Psychology: Human Behaviour Study Notes

Week 1- The science of psychology

Week 2- Research methods of psychological science

Week 3- Performance psychology

Week 4- Sensation and Perception

Week 5- Genes, environment and behaviour

Week 6- Biological bases of mental life and behaviour

Week 7- Abnormal and forensic psychology

Week 8- Learned behaviour and emotions

Week 9- SESSION BREAK

Week 10- Cognitive processes: memory and information processing

Week 11- Health and wellbeing

Week 12- Language and thinking

Week 13- Emotion and motivation

Week 14- Consciousness and altered states of thinking

Notes:

Week 1-

The science of psychology

The nature of psychology:

- Psychology- the scientific study of behaviour and the mind
- The term behaviour refers to actions and responses that we can directly observe, whereas the term mind refers to internal states and processes that cannot be seen directly and that must be inferred from observable, measurable responses
- Clinical psychology- the study and treatment of mental disorders
- Cognitive psychology- specialises in the study of mental processes, especially from a model that views the mind as an information processor
- A few other subfields of psychology include:
  1- Biopsychology or behavioural neuroscience- focuses on the biological underpinnings of behaviour
  2- Developmental psychology- examines human physical, psychological and social development across the life span and the effects of ageing on cognitive and behavioural processes
  3- Experimental psychology- focuses on basic processes such as learning, sensory systems, perception and motivational states
  4- Industrial-organisational (I/0) psychology- examines people's behaviour in the workplace
  5- Personality psychology- focuses on the study of human personality
  6- Social psychology- examines people's thoughts, feelings and behaviour pertaining to the social world: the world of other people

Psychology's scientific approach:

- Across psychology's diverse subfields, researchers share a common underlying scientific approach to studying behaviour
- Science- a process that involves systematically gathering and evaluating empirical evidence to answer questions and test beliefs about the natural world
- Empirical evidence- evidence gained through experience and observation. It includes evidence obtained from manipulating or 'tinkering around' with things and then observing what happens (this is the essence of experimentation)
- Although our experiences and everyday observations provide us with empirical information, unlike scientific observations, everyday observations are usually casual rather than systematic, and we rarely critically evaluate them in a scientific manner
- Our own experiences also may be atypical and not representative of what most people experience, yet we may not routinely acknowledge this
- Misconceptions can result from our own faulty thinking, such as, mental shortcuts, failure to consider alternative explanations and displaying a confirmation bias

Using science to minimise everyday pitfalls:

- Science id a self-correcting process
- Critical thinking- involves taking an active role in understanding the world around you, rather than merely receiving information

- As a science, psychology has four central goals: description, explanation, control and application
- Basic research- reflects the quest for knowledge for its own sake
- Applied research- designed to solve, specific, practical problems
- Levels of analysis: behaviour and its causes can be examined at the biological level, psychological level and environmental and social level

Perspectives on behaviour:

- Psychologists' focus on the biological, psychological, and environmental and social factors that influence behaviour is not new; it has been an integral part of psychology's history
- Different ways of viewing people, called perspectives, became part of psychology's intellectual traditions because psychology has roots in such varied disciplines as philosophy, medicine, and the biological and physical sciences
- Mind-body dualism- the belief that the mind is a spiritual entity not subject to physical laws that govern the body
- French philosopher and scientist Rene Descartes (1596-1650) proposed that the mind and body interact through the brain's tiny pineal gland. Although Descartes placed the mind within the brain, he maintained that the mind was a spiritual, non-material entity
- Dualism implies that no amount of research on the physical body (including the brain) could ever hope to unravel the mysteries of the non-physical mind
- British empiricism- held that all ideas and knowledge are gained empirically- that is, through the senses
- This idea bolstered the development of modern science, whose methods are rooted in empirical observation
- Darwin's theory of evolution implied that the mind was not a spiritual entity but rather the product of biological continuity between humans and other species, also that scientists might gain insight about human behaviour by studying other species
- The infant science of psychology emerged in 1879, when Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) established the first experimental psychology laboratory at the University of Leipzig in Germany