

Classical Conditioning Theory of Learning

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Abstract:-

The most well known experiment on classical conditioning were conducted by Ivan Pavlov , the Russian psychologist , who won the Nobel prize for his experiments on this subject. Pavlov conducted an experiment on dogs and tried to established a stimulus-response (S-R) connection . Pavlov's dog provided conditioned response (salivation) not at the sight of the food but to very stimulus like ringing of the bell, appearance of light, sound of the footsteps of the feeder. This theory is helpful to change the behavior of a person.

Keywords:-

Learning, classical conditioning theory of learning, principles of classical conditioning theory, educational implications of classical conditioning theory.

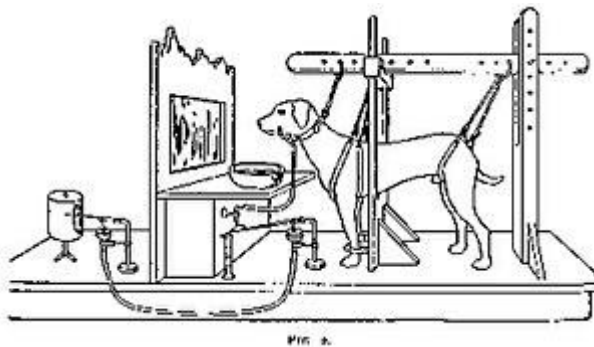
Learning:-

Learning is a relatively permanent change in behavior that occurs as a result of a prior experience and learning has taken place if an individual behaves,reacts,responds as a result of experience in a manner different from the way he formerly behaved.

Classical conditioning theory of learning:-

Classical conditioning is the association of one event with another desired event resulting in a behavior. The most well known experiment on classical conditioning were conducted by Ivan Pavlov , the Russian psychologist , who won the Nobel prize for his experiments on this subject. Pavlov conducted an experiment on dogs and tried to established a stimulus-response (S-R) connection . He tried to relate the dog's salivation and the ringing

of the bell. In his experiment he put some meat in front of dogs. The dogs responded to this stimulus by salivating. This response was instinctive or unconditioned. Pavlov next began to ring a bell at the same time as the meat was presented. Ringing the bell in itself without the presentation of meat was not connected to any response. But by ringing the relationship between the two stimuli- the bell and the meat in the mind of the dogs. By continuing this process the ringing of bell alone was sufficient stimulus to elicit a response of salivating even when no meat was presented. Thus the bell became a conditioned stimulus resulting in conditioned or learned response.



Principles of classical conditioning theory:-

The theory of classical conditioning emphasized by Pavlov and waston gave birth to a number of important concept and principles in the field of learning such as:-

1. Extinction:-

It was noted by Pavlov that if the conditioned stimulus (ringing the bell) is presented alone a number of times without food the magnitude of the conditioned response of salivation begins to decrease and so does the probability of its appearing at all. This process of gradual disappearance of the conditioned response or disconnection of the S-R association is called extinction.

2. Spontaneous recovery:-

It was also discovered by Pavlov that after extinction, when a conditioned response is no longer evident, the behavior often reappears spontaneously but at a reduced intensity. This phenomenon the reappearance of an apparently extinguished conditioned response(CR)after an interval in which the pairing of conditioned stimulus(CS) and unconditioned stimulus(US) has not been repeated is called spontaneous recovery.

3. Stimulus generalization:-

Pavlov's dog provided conditioned response (salivation) not at the sight of the food but to very stimulus like ringing of the bell, appearance of light, sound of the footsteps of the feeder, etc. associated with its being fed. Similarly Watson's boy Albert showed fear not only of touching a rabbit but also of the mere sight of a rabbit a white fur coat and even Santa Claus whiskers. Responding to the stimuli in such a generalized way was termed as stimulus generalization with reference to a particular stage of learning behavior in which an individual once conditioned to respond to a specific stimulus is made to respond in the same way in response to other stimuli nature.

4. Stimulus discrimination:-

Stimulus discrimination is the opposite of stimulus generalization. Here in sharp contrast to responding in a usual fashion, the subject learns to react differently in different situations. For example, the dog may be made to salivate only at the sight of the green light and not of the red or any other. Going further, salivation might be elicited at the sight of a particular intensity or brightness of the green light but not at any other. In this way, conditioning through the mechanism of stimulus discrimination one learns to react only to a single specific stimulus out of the multiplicity of stimuli and to distinguish and discriminate one from the others among a variety of stimuli present in our environment.

Educational implications of classical conditioning theory :-

In our day to day life, we are usually exposed to simple classical conditioning. Fear, love and hatred towards an object, phenomenon or event are created through conditioning.

Most of our learning is associated with the process of conditioning from the beginning. A child learns to call his father 'daddy', his mother 'mummy', and his dog 'Montu', through the process of conditioning, for example:- stimulus-response association and substitution. As a result of stimulus generalization, he may attribute the name daddy to all adult males, mummy to all adult females and call all dogs by the name of Montu. Gradually, he comes to the stage of stimulus discrimination and then learns to discriminate and recognize and attribute different names to different persons, animals and objects.

Thus, much of our behavior in the shape of interests, attributes, habits, sense of application or criticism, moods and temperaments, is fashioned through conditioning. The process of conditioning not only helps us in learning what is desirable but also helps in eliminating, avoiding or unlearning of undesirable habits, unhealthy attitudes, superstitions, fear and

phobias through deconditioning. An individual who hates a particular person or object may be made to seek pleasure in their company. Another individual who thinks it is a bad sign if a cat crosses his path can be made to give up his superstitious belief.

Conclusion:-

In conclusion we can say that classical conditioning theory is helpful to change the behavior of a person in particular situation. The process of conditioning not only helps us in learning what is desirable but also helps in eliminating, avoiding or unlearning of undesirable habits, unhealthy attitudes, superstitions, fear and phobias through deconditioning.

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