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Title

HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY AND BEHAVIOUR
AT DIFFERENT LEVELS: CHILD,
ADOLESCENT, ADULT AND ELDERLY.

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Abstract:

The present paper explores the role of the study of Human Psychology and Behaviour in almost all the walks and spheres of human life. One can use the knowledge of different levels of human psychology and behaviour like infant psychology, child psychology, adolescent psychology, adult psychology, elder psychology etc. for seeking such proper development and growth of human life and society. After providing an overview of the meaning and need of the study of human psychology and behaviour, this paper focuses on the main characteristics of the developmental trend, psychology and behaviour pattern during the different stages of our life—infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and elderhood.

KEYWORDS - human psychology, behaviour, infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and elderhood.

Introduction:

‘PSYCHOLOGY’ is a Greek word which means ‘Science of Soul’. But ‘soul’ was too abstruse and intangible an object to carry on scientific studies. Thus Psychology was later said to be a science of ‘mind’. ‘Mind’ again turned out to be equally intangible. Psychology had earlier lost the ‘soul’, and now it had to lose the ‘mind’. William McDougall in his book *An Outline of Psychology*, added:

“Psychology is a Science which aims to give us better understanding Control of the behaviour of the organism as a whole” (1949, p. 38).

An American Professor Walter Bowers Pillsbury in his book *Essentials of Psychology* published in 1911 gave the same behavioural definition of the term psychology in these words:

“Psychology may be most satisfactorily defined as the Science of human behaviour”

However, in later years, in 1913, J.B. Watson, the father of behaviourism proposed to elaborate the concept of the term behaviour including in it both human and animal behaviour and consequently he defined psychology as “the science of behaviour”.

Psychologists, Woodworth and Marquis wrote:

“Psychology is the scientific study of the activities of the individual in relation to his environment” (1948, p. 20).

As it stands today, Psychology is a scientific study of both the behaviour of man as it appears in his responses, and of consciousness as he finds it in his immediate experience. So, before starting the deep study of psychology, we shall understand the term 'behaviour' and 'consciousnesses in detail.

Behaviour

Behaviour is a response (R) to a stimulus (S). The response may be simple or complex. Usually the complex response is termed as behaviour. Stimulus can be defined as any change in external energy around the organism which excites the nervous system and brings out response. For example, a student is reading a book . Suddenly there is a gun shot at his back. This is the introduction of a new stimulus in his field. He will respond to that by looking back, or jumping or closing his eyes, or shouting, etc. Behaviour does presuppose the existence of some stimulus.

Consciousness

Only a hundred years before it was believed that Psychology is the study of only consciousness in the mind, and Physiology is the study of the body and its behaviour. This was in strict adherence to the classical theory of dualism— of body and mind. As discussed earlier the two may be studied separately but functionally they always behave as single entity. The consciousness is like the electric current flowing through the wire, but behaviour is its manifestation in the form of heat, light chemical analysis or physiological shock.

Thus, the popular definition of Psychology is that it is the study of human behaviour and experience.

The Need for the Study of Psychology:

Psychology may provide valuable help and assistance for understand one's self plan about its own progress, and actualize one's potential to the maximum in the interest of the self and the society. Psychology in true sense is the science of life. It provides us valuable directions for understanding our own abilities and capacities, develop them properly and then strive for an adequate adjustment with the self and the ever changing needs of the environment. The knowledge of the various aspects of the growth and development, modification of behaviour,

ways and means of seeking a proper harmonious development of personality of the child helps the parents, teachers and elders to plan and implement all the schemes related to the development of their wards or children. One can use the knowledge of the many special branches of human psychology like infant psychology, child psychology, adolescent psychology, adult psychology, psychology of teaching and learning, health psychology, psychology of adjustment etc. for seeking such proper development and self actualization. Human Psychology has also provided the ways and means of development for the help of all the individuals who wish to strive for the development of the society.

Human Psychology and Behaviour:

How our development goes on with various stages of our life, it must be quite interesting thing to be known. Let us try to discuss the human psychology and behaviour at different levels: infancy, childhood and adolescence, adult, elderly.

