

## **1. The general definition of personality**

Personality is generally defined as the psychological structure underlying consistent patterns in thoughts, feelings and behaviours. People have different personalities as well; this helps to explain differences in behaviours.

## **2. The value of theory (generally)**

Theory = understanding. The key idea is that if you have a strong understanding of something, you have the power to change it. Scientific theory = very good understanding. (If you understand how malaria works and enters the blood stream, you will have a better idea of how to intervene and stop this process from occurring). In the context of personality psychology, if you have an expert understanding of human behaviour, you can help a person change in a way that is more effective than a non-expert.

## **3. Conceptual issues relevant to the study of personality:**

### **a. How is personality studied?**

An idea (theory) is developed, a hypothesis is proposed and is used to test the idea which produces evidence to either enhance or reject the idea.

(i) understand the term evidence-based: techniques used in behaviour change are empirically validated. Trials using such technique show meaningful improvement compared to those not using technique, therefore is evidence-based.

(ii) appreciate the use of the scientific method in personality psychology and the variety of views regarding this: Taste-based= is white wine better than red wine. Opinions; is very difficult to scientifically test. Reality-based = does impulsivity effect treatment for alcohol use. This question can be tested and produces some kind of answer upon completion of the study.

### **b. How is consistency in behaviour defined?**

Cross-situational consistency – when an individual's behaviour is consistent across various situations (grumpy at home, work, school etc – generally grumpy person).

Within-situation consistency – behaviour is consistent within a situation, but not necessarily across other situations. For example, a person is fearful in relation to horror movies, but other than in this situation, the person is not generally fearful (particular emotion only manifest in a particular situation and is not generalisable of that person's personality).

- people display both types of consistency. However, most of our behaviour is situation specific.

Longitudinal consistency – patterns of behaviour are stable over time (regardless of whether they are consistent across situations or within situations). For example, an individual is fearful when exposed to horror movies at any time; therefore, this is consistent over time.

### **c. Why is there more than one theory of personality?**

There are a number of personality theories. This is because some are seen as more useful and/ or better validated than others. There is no single agreed upon approach to understanding personality, rather, a range

- Characterised by primary process thinking (primitive, illogical, confounds time and space, doesn't distinguish between fantasy and reality).
- ‘Seen’ in dreams (symbolism).
- Wants what it wants, doesn't matter if it's realistic or not.



Ego – Aspects of conscious, preconscious and unconscious

- Acts as a mediator; balance competing demands of id, superego and reality. Sometimes expressing what id and superego want isn't even possible
- Operates according to reality principle; characterised by sophisticated secondary – rational, separates fantasy and reality, can divert/block energy if unsafe to express.
- Kind of weak, struggles to balance these demands – takes a lot of effort.

Superego – Moral center of our brains; internalisation of social norms.

- Has unconscious, preconscious and conscious aspects
- Rewards 'good' behaviour and punishes 'bad'
- Primitive in some ways; doesn't distinguish between fantasy and reality

Current view of unconscious: no one places as much importance on unconscious as Freud. Unconscious is very much like the conscious mind, therefore has an effect on behaviour. However, evidence indicates the unconscious is not necessarily psychoanalytic in nature.

b. Pleasure principle – driving force of the id that seeks immediate gratification. This strives to fulfill our most basic and primitive urges including hunger, thirst, anger and sex.

c. Reality principle – ability of the mind to assess the reality of the external world and act upon it accordingly, as opposed to the pleasure principle.

d. Primary process thinking – unconscious thinking of the id which focuses on immediate gratification that manifest during dreaming, psychotic patients and young children.

e. Secondary process thinking – logical thinking controlled by the ego and influenced by environmental demands.

## FIVE FACTOR MODEL – TRAIT APPROACHES

### **1. General definition of the trait concept.**

A trait is a tendency to act in a consistent way across time – a consistent pattern in the way unique individuals think, feel and behave.

- Consistent: refers to a consistent disposition to act in a particular and stable way.

- Unique: traits differentiate individuals.

Individuals are not different because they have *different* traits; they are different because they have different *levels* of the *same* traits.

That is, it's not that one person has extraversion and another doesn't, one may just have greater levels of extraversion than another.

Traits capture generalised behaviour that are stable over time.

### **2. The importance of a biological basis in trait *explanations* of personality.**

#### Description Vs Explanation

If you want to use personality characteristics to explain behaviour, you can't measure them using behaviour and then explain that same behaviour using those personality characteristics – this is circular reasoning.

Eg. Rebelliousness → Drink driving

Rebelliousness ← Drink driving

If you want to use personality traits to explain behaviour, an extra element needs to be added to the model. Costa and McCrae use personality traits to explain behaviour and allow it to work logically by positing a biological basis for the personality traits. This then avoids circular reasoning.

Biol factors → *determine* → personality trait → *which explains* → behaviour.

Biol factors → *determine* → extraversion → *which explains* → drink driving.

Other theorists would use other factors to explain traits which explain behaviour, eg; cognitive theorist might use cognitive factors to explain traits and behaviour.

### **3. The fundamental lexical hypothesis.**

The idea that it is okay to describe personality characteristics in natural language is explained by the fundamental lexical hypothesis. Throughout history, humans have realised some characteristics are important to understand when interacting with others; agreeableness, honesty etc. Given the importance of these individual differences, they have been encoded into language. Therefore, one way to understand the