

Chapter 14:

Personality

What is Personality?

- **Personality** – the distinctive and relatively enduring ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that characterize a person's response to life situations
- There are three characteristics of an individual's personality:
 - Seen as components of identity that distinguish that person from other people
 - Behaviours are viewed as being caused primarily by internal rather than environmental factors
 - Person's behaviours seem to "fit together" in a meaningful fashion, suggesting an inner personality that guides and directs behaviour

The Psychodynamic Perspective

Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory

- Instinctual drives generate **psychic energy**, which powers the mind and constantly presses for either direct or indirect release
- Mental events may be conscious, preconscious or unconscious
 - Conscious mind consists of mental events that we are presently aware of
 - Preconscious mind contains memories, thoughts, feelings, and images that we are unaware of at the moment but that can be called into conscious awareness
 - Unconscious mind is a dynamic realm of wishes, feelings, and impulses that lie beyond our awareness
- Freud divided personality into three separate but interacting structures:
 - The **id** exists totally within the unconscious mind – it is the innermost core of the personality, the only structure present at birth and the source of psychic energy; has no direct contact with reality and functions in a totally irrational manner
 - Operating according to the **pleasure principle**, it seeks immediate gratification or release, regardless of rational considerations and environmental realities
 - In the course of development, a new structure develops that has direct contact with reality - the **ego** functions primarily at a conscious level
 - Operates according to the **reality principle** – tests reality to decide when and under what conditions the id can safely discharge its impulses and satisfy its needs
 - Last personality structure to develop is the **superego** – according to Freud, develops by the age of 4 or 5 and is the repository for the values and ideals of society
 - Strives to control the instincts of id, particularly the sexual and aggressive impulses that are condemned by society – tries to block gratification permanently
- **Defense mechanisms** – unconscious processes by which the ego prevents the expression of anxiety-arousing impulses or allows them to appear in disguised forms
- In **repression**, the ego uses some of its energy to prevent anxiety-arousing memories, feelings and impulses from entering consciousness (e.g. a person who was sexually abused in childhood develops amnesia for the event)

- **Sublimation** – repressed impulse is released in the form of a socially acceptable or even admired behaviour (e.g. a man with strong hostile impulses becomes an investigative reporter who ruins political careers with his stories)
- Freud proposed that children pass through a series of psychosexual stages during which the id's pleasure-seeking tendencies are focused on specific pleasure-sensitive areas of the body called **erogenous zones**
- Potential deprivations or overindulgences can arise during any of these stages, resulting in **fixation**, a state of arrested psychosexual development in which instincts are focused on a particular psychic theme
- Alfred Adler – insisted that humans are inherently social beings who are motivated by **social interest**, the desire to advance the welfare of others
 - Also postulated a general motive of **striving for superiority**, which drives people to compensate for real or imagined defects in themselves (the **inferiority complex**) and to strive to be ever more competent in life
- Carl Jung – developed his own theory of **analytic psychology**, in which he believed that humans possess not only a personal unconscious based on their life experiences, but also a collective unconscious that consists of memories accumulated throughout the entire history of the human race
 - These memories are represented by **archetypes**, inherited tendencies to interpret experience in certain ways (symbols, myths, and beliefs that appear across many cultures)
- **Object relations** theorists focus on images or mental representations that people form of themselves and other people as a result of early experience with caregivers

The Humanistic Perspective

- Emphasizes the central role of conscious experience, as well as the individual's creative potential and inborn striving for **self-actualization**, the total realization of one's human potential

Carl Roger's Self Theory

- Rogers believed that our behaviour is not a reaction to unconscious conflicts but a response to our immediate conscious experience of self and environment
- **Self** – an organized, consistent set of perceptions and beliefs about oneself; once formed, it plays a powerful role in guiding our perceptions and directing our behaviour
- There is a need for **self-consistency**, an absence of conflict among self-perceptions, and **congruence**, consistency between self-perceptions and experience
- Rogers believed that we are born with an innate **need for positive regard** – that is, for acceptance, sympathy, and love from others
- Positive regard received from parents is unconditional – that is, independent of how the child behaves; **Unconditional positive regard** communicates that the child is inherently worth of love
- Conditional positive regard, however, is dependent on how the child behaves
- A **need for positive self-regard** also develops – this fosters the development of **conditions of worth** that dictate when we approve or disapprove of ourselves
- **Fully functioning persons** do not hide behind masks or adopt artificial roles – feel a sense of inner freedom, self-determination, and choice in the direction of their growth

Research on the Self

- **Self-esteem** refers to how positively or negatively we feel about ourselves – very important aspect of personal well-being, happiness and adjustment

- Levels of self-esteem tend to be stable across development, with correlations between +0.50 and +0.70 from childhood to old age
- People with high self-esteem – less susceptible to social pressure, have fewer interpersonal problems, happier with their lives, achieve at a higher level, and are more capable of forming a satisfying love relationship
- Rogers proposed that people are motivated to preserve their self-concept by maintaining self-consistency and congruence – known as **self-verification**
- Rogers also suggested that people have a need to regard themselves positively, and research confirms a strong and pervasive tendency to gain and preserve a positive self-image – these processes are known as **self-enhancement**
 - For example, people tend to attribute their successes to their own abilities and efforts, but attribute their failures to environmental factors
- Gender-role socialization provides us with **gender schemas**, organized mental structures that contain our understanding of the attributes and behaviours that are appropriate and expected for males and females

