

The Science of Psychology

NATURE OF PSYCHOLOGY

- **Biopsychology or behavioural neuroscience:** focuses on the biological underpinnings of behaviour. Biopsychologists examine how brain processes, genes and hormones influence our actions, thoughts and feelings.
- **Developmental psychology:** examines human physical, psychological and social development across the life span and the effects of ageing on cognitive and behavioural processes . For example, some developmental psychologists explore the infant's emotional world, while others study how different parenting styles psychologically affect children or how our mental abilities change during adolescence and adulthood.
- **Experimental psychology:** focuses on basic processes such as learning, sensory systems (e.g. vision, hearing), perception and motivational states (e.g. sexual motivation, hunger, thirst)
- **Industrial- organisational (I/O) psychology:** examines people's behaviour in the workplace . I/O psychologists study leadership, teamwork and factors that influence employees' job satisfaction, work, motivation and performance
- **Personality psychology:** focuses on the study of human personality . Personality psychologists seek to identify core personality traits and the way different traits relate to one another and influence behaviour.
- **Social psychology:** examines people's thoughts, feelings and behaviour pertaining to the social world : the world of other people . Social psychologists study how people influence one another, behave in groups and form impressions and attitudes.

GOAL OF PSYCHOLOGY

- Psychology has four central goals: description, explanation, control and application

BASIC AND APPLIED RESEARCH

- Basic research , which reflects the quest for knowledge for its own sake
- Applied research , which is designed to solve specific, practical problems
- For psychologists, most basic research examines how and why people behave, think and feel the way they do.
- **e.g.** Schweitzer et al.'s (2005) research on prejudice represents basic research. Their main intent was to explore the role of social cognition in attitudes and thereby increase our understanding of why prejudicial attitudes toward refugees exist. The purpose of their study was not to apply that knowledge or directly modify people's attitudes
- In applied research, psychologists often use basic scientific knowledge to design interventions
- **e.g.** we could use the basic knowledge obtained from Schweitzer et al.'s (2005) research to design and test the effectiveness of an intervention program aimed at altering prejudicial attitudes toward refugees. Principles concerning how people learn by observing the behaviour of others