The Stage of Infancy:

The special features of the developmental trend and behaviour pattern at this stage are the following:

(1) *Rapid growth and development:* Infancy is the period of rapid growth and development. Inner as well as outer organs develop rapidly at this stage. There is rapid growth in terms of height, weight, and size. There is rapid development of emotions and almost all the emotions are developed in the child during this stage. This stage is marked by intensive motor activity and restlessness.

(2) *Dependence:* An infant depends upon his mother, father a other family members for the satisfaction of his basic needs. He is a helpless creature and can move and function only with the help of others. Even for the emotional satisfaction, he depends upon others. He expects that everybody around him should love him and give him his entire affection and attention. He wants to love and to be loved and in this exchange he totally depends on the mercy of others. In this

way the child at this stage is dependent but as he moves into the later years of his infantile behaviour he slowly proceeds towards independence.

(3) **Self-assertion:** Although the child is a helpless one and depends upon others for the satisfaction of his needs, he is quite self assertive, tries to dominate his superior and elder ones. His wishes must be fulfilled. He thinks he is always right and all around him should obey him. He is the prince although without crown and tries to assert himself all the time in all situations.

(4) **Period of make-believe and fantasy:** Infants live in the world of their own creation. This is a period of rich but baseless imagination. As in this stage the infant has limited potentialities and aspires more than, what he can actually get in actual life, he compensates himself in fantasy and make-believe.

(5) **Selfish and Unsocial:** In infancy the child is almost completely ego-centric and selfish. He does not want to share his toys or give any of his possessions to any one else. He wants to have all the things, even love, admiration and affection reserved for him. He does not care for the social and moral codes and principles and places his self interest at the premium.

(6) **Emotionally Unstable:** Infancy is the period of violent emotional experiences. The emotions at this stage are marked by Intensity, frequency and instability. They are spontaneous and the infant is hardly able to exercise control over them. He is not able to hide his feelings and in this way, the emotional expression of the infant is generally in the overt form.

(7) **Characteristics of mental development:**

(1) **Developing curiosity and questioning attitude:** At this stage the child is very much curious about knowing so many things around him. The world and the environment are new for him. He is in the habit of questioning like what is this, why does it happen or not happen etc. His queries are virtually endless. Answers do not interest him as much as asking questions. His speed of questionings is so rapid that he does not bother to wait for previous answers.

(ii) **Intellectually not developed:** The child at this initial stage. is very immature in intelligence. He lacks in reasoning and abstract understanding. He can think only in concrete terms and is not developed in abstract reasoning and thinking. The powers of observation, perception, concentration etc. are also not developed.

(iii) **Rote memory:** The child though not developed much intellectually has a very good memory. But this memorization is without reasoning, it is purely a rote memory. He can cram and reproduce the matter easily.

(iv) **Creativity:** The period of infancy is also characterized by the tendency of creative impulse in the child. He develops a creative attitude and often engages himself in making and collecting so many things. He tries to take satisfaction in realizing that he can make, construct and perform the activities as his elders do.

(v) **Time concept is not developed:** For the child at this stage, the divisions of time such as yesterday, today, tomorrow, month, year etc. are meaningless as he has not yet developed the concept of time. As Crow and Crow put it, "Time as such means little to the young child. He cannot distinguish among 'today', 'tomorrow' and 'next week' except as they represent words rather than actual duration of time." (1968, p. 73)

(8) Sexual development although the sex organs at this stage are not developed, yet the sex tendency is in a continuous stage of development.

B. The Stage of Childhood Main characteristics:

When the child completes his five years and steps into school going age, this period of childhood starts. It goes up to the on-set of puberty. During this period significant changes in the sphere of physical, intellectual, emotional and social aspects take place. The main characteristics of development during this stage can be named as follows:

1. Period of slow and steady growth: Where the infancy is the period of rapid and intensive growth, the stage of childhood is characterized as the period of slow, steady and uniform growth. Development although continuous and uniform, is very low at this stage.

2. Independence: Whereas an infant looks for help in every sort of work even if he is able to do it independently, the child at this stage desires independence. By acquiring experiences and developing physically, intellectually and socially he tries to adjust himself in his environment. In fact at this stage he feels more at home with the world and takes satisfaction by doing his work.

with his own efforts. He becomes increasingly independent of his parents whom he considers merely, convenient persons to provide food and shelter.

