

# **Module : Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Level : 1st year**

**Teacher: Dr. Nassima Amirouche**

## **Lecture 2: Psychology**

### **Etymology**

The word "psychology" is derived from the Greek word psyche, literally meaning "life" or "breath." Derived meanings of the word include "soul" or "self."

### **Definition**

Psychology is the scientific study of behavior, with the aim of understanding mental processes and components of personality and emotions. It encompasses the biological influences, social pressures, and environmental factors that affect how people think, act, and feel. Gaining a richer and deeper understanding of psychology can help people achieve insights into their own actions as well as a better understanding of other people.

### **Branches of Psychology**

There are different types of psychology that serve different purposes. There is no fixed way of classifying them, but here are some common types.

- **Clinical psychology** is focused on the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental disorders.
- **Cognitive psychology** is the study of human thought processes including attention, memory, perception, decision-making, problem-solving, and language acquisition.
- **Comparative psychology** is the branch of psychology concerned with the study of animal behavior.
- **Developmental psychology** is an area that looks at human growth and development over the lifespan including cognitive abilities, morality, social functioning, identity, and other life areas.
- **Neuropsychology** looks at the structure and function of the brain in relation to behaviors and psychological processes. A neuropsychology may be involved if a condition involves lesions in the brain, and assessments that involve recording electrical activity in the brain.
- **Biological psychology** (biopsychology) studies how biological processes influence the mind and behavior. This area is closely linked to neuroscience and utilizes tools such as MRI and PET scans to look at brain injury or brain abnormalities.
- **Forensic psychology** is an applied field focused on using psychological research and principles in the legal and criminal justice system.
- **Social psychology** focuses on group behavior, social influences on individual behavior, attitudes, prejudice, conformity, aggression, and related topics.

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## History of Psychology

Early psychology evolved out of both philosophy and biology. Discussions of these two subjects date as far back as the early Greek thinkers, including Aristotle and Socrates. The emergence of psychology as a separate and independent field of study truly came about when Wilhelm Wundt established the first experimental psychology lab in Leipzig, Germany in 1879.

Throughout psychology's history, various schools of thought have formed to explain the human mind and behavior. In some cases, certain schools of thought rose to dominate the field of psychology for a period of time.

The following are some of the major schools of thought in psychology:

- **Psychoanalysis:** Soon, these initial schools of thought gave way to several dominant and influential approaches to psychology. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis centered on how the unconscious mind impacted human behavior.
- **Behaviorism:** The behavioral school of thought turned away from looking at internal influences on behavior and sought to make psychology the study of observable behaviors.
- **Humanistic psychology:** Later, the humanistic approach centered on the importance of personal growth and self-actualization.
- **Cognitive psychology:** By the 1960s and 1970s, the cognitive revolution spurred the investigation of internal mental processes such as thinking, decision-making, language development, and memory.

## Research methods in psychology

Psychology research can usually be classified as one of three major types.+ one secondary.

1. **Causal or Experimental Research method:** When most people think of scientific experimentation, research on cause and effect is most often brought to mind. Experiments on causal relationships investigate the effect of one or more variables on one or more outcome variables. An example of this type of research would be changing the amount of a specific treatment and measuring the effect on study participants.

**Eg:** Companies can use causal research to enact and study advertisement campaigns. For example, six months after a company releases a new commercial in one region, they observe a 5% increase in sales revenue. To assess whether the commercial caused the increase, they release the same commercial in randomly selected regions so they can compare sales data between regions for another six-month-long period. When the sales increase again in these regions, they can conclude that the commercial and sales have a valuable cause-and-effect relationship.

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2. **Descriptive method:** seeks to depict what already exists in a group or population. An example of this type of research would be an opinion poll to determine which presidential candidate people plan to vote for in the next election. Descriptive studies don't try to measure the effect of a variable; they seek only to describe it.
3. **Historical method:** the technique of analyzing, counseling, or otherwise offering therapy by focusing on a client's personal history. eg: Jean Piaget used naturalistic observation of his own three children and developed diary description with charts of children's development.
4. **clinical Research method (case study):** The case study is considered one of the most important scientific research methodologies, which are used in many researches in the social and human sciences. It can also be defined as the detailed study associated with one or more individuals, which is taken as a model for a social, medical or psychological phenomenon. The data and information related to the case study are collected from various sources using multiple scientific research methods and tools, including: (interview, observation).

## **Use of Psychology**

The most obvious application for psychology is in the field of mental health where psychologists use principles, research, and clinical findings to help people manage and overcome symptoms of mental distress and psychological illness. Some of the additional applications for psychology include:

- Developing educational programs
- Informing public policy
- Mental health treatment
- Performance enhancement
- Personal health and well-being
- Psychological research
- Self-help
- Social program design
- Understanding child development

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## **Impact of Psychology**

Psychology is both an applied and academic field that benefits both individuals and society as a whole. A large part of psychology is devoted to the diagnosis and treatment of mental health issues, but that's just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the impact of psychology.

Some of the ways that psychology contributes to individuals and society include:

- Improving our understanding of why people behave as they do as well
- Understanding the different factors that can impact the human mind and behavior
- Understanding issues that impact health, daily life, and well-being
- Improving ergonomics to improve product design
- Creating safer and more efficient workspaces
- Helping motivate people to achieve their goals
- Improving a person's productivity

There are psychologists who help solve crimes, and there are plenty of professionals who help people deal with mental health issues. However, there are also psychologists who:

- Contribute to creating healthier workplaces
- Design and implement public health programs
- Help design technology and computer programs
- Study military life and the psychological impact of combat
- Promoting effective and attractive advertising practices

No matter where psychologists work, their primary goals are to help describe, explain, predict, and influence human behavior.