

Unit 10

DEVELOPING PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILLS

Introduction

Developing as an Effective Psychologist

General skills

- Intellectual and Personal skills
- Sensitivity to Diversity

Observational skills

Specific skills

- Communication skills
- Interviewing skills
- Counseling skills

Introduction

In recent times Psychology has developed a lot as a profession. One aspect common to all the applied areas within psychology is a universal agreement on the basic assumptions about human nature and the role of psychologist in different settings. It is generally assumed that psychologists have interest in people, their abilities and temperaments. A psychologist is required to have interest in other people and exhibit a willingness to provide help by using her/his

knowledge. A psychologist must have some skills to give guidance. The term 'skill' means possession of the qualities required to do something or get something done. American Psychological Association (1973) constituted a task force to identify skills essential for professional psychologist. These are: assessment of individual differences, behavior modification skills and counseling and guidance skills.

Developing as an Effective Psychologist

Some Psychologists carry out research to propound and investigate theoretical formulations while others are concerned with our daily life activities and behaviour. We need both types of psychologists. We need some scientists to develop theories and others to find solutions to human problems.

The basic skills or competencies which psychologists have identified for becoming an effective psychologist fall into three broad sections namely :

- (a) General skills
- (b) Observational skills
- (c) Specific skills

General skills

These skills are generic in nature and are needed by all psychologists irrespective of their field of specialization. These skills are essential for all professional psychologists whether they are working in the field of clinical and health psychology, industrial / organizational, social educational or consultancy.

Specific skills can only be learnt after a student has learnt the general skills.

The general skills are :

Interpersonal skills : ability to listen and to be empathic, to develop respect for/interest in others' cultural experiences, values, points of view, goals and desires and openness to receive feedback.

Cognitive skills : ability to solve problems, intellectual curiosity.

Affective skills : emotional control and balance, tolerance / understanding of interpersonal conflict.

Personality : desire to help others, honesty / integrity, openness to new ideas.

Reflective skills : ability to communicate one's own ideas, feelings and information in verbal, non-verbal and written forms.

Personal skills : personal organization, health, time management and appropriate dress.

Observational skills

A psychologist engages in observing various facets of surroundings, including people and varying events.

Important elements of Inspection Method

All kinds of observation cannot be called scientific observation. When observation is

based on scientific methods, then only it is called scientific observation. The following characteristics should be there in scientific observation :

- (1) Objectivity
- (2) Precision
- (3) Systematic
- (4) Verifiability
- (5) Reliability

Appropriate Planning

Before the observation begins it is essential that the behaviour to be observed and studied should be appropriately outlined. The person who has to do observation should know before hand who, what, when, where and which behaviour to observe.

Behaviour observed

After deciding the problem, the behaviour and instruments to be used in observation, the observer starts the observation process by using instruments and his own ingenuity. While observing, observer pays close attention to the problem behaviour and takes care that observation is in accordance with the pre-decided plan.

Observation / Examination

After minutely observing the behaviour if it is feasible, the observer converts the data into numerical form and analyses the data by using appropriate statistical techniques.

Analyzing and Generalization

After analyzing the observed behaviour it is explained with the help of various theoretical formulations. The causative factors of behaviour are explained.

Types of Observation Method

Simple or Uncontrolled Observation :
According to Jung, (1954) In uncontrolled observation, observation is done in real settings. When any event is observed in a natural setting and there is no influence of external pressure, it is called uncontrolled observation.

Disadvantages of uncontrolled observation method

- (1) Through this methods the results obtained are less reliable because we accept the result before examining it in detail.
- (2) The observation results get biased because of the feelings and emotions of the person who is observing. Besides, no control technique is used in this method.
- (3) Different observations and results are reported by different observers for the same event. This method lacks objectivity.

Systematic / Controlled Observation

When there is control on both the observer and the situation, this method is called systematic observation. Till date there are many problems in psychology which cannot be studied in laboratory. In such situations controlled observation is used.

Participant Observation Method

Here the observer is actively involved in the process of observing by becoming an active member of the setting where the observation takes place. The more the observer indulges himself in the group and with group members, better he/she is able to minutely observe the behaviour.

Disadvantages of Observation Method

- (1) One disadvantage is that the observer while observing events and people develops a

close and friendly relationship with the subject. In this case the attitude of observer influences the people who are being observed.

- (2) The results get influenced by views and needs of the observer. Different results are obtained for same event.
- (3) The results obtained through this method are unprofessional, especially when observation is done without planning.
- (4) In psychology, certain events do not have a prior fixed time and place for occurrence so it becomes impossible for the observer to be present everywhere.

Importance of Observation Method

- (1) This method is used when the investigator has to formulate hypothesis based on this method.
- (2) Interpersonal relation can be effectively studied with the help of this method.
- (3) In comparison to other methods, it is a simple method.
- (4) The results are more reliable as the observer uses various sophisticated instruments and his/her sense organs.