3. Emotional stability and control: Childhood in the emotional aspect is the period of stability and control. Intense emotional outbursts which usually find their expression in motor activity and physical form during infancy are rarely repeated at this stage. The child learns to hide his feelings. He can exercise control over his emotions and express them in appropriate and socially approved ways. His emotional behaviour is not guided by instinctive causes but has an appropriate rationale behind it.

4. Developing social tendency: In contrast to an infant who is egocentric, the child at this stage, develops social tendencies and picks up so many social virtues. He likes to play in group and shares his toys with others. Feelings of mutual cooperation, team spirit and group loyalties are developed among children of this age. This period of childhood is often named as gang-age as the child of this age is always a member of some group and develops a very strong sentiment for the group. He is so much loyal to his group that he sometimes even does not mind the displeasure of his parents and teachers.

5. Realistic attitude: Child at this stage begins to accept and appreciate the hard realities of life. He, no longer remains in the own world of make-believe, fantasy and fairy-tales. He is now a perfect realist in place of imaginative idealist. He begins to take a close interest in the world of realities and tries to adapt himself in the real environment.

6. Formation of sentiments and complexes: Infancy is the age of innocence. The child at this stage is not in the habit of hiding his feelings and checking his emotions. Therefore, no complexes are formed at this stage whereas childhood stage gives birth to so many complexes due to inhibition, repression, etc. At the stage of infancy, emotional behaviour does not turn itself into a permanent structure for giving birth to sentiments. But at this stage of childhood emotional behaviour gets itself structured into sentiments. Various sentiments like religious, moral, patriotic and aesthetic sentiments begin to develop at this stage. The formation of such sentiments leads towards character development.

7. Sexual development: With regard to sexual development, this stage is called 'latency period'. Sexual energy, generally, at this stage remains dormant but emerges with great force at the end

of this stage. The sexual behaviour of the children at this stage is characterized by the development of an attitude of antagonism and indifference towards the opposite sex.

While at the infancy stage the boys and girls play together, the children this stage like to play with the members of their own sex. Due to varied interests they gradually develop a general attitude of antagonism towards the opposite sex. As a result of this antagonistic behaviour the sexes naturally draw apart. Even when brought together in family gatherings, boys and girls of this age are barely civil to one another. Sex antagonism more pronounced in boys than in the case of girls. They do not want anything that resembles a girl. In the case of girls the attitude of antagonism, general] takes the form of indifference. They try to ignore the boys in place of tormenting, teasing and interfering with their play.

8. Intellectual development: This stage is the period of intellectual advancement. The rate of intellectual development is quite rapid at this stage which resembles the rate of physical growth at infancy. At this stage child acquires new experiences and tries to adapt himself in his environment and prepares himself to solve the problems. His power of reasoning, thinking, observation, concentration, perception, imagination etc. are developed. He cannot very well go with abstract thinking. He develops the concept of length, time and distance and learns to express himself in various ways. . The developmental schedule as discussed by Hurlock and Schwartz indicates that “During early childhood from 3 to 6 years, situations become significant factors in the Child's memory. Also the emotional quality of the impressions influences memory. By 3 years the child can recount the story heard a few days ago and he can also give information about past experiences.” (1964, p. 98)

9. Development of interests and aptitudes: In childhood the child's field of interests widens and he shows special aptitudes, likings and disliking towards the things and work. The children of this age are usually extravert and are very fond of excursions and visits. They develop interest in reading various types of books. Radio, television drama and movies hold a strong appeal for them. They are interested in everything which is mysterious and romantic. Wide differences in the interest pattern can be seen among boys and girls. Boys are interested in the activities requiring fearlessness, courage and adventures while girls are inclined towards the activities requiring tenderness, softness and other feminine characteristics.

C. Development during Adolescence:

The word 'adolescence' comes from the Latin verb 'adolescere' which means 'to grow.' So, the essence of the word adolescence is growth and it is in this sense that adolescence represents a period of intensive growth and change in nearly all aspects of child's physical, mental, social, and emotional life. It is very crucial period of one's life. The growth achieved, the experiences gained, responsibilities felt and the relationships developed at this stage destine the complete future of an individual.

Who is to be called an Adolescent?

