

## **Introduction to Psychology and Health Psychology**

**Definition of Psychology:** it is an old Greek word made up of *psyche* which is the mind or the soul while *logy* means study.

It is often defined as the science of behaviour and mental processes. There are three key terms in this definition; Science, behaviour and mental processes.

**Science:** psychology uses systematic methods to observe, describe, predict, and explain behaviour.

**Behaviour:** It refers to actions and responses that can be observed and measured directly.

**Mental processes:** they are the thoughts, feelings, and motives that all people experience privately but that cannot be observed directly.

### **Goals of psychology:**

1. To describe how people behave
2. To understand the causes of these behaviours
3. To predict how people will behave under certain conditions.
4. To influence behaviour through the control of its causes.
5. To apply psychological knowledge in ways that enhance human welfare.

### **History of psychology:**

#### **A. The First Psychological Experiments:**

1. **Old King of Egypt**, as far back as the seventh century B.C., can be considered the **first psychology experiment**.
2. **Hippocrates** (460-377 B.C. Before Christ) known as the **father of modern medicine** argued that there was a close connection between the mind and the body. He proposed that mental illness was not caused by demons but **caused**

by physical malfunctions. He was the first to suggest that the mind resides in the brain.

3. **Plato** (427-347 B.C.), who lived at about the same time also subscribed to Hippocrates' view that **the mind and body were separate and the mind was located in the brain**. He was a rationalist who believed that knowledge is gained through thinking and analysing in an effort to understand the world and people's relationship to it.
4. **Aristotle** (384-322 B.C.), who was Plato's student disagreed with him on many points. He argued that **the mind and body were not separate and felt that the mind and body are one and the same**. Aristotle's view formed the foundation for the methods of empirical psychological research.
5. **Ibn Sina** (980-1037), a Muslim philosopher famous for his works on medicine viewed the human being as consisting of **both hidden (*sirr*) and open (*alin*) elements**. The hidden part consists of the powers of the mind while the open part is the human body and its organs.

## **B. The Beginnings of Modern Psychology**

1. **John Locke** (1632-1704), an Englishman, believed that the **interaction between mind and body is an equal relationship between two aspects of the same unified phenomenon**.
2. **Wilhelm Wundt** (1832-1920), was a physiologist and psychophysicist who established the world's **first psychology laboratory and wrote the first psychology textbook** "principles of physiological psychology, 1874".
3. **William James** (1842- 1910), was interested in the process of conscious activity and viewed the attempt to divide consciousness into distinct elements as misguided.
4. **Sigmund Freud** (1856- 1939), a Viennese physician, formulated a revolutionary theory of human behaviour. Much of his work has become a significant part of both psychological thinking and western society's

thinking. A key component of his theory was around the inner or unconscious conflicts that motivate a person's behaviour. Freud developed a structure of the mind, which includes three components:

- a. **Id**: this is the part of personality or mind that a person is born with. It is the largest part of the unconscious structure of the mind. The id holds the sexual and aggressive instincts of the person and demands instant gratification. It is sometimes referred to as the psychic energy.
- b. **Ego**: this part of the personality or mind is the largest part of the conscious mind but at least half of it is preconscious. The ego develops in childhood and fulfils a function of balancing the desires of the id with the social constraints of the world which are internalised by the superego.
- c. **Superego**: the superego is often referred to as the conscience of the person, which is developed at about the age of five. The superego uses guilt and pride to facilitate compliance with social norms.

**5. Skinner** (1904-1990), he is the most influential psychologist of twentieth century. He focused on **operant conditioning and believed in radical behaviourism**

### **Psychology perspectives:**

Psychology has a number of different ways of trying to understand the person and these are called perspectives. These perspectives have changed over the years but the most commonly used now are:

**1. Biological psychology:** explanations of human or animal behaviour are said to be due to anatomy or physiological changes such as chemical reactions in the nervous and endocrine systems. They suggest that biological function and structure determine behaviour.

**2. Psychodynamic:** A key component of this theory was around the inner or unconscious conflicts that motivate a person's behaviour.

**3. Behavioural psychology:** Behaviorism is a theory of learning based on the idea that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning, and conditioning occurs through interaction with the environment.

**4. Cognitive psychology:** The cognitive psychologists seek to understand what happens between stimulus and response because they recognise that there is not always a predictable automatic response to any given stimulus.

**5. Humanistic psychology:** Whilst they accepted that learning was important, they also acknowledged the importance of innate potential and unconscious processes. Their focus was much more optimistic, identifying that the person was an individual, whole being with unique potential, and they offered a spiritual element to psychological theory. They suggested that all people are moving towards self-actualisation to achieve their potential. Un-favourable environments sometimes disrupt this.

### **Psychology for nursing:**

1. Nursing and psychology are separate field, the nursing as a profession focuses on helping patients recover from health illnesses. Psychology on the other hand explores the mental processes and its effect on human behaviour.
2. When nurses understand the basics of human behaviour, they are better able to treat their patients.
3. Nurses need to be able to understand the emotional reactions from patients and be able to treat their patient's emotional needs as well as their physical needs for optimal health
4. Psychiatric nurses work in the mental health field with patients who have diagnoses such as schizophrenia, suicidal tendencies, depression or various addictions.
5. These nurses often have to work with families and the parents of patients in order to teach them how to cope with the patient's illness.

**Facts important for psychology in nursing profession.**

- It is important to consider that how people's thoughts and needs vary and what best can be done to ensure these needs satisfied.
- It helps in establishing the communication processes in order to improve the therapeutic relationship and work more effectively in inter-professional and inter-agency contexts.
- Understanding can be built on how people react in different situations of illness, pain and distress.
- Psychology provides chance for nurses to understand their responsibilities in a better way and perform exactly as what is expected of them.

**Lecturers**  
**Abbas Shubbar**  
**Hatem Kareem**