Specific skills

These skills are core/basic to the field of psychological services. For example, psychologists working in clinical settings need to be trained in various techniques of therapeutic interventions, psychological assessment and counseling. Similarly organizational psychologists working in the organizational context need to have skills in assessment, facilitation and consultation; behavioural skills to bring about individual, group, team and organizational development and also research skills.

Classification of specific skills

- Communication skills
 - Speaking Active listening
 - Body language or non verbal skills
- Psychological Testing skills
- Interviewing skills
- Counseling skills

Communication skill

Communication plays an important role in fostering relationships and personal effectiveness. Communication is a conscious or unconscious process in which feelings and ideas are expressed. Interpersonal Communication refers to the communication that takes place between two or more persons who establish communicative relationship.

Characteristics of Communication

- Communication is dynamic
- Communication is irreversible because once we send a message, we cannot take it back.
- Communication is an active process. Action–reaction goes on.

Components of Human Communication

- (1) Source : Communication starts with a source. Information originates from the source.
- (2) Information : By information we mean the stimulation which is transferred from the source or sender to the other person who is the receiver. Usually, the information is given through verbal or written material, but sometimes non-verbal cues are also used, for example, body language, gestures etc.
- (3) Encoding : The information to be given is encoded i.e. provided meaning and put into a

message form. The process of encoding is simple as well as complex.

(4) Medium : It refers to all the means through which the information is sent to the receiver from the sender.

(5) Receiver : He is the person who is receiving the information. It is the responsibility of the psychologist to infer the true and real meaning of the information.

(6) Decode : Psychologist translates message into understandable forms.

(7) Feedback : Feedback is a kind of information which is received by the source of communicator from the receiver. Feedback is received by the source from the receiver. He is thereby able to understand the importance of the information communicated by him.

(8) Noise : Noise are all the external and environmental obstacles because of which the receiver cannot receive the information sent by the sender, in a proper manner.

Thus, we can say that communication is a process in which the meaning of a message is transmitted from the sender to the receiver. In Inter–personal Communication, speaking and listening play a central role. Listening is an attentive process. Besides being patient, the person should be non-judgmental and yet have the capacity to analyse and respond.

Body Language

While communicating a person besides using words also uses non-verbal signals, for example, pitch of sound, body movements, facial expressions, etc. – all of them have to be considered together, that is, in a cluster.

Body language is composed of all postures,

gestures and body movements. While reading body language, we must remember that a single non-verbal signal does not carry complete meaning.

Psychological Testing Skills

The next set of competencies which psychologists require is concerned with the knowledge base of the discipline of psychology. They involve psychological assessment, evaluation and problem-solving with individuals and groups, organization and the community. Psychologists have always been interested in understanding individual differences. Psychological tests have been devised and are primarily used for the determination and analysis of individual differences in general intelligence, differential aptitudes, educational achievement, vocational fitness, personality, social attitudes and various non-intellectual characteristics. Psychologists study these differences based on the factors such as occupation, age, gender, education, culture, etc. While using psychological tests, an attitude of objectivity, scientific orientation and standardized interpretation must be kept in mind.

Interviewing skills

Interview as a method has been used in psychology since long. In recent times its importance is increasing. An interview is a purposeful conversation between two or more people who sit in front of each other. According to Eysenck (1972) Interview is a tool through which written and oral information is collected.

Types of Interview

Structured Interview Method

In this type the questions to be asked during

interview are prepared before hand. Questions are asked in a sequential order and the interviewer cannot change the order of questions. This method is more reliable in comparison to unstructured interview method, as it is more pure.

Unstructured Interview Method

In this method neither the questions related to the research problem are prepared before hand, nor the number of questions is decided. Though unstructured interview method is less reliable, it gives an opportunity to understand the subject.

Limitations of Interview Method

- (1) It is a great difficulty for the investigator to take consent of people for interview, as they lack time or are unavailable at the time the investigator wants.
- (2) When the problem is related to emotional aspects of individuals, they usually do not want to discuss their personal life. However, if the investigator wants to know about their personal life without even letting them know, he must be trained.
- (3) The information collected through unstructured interview method is biased. The interviewer's desires, feelings, motivations emotions and attitudes get reflected in the information collected.
- (4) It is difficult to validate the information which is shared by the interviewer.

Counseling skills

Another prerequisite for developing as a psychologist is competence in the domain of guidance and counseling. A psychologist, when practicing counseling should be able to give unconditional positive regard to the seeker, and also understand the experiences his subject is

undergoing. Counseling is a helping relationship that helps to bring balance in the life of the subject and also bring him close to reality. Not only the process of counseling, the basic attitude of the counselor towards the subject his ability for helpful caring of the subject are also included here. Counseling is one such domain where a person entering the field is required to engage in self-introspection in order to assess her/his inclination and basic skill set for being effective in her/his vocation.