Evaluating Humanistic Theories

- Rogers measured the discrepancy between one's ideal self (how they would like to be) and their perceived selves (their perceptions of what they are actually like) – psychotherapy lowers this discrepancy, as one may become more self-accepting

Trait and Biological Perspectives

- Two major approaches have been taken to define “the building blocks of personality”:
 - Propose traits on the basis of intuition or a theory of personality
 - More systemic way – use the statistical tool of **factor analysis** to identify clusters of specific behaviours that are correlated with one another so highly that they can be viewed as reflecting a basic dimension, or trait, on which people vary

Cattell's Sixteen Personality Factors

- Widely used personality test called the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) to measure individual differences on each of the dimensions and provide a comprehensive personality description

Eysenck's Extraversion-Stability Model

- Proposed only two basic dimensions of personality – introversion-extraversion and stability-instability
- Extraversion reflects the tendency to be sociable, active, and willing to take risks (stability - high emotional stability and poise) while introversion represents a tendency toward social inhibition, passivity, and caution (instability - moodiness, tendency to worry excessively, guilt, and anxiety)

The Five Factor Model

- The big five factors are **OCEAN** – for openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism
- Two of the five factors – extraversion and neuroticism – overlap with Eysenck's theory
- It is believed that when a person is placed at a specific point on each of these five dimensions by means of a psychological test, behaviour ratings, or direct observation of behaviour, the essence of his/her personality is captured

Biological Foundations of Personality Traits

- Biological explanations for personality differences focus on three levels – functioning of the nervous system, genes, and evolutionary principles
- Eysenck linked introversion-extraversion and stability-instability to differences in individuals' normal patterns of arousal within the brain
- He believed that extreme introverts are over-aroused – their brains are too electrically active so they try to minimize stimulation and reduce arousal to get down to their optimal arousal level (comfort zone)
- In contrast, the brain of extraverts is under-aroused – so they need powerful or frequent stimulation to achieve an optimal level of cortical arousal and excitation
- Stability-instability represents the suddenness with which shifts in autonomic nervous system arousal occur

The Stability of Personality Traits

- Personality traits – enduring behavioural predispositions, thus show some degree of stability
- Three factors make it difficult to predict on the basis of personality traits how people will behave in particular situations:
 - Personality traits interact with other traits as well as with characteristics of different situations
 - The degree of consistency across situations is influenced by how important a given trait is for the person
 - People differ in their tendency to tailor their behaviour to what is called for by the situation
 - This personality trait is called **self-monitoring** – these type of people are very attentive to situational cues and adapt their behaviour to what they think would be most appropriate

Social Cognitive Theories

- **Social cognitive theorists** such as Julian Rotter, Albert Bandura, and Walter Mischel have combined the behavioural and cognitive perspectives into an approach to personality that stresses the interaction of a thinking human with a social environment that provides learning experiences
- According to the social cognitive principle of **reciprocal determinism**, the person, the person's behaviour, and the environment all influence one another in a pattern of two-way causal links

Julian Rotter: Expectancy, Reinforcement Value, and Locus of Control

- **Expectancy** – our perception of how likely it is that certain consequences will occur if we engage in a particular behaviour within a specific situation
- **Reinforcement value** – how much we desire or dread the outcome that we expect the behaviour to produce
- One of Rotter's most influential concepts is **internal-external locus of control**, an expectancy concerning the degree of personal control we have in our lives
- People with an internal locus of control believe that life outcomes are largely under personal control and depend on their own behaviour
- People with an external locus of control believe that their fate has less to do with their own efforts than with the influence of external factors, such as luck, chance, and powerful others

Albert Bandura: The Social Cognitive Perspective and Self-Efficacy

- Central concept to Bandura's work is the idea of **human agency**, the idea that humans are active agents in their own lives – we make plans and goals, and then we behave in ways that help us reach our goals
- Human agency is a process, not a trait/characteristic, and includes four aspects:

- Intentionality: we plan, modify our plans and act with intention
- Forethought: we anticipate outcomes, set goals, and actively choose behaviours relevant to those goals
- Self-reactiveness: process of motivating and regulating our own actions, processes that we use when we modify our goals, monitor our progress toward those goals, and if necessary, change strategies
- Self-reflectiveness: we think about and evaluate our own motivations, values and goals
- According to Bandura, a key factor in the way people regulate their lives is their sense of **self-efficacy**, their beliefs concerning their ability to perform the behaviours needed to achieve desired outcomes
- Self-efficacy beliefs are always specific to particular situations
- Factors that create differences in self-efficacy include:
 - Previous performance attainments in similar situations – shape our beliefs about our own capabilities
 - Observational learning – observing others’ behaviours and their outcomes
 - Verbal persuasion – messages we get from other people who affirm our abilities or downgrade them affect our efficacy beliefs
 - High emotional arousal – interpreted as fatigue or anxiety, tends to decrease self-efficacy