When does this crucial period start and end in one's life? Who should be labelled as an adolescent? These are some pertinent questions which should be answered at this stage.

Technically speaking, a child is described as an adolescent when he achieves puberty, that is, when he has become sexually mature to the point, where he is able to reproduce his kind. He ceases to be an adolescent when he has acquired maturity to play the role of an adult in his society or culture. Maturity, as the term used here, does not mean mere physical maturity; it also implies mental, emotional and social maturity

It is very difficult to point out the exact range of the adolescence period in terms of chronological years. Achieving puberty and becoming mature cannot be tied to a universal span or period. Therefore, the range of adolescence not only differs from country to country but varies from community to community and from individual to individual. In general, girls become sexually as well as socially mature at an early age. The standard of living, early or late marriage, health and climate, the cultural traditions and environment, attitude towards sex, the role expected from the child at different ages, are some of the other factors which control the dawn of puberty and attainment of maturity by children.

In our country, in comparison to western countries, the period of adolescence starts early as Indian children achieve puberty earlier, because of the favourable climatic and cultural factors. Also it ends earlier due to early attainment of maturity whereas in the western world "the adolescence extends roughly from 13 years of age till 21 for girls and 15 till 21 for boys",

(Harriman, P.L. 1946, p. 3) in India it usually ranges from 13 to 19 among boys and from 11 to 17 among girls.

The above classifications of the range for the period of adolescence are not rigid. There are wide individual differences. However, with a view of a rough estimate for universal applicability, with regard to span of adolescence the adolescents can be referred to as teenagers—the individuals having chronological age between 11 to 19 years.

Characteristics of Adolescence

After acquainting ourselves a little with the growth and developmental pattern of the adolescence, it is worthwhile to point out some of the special characteristics of adolescence. Adolescence often termed as the age of storm and stress, has so many conflicting situations and problems of adjustment which need a careful study. . Sorenson writes:

“It is probably safe to conclude that a person reaches his maximum mental level at about the age of twenty or perhaps a little before or all after twenty—. It is true that on the average there is only a little mental growth during the late teens — nevertheless this small amount may be very important.” (1948, p. 44)

(1) Perplexity with Regard to Somatic Variation: Every adolescent has more or less difficult task of adjusting to ‘somatic variation’ may occur during or after puberty. As said earlier, during the adolescence maximum physiological changes take place. These rapid changes create problems for the adolescents in the following way:

(a) There are always individual differences among the human beings and so one cannot deny the possible differences with regard to bodily development, look and appearance among the adolescents. The adolescent with his nearly developed body, is constantly making comparisons between himself and his contemporaries. Differences are almost certain to cause him some anxiety, particularly; they are concerned with height, weight, fatness, thinness, facial blemish ness, largeness or smallness of the hips and breasts in girls and of the genitals in boys.

For both boys and girls, appearance and bodily condition, which is not in keeping with what is considered the norm, will cause some anxiety. Girls want to look feminine and be attractive to boys. Boys want to look manly to gain prestige with other boys and particularly with girls. To be reasonably satisfied with one's physical appearance, thus becomes an important task for an adolescent. He has a need to become accustomed to new bodily changes. Any deviation from the norms and standard of the peer group can produce complexes in the mind and make him maladjusted.

(2) Intensification of Self-awareness: Self-consciousness is too much developed in adolescence. There is a strong desire in an adolescent that his or her bodily changes should be noticed by the elders as well as by the members of his own age-group. Adolescence can be described as an age of self-decoration. Boys and girls pay more attention towards their dresses, make-up, manner of talking, walking, eating etc.

In fact, there is a craving for recognition in adolescents. Every adolescent desires that he or she should be a centre of attraction for the opposite sex and his or her abilities, intelligence, and capacities should be recognized by the peer group and elders. Moreover, the adolescents are too much sensitive, touchy and inflammable. They aim to maintain at any cost their concept of themselves and whenever possible to enhance their status among their peers. An attack on their phenomenal self invites strong reactions and behavioral problems. It makes an adolescent either aggressive or withdrawn depending upon the circumstances.

(3) Intensification of sex-consciousness: sex-consciousness becomes too intense at this time. Most of the adolescents' problems are concerned with the sudden functioning of their glands, secretion of hormones and the awakening of the strong sex instinct.

