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Abstract

The scientific study of human mind and behaviour is a very complex, rich and exciting field which is diverse hence we have so many psychologists trying to explain this phenomenon. My interest in Psychology started from a very young age as l was very much fascinated by the way people did things or said things. Most of the time l found myself asking the why question. When l went to college it then made sense because people’s behaviours were now explained through the study of Psychology. Sometimes l would go to the marketplace just to observe various behaviours and try to explain why some of these people were behaving the way they did. The market place has all kinds of people. From vendors who call for customers and vendors who are just quiet and waiting for customers. Then there are those free loaders, street-kids, homeless hermits, police, municipal police and their shamboks or button stick as well the customers. The customers also have various behaviours from those who first do a market survey and look for the best price to those who negotiate prices or those who just buy without negotiating. Through the undertaking of various researches and theories that eventually lead to numerous psychologists like biopsychologists, school psychologists, and cognitive psychologists, cognitive psychologists and clinical psychologist, observing certain behaviours can be fun. This paper looks at the five main perspectives, their strengths and their flaws. It will also highlight comments from various critics. It is hoped that this paper can also clearly show the differences amongst the perspectives bringing to light the need for various schools of thought in the subject.

# Introduction

Psychology is a scientific approach which is broad and diverse as it covers to explain human behaviour (Saunagal, 2022) . Researchers have come up with various ways to study the human psyche through research with animals up to use of humans. Some of the strategies include analysis of dreams, having their memories tested, scrounging for unconscious memories, or even examining their neurotransmitters and hormones (Caleja, 2021). The study of Psychology is two dimensional. It involves study of human behaviour as well as the animal behaviour. The five perspectives discussed in this paper can be easily summarised as a fruit cake. The diversity of the theories is like the numerous ingredients that we use when backing a cake. There is a very fine line between some of the perspectives while others run parallel while at the same time complimenting each other.

# 2.0. Behaviourist Approach

Behaviourist postulates that a person’s behaviour is a result of the environmental stimuli that the person come across or experiences. This perspective is also key to the “nurture” and “Nature” paradigm. It seeks to predict and control behaviour in human beings and it also supports the idea of free will (Aiken, 2022). In an environment that supports happiness, good mood or positive reinforcement, the person is expected to exude behaviour aligned with happiness , laughter and high self esteem. In such instance you will find the person exhibiting moods like happiness, satisfaction and laughter. This perspective derives its assertion from Classical Conditioning and Operant Conditioning. A good example is Pavlov’s dogs. The dogs would salivate at the sound of the bell even when it no longer came with food. Operate conditioning states that behaviour can only be influenced by either reward or punishment. A child who gets positive feedback from their parents and teachers is usually motivated to do even more than a child who is always condemned and criticized (Big, 2022). I also found this to be true in our studies. Whenever we submit an assignment our tutors respond promptly and grading is also done within expected time. The feedback also motivates us to do even better and strive to improve on highlighted weakness areas. Even when you have not done well the comments do not condemn you but it is constructive and clear. When we talk of Operant Conditioning it can be either positive or negative. A person who is afraid of heights may be exuding such behaviour due to past traumatic events involving falling from high places. Personally l do not ride bicycles due to an incident that happened to me when l was 6. Our gardener offered to give me a ride on his bike and l accepted. On our way back he lost control of the bike and we both fell off the bike. I sustained bruises and one bruise took longer to heal and when it did it left a very ugly scar. Up to now l do not ride bicycles. I guess l also did not get anyone who could have assisted me to get over this phobia by gradually introducing me to safe riding so as to dispel my fears.

Behaviourists also postulates that all behaviours are learned and the idea of “freewill” is an illusion. According to them a child who lives in an abusive situation will learn that conflicts can only be resolved by fighting. Those who grow up in a family loving environment have respect for their better half and they love them unconditionally.

### Forerunners of Behaviourist Approach

In 1912 John Watson postulated that behaviour is an observable phenomenon and it can be influenced by stimulus from within the environment. He argued that Psychology has nothing to do with consciousness or the mind but that it is an observable phenomenon which is behaviour. Watson’s theory emanated from Pavlov’s experiments (Aiken, 2022) with dogs. This theory was further developed by B.F. Skinner into Psychological behaviourism. Skinner opted for a more radical approach to explaining a person’s behaviour (Staats, 1996).

### 2.2 Critics for Behaviourism

Due to the complex nature of Psychology the behaviourist theory has been criticised as having many loopholes and gaps in predicting and controlling behaviour using nurture and nature ideology. It also does not take into account issues like critical thinking, memory or problem-solving etc. (Aiken, 2022) . These are also key in explaining why people behave the way they do.

