

1.1 VARIOUS BRANCHES OF PSYCHOLOGY

During its journey of more than a hundred years, psychology as a field of enquiry has grown in many directions. In contemporary times a number of specialized fields with focused area of application have developed. The emergence of different fields in psychology indicates the importance and relevance of these areas in our daily life. In this section we will briefly learn about some of these fields.

Abnormal Psychology: This branch of psychology tries to describe, assess, predict and control those categories of behaviors which are considered as unusual and non-normative. It also deals with various categories of psychological disorders which affect the mental health of the individual. It assesses abnormality in the individual through standardized psycho-diagnostic tools and suggests problem specific treatment.

Cognitive Psychology: It deals with acquisition, storage, transformation and application of information the individual uses to understand and interpret events happening around him/her.

Clinical and Counseling Psychology: Clinical psychology is primarily concerned with diagnosis and treatment of various psychological disorders. A clinical psychologist is trained in psychotherapeutic techniques which are used to treat people suffering from psychological disorders. They are employed in hospitals and clinics dealing with mental health problems. The counseling psychologist deals with mild problems pertaining to adjustment in social and emotional life, and provides specialized services to deal with marital problems, stress oriented problems and career choice.

Educational Psychology: This field of psychology is mainly concerned with academic performance. It studies the role of various factors which influence learning processes in classroom setting. It focuses on assessing the aptitude, skills and intellectual potential of the students and evaluating their performance. An educational psychologist also helps students to overcome learning difficulties.

Environmental Psychology: This field is concerned with the study of interaction between physical environment and human behaviour. It studies the impact of noise, heat, humidity, pollution and crowding on human performance. It also focuses on the impact of physical environment on psychological health of individuals.

Health Psychology: This field focuses on the impact of various psychological factors (e.g. stress) on the onset progress and treatment of illness. It also deals with various life style diseases such as hypertension, coronary heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

Organizational Psychology: This field is concerned with application of psychological principles and models to study the selection and performance of employees in organizational settings. It also studies the concepts of leadership, motivation, job satisfaction and performance appraisal.

Developmental Psychology: This field is concerned with the study of various physical and psychological factors which influence the systematic changes which the individual experiences across the different stages of life.

Emerging Fields: In addition to the fields mentioned above a number of new areas have emerged. Some of these fields are sports psychology, military psychology, aviation psychology, forensic psychology, peace psychology, neuropsychology, political psychology, feminist psychology and positive psychology

1.2 SCHOOLS OF PSYCHOLOGY

From the late 1800's until the 1930's, psychologists were divided about what they should study and how they should study it. Four major schools developed. These schools were:

- (1) Structuralism,
- (2) Behaviourism,
- (3) Gestalt psychology, and
- (4) Psychoanalysis.

Structuralism grew out of the work of James, Wundt, and their associates. These psychologists believed the chief purpose of psychology was to describe, analyze, and explain conscious experience, particularly feelings and sensations. The structuralists attempted to give a scientific analysis of conscious experience by breaking it down into its specific components or structures. For example, they identified four basic skin sensations: warmth, cold, pain, and pressure. They

analyzed the sensation of wetness as the combined experience of cold and smoothness.

The structuralists primarily used a method of research called introspection. In this technique, subjects were trained to observe and report as accurately as they could their mental processes, feelings, and experiences.

Behaviourism was introduced in 1913 by John B. Watson, an American psychologist. Watson and his followers believed that observable behaviour, not inner experience, was the only reliable source of information. This concentration on observable events was a reaction against the structuralists' emphasis on introspection. The behaviourists also stressed the importance of the environment in shaping an individual's behaviour. They chiefly looked for connections between observable behaviour and stimuli from the environment.

The behaviourist movement was greatly influenced by the work of the Russian physiologist Ivan P. Pavlov. In a famous study, Pavlov rang a bell each time he gave a dog some food. The dog's mouth would water when the animal smelled the food. After Pavlov repeated the procedure many times, the dog's saliva began to flow whenever the animal heard the bell, even if no food appeared. This experiment demonstrated that a reflex--such as the flow of saliva--can become associated with a stimulus other than the one that first produced it--in this case, the sound of a bell instead of the smell of food. The learning process by which a response becomes associated with a new stimulus is called conditioning.

Watson and the other behaviourists realized that human behaviour could also be changed by conditioning. In fact, Watson believed he could produce almost any response by controlling an individual's environment.

During the mid-1900's, the American psychologist B. F. Skinner gained much attention for behaviourist ideas. In his book *Walden Two* (1948), Skinner describes how the principles of conditioning might be applied to create an ideal planned society.

Gestalt psychology, like behaviourism, developed as a reaction against structuralism. Gestalt psychologists believed that human beings and other animals perceive the external world as an organized pattern, not as individual sensations. For example, a film consists of thousands of individual still pictures, but we see what looks like smooth, continuous movement. The German word Gestalt means pattern,

form, or shape. Unlike the behaviourists, the Gestaltists believed that behaviour should be studied as an organized pattern rather than as separate incidents of stimulus and response. The familiar saying "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts" expresses an important principle of the Gestalt movement.

Gestalt psychology was founded about 1912 by Max Wertheimer, a German psychologist.

During the 1930's, Wertheimer and two colleagues took the Gestalt movement to the United States.

Psychoanalysis was founded during the late 1800's and early 1900's by the Austrian doctor Sigmund Freud. Psychoanalysis was based on the theory that behaviour is determined by powerful inner forces, most of which are buried in the unconscious mind. According to Freud and other psychoanalysts, from early childhood people repress (force out of conscious awareness) any desires or needs that are unacceptable to themselves or to society. The repressed feelings can cause personality disturbances, self-destructive behaviour, or even physical symptoms.

Freud developed several techniques to bring repressed feelings to the level of conscious awareness. In a method called free association, the patient relaxes and talks about anything that comes to mind while the therapist listens for clues to the person's inner feelings. Psychoanalysts also try to interpret dreams, which they regard as a reflection of unconscious drives and conflicts. The goal is to help the patient understand and accept repressed feelings and find ways to deal with them.

Modern psychology has incorporated many teachings of the earlier schools. For example, though many psychologists disagree with certain of Freud's ideas, most accept his concept that the unconscious plays a major role in shaping behaviour. Similarly, most psychologists agree with the behaviourists that environment influences behaviour and that they should study chiefly observable actions. However, many psychologists object to pure behaviourism. They believe that it pays too little attention to such processes as reasoning and personality development.

Psychology today has continued to develop in several directions. A group of extreme behaviourists called the stimulus-response school believe all behaviour is a series of responses to different stimuli. According to these psychologists, the stimulus

connected with any response can eventually be identified. As a result, stimulus-response psychologists regard behaviour as predictable and potentially controllable.

Another group of psychologists, who are known as the [cognitive school](#), believe there is more to human nature than a series of stimulus-response connections. These psychologists concentrate on such mental processes as thinking, reasoning, and self-awareness. They investigate how a person gathers information about the world, processes the information, and plans responses.

A school called [humanistic psychology](#) developed as an alternative to behaviourism and psychoanalysis. Humanistic psychologists believe individuals are controlled by their own values and choices and not entirely by the environment, as behaviourists think, or by unconscious drives, as psychoanalysts believe. The goal of humanistic psychology is to help people function effectively and fulfill their own unique potential. The supporters of this approach include the American psychologists Abraham H. Maslow and Carl R. Rogers.

Many psychologists do not associate themselves with a particular school or theory. Instead, they select and use what seems best from a wide variety of sources. This approach is called eclecticism.

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