

# Unit 1:

## Introduction to Psychology

### What is Psychology?

-The term psychology comes from the Greek roots psyche meaning soul or mind and logos meaning word or study

**Psychology** - The scientific study of behavior and the mental process that is tested through scientific research (should be systematic in approach).

### Goals of Psychology

Psychologists seek to do four things when studying behaviors:

1- *Describe* – gather information on studied behavior and present what is known.

2- *Explain*- creating a hypothesis (*educated guess*) to understand why a behavior is practiced. A theory (*more complex assumption to explain and offered for scientific study*) is produced from large amounts of experimental study.

3- *predict*- By studying past behaviors, future behaviors can be predicted based upon theory

4 -*Influence*- using what is known to influence future behavior.

- **Basic science** – research for its own sake.

Applied science - Using principles to solve more immediate problems.

### Fast facts about psychology

- Psychology is the study of behavior and the mind.

- There are different types of psychology, such as cognitive, forensic, social, and developmental psychology.
- A person with a condition that affects their mental health may benefit from assessment and treatment with a psychologist.
- A psychologist may offer treatment that focuses on behavioral adaptations.
- A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who is more likely to focus on medical management of mental health issues.

### **Brief History of Psychology**

- Origins of psychology begin with 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century Greece with studying behavior.
- Copernicus & Galileo used Greek observation methods to develop theory.
- In disagreement with *dualism* 17<sup>th</sup> Century Rene Descartes proposed that the mind does affect on the body by controlling movements, sensations and perceptions.

### **Historical Approaches to Psychology**

**Structuralism** – study of basic elements that make up human experience

***Wilhelm Wundt*** – In 1879, used people's self observations about their thoughts (**introspection**) to map out structure of the thought process.

**Functionalism** – study of the function or how people & animals adapt to environment.

***William James*** – known as the “father of psychology”  
taught first psych class in 1875 and wrote first textbook in 1890.

**Inheritable Traits** – study of how heredity influences a person's ability, character, and behavior.

*Is behavior determined by heredity or environment?*

**Sir Francis Galton** – concluded that intelligence was hereditary / good marriages would supply the world with talented offspring. (1883).

**Gestalt Psychology** - perception is more than the sum of its parts – it involves a whole pattern. German group that picked apart cognitive thought process.

### **Contemporary Approaches to Psychology (mid 1900's to Present)**

**-Psychoanalytic Psychology-** study of unconscious motives & conflict determine behavior.

**-Sigmund Freud** – used *free association* and *dream analysis* to study behavior (1940).

**-Behavioral Psychology** – study of how organisms learn or change behavior based upon responses to events in their environment. (Early-mid 1900's)

Ivan Pavlov – classical conditioning experiment with dog's salivation

John B. Watson – behavior occurs due to stimuli in environment

B.F. Skinner – introduced concept reinforcement to show how behaviors repeat

**Humanistic Psychology** – belief that each person has freedom in directing his/her future and achieving personal growth.

Humans are not controlled by environment, but by their own self-concept.

**Abraham Maslow** – humanist whose views differed from behaviorists and psychoanalysts

**Cognitive Psychology** – study of how we process, store retrieve, and use information and how the thought process influences our behaviors.  
(since 1950's)

**Jean Piaget** – leader in the cognitive field of psychology.

**Biological Psychology** – study of how physical and chemical changes in our bodies influence behaviors. Ex/ brain, nervous system, hormones effect on behavior.

**Sociocultural Psychology** – study of cultural and socioeconomic influences on behaviors

## **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.

**1-Clinical psychology** :Clinical psychology integrates science, theory, and practice in order to understand, predict and relieve problems with adjustment, disability, and discomfort. It promotes adaption, adjustment, and personal development.

A clinical psychologist concentrates on the intellectual, emotional, biological, psychological, social, and behavioral aspects of human performance throughout a person's life, across varying cultures and socioeconomic levels.

Clinical psychology can help us to understand, prevent, and alleviate psychologically-caused distress or dysfunction, and promote an individual's well-being and personal development.

Psychological assessment and psychotherapy are central to the practice of clinical psychology, but clinical psychologists are often also involved in research, training, forensic testimony, and other areas.

**2-Cognitive psychology** :Cognitive psychology investigates internal mental processes, such as problem solving, memory, learning, and language. It looks at how people think, perceive, communicate,

remember, and learn. It is closely related to [neuroscience](#), philosophy, and linguistics.

Cognitive psychologists look at how people acquire, process, and store information.

Practical applications include how to improve memory, increase the accuracy of decision-making, or how to set up educational programs to boost learning.

**3-Developmental psychology :** This is the scientific study of systematic psychological changes that a person experiences over the life span, often referred to as human development.

It focuses not only on infants and young children but also teenagers, adults, and older people.

Factors include motor skills, problem solving, moral understanding, acquiring language, emotions, personality, self-concept, and identity formation.

It also looks at innate mental structures against learning through experience, or how a person's characteristics interact with environmental factors and how this impacts development.

Developmental psychology overlaps with fields such as linguistics.

**4-Evolutionary psychology :** Evolutionary psychology looks at how human behavior, for example language, has been affected by psychological adjustments during evolution.

An evolutionary psychologist believes that many human psychological traits are adaptive in that they have enabled us to survive over thousands of years.

**5-Forensic psychology :** Forensic psychology involves applying psychology to criminal investigation and the law.

A forensic psychologist practices psychology as a science within the criminal justice system and civil courts.

It involves assessing the psychological factors that might influence a case or behavior and presenting the findings in court.

**6-Health psychology :**Health psychology is also called behavioral medicine or medical psychology.

It observes how behavior, biology, and social context influence illness and health.

A physician often looks first at the biological causes of a disease, but a health psychologist will focus on the whole person and what influences their health status. This may include their socioeconomic status, education, and background, and behaviors that may have an impact on the disease, such as compliance with instructions and medication.

Health psychologists usually work alongside other medical professionals in clinical settings.

**7-Neuropsychology :**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.

A neuropsychological evaluation is used to determine whether a person is likely to experience behavioral problems following suspected or diagnosed brain injury, such as a [stroke](#).

The results can enable a doctor to provide treatment that may help the individual achieve possible improvements in cognitive damage that has occurred.

**8-Occupational psychology :**In a corporate setting, a psychologist can help boost productivity and enhance employee retention.

Occupational or organizational psychologists are involved in assessing and making recommendations about the performance of people at work and in training.

They help companies to find more effective ways to function, and to understand how people and groups behave at work.

This information can help improve effectiveness, efficiency, job satisfaction, and employee retention.

**9-Social psychology :** Social psychology uses scientific methods to understand how social influences impact human behavior. It seeks to explain how feelings, behavior, and thoughts are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of other people.

A social psychologist looks at group behavior, social perception, non-verbal behavior, conformity, aggression, prejudice, and leadership. Social perception and social interaction are seen as key to understanding social behavior.

Other [branches include](#) military, consumer, educational, cross-cultural, and environmental psychology. The number of branches continues to grow.