

# Albert bandura the founder of reciprocal determinism



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Albert Bandura, the founder of reciprocal determinism was born in Canada in 1925. He obtained his Ph. D. from the University of Iowa, where he developed the social learning theory. Bandura had certain strong beliefs on how psychological research should be done. He believed research should be conducted in laboratories where psychologists could control factors that determined behavior. Bandura has conducted many famous clinical studies which are the basis of the several books he has written. Bandura was also the creator of the reciprocal determinism theory which showed he believed that a person's behavior both influences and is influenced by personal factors and the social environment.

Personal factors are those that are based on a person's morals, ethics ideas, and personality. The social environment consists of everything external to the self, which are other people, their beliefs, ideas and external items.

Two brief examples of reciprocal determinism would be a person who is afraid of flying on airplanes will act nervous, scared, and out of the ordinary which would be the personal factor. This will cause the other people on the plane to become agitated and worried, making the nervous flier even more afraid. This shows how personal determinants, environmental determinants and behavioral determinants interact and influence each other. Another example would be of a man who cannot hold a job and therefore feels like a failure. His inability to hold a job is due to poor work habits and therefore influences employers to treat him bad until his behavior becomes terrible and is ultimately fired.

Reciprocal determinism is affected by self-efficacy, which is a person's belief about their ability to achieve a goal or an outcome. There are several ways to influence self-efficacy; performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and emotional arousal. Performance accomplishments are based on a person's own experiences which are past successes and failures. Vicarious experiences are based on the observations of others and their performance in executing a task. Verbal persuasion uses suggestions or self-instruction as a motivator. Lastly, emotional arousal is used by diminishing emotional arousals that are associated with decreased performance.

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A helpful way to think of reciprocal determinism is in the form of a triangle. At the top would be behavioral determinants and the two corners would be personal determinants and environmental determinants. Arrows go back and forth between each word showing that they are influenced by each other. The basic idea is that personal factors (cognitive and affective events), the environment and behavior all influence each other. This triangle aids to understand that humans are shaped by their environment and also shape the environment.

## **Self- Efficacy**

A person's belief about their ability to organize and carry out courses of action needed to accomplish a goal is known as self- efficacy. Those persons, who are confident in their capability to execute a behavior, have very strong

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efficacy beliefs. These beliefs are influencing our personal emotional reactions and choices, motivation, and patterns, therefore they are considered to have a very significant impact on our goals and accomplishments in life. (Bandura. A. Psychological Review. 1977).

For example, people with high confidence in their capabilities, consider difficult tasks as challenges to be proficient at instead of seeing them as threats to be avoided. These kind of people set challenging goals for themselves and continue to be committed to them. If they fail, they heighten and keep up their efforts, rather than giving up. Higher self- efficacy also produces personal accomplishments and reduces stress, and vulnerability to depression.

In contrast, people who have low self- efficacy shy away from challenging tasks, which they view as personal threats. They loosen their efforts and give up quickly when faced with difficulties rather than concentrate on how to perform successfully. People with low self- efficacy not require much failure for them to lose faith in their competence. They can easily get stressed and fall into depression. (Bandura. A. Encyclopedia of human behavior 1994).

We can influence self- efficacy through four sources, which include performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal.

### **Four sources of Self- Efficacy**

Performance accomplishments are one's personal proficiency experiences, defined as earlier successes or failures. Because of these experiences people form expectations towards other situations that could be similar or  
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substantially different from the ones experienced before. For example, if a person experiences a repeated success he would develop strong efficacy expectations. In contrast the person who experienced repeated failure could generate reduced efficacy expectations. Personal mastery for a behavior can be increased through participant modeling, self instructed performances, performance exposure, and performance desensitization, where aversive behavior is paired with enjoyable or comforting experience.

Vicarious experiences are when people are observing others perform threatening activities without unpleasant consequences. These experiences can improve personal self- efficacy by showing that the action is “ doable” with a little effort and determination. Vicarious experiences can be improved through live or symbolic modeling.

In Verbal persuasion people are led to think they can effectively complete a task or behavior through the use of suggestion, catchphrase, or self- instruction. However, since verbal persuasion is not embedded in personal experience, it is a weaker inducer of efficacy and may be extinguished by past failure experiences.

Self- efficacy can be enhanced by withdrawing emotional arousal such as physical agitation, fear, and stress since they are connected with decreased performance, reduced success, and other averting behaviors. Repeated symbolic exposure that permits people to practice handling and dealing with stress, symbolic desensitization, and relaxation techniques can alleviate emotional arousal. (Bandura. A. Psychological review 1977).

## **Predicating and Understanding Behavior**

### **A. Social Learning Theory**

Proposed by Albert Bandura, the social learning theory has become one of the most influential theory in regards to learning and development. Bandura believed that direct reinforcement could not account for all types of learning (Ewen, 2003, p. 367). His theory added a social element, arguing that people can learn new information and behaviors by watching other people, known as observational learning (or modeling).

