PYSC 333
Psychology of Personality

Session 6 – Social-Cognitive Theory of Personality-Part 1

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Session Overview

- Social-cognitive theorists emphasize the role of interactions and the environment and an individual's developmental processes in the development of personality.

- Bandura propounded the observational learning theory, which posited that individuals learn from others by observing and imitating their behavior and the consequences of their actions.

- This session provides information on the process of observational learning, Bandura's triadic reciprocal determinism and causes of maladjustment and an individual's personality.
Session Goals and Objectives

At the end of this session, you should be able to

• Outline the process of observational learning
• Define and explain triadic reciprocal determinism
• Discuss the basic assumptions of triadic reciprocal determinism
• Discuss how self-regulation and self-efficacy contribute to behaviour
• Describe how personality maladjustment occurs based on Bandura’s theory
Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

• The Social cognitive approach
• Observational learning
• Reciprocal determinism
• The self
• Personality maladjustment
Reading List

• Carducci, B. J. (2009). The Psychology of personality (2nd ed.). Chichester: John Riley & Sons Ltd (Ch 10)

Topic One

THE SOCIAL COGNITIVE APPROACH
Social-Cognitive Theory

• According to the social cognitive perspective, cognitive processes play a key role in shaping an individual’s behaviour (Carducci, 2009)

• The social-cognitive perspective developed from the behaviourist perspective
They however disagree with the behaviourist position of behaviour being merely a response to a stimulus.

Rather, the social-cognitive perspective proposes that cognitive processes influence a person’s response to a stimulus (Schultz & Schultz, 2009).
Examples of Cognitive Processes

Some of these cognitive processes are:

• The mental processes involved in organizing personal information and information about others

• The use of decisions to regulate behaviour

• The way consequences of actions in specific situations are evaluated (Cervone & Shoda, 1999, in Carducci, 2009)
Basic Assumptions

• According to Carducci, (2009) There are four basic assumptions of the social-cognitive perspective of personality:

• 1. The significance of the social perspective
  How a person perceives an event, and how these perceptions influence the way the person thinks and acts (Carducci, 2009)
Basic Assumptions

• 2. The presence or need for cognition

- Individuals actively search for information which they use in making informed decisions (Weary & Edwards, 1994, in Carducci, 2009)

- The time and effort allocated to making decisions varies from person to person (Carducci, 2009)
Basic Assumptions

- 3. A desire for accuracy in understanding

- People engage in an on-going evaluation of the consequences of their actions

- This helps them to identify whether or not there is a need to modify those actions to achieve the desired results (Carducci, 2009)
Basic Assumptions

- 4. The significance of subjective probabilities
  - When faced with the task of making new decisions, people use past experiences to guide them to make the best decision (decisions) possible
  - This helps them to avoid making assumptions about what to do (Carducci, 2009)
Topic Two

OBSERVATIONAL LEARNING
• Bandura focused on overt/ observable behaviours rather than traits, drives, motives, defense mechanisms etc.

• Data from experiments that do not involve social interaction is not relevant (Schultz & Schultz, 2005)
Albert Bandura (1925-date)

- Bandura recognised the role of internal cognitive variables that mediate between stimulus and response
- His approach reflects and reinforces the cognitive move in psychology
Albert Bandura (1925-date)

- Propounded Observational Learning Theory
- Iterated that individuals learn through vicarious reinforcement
- Bandura believed that internal cognitive processes can influence observation learning mediating between behaviour and reinforcement
Albert Bandura (1925-date)

- In observational learning, reinforcement is not automatic.
- Instead, an individual *make (makes)* a conscious decision to imitate a behaviour such as visualizing the consequence of a behaviour being observed.
Process of observational learning

• 1. Attention processes
• 2. Retention processes
• 3. Production processes
• 4. Incentive / motivational processes
Characteristics of the modelling situation

1. The characteristics of the model
2. Characteristics (attributes) of the observer
3. Reward consequences associated with the behaviours
Characteristics of the modelling situation

• Individuals learn by observing other people and pattern their behaviour after them.

• Through modelling one is able to perform behaviours they have never performed before and strengthen or weaken existing behaviours.

• Bandura demonstrated modelling with his classic Bobo doll experiment and other modelling studies.
Society’s models and their effect

- Bandura concluded that human behaviour whether good or bad, normal or abnormal is learned by imitation.

- From infancy onward, beginning with parents as models, individuals learn their parent’s language and become socialized by cultures, customs and acceptable behaviours.
Society’s models and their effect

- Those who deviate from cultural norms learn their behaviours like everyone else.
- However, they learn from models that society considers undesirable.
- Positive behaviour (behaviours) as well as negative behaviours are learned (learnt) from parents and other models in the society.
Topic Three

RECIPROCAL DETERMINISM
Reciprocal Determinism

- Initially Bandura believed that personality was a two-way process- reciprocal determinism
- He believed that the environment causes behaviour but behaviour can also cause environment
- E.g. a student shows his aggressive personality because he is being bullied by other (others)
Reciprocal Determinism

• Bandura later proposed that this two-way process involved a third factor - the self-system (cognitive functions)

• Thus this three-way interaction became known as *Triadic Reciprocal Determinism*

• Bandura became included in the behaviourist-cognitivist circle when he introduced this cognitive aspect in his perspective
Basic Assumptions- Bandura

• “People are neither driven by inner forces nor automatically shaped and controlled by external stimuli. Rather human functioning is explained in terms of a model of triadic reciprocality in which behaviour, cognitive and personal factors and the environment all operate as interacting determinants of each other” (Bandura, 1986, p. 18)
Basic Assumptions- Bandura

