
Section A

Approaches in psychology

Answer all questions in this section

01 Describe the ego and superego according to the psychodynamic approach [4 marks]

Ans. The ego is that component of personality which mediates between the demands for gratification by the id and morality by the superego. It works on the reality principle, striking a balance between the impulsiveness of the id and conscientiousness of the superego. The superego is that component which directs behaviour towards what is right while rejecting what is wrong, morally. It works on the moral principle, seeking to sacrifice immediate gratification for what is the responsible action to be taken.

02 Outline Wundt's method of introspection. [4 marks]

Ans. Introspection was the technique used by Wundt in his structuralism school to understand the parts of the human mind. It involved having trained observers arrive at a controlled setting and being presented with various stimuli. The stimuli could include light, sound, heat - of different intensities and quality. The observers' task was to report their experience of the stimulus presented without censorship, including their sensations, feelings and thoughts in response to it.

03 Outline one example of how neurochemistry influences behaviour. [3 marks]

Ans. An imbalance of the neurotransmitter GABA in the brain can cause phobic behaviour. Specifically, since GABA is the inhibitory neurotransmitter which regulates levels of arousal in the body, its imbalance can cause high levels of arousal. This is characteristic of the excessive energy created in the body in the 'fight-or-flight' response in the presence of a phobic stimulus.

04 Karishma has very low self-esteem, even though she achieved very high GCSE grades. She would like to be a lawyer. Although she is studying A-levels, she has delayed her application to university because she does not think she will receive any offers. She does not think she is clever enough to study law.

Explain why a humanistic psychologist would suggest that Karishma is not displaying congruence. [2 marks]

Ans. Karishma's ideal self is that of a university student, studying law. Though her real self is a competent student since she has achieved very high GCSE grades, there is a mismatch between the real and ideal self as she perceives herself to be not clever enough to study law. Thus, she is not displaying congruence.

05 Explain how a humanistic psychologist might help Karishma to achieve congruence [3 marks]

Ans. A humanistic would use client-centered therapy proposed by Carl Rogers to help Karishma achieve congruence. Unconditional positive regard will be given to her, to make her feel accepted regardless of what she thinks about herself, helping boost her self-esteem. The atmosphere created in this way will help her truly perceive her real self, as it will help her to accept herself, resolving any doubts about her being 'not clever enough' to study the law.

06 Outline how behaviourists explain learning through the process of operant conditioning.

Compare operant conditioning with social learning. [8 marks]

Ans. Operant conditioning is the principle pioneered by Skinner which suggests that behaviour is learnt from the consequences that follow - behaviour that is rewarded is repeated, behaviour that is punished is not repeated. So, learning in this approach involves the use of processes like positive and negative rewarding or reinforcement and punishment. Positive reinforcement causes repetition of behaviour by providing a pleasant consequence for behaviour. Negative reinforcement causes repetition of behaviour by taking away an unpleasant consequence for behaviour. Finally, punishment causes extinction of behaviour by applying an aversive consequence to behaviour.

In comparison with the social learning approach, operant conditioning involves the use of direct rewards for learning. That is, the individual performing desired behaviour is directly rewarded. In the social learning approach, there is use of vicarious reinforcement. In this type of indirect reinforcement, the model being observed to be imitated is rewarded, to indirectly make the observer feel reinforced, and encouraged to carry out that behaviour. In operant conditioning, only observable behaviour is focused upon for learning, whereas in social learning, both cognitive processes and observable behaviour are given importance for learning. That is, it is assumed that mediational processes like attention, memory, reproduction ability and motivation contribute towards successful outward imitation of modelled behaviour.

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