

Health Psychology

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Introduction to Psychology

Definitions

The word PSYCHOLOGY is derived from two Greek words, **psyche** (mind soul or spirit) and **logos** (discourse or study) which put together produce "**Study of the mind**"

"Psychology is the Science of Mental Life, both of its phenomena and of theory condition...The Phenomena are such things as we call feelings, desires, cognitions, reasoning, decisions and the like."

(William James, 1890)

"For the behaviourist, psychology is that division of Natural science which takes human behaviour – the doings and sayings, both learned and unlearned – as its subject matter."

(John B. Watson, 1919)

"Psychology is usually defined as the scientific study of behaviour. Its subject matter includes behavioural processes that are observable, such as gestures, speech and physiological changes, and processes that can only be inferred, such as thoughts and dreams."

(Clark & Miller, 1970)

And more recently and concisely :

"The scientific study of behaviour and mental processes"

(Atkinson, 2000)

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Two levels of Psychology

MICRO

Biology → Genetics
→ Nerves
→ Biochemistry
→ Neurology

Biology based

Biologically

MACRO

Social World → Society
→ Culture

Social groups
Societies

←Sensation→

←Attraction→

←Perception→

←Learning→

←Condition→

←Development→

←Personality→

←Interaction→

How do we think socially
⇒ effect from both fronts

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The science of Psychology has many definitions for its role, goal, and the tools of the science

- **Definition of Psychology** - To understand the scientific, study of behaviour and mental process.
- **Goals of Psychology** - To understand, predict, and control the behaviour and mental process.
- **Tools of Psychology** - Scientific method
Observation
Definition – Identifying and defining problems.

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The science of Psychology

Psychologists try to look at human behaviour from a range of different angles, so that they can get as complete a picture as possible, therefore many different branches of psychology and areas of interests have developed :

- Cognitive Psychology
- Individual Processes and Abnormality
- Physiological Psychology
- Social Psychology
- Developmental Psychology
- Comparative Psychology

These are general categories, though disciplines often relying on knowledge from different areas of psychology.

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Definition of Health Psychology

“The aggregate of the specific educational, scientific and professional contributions of the discipline of psychology to the promotion and maintenance of health, the prevention and treatment of illness, the identification of aetiologic and diagnostic correlates of health, illness and related dysfunction, and to the analysis and improvement of the health care system and health policy formation”

Matarazzo (1982)

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Intro to Health Psychology

Health Psychology = Illness Psychology

Aims:

- Health models / perspectives
- Developmental approaches
- Social
- Cultural
- Medical
- Health & Illness from a global perspective
- Introduce models to an overall critical analysis

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Health Psychology Objectives

- To evaluate the role of psychological factors in the aetiology of illness
- To understand the causes of health-related behavior
- To understand the role of psychology in the experience and treatment of illness
- To promote health-enhancing behavior and prevent illness

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Health Psychology and Clinical Psychology

- Nature of pathology – Physical disease versus conditions identified in terms of cognition, emotion, and behaviour.
- Populations investigated – Patients, at risk populations, general public, and health professionals
- Professional model – Scientist-practitioner

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Plato

“The great error of our day, that physicians separate the soul from the body. The cure of the part should not be attempted without the treatment of the whole.”

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Plato explained

In order to understand health and illness more completely, it is essential to include an understanding of those aspects of people which are excluded from traditional models of illness - that is, their behaviour and the social and personal context in which their behaviour occurs.

- ⇒ Some people are more likely than others to become ill due to their social circumstances or psychological make-up, rather than for any physical reason.
- ⇒ Rather than isolating the illness or dysfunction from the person, it should be seen as an integral part of that person
 - treat the whole person.

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Concepts of Health & Illness

- What is health?

Health is commonly thought of in terms of the absence of :

 - Objective signs that the body is not functioning properly, such as measured high blood pressure
 - Subjective symptoms of diseases or injury, such as pain or nausea
- ⇒ **Consider health to be an absence of illness**

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Health definitions

The term health, can be used to mean a positive state of physical, mental, and social well-being, not just the absence of injury or disease. This is the **holistic** approach, where the whole individual is considered, not just the physical symptoms.

→ Varies over time.

“Health is state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”

(World Health Organisation, 1946)

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Understanding Health and Illness

- Two main considerations :
 - The view of health and illness in the past and present.
 - The life-span perspective
- Other considerations:
 - Cross cultural differences
 - The politics of health
 - Health and Illness as viewed by the professionals.

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Illness / Wellness Continuum Model



Premature death at one end, and a high level of wellness at the other. Moving from the centre to the left shows a progressively worsening state of health. Moving to the right of centre indicates increasing levels of health and well-being. The treatment model can bring you to the neutral point where the symptoms of disease have been alleviated. The wellness model, which can be utilised at any point, directs you beyond neutral, and encourages you to move as far right as is possible.

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Changing patterns of illness and disease 1

Causes of mortality:

Cardiovascular diseases (Heart disease, stroke)	396 in 100,000
Malignant neoplasms (Cancer)	199 in 100,000
Accidents	40 in 100,000
Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases	33 in 100,000
Influenza and pneumonia	31 in 100,000
Diabetes mellitus	16 in 100,000
Suicide	12 in 100,000
Chronic liver diseases and cirrhosis	11 in 100,000

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Changing patterns of illness and disease 2

Causes of ill health

- Diabetes
- Mental health
- Asthma

Factors contributing to mortality, ill health, and healthy living

- Smoking
- Diet and alcohol
- Physical exercise

Criticisms

Factors such as poverty, environment, and unemployment can also cause mortality.

*** Major breakthroughs reduced the prevalence of infectious disease (e.g. rubella, influenza, polio, and TB) in the western world due to vaccines. More deaths are caused by cancer, heart disease, and strokes

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Health & Developmental Psychology

- Health psychology is a rapidly growing area in psychology that is highly relevant to the work of health care professionals.
- Developmental psychology looks at the human life cycle in terms of development, transitions and developmental crises. Both normal and pathological aspects of development will be considered and links will be made with health and illness.

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The Life-Span Perspective

How do characteristics relating to health and illness vary with development?

Expectations of health and illness change throughout the life-span, and the biopsychological systems change with development. The life-span perspective is an approach whereby characteristics of a person are considered with respect to their prior development, current level of development, and likely development in the future. There are both continuous and discontinuous in development.

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Summary

- Definitions of health and illness must refer to a continuum of illness / wellness.
- Consider interactions within biological, psychological, and social processes.
- Historical, political, and cultural contexts.
- Life-span development.

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