

# What is Psychology?

## NCERT Text Book Questions Solved

**Question 1. What is behaviour? Give examples of overt and covert behaviour?**

**Answer:** Behaviour refers to any response of an organism that can be measured. Any covert or overt action/reaction a person does that can be observed in some ways.

A person running to catch train is an example of overt behaviour.

The working of human memory or problem solving might be thought of as behaviour, even though they cannot be observed directly but must be inferred from their product.

**Question 2. How can you distinguish scientific psychology from the popular notions about the discipline of Psychology?**

**Answer:** The popular theories of human behaviour are based on common sense and may or may not be true if investigated scientifically.

- Common sense based on hind sight. Psychology as a science looks for patterns of behaviour which can be predicted and not explained after the behaviour occurs.
- Dweck's study on children (who gave up too easily when faced with difficult problems or failures) is worth mentioning here.
- Commonsense tells us to give them easy problems, first in order to increase their success rate so that their confidence goes up.
- Dweck found that children who had always succeeded because they were given easy problems could not cope up with difficult problems and gave up faster in comparison to those who had experience of both success and failure and were taught to put more effort to deal with difficult problems. Such studies prove that predictions based on empirical studies are reliable and valid.

**Question 3. Give a brief account of the evolution of psychology.**

**Answer:** Psychology as a modern discipline has a short history but a long past. It grew out of ancient philosophy. It emerges as a scientific discipline in the following phases:

### **1. Structuralism:**

It is the oldest school/approach to psychology, and it was proposed by William Wundt.

Structuralists were interested in analysis of human mind and its structure.

- They were interested in conscious experience and wanted to study the building blocks of mind.
- They used introspective method to study mental processes and experiences.

### **2. Functionalism:**

It is an approach to psychology, developed by an American Psychologist William James.

- They (Functionalists) emphasised on what the mind does and the function of consciousness in adjustment to the environment
- According to them consciousness is an on-going stream of mental process, it can't be broken down into parts.
- They also used introspective method to study mental processes and experiences.

### **3. Behaviourism:**

Proposed by John B. Watson who viewed psychology as the science of behaviour and behaviour could be described objectively in terms of stimuli and responses (S-R).

- This approach proposed that mentalist concepts such as consciousness, image or mind cannot be measured or studied objectively and scientifically.
- Watson emphasised on observable and verifiable response to stimuli.
- He was influenced by Pavlov's classical conditioning and was interested in the study of learning.

### **4. Gestalt Psychology:**

This approach was a revolt against structuralism, founded in Germany by Wertheimer, Kohler and Koffka

- It focused on perceptual organisation (organisation of what we see) and they also demonstrated the laws of perceptual organisation.
- Structuralist wanted to break down perception into elements but Gestalt stated that when we look at the world, our perceptual experience is more than the sum of the components of the perceptions i.e. we give meaning to perception.
- For example, when we look at a table we do not see four wooden legs and trapezoid plain surface above it but we recognise it as a table.

### **5. Psychoanalysis:**

This approach was proposed by Dr. Sigmund Freud.

- He viewed human behaviour as a dynamic manifestation of unconscious desires and conflicts of which we are not aware at present.
- He used psychoanalysis as a system to understand and cure psychological disorders.

### **6. Humanism:**

It was advocated by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow.

- They emphasised on the free will of human beings i.e. people are free to do whatever

they choose to do. Their actions are not predetermined by any force.

- They said that human beings strive to grow and unfold their inner potential i.e. what they are capable of doing.
- According to them all individuals have innate tendency to self actualise and all human activities are goal directed and worthwhile.

#### **7. Cognitive Perspective/Constructivism:**

This perspective is a combination of Gestalt approach and structuralist approach.

This approach focuses on cognition i.e. how we know the world through thinking understanding, perceiving, memorising and problem solving etc.

- Jean Piaget and Vygotsky are the pioneers of this approach.
- Cognitive psychologists view the human mind as an information processing system like a computer.
- Mind is considered to receive, process, transform, store and retrieve information.
- Mind is dynamic and human beings actively construct their minds as they interact with the social and physical environment and interaction between adults and children.

#### **Question 4. What are the problems for which collaboration of psychologists with other disciplines can be fruitful? Take any two problems to explain.**

**Answer:** Psychology is located at the intersection of many fields of knowledge pertaining to human functioning.

- It contributes to the growth of other disciplines and draws subject-matter from them as well.
- In the study of brain and behaviour psychology shares its knowledge with neurology, physiology, biology, medicine and computer science.
- In studying the meaning, growth and the development of human behaviour in a socio-cultural context, psychology shares its knowledge with anthropology, sociology, social work, political science and economics.

#### **Question 5. Differentiate between (a) a psychologist and a psychiatrist (b) a counsellor and a clinical psychologist.**

**Answer: (a) Psychologist**—A psychologist is someone who possesses the knowledge of psychology and holds recognized degree in the field; they work in diverse areas, like teaching, counselling, community etc. **Psychiatrist**—They are qualified medical-practitioners who are concerned with psychological well-being of individuals. Clinical Psychologist and psychiatrist are different in the qualification and in roles. Clinical Psychologist cannot administer or prescribe drugs whereas psychiatrists are medical professionals and trained in administering medicine/drugs to treat mental disorders.

**(b) Counsellor**—A counsellor provides advice to the persons who suffer from motivational and emotional problems, they provide vocational guidance also. **Clinical psychologist**—A clinical psychologist also helps people with behavioural, mental and emotional problems.

- They are post- graduate in Psychology and are specialised professionals.
- They provide therapy for various mental disorders, anxiety, fear or stress of any type.
- They use interview and administer psychological tests to diagnose the client's problem.

#### **Question 6. Describe some of the areas of everyday life where understanding of psychology can be put to practice.**

**Answer:**

- Psychology is not only a subject that satisfies curiosities of our mind about human nature, but it is also a subject that offers solutions to a variety of problems. It ranges from personal to family, a community or even national and international dimensions.
- The solution of these problems may involve political, economic and social reforms; however, these problems are a result of unhealthy thinking, negative attitude towards people and self and undesirable patterns of behaviour.
- A psychological analysis of these problems helps both in having a deeper understanding of these problems and also finding effective solutions.
- Psychology enables an individual to understand oneself in a balanced and positive way without being reactionary, in order to deal with everyday challenges and meet with personal expectations.
- Therefore, understanding of psychology enables a person to build stronger relationships at community level and improve individual strength.

**Question 7. How can knowledge of the field of environmental psychology be used to promote environment friendly behaviour?**

**Answer:** Environmental psychology studies the interaction between natural and man-made environment and human behaviour.

- The knowledge of environmental psychology can help us prevent big disasters.
- We can learn to modify our behaviour to prevent any unwanted and painful outcome.
- For example, if we know the hazards of growing population, we can certainly apply some measure to stop population growth.

**Question 8. In terms of helping solve an important social problem such as crime, which branch of psychology do you think is most suitable. Identify the field and discuss the concerns of the psychologists working in this field.**

**Answer:** The branch of social psychology is the most suitable for solving problems like crime. It explores through thought process of people and their influence on other. Social psychologists are concerned with topics like attitude, conformity, obedience to authority, social motivation, inter-group relations, etc.

In answering such questions the knowledge of psychology for Lawer and a criminologist is also very essential. If they have the knowledge of psychology they can understand how well a witness remembers the incident? How well can he/she report such facts when taking the witness stand in the court.