### 2.3. Support for Behaviourism.

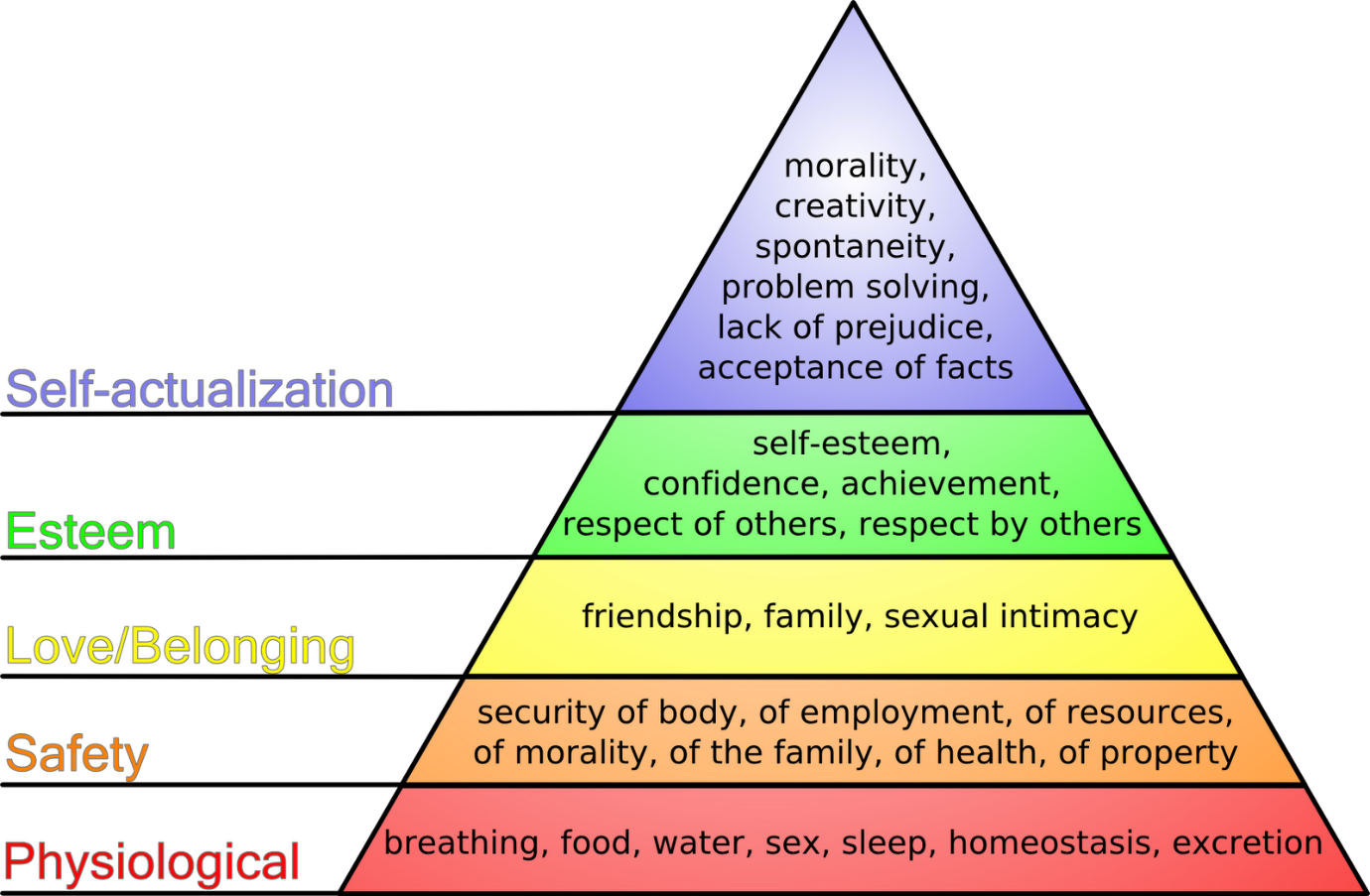
Even though there are criticisms on behaviourist theory, it also posits some great outcomes. It makes prediction of behaviour real and feasible. These predictions can be measurable and can be tested. The ability to produce empirical evidence is why we refer to psychology as a scientific subject. Behaviourist theory has led to the development of most learning theories in Education as we know it. Classroom practioners find the behaviourist theory or perspective very useful in predicting or explaining student behaviour. The idea of rewards and punishment is best practiced in schools. Behaviour analysts also base most of their theories and views on behaviourist perspective.

