

Revision Notes

Chapter 1: What is psychology

- Psychology is a modern discipline aimed at understanding the complexities of mental processes, experiences and behaviour of individuals in different contexts. It is treated as a natural as well as a social science.
- The major schools of psychological thought are structuralism, functionalism, behaviourism, Gestalt school, psychoanalysis, humanistic psychology and cognitive psychology.
- Contemporary psychology is multivocal as it is characterised by many approaches or diverse views, which explain behaviour at different levels. These approaches are not mutually exclusive. Each provides valuable insights into the complexities of human functioning. The cognitive approach uses thought processes as central to psychological functions. The humanistic approach views human functioning as characterised by a desire to grow, be productive and fulfill human potential.
- Today psychologists work in many specialised fields which have their own theories and methods. They make efforts to develop theories and solve problems in specific domains. Some of the major fields of psychology are: cognitive psychology, biological psychology, health psychology, developmental psychology, social psychology, educational and school psychology, clinical and counselling psychology, environmental psychology, industrial/ organisational psychology, sports psychology.
- More recently a need is felt to have multi/interdisciplinary initiatives to arrive at a better understanding of reality. This has led to a collaboration across disciplines. Interests of psychology overlap with social sciences (e.g., economics, political science, sociology), biosciences (e.g., neurology, physiology, medicine), mass communication, and music and fine arts. Such efforts have led to fruitful research and application.
- Psychology is a discipline not merely contributing to the development of theoretical knowledge about human behaviour, but contributing to the solution of problems at different levels. Psychologists are employed to help in diverse activities in a variety of settings including schools, hospitals, industries, training institutes, military and government establishments. Many of them are doing private practice and are consultants.