### **B. Observational Learning**

One basic learning concept is that people essentially learn through observation. In a variation of Bandura's famous Bobo doll study, preschool children observed an adult's aggression toward the doll on film. In this version, the adult hit the Bobo doll with a hammer, and the film had three different endings. One group of children saw the adult rewarded for aggressive behavior, a second group saw the adult punished, and a third group saw an ending where the adult was neither rewarded or punished. When the children were then allowed to play with a Bobo doll, those who had seen the adult model being rewarded were most likely to attack the doll, while those who observed the model being punished were least likely to be aggressive (Ewen, 2003, p. 373). What this study shows is that observational learning not simply a matter of "monkey see, monkey do." We observe, formulate rules, concepts and conclusions based on what we observe, and apply these inferences in ways that lead to behavior that is related but not identical.

Bandura identified three basic models of observational learning (Cherry, 2010):

A live model- involves an individual demonstrating or acting out a behavior.

A verbal instructional model- describes and explains the behavior.

A symbolic model- involves real or fictional characters displaying behaviors in books, films, television, or online media.

### **C. The Modeling Process**

Not all observed behaviors are effectively learned. Factors involving both the model and the learner can play a role in whether social learning is successful. Certain requirements and steps must also be followed. The following steps are involved in the observational learning and modeling process (“ Social Learning Theory,” 2008.):

Attention- Observers cannot learn unless they pay attention to what’s happening around them. This process is influenced by characteristics of the model, such as how much one likes or identifies with the model, and by characteristics of the observer, such as the observer’s expectations or level of emotional arousal.

Retention- Observers must not only recognize the observed behavior but also remember it at some later time. This process depends on the observer’s ability to code or structure the information in an easily remembered form.

Reproduction- Observers must be physically and/intellectually capable of producing the act. In many cases the observer possesses the necessary

responses. But sometimes, reproducing the model's actions may involve skills the observer has not yet acquired.

Motivation- In general, observers will perform the act only if they have some motivation or reason to do so. The presence of reinforcement or punishment, either to the model or directly to the observer, becomes most important in this process. Rewarding a model tends to increase the probability that the observer will behave this way (vicarious reinforcement), whereas punishing the model makes imitating the model less likely (vicarious punishment).

### **Self- Regulatory system**

Bandura brought about the self- regulatory system in which we all use for self development. The self-regulatory system provides the foundation for coherent actions. In the social cognitive theory, as human beings we apply a continuous use of self- influence as motivation and regulation for our behaviors. Bandura's system derives from the interaction between three elements which include self-monitoring, judgment of one's behavior, and self- reaction. Each sub -function plays an important role in self-regulated learning.

Individuals act on the basis of ' forethought'. This process starts with developing an idea about what they can accomplish, predict what the consequences are of the actions they can carry out, set certain milestones, and finally think of actions that will produce the aspired outcome. The desired outcomes are transformed into motivators and regulators of current behavior. Using self- reflective and self- reactive skills individuals have the ability to control their actions, thoughts, feelings and motivation. These



actions and thoughts are then regulated and guided by certain standards of behavior adopted by the individual from the society and people around them. As humans we are motivated to change by controlling actions anticipatorily through self- reactive influence. “ Neither intention nor desire alone has much effect if people lack the capability for exercising influence over their own motivation and behavior” as stated by Bandura.

## **Self Monitoring**

Individuals influence their own actions by focusing on their performances. It is crucial for an individual to analyze their current or previous actions to further regulate their future procedures. Self-beliefs, thoughts and moods affect an individual's self- monitoring. Self observation provides the information required for planning realistic goals and assessing the progress made to achieve them. Paying close attention to one's thoughts and patterns can contribute to directed change. Some of the functions self- observation provides are:

**Self Diagnostic Function:** By paying close attention to their thoughts, emotions and behaviors individuals can begin to see patterns that are influenced by the social environment around them that lead them to behave a certain way. This acquired knowledge can be used to correct behavior and thought or the social environment itself creating a positive change. By changing routine thought patterns and observing the change that follows we can get a hold of how thoughts can alter emotions, motivation, and even every day performance.

Self- motivating function: When individuals keep track of their performance and actions they are motivated to set goals for improvement “ even though they have not been encouraged to do so” as Bandura stated. Yet, the individuals who don't take action in setting milestones for themselves realize no personal change and are outperformed by those who create more challenging goals to achieve for growth.

Motivational level- Self motivation is a heavily weighted factor on goal setting. Individuals who truly desire to change their actions or performance are motivated to set high objectives for them selves to evaluate their progress. Individuals with low motivation are prone to have an unrealistic self observation.

Successes or failures- Self monitoring accomplishments increases desired behavior, while, dwelling one's failures can not only be discouraging but has the ability to reduce performance accomplishments.