Firstly, menstruation and ejaculation through natural occurrences at puberty give a shock to most of the adolescents. Afterwards every adolescent feels a sort of strong sensation in the sex organs. This makes to motivate him in seeking satisfaction through masturbation and homosexual relations. In the third stage of their sexual development the adolescents are attached towards the opposite sex. Sex sensation combined with curiosity about sex draws the members of the two opposite sex nearer and nearer. This nearness is sometimes developed into relationships and intercourse and creates many problems and complexes for the future.

These activities create so many worries and complexes in the minds of the adolescents. They become perturbed and develop a sense of guilt, in most of such cases they express the opinion that by acquiring these habits they have ruined their lives and they will now remain unfit for any future sexual life.

(4) Independence v/s dependence: The adolescent is on the boundary line of childhood and adulthood. So, he is typically a person who needs security, guidance and protection like a child and independent views, maturity of opinion and self-support like an adult. He is still immature. His capacities are still in the process of growth and development. He depends for the satisfaction of his so many needs—physical, emotional etc. — on his parents and elders. The emotional instability of his behaviour and difficulty in coming in terms with the somatic changes makes him quite restless and often insecure.

He needs security and complete freedom from unnecessary worries and anxiety at this stage and in this way he is once again in the search of mother's lap and father's affection. Also, his intense love for adventure, coupled with his uncontrolled emotions, needs somebody guide him, and to check his unbridled flow of energy. On the other hand as his social circle is widening, he tries to emancipate himself from the care and look after of his parents and elders. He thinks himself a mature and full-fledged adult. He reacts strongly when the parents and the elders consider him still a child. He tries to assert or show that he is now a mature person and not a child as they think of him. His opinion should now be given weightage. He has every right to give suggestions and directions in family matters. He can very well manage his own affairs and the elders should not interfere unnecessarily. He begins to feel ashamed and embarrassed for the protection and care shown by the parents.

Not only he suffers from the duality in his behaviour, but also the parents themselves are not decided about the roles of their child at this age. Sometimes, they expect him behave as an adult and at other times, they treat him as a child. Therefore, the poor adolescent is caught between the role of the child and the adult. He possesses a strange mixture of the needs for dependence and independence which creates conflicting situations and problems for him.

(5) Peer-group relationship: Peer group relationship plays a substantial role in the life of an adolescent. He goes away from his parents and elders and spends much of his time with members of his peer group. He values the ideals of the group and develops a sense of loyalty

towards it. He is now directed by the standard and norms of his peer group and pays least attention to the desires and advice of his parents and elders. He is more concerned with gaining prestige and recognition in the eyes of his peer. Every child wants at this stage that he should be fully accepted by his peers. Nothing can be more devastating to adolescent than to be rejected by his age-mates. There is sure to exist a difference in the opinions, views, likings and disliking of the elders and adolescents. It is here that the difficulty arises. The adolescents find themselves the victims of the conflicting demands of social and cultural norms, of adults and their peer group and they often become confused and perplexed with regard to any decision making

(6) Idealism v/s Realism: A typical feature of adolescence lies in the Interest of the adolescent in ideals. He desires whelp in the creation of an ideal society. He is very critical of the existing circumstances and happenings and thinks of bringing reform. He often engages himself in asking such questions: Whither is the world going? What is the meaning of our life? is God? What is humanity? Why are there so many sufferings and inequalities ?In this way he tries to place himself on a superior level by searching some lofty aims and ideals and wants a set of moral principles he can understand as well as some guiding principles by which he can operate. Rex reflects the above idea when he says, “Adolescence is best regarded as a recapitulation of the first period of life, as second tune of the spiral of development (1951, p. 147).”

But in this search of idealism he goes away from realism In fact, lack of experience makes him somewhat unrealistic. He tends to accept the impossible. When it is not attainable he, becomes quite disturbed and unreasonable. Many of the adolescents turn themselves into problem youths. Some of them become pessimistic and believe in destroying whatever comes in the way of realising their dreams. Some turn into withdrawn and daydreamers. They begin to roam in their own world of imagination, make-believe and fairy-tales and thus have possibility to turn into maladjusted personalities.