# 3.0 Humanistic

These argue that “all people are inherently good”. The theory is termed a humanistic theory by virtue of the fact that it borrows heavily from human experiences (Psychogenie, 2022). It posits that people are always finding means and ways to be good and to help each other and the environment. Although human beings are born with the goodness factor, they have to go through a number of steps in order to get to that feeling of satisfaction (Maslow, 1999). This notion resulted in Abraham Maslow coming up with the Hierarchy of needs. The humanistic approach is quite intense and diverse and it applies in almost all facets of human life.

### 3.2 Forerunners of Humanistic Theory

According to an article by PsychoGenie the Humanistic Approach was postulated and originated by Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Clark Moustakas . These psychologists propagated humanistic psychology as we know today and this is hugely associated with deeper and irrational (non-mathematical) issues such as “health, love, spirituality, hope, creativity, nature, and self-actualization” (Psychogenie, 2022).



Courtesy of Bing.com

Maslow postulated that every person goes through 5 basic steps in order to achieve self-actualisation. These steps are physiological, Safety, Love, esteem and Self actualisation. The physiological needs of every human beings are basic and these include breathing , sex, water, food, homeostasis and of course excretion. Every person wants to feel safe and this can be safety of the body employment, resources, morality, family and property (Maslow, 1999). This can be further observed when people take life assurances or insure their properties and take health insurance. The sense of belonging is the third step on the hierarchy. I feel so comfortable and happy that l am an AIU student. I belong to AIU and every time l see an AIU student l feel the need to connect. Human beings and even animals have the same instinct too and that is why we have friendship, families and sexual intimacy. The fourth stage is the Self-esteem and in this stage we expect to see people who are confident, who achieve their goals and have respect for others. These also receive respect from others. At this point one is said to have reached their self -esteem point. The last stage is the self- actualisation stage where one starts to show characteristics associated with morality, creativity, spontaneity, acceptance of facts and lack of prejudice. Maslow stated that people can only reach the next level after satisfying the previous stage (Maslow, 1999) (Schneider, 2015).

### 3.3. Support for Humanistic Theory

The humanistic approach has a very thin line between science and philosophy (Caleja, 2021). A lot of emphasis is placed more on a person’s well being, feelings and creativity than dealing with ailments. Some of the identified strengths of the humanistic perspective and theory, not limited to but involves its innovative approach which according to (Bland, M.A. & DeRorbertis,E.A., 2019) “helped move psychology past the theoretical dogma of Freud and which provided research-based explanations of the therapy process and its outcomes”. The humanistic approach has been applauded for its emphasis on prevention rather than intervention. Such ideologies have been widely used in organisation management , education and on any approach that for society at large (Schneider, 2015).

### 3.4 Critics for the Humanistic Theory.

Without a quantitative aspect to measure, the humanistic approach remains hugely qualitative. This makes the approach very dubious in research and treatment. (Bland, M.A. & DeRorbertis,E.A., 2019). While some academics point out that the humanistic approach is “undisciplined, impractical, and therefore worthy of obsolescence”, this does not make it any lesser of an approach (Aiken, 2022). It has also been accused of lacking a standardised approach and that it is without precision and specificity (Schneider, 2015). It has no space in multicultural settings as it remains biased towards the West.

# 4.0. Psychodynamic

Perhaps the most criticised perspective of all due to its insistence on sex and childhood memories as the basis for behaviour. Some people call it the theory of personality However it is also the most popular. Most of the available therapies have a background and solid relationship with the Psychodynamic perspective. It is premised on the assumption that most of the ailments people face are a result of unresolved conflicts between the conscious and unconscious mind. This perspectives believes in sexual instincts, childhood traumas and repressed memories as the driving force behind the conflict (Caleja, 2021). In the psychodynamic perspective therapy is supposed to bring out the repressed memories and resolve whatever conflict was associated with the memory. Popularity of this perspective is tied up to Sigmund Freud who came up with the Psychoanalysis theory. Freud postulated that the mind has three subsection namely the id, the ego and the superego (Blagov,P.S., Shedler,J., & Western,D., 2012). Our subconscious primal desires are reflected in the id, the logical part is reflected in the superego where all reality issues are reflected by the ego. These three facets can be likened to the devil the id and an angel the superego and the human in the middle is the ego. The Freudian perspective included talk therapy where the patient would lie on the couch and the psychologists would be asking questions and writing notes. After that the psychologist would analyse the notes and come up with a solution (Caleja, 2021). According to Freud he postulated that interpersonal patterns and intrapsychic processes can be used to explain unconscious behaviour.