## **Judgment of Behavior**

This is the step where individuals compare their actions and behavior with personal standards and environmental circumstances. Even though an individual's performance may have been successful they then take that further step to compare it to certain acquired personal standards to feel gratification. People have many different standards in which they compare their performance to which include:

Personal Standards are created by the way influential individuals in the social environment have reacted to our behavior. Our personal standards are

not created just by other people's reaction but by their behaviors as well. We then come to judge our actions based on these standards

Social Referential comparisons- are the comparisons of one's own achievement to that of others. An individual will first compare their performance to their personal standards and will continue by comparing their performance to that of others. In most cases individuals tend to compare themselves to others they believe are in a similar situation or standing.

Self comparisons- are the comparison of an individual's performance to previous performances. An individual will use prior accomplishments as reference and guide for self- growth; always aiming to out perform previous goals.

Valuation of activities- is another crucial factor under the judgment process. People tend less importance to activities that have little significance for them. Little effort is usually given to activities that are categorized as being of low value.

## **Self- Reaction**

Self- Reaction is what follows after an individual has compared their performance to their standards. Individuals pursue accomplishments that create positive self- reactions and behavior. Individuals add self- incentives and rewards to accomplishments as well. Self- incentives affect behavior mainly through their motivational purpose. When people add self- incentives or benefits that are dependent on the accomplishment of an action they

motivate themselves to give that extra effort to be able to attain the  
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incentive. Individuals who set self- incentives outperform those who perform the same activity under instruction without self- incentives or rewards.

People who succeed in regulating their behavior follow up with self- incentives, meanwhile individuals who are unsuccessful rarely give themselves these perks. Most people value their self satisfaction derived from a job well done more highly than they do material rewards. Self- reactions affect how much satisfaction an individual gets from what they do.

## **Issues with Reciprocal Determinism**

In discussing reciprocal determinism, a number of issues appear in the history and the concept itself. Firstly, while Bandura was the one who coined the term, reciprocal determinism, the idea was present in the sciences long before. Specifically, reciprocal determinism appears in natural sciences in the form of functional laws. That is, functional laws are not cause-and-effect relationships but interactions of variables – which is what reciprocal determinism is. In addition, J. S. Haldane, a biologist, attempted to show that “surroundings and organisms successfully act and react to one another” (Life and Mechanism as cited by Phillips & Orton, 1983) over 90 years before Bandura’s writing. Granted Haldane talks of interaction between two factors and not three, but it is still a very similar idea to reciprocal determinism as proposed by Bandura.

Secondly, reciprocal determinism might not be as multidirectional as it is portrayed. That is, while the three factors: situation, person, and behavior do influence each other; the interactions can be reduced to unidirectional causal relationships. These interactions do not occur simultaneously, therefore,

reciprocal determinism might describe the ability of each factor to affect one of the other two, but not necessarily a triadic relationship.

Lastly, if the study of psychology is aimed at explaining behavior, reciprocal determinism fails to put forth a theory or set of explanations. It presents an “infinite regress” (Phillips & Orton, 1983), but does not address the “why,” the reason for the behavior. Therefore, we see that reciprocal determinism, while a powerful idea gives rise to a number of new issues.

## **Applications of Reciprocal Determinism**

Reciprocal determinism has been shown to be present in over 25 nations, although it does not appear to work in the same in all nations. Thus, just as reciprocal determinism crosses cultural boundaries, it can be applied across a variety of fields. In this section we will focus on three areas in which reciprocal determinism has been utilized: child or developmental psychology, industrial/organization psychology, and clinical psychology. We will talk about how reciprocal determinism is demonstrated in learning, in the workplace, and specifically in leader-subordinate relationships, and in how reciprocal determinism affects treatments in patients with mental disorders.

Reciprocal determinism is found and is very important in the learning process. As discussed previously in the chapter, self-efficacy bears a strong relationship to this concept and perception of strength in a specific domain has powerful influence on child's ability and desire to learn in that area. For example, Ghee and Khoury (2008) found that students who perceive math and science negatively tend to perform worse in those subjects as compared to students who hold positive views of math and science. That is, perception

of the subject affects performance, and performance in a certain area affects the personal view towards this subject.

Reciprocal determinism is clearly present in the workplace. Performance and efficiency are affected by employees' motivations, which in turn can be affected by the work environment and their personality characteristics. To give a concrete example, Sims and Manz (1984) found that the behavior of leaders tends to both, be caused by subordinate behavior and to be a cause of performance. In this dyadic relationship, reciprocal determinism is evident in the truly two-way direction of influence between leader and subordinates.

In a different area, Makoul (1998) explored reciprocal determinism in physician-client relationship. There are physician-reliant patients and self-reliant patients, and the former tend to visit the doctor more than twice as often (Makoul, 1998) than the latter. Reciprocal determinism comes into play when the physician adjusts his or her orientation to match the patient's self-reliant or physical-reliant orientation. However, if physicians attempt to get the patient more involved in treatment options and decisions, the patient will adjust his or her orientation, which thus demonstrates reciprocity.