research to understanding organizations and behaviour of people in organizational setting
- I/O Psychology is concerned about management functions, roles and skills. Behavioural processes are studied at three levels: Individual, group and organization

▶ I/O psychologists study behaviours related to teamwork, work motivation, employee performance, job satisfaction, leadership behaviour, employee satisfaction, organizational culture, organizational change, employee commitment, conflict within organizations, stress and work, work life balance, group structure, politics, ethics, and gender in organizational context

Positive Psychology

- Positive psychology emerged as a field of study that focuses on positive aspects of human life and living
- As a field of study, positive psychology is based on the philosophy that individuals have the capability to enhance themselves and lead a meaningful and fulfilling life
- Positive psychologists study and research on upon various topics such as happiness, hope, character strengths, optimism, increasing life satisfaction, well-being, gratitude, compassion toward others and self, self - growth etc.

Biopsychology

Biopsychology focuses on the biological and physiological bases of behaviour. These biological factors include brain processes, heredity and hormonal factors. These psychologists study how these biological factors influence behavioural processes such as cognition and emotions etc.

Personality Psychology

- Personality psychologists study what is personality and how it is relevant for human behaviour
- These psychologists also develop tools for measurement of personality
- Personality psychology has applications relevant to various areas such as clinical, counselling, health, organizational behaviour etc.

To conclude

- We have discussed various subfields of psychology
- There are many other areas, such as environmental psychology, evolutionary psychology, forensic psychology, sports psychology etc
- The scope of modern psychology is very large and it is a fast growing field – the areas also keep expanding

Thank you