### 4.1. Forerunners of Psychodynamic Perspectives

Through Psychodynamic Theory the Psychoanalysis theory was birthed and this introduced the psychoanalysis theory which was postulated by Sigmund Freud. Freud developed the psychoanalytic theory and from it stemmed up other theories by Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, and Erik Erikson (MSW, 2022). Sigmund Freud studied middle aged women in Vienna and this is what led to sexist criticism. He also wrote a book Interpretation of Dreams which explained the relationship between conscious and unconscious thoughts, motives and desires of (Moore,B.E., Fine,B.R. eds, 1990)humans. Although African Tradition lacks proper recording of culture, beliefs and traditions interpretation of dreams has always been part of the Indigenous Knowledge systems and is used to explain the past, current and future. If you dream of an arid place or an untilled piece of land that is funeral. A fire represents allegation which can lead to an arrest while dreaming of big body of water is a good thing.

Freud’s theories were further interrogated and developed by Carl Jung, Erik Erikson and Alfred Adler. The trio sometimes dubbed as Neo-Freudians felt that Freud’s theory was incomplete (Brandell, 2004). Although Carl Jung accepted or agreed with the concept of personal consciousness, he however refuted the idea that sex was the motivator for behaviours. He eventually found a Psychology school of thought called Individual Psychology. This was supported by his ideology of Inferiority Complex. This is when an individual feels that he does not fit or that he does not measure up to expectations. Hung was also a firm believer of socialisation and social connections especially in childhood development

### 4.2. Support for Psychodynamic Approach

The Psychodynamic approach helps people to understand their emotions while dealing with unconscious behaviour patterns. It can explore a person’s deep rooted desires, emotions, needs and drives while other cognitive perspectives barely scratch the surface (MSW, 2022).

While scientific theorists refute the Psychodynamic theory for lack of testable variables, it has very good procedural processes which can be easily followed and accepted by scientific standards. (Vinney, 2019).

### 4.3. Criticism

Theories and perspectives have evolved overtime bringing a paradigm shift into what we know as the Psychodynamic Perspective today. The evolvement has caused a tear in the unity of the perspectives and this resulted in emergence of related theories in personality and development.

Psychodynamics does not leave room for the person‘s ability to think and control their behaviour (MSW, 2022). Freud postulated that behaviour is predetermined by past experiences encountered during childhood or traumatic experiences. Other theories however refute this notion by stating that men have a free will and can think on their own. Freud dismisses creativity in his theory.

Psychodynamic Theory has been criticised as being victim –blaming and too deterministic which makes it complicated to be used in modern psychology (MSW, 2022). This is supported by the unscientific nature of this theory which makes it hard to prove using scientific.

It is highly sexists and does not consider other racial descents like people of colour or even the LBGTQ group (McNabb, 2022). He worked with middle-aged women from Vienna. In short one pop out criticism is that Freud studied his own children and this leaves the whole research contaminated by social and economic status, genes, home environment and experimenter bias. The research environment was highly controlled and compromised.

Addressing broader objectives is another lack in this perspectives as it focuses more on psychotherapy that causes. Most of the Neo-Freudian theories have also been criticised for lack of sound scientific basis but tend to lean towards philosophical ideology.

# 5.0. Biological Approach

The Biological perspective has Charles Darwin’s footprints as he is the one who perpetuated the need to use science when studying the human being’s behaviour. The brain and its associated neurons have a great role to play when it comes to a person’s behaviour and this is also supported or shaped by the environment the person finds themselves in. Based on the Biologists theory DNA, genes and other hereditary factors play a great role in shaping a person’s behaviour. This is where the idea of Nature vs Nurture comes in. (Saunagal, 2022). Behaviourists believe that there are certain neurological processes within the brain that cause a person to behave in a certain way. This perspective is also referred to as the physiological Psychology as it explains the relationship between the mind and behaviour as influenced by genetic makeup, DNA, hormones and the nervous system.

So far it is the only approach in the study of psychology that fully examines an individual’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviours from a biological and of course physical point of view. The biological approach has a strong scientific foundation and its variables can be tested. That is why they strongly posit that all behaviours are first physiological and are affected by certain biological processes within the body. Changes in biological process in the body affects behaviour. The biologists supports genetics and inheritance and this is what’s explain how in one family you can have people who are all intelligent or you can have a child who picks on one of their parent’s traits and behaviours.