Walter Mischel: The Consistency Paradox and if...then...Behaviour Consistencies

- Formulated a personality theory, called the **cognitive-affective personality system (CAPS)**, in which both the person and the situation matter – dynamic interplay between the characteristics that a person brings to the situation and the characteristics of the situation
- This view proposes what have been referred to as **if...then...behaviour consistencies**, which suggests that there is consistency in behaviour, but it is found within similar situations
- Mischel argues that behaviour is consistent but we should not expect some form of global consistency – we expect and find consistency within similar situations (for example, how you act with your friends versus how you act with your grandma)

Evaluating Social Cognitive Theories

- Strength of the social cognitive approach is its strong scientific base – brings together two perspectives – behavioural and cognitive
- Constructs of social cognitive theory can be defined, measured, and researched with considerable precision
- Another strength is its ability to translate insights derived from other perspectives into cognitive-behavioural concepts

Personality Assessment

- Personality tests must conform to the standards of reliability and validity
- Reliability – consistency of measurement
 - A test that measures a stable personality trait should yield similar scores when administered to the same individuals at different times (test-retest reliability)
 - Different professionals should score and interpret the test in the same way (interjudge or inter-rater reliability)
- Validity refers to question: Is the test actually measuring the personality variable that it is intended to measure?

Interviews

- Structured interviews – frequently used to collect research data or make a psychiatric diagnosis, contains a set of specific questions that are administered to every participant

- Interviews are valuable for the direct personal contact it provides – voice, speech, posture, content of one’s statements, and general appearance can infer specific attitudes
- However, limitations include:
 - Characteristics of the interviewer may affect how the person responds in ways that can affect the validity of the information
 - Validity of information also depends on the interviewee’s desire to cooperate, respond honestly and report accurately what the interviewer is trying to assess

Behavioural Assessment

- In **behavioural assessments**, psychologists devise an explicit coding system that contains the behavioural categories of interest
- Can provide valuable information about how frequently and under what conditions certain classes of behaviour occur
- Requires precision in defining the behaviours of interest and the conditions under which they occur

Remote Behaviour Sampling

- Through **remote behaviour sampling**, researchers and clinicians can collect samples of behaviour from respondents as they live their daily lives (such as ratings of their mood at a certain time)
- Can be used over weeks or even months to collect a large behaviour sample across many situations
- Enables researchers and clinicians to detect patterns of personal functioning that might not be revealed by other methods

Personality Scales

- Personality scales are termed objective measures because they include standard sets of questions, usually in a true-false or rating scale format, that are scored by using an agreed-upon scoring key
- Advantages include: ability to collect data from many people at the same time, all people respond to the same items, and ease of scoring
- Disadvantage is the possibility that some people will choose not to answer the items truthfully, in which case their scores will not be valid
- The items on personality scales are developed in two major ways:
 - In the **rational approach**, items are based on the theorist’s conception of the personality trait to be measured
 - In the **empirical approach**, items are chosen not because their content seems relevant to the trait on rational grounds, but because previous research has shown that the items were answered differently by groups of people known to differ in the personality characteristic of interest
- The empirical approach was used to develop the **Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)**, the most widely used personality inventory – developed in the 1940s, it was originally designed to provide an objective basis for psychiatric diagnosis
 - The revised MMPI-2 has 10 clinical scales and three validity scales
 - Validity scales are used to detect tendencies to either present an overly positive picture or exaggerate the degree of psychological disturbance
 - Clinical scales were originally intended to measure severe personality deviations such as schizophrenia, depression, and psychopathic personality – in addition, however, the pattern or configuration of scores obtained on the various scales also reveal important aspects of personality functioning in people who do not display such disorders

Projective Tests

- The assumption underlying **projective tests** is that, when a person is presented with an ambiguous stimulus whose meaning is not clear, the interpretation attached to the stimulus will have to come partly from within – thus, the person’s interpretation may reflect the “projection” of inner needs, feelings, and ways of viewing the world onto the stimulus
- Rorschach Inkblots (consist of 5 black and white and 5 color inkblots) – responses are categorized and scored in terms of the kinds of objects reported, the features attended to, and the emotional tone associated with the responses
 - Unreliability between examiners – different examiners may interpret the same response differently
- Thematic Apperception Test (consists of series of pictures derived from paintings, drawings and magazine illustrations) – respondents are asked to describe what is going on in each scene, what has led up to the current situation, what characters are thinking/feeling, and what the outcome of the situation will be
 - Stories are analyzed for recurrent themes that reflect respondent’s personality
 - Like the Rorschach, has the problem of subjective interpretation

Personality Theory and Personality Assessment

- Theories provide us with a framework that specifies how thoughts, feelings, and bodily processes relate to one another and behaviour
- Assessment provides tools for measuring personality variables and testing the theory