(7) Vocational choice and need of self-support: The adolescent’s strong desire is to achieve self-sufficiency and make himself quite independent like an adult member of the society. Also the life ahead demands from hi m that he should prepare himself for the future vocation which he wants to adopt. Therefore, the period of adolescence requires from the individuals t take a decision about their vocations. ‘Vocational decision is an import one for an adolescent and he often finds himself not quite upto the mark in making a right choice. Emotional instability, lack

of experience and maturity prove as obstacles in the right choice. Moreover, his interests, aptitude and abilities are in the process of making yet. This uncertainty about the interests and abilities makes him quite puzzled. Therefore, the adolescent wants proper guidance and advice with regard to their interests, aptitude and vocational choice.

If we try to make close analysis, we can find that the adolescence is like a crossroad which provides an opportunity for the adolescents to choose and proceed in wrong as well as in right direction equally. It has every chance of turning adolescents into maladjusted personalities the chief cause of which is the frustration of needs and conflict of motives. At the adolescent age there emerges a new physical, social and emotional need. With regard to physical needs the adolescent needs to become accustomed to new bodily changes and desires to have other's notice that such changes have occurred.

In the social aspect he has a strong need for the belongingness to a peer group. Emotionally, he needs to be loved, accepted and admired. He needs security, freedom from anxiety and recognition of self. There is striving for independence from parental control and a struggle for making the active sexual instincts and urges satisfied or sublimated within the norms of the society and culture.

The Stage of Adulthood:

When the child completes his nineteen years and steps into adult age, this period starts. Emotional development reaches its maximum in adulthood. During age, generally, all individuals attain emotional maturity. In brief a person can be called adult if he is able to display his emotions and physical actions in an appropriate degree with reasonable control. Adult people will possess the following characteristics:

- (1) An adult becomes career conscious.
- (2) Manifestation of emotions is very much refined. Usually he expresses his emotions in a socially desirable way. According to Garrett: "Socialization or social development is the process whereby the biological individual is converted into a human person." (1968p. 555)
- (3) He is able to exercise control over his emotions.

(4) The person no more hangs in mere idealism, but he actually perceives the things in their real perspective. He is not a day-dreamer.

(5) The intellectual powers like thinking, reasoning etc. are properly exercised by him in making any decision.

(6) He does not possess the habit of rationalization i.e. he never gives arguments in defence of his undesirable or improper conduct.

(7) He possesses an adequate self-concept and self respect.

(8) He is not confined to himself. He thinks for others and is keen to maintain social relationships.

(9) He has the guts to exercise his emotions at a proper time in a proper place.

The Stage of Elder hood

In this stage, a person gets his physical, mental, emotional and social maturity. The child while passing through various stages from his very birth strives to attain it. Following are the characteristics, which are supposed to be in a mature elder person:

1. An elder person likes to mix up with people.
2. He is not self-centered. He is always ready to sacrifice his interests for the greater cause of groups, society and nation.
3. He possesses the ability for sharing and shouldering the responsibilities. According to Mrs. Hurlock: "Social development means the attaining maturity in social relationships." (1959, p. 251)
4. He is able to make proper decision.
5. He believes in justice, equality and fraternity.
6. The area of his social interests and participation is very wide. He possesses refined tastes and adequate social etiquettes.
7. His behaviour conforms to the norms, mores, social codes and ethics.

8. He possesses a strong desire to serve the cause of the society.
9. He possesses a greater degree of adaptability and adjustability.

Conclusion:

In this way, it can be concluded that Human psychology has a wide field of application and utility. There is no profession in the world where we do not have opportunities of utilising the principles and techniques of human psychology. Children or adults, normals or abnormal, males or females, rich or poor, educated or uneducated belonging to all castes colours or creeds, knowingly or unknowingly do make use of human psychology and may derive more benefits through gaining proper training in this subject. There is no corner of ones life which cannot be illuminated or glorified with the help or knowledge of psychology. It helps the individual to grow and develop in its totality with complete resonance to his environment to achieve happiness and contribute towards social progress and development. In a nutshell, where there is any living organism, environment and behavioural response, the need for study of the behaviour and a subject competent to perform this study will always be felt and where there is any craving or desire for self improvement, adjustment, happiness and social progress, we will have to call for the available or otherwise discovered services of the subject human psychology.

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