## 5.1. Fore Runners of Biologist Perspective

History of the Biologist perspective dates back to 18th century and the first theory was postulated by Darwin. In his theory , he discussed the idea of natural selection regarding behaviour. In 1848 Harlow further developed this theory by introducing the famous Phineas Cage Brain Injury Case Study (Guy-Evans, 2020). While it is a largely speculated phenomenon, it also sparked huge interest in psychology. Cage miraculously survived from an accident where a huge steel rod penetrated through his skull. The rod was never removed but Cage lived a normal life with the rod still embedded in his skull. In 1957 Jane Goodall studied how monkeys acquire a language or thinking capacity. The primates showed similar traits and behaviours similar to human being (Guy-Evans, 2020).

## 5.2. Strengths

The Biologist perspective allows researchers to diversify their research methods through its comparative, physiological and inheritance ideologies (MacLeod, 2017). Through the comparative paradigm human beings or animals can be compared and the results are usually valid. The physiological aspect posits that some brain activities through the neurons are a great proponent of a person’s behaviour.

Geneticists also use this phenomenon to compare two people who are either related or not related. One such experiment was of twins who had a genetic relationship of 0.5. (Guy-Evans, 2020). One other strength of the biological approach is that it can provide evidence that can be tested through it objective measurement. Its therapy is also people centred and it is deals with real life application. Against this background many researchers and psychologists support this approach.

## 5.4. Weaknesses

The biological approach leaves no room for consideration of mediational processes. Cognitive processes are not linked to behaviourist theory as the basis of behaviour is different. It fails to explain the complexities of human behaviour on how physical systems interact with the environment. Its main focus is on nature more than nurture. It is also reductionist and fails to acknowledge the possibility of free-will (MacLeod, 2017). As such it becomes very determinist with characteristics that are not flexible or expected to change (Guy-Evans, 2020). Its research does not give room to compare animals and human beings.

# 6.0. Cognitivist Approach

According to the Cognitivist approach human behaviours are said to be fully influenced by the person’s mindset (Caleja, 2021).In this approach focus is on memory, attention and perception. The Cognitivist theory postulates that human compartmentalise information and this is what influences their behaviours (MacLeod, 2017). The name Cognitivist Psychology is derived from a Latin word “*cognoscere”* which basically meansknowing and information. The Cognitivists try to explain human knowledge and processing of information (Caleja, 2021) (McNabb, 2022). The Cognitive approach is divided into two basic parts which is the theoretical and the methodological (Saunagal, 2022). The theoretical approach puts forward that cognition contains discrete and internal mental states which come as representations or symbol that can be scientifically changed using rules or algorithms. The methodological approach supports the scientific validity of the cognitivist approach. This approach is a positivist stance which is criticised for its reductionist component.

For Cognitivists memory is essential for storing information . However transference occurs when the person is able to use the information learned in a real life situation.

## 4.2. Forerunners of the Cognitivist Approach

### 4.3. Support For Cognitivist Approach

The cognitivist approach is wholly supported by the increased understanding of how the brain works since it is the mediator between the brain and the environment. While other perspectives place more emphasis on external factors, cognitivists regards human beings as purely reasonable, overly conscious, reflexive, and of course self-organizing (Tudela, 2004). The Cognitivist Approach was preferred because of its better scientific methods (McLeod, 2020). It is a pure science which has its roots in experimental processes. The mind assimilates a computer even though it is slower. It receives information, processes the information and then stores the data which can be retrieved when needed. The Cognitive approach is the only one that mixes well with other approaches like the Biologists approach and the behaviourist approach (McLeod, 2020).

### 4.4. Criticism Of the Cognitivist Approach

Emerging theories came hard on Cognitivist Approach in the 1990s.The main bone of contention stemmed from the idea of brain computation. With a lot of support from the postmodern philosophy and phenomenological approaches, a lot of new theories emerged and this gave birth to cognition, dynamisms and embodied cognition. From these new theories we find thinkers like Rodney Brooks who produced non-cognitivist models of cognition. Philosopher John Searle and mathematician Roger Penrose heavily criticised the idea that the brain does some computation which assimilates computers. Penrose is for his Godel’s incomplete theorem which states that “certain mathematical truths can never be proven even in a sufficiently strong mathematical systems ( (McNabb, 2022) (Costall, 1989). Cognitivists also came under fire regarding the homunculus fallacy or Ryle’s Regress.

# 5.0. Conclusion

Human beings are very complex and different in the way they do , think, and perceive things. Most explanations have been scientifically proven and hence postulations of why and what people do. Having gone through all these five perspective would we then say which one is wrong or which one is right? No. each perspectives serves a certain purposes and is ideal for certain circumstances. Each perspectives also directs us to proper diagnosis and treatment.

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