• Bandura’s viewpoint of personality combines cognitive processes with the study of the individual in the context of social factors

• According to Bandura, Self system and Triadic Reciprocal Causation form the foundation for this eclectic approach
Basic Assumptions- Bandura

1. The self-system

- Reacting to environmental stimuli is not automatic
- Instead, information about the stimuli is processed through a self-system
- Self-system- cognitive functions that help the individual to perceive and evaluate the environment and regulate his/her behaviour (Carducci, 2009)
Basic Assumptions- Bandura

- E.g. communicating during exams will be determined by several cognitive processes operating within your self-system
- E.g. a) how you perceive this “act of communication” (is it cheating or merely seeking clarification?)
- b) Your evaluation of the likelihood of being caught
Basic Assumptions- Bandura

- **2. Triadic Reciprocal Causation**

  *Behaviour is determined through the interaction of behavioural, cognitive, and environmental or situational variables*

- Carducci, (2009) refers to this as “Reacting to the reaction of others reacting to your reaction”

- Not only cognitive processes operated on environmental stimuli, the environment also operates on the self-system
Basic Assumptions- Bandura

- Thus, a behaviour (B) exhibited is as a result of the interrelatedness of a person’s self-system (S) and the nature of the cues in the environment (E), (Carducci, 2009)
Basic Assumptions- Bandura

- E.g. if you decide to communicate during the exam
- You may think “no one is looking so I can go ahead”- thus the environment influences your behaviour
- The invigilators with time notice that students are communicating so they become more vigilant or more invigilators are employed
Basic Assumptions - Bandura

Student’s Perception of getting caught (S)

Invigilation (E)

Student Communication (B)
Thus, the behaviour of the invigilators have been influenced by the students’ behaviour.

Once students know that the invigilators are more alert, they perceive that they can easily be caught, and so they stop communicating.
Basic Assumptions - Bandura

Student’s Perception of getting caught (S)
Invigilation (E)
Student Communication (B)
Topic Three

THE SELF
The Self

• Bandura also focused on the active role of the ‘self’

• In his approach to personality, *the self is a set of cognitive processes and structures concerned with thoughts and perceptions* (Schultz & Schultz, 2005, p. 414)

• The self is not determined by psychic forces (Schultz & Schultz, 2005, p. 414)
The Self

• The performance of observed behaviours is influenced by factors such as
  – the individual’s belief that he or she has the ability to execute the said behaviour- self efficacy
    – and the expected outcome this action will produce (Carducci, 2009)- self-regulation
  • These are two important aspects of the self
a. Self-regulation

- A set of internal (moral, social, personal, ethical) standards a person uses to guide his/her behaviour
- It forms the basis for self-reinforcement (self-rewards) and self-punishment (Carducci, 2009)
a. Self-regulation

• We learn our initial set of internal standards from behaviours of models and past performance
• Then begin a lifelong process of comparing our behaviours with the model’s behaviour
• We set up standards of behaviour and achievement
a. Self-regulation

- We reward ourselves when we meet the internal standards
- Termed Self-administered reinforcement- can be a tangible reward or emotional reward
  (Schultz & Schultz, 2005)
a. Self-regulation

• We punish ourselves when we are unable to meet these internal standards

• Termed Self-administered punishment-expressed in the form of shame, guilt or depression about failures

• As we reward and punish ourselves, our past behaviours becomes (become) a reference point
a. Self-regulation

- As we develop and attain a certain level of achievement, we raise our standards and require more.
- When people set unrealistic standards, repeated failures may occur.
a. Self-regulation

- They may punish themselves emotionally with feelings of worthlessness and depression
- This can result in self-destructive behaviours such as alcohol and drug abuse (Schultz & Schultz, 2005)
b. Self-Efficacy

- Individual’s belief about his/ her ability to perform the behaviour
- How well a person meets his/ her behaviour standards determines the individual’s self-efficacy
b. Self-Efficacy

- Self-efficacy - a person’s perceived belief that he/she can perform a specific behaviour to cope with a particular situation
  - E.g. Making a first class
    - Answering questions in class
    - Becoming a good parent
  - One can be self-efficacious in different domains
b. Self-Efficacy

- When people have high self-efficacy, they feel competent to deal with events and situations.
- They have great confidence in their abilities.
- It raises aspirations, improves problem solving and critical thinking and fear of failure is reduced (Schultz & Schultz, 2005).
b. Self-Efficacy

- People with low self-efficacy feel helpless and are unable to have control over life’s events
- They believe their efforts are futile and easily give up
- Low self-efficacy can interfere with cognitive abilities, destroy motivation, and lower aspirations and affect physical health (Schultz & Schultz, 2005)
Factors that can affect self-efficacy are:

1. The verbal persuasion of other people
2. Vicarious experience
3. Performance accomplishment
4. Emotional arousal
Topic Three

PERSONALITY MALADJUSTMENT
Personality maladjustment can result from:

- **a. Maladaptive modelling** - being exposed to models that display maladaptive behaviours (Carducci, 2009)

- **b. Dysfunctional/unrealistic self-regulation** - Effective standard for self-reinforcement and self-punishment
Personality maladjustment

- There is lack of self-reinforcement but excessive self-punishment contributing to depression
- c. Perceived ineffectiveness - can trigger feelings of anxiety and depression (Bandura, 1977b; Bandura, Pastorelli, Barbaranelli & Caprara, 1999).
• Evaluation of Bandura’s Theory

• Read about this and discuss at tutorials
END OF SESSION 6 PART 1
References

- Carducci, B. J. (2009). *The Psychology of personality* (2nd ed.). Chichester: John Riley & Sons Ltd