Meaning and Nature of Counseling

Counseling can be defined as a special area of those services which aim to serve and help others. The focus is more on the person and how he/she defines the problem. The American Counseling Association (ACA) and American Psychological Association (APA) division 17 define counseling as :

- (a) Counseling is a process
- (b) Counseling is related to personal, social, vocational and educational aspects.

In brief, counseling is a process in which effective behavioural change that takes place in the client is multifaceted. It may show up in the form of a client taking greater responsibility, developing new insights, learning to engage in different behaviours.

Aims of Counseling

- (1) **Support** : Some people need support and assurance to face the challenges of present day. The work of the counselor is to build confidence in them regarding their abilities.
- (2) **Psychological Guidance** : The aim and purpose of counseling is to give guidance regarding different aspects.

Guidance includes providing information to individuals to do assessment, provide training and develop social skills, training in stress management, development of cognitive behaviour and resolve interpersonal relationship problems.

- (3) **Decision Making** : The main aim of counselor is to help the person in decision making process. Counselor teaches the person to make goals and aspirations according to his abilities.
- (4) **Adjustment** : Counseling has a developmental aspect in the direction of adjustment. For adjustment the abilities and skills of a person are developed so that he can face the problems which he may face in future.

Characteristics of effective Counselor

The success of a counseling process, depends on the skill, knowledge, attitude personal qualities and behaviour of a counselor. These include

- (1) **Authenticity** : Authenticity means that one's behavioural expressions are consistent with what one values and the way one feels and relates to one's inner self-image.
- (2) **Positive regard for others** : Counselor should express a feeling of positive regard for the person. The counselor should not stop the person to share his feelings and should not label himself or other person.
- (3) **Empathy** : Empathy is the ability of a counselor to understand the feelings of another person from his/her perspective. It is like stepping into someone else's

shoes and trying to understand the pain and troubled feelings of the other person.

- (4) Paraphrasing : This involves the ability of a counselor to reflect on what the client says and feels, using different words.

Important Points

- To become an efficient psychologist general skills, observation skills and specific skills are essential.
- For any scientific observation it should have objectivity, precision, systematic verifiability and reliability.
- General skills include many types of skills – interpersonal skills, cognitive skills, emotional skills, personality skills, expressive skills and individualistic skills.
- There are basically three types of observation methods – uncontrolled observation method, controlled observation method and participant observation method.
- Specific skills are basically of four types – Communication skills, Psychological testing skills, Interviewing skills and Guidance skills.
- Interview is a process through which oral and written information is gathered.
- Communication means exchange of ideas and experiences among people in a psychological way.

Practise Questions

Multiple – Choice Questions

- (1) Psychology is the study of
 - (a) Human Behaviour
 - (b) Weather Conditions
 - (c) Knowing about Culture
 - (d) Knowing the Society
- (2) Skill can be acquired through
 - (a) Heredity
 - (b) Training and Experience
 - (c) Interview
 - (d) Guidance
- (3) In Participant Observation
 - (a) Observer actively participates as group member
 - (b) Observes from distance
 - (c) Understands non-verbal language
 - (d) Gives guidance
- (4) Factors in Human Communication are
 - (a) Encoding and decoding
 - (b) Listening
 - (c) Language
 - (d) Interview
- (5) The main assumption of naturalistic observation is
 - (a) Organism behaves properly in a natural condition.
 - (b) Behaviour of organism gets influenced if the researcher intervenes.

- (c) Researcher studies the behavior of the organism empirically.
 - (d) Researcher formulates the cause effect relationship in naturalistic behavior.
- (6) For an efficient Psychologist, what is essential is
- (a) Ability
 - (b) Integrity
 - (c) Ethical responsibility
 - (d) All of the above
- (7) Communication can be made effective by
- (a) Controlling environmental noise
 - (b) Dressing properly
 - (c) Talking sweetly
 - (d) Medical intervention

Short Questions

- (1) What do you understand by skills ? How many types of skills are there?
- (2) What qualities are essential to become an efficient psychologist ?
- (3) What is communication ?
- (4) Define specific skills.
- (5) Define observation.
- (6) Define counseling and name the characteristics of efficient counselor.
- (7) Define Interview. Explain the format of Interview.

- (8) Define empathy. Why is empathy essential for counselor ?
- (9) What is the role of culture in listening ?
- (10) Explain the factors of Human Communication.

Long Answers

- (1) What are the essential qualities to become an efficient psychologist ?
- (2) Define Communication ? Which factor is most important in the Communication process ?
- (3) Explain Psychological Testing skill with example.
- (4) Define observation. How many types of observation are there ?
- (5) What is the need of General skills ? Name General skills.