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Abstract

Psychology is the scientific study of human behavior. Human beings exhibit different behaviors. The behavior that an individual portrays is controlled by the mind because people act as per their thoughts. People have different personalities whereby another dislikes a behavior, which one cherishes.

The term consciousness is defined as the state of mind in which one is aware of what he/she is doing. Conscious persons control his mind in determining what to do and what not to do and the time. Since the person acts in his right senses, he is accountable for results of his actions. There are some instances in which people act out of consciousness.

An individual can get involved in a very bad act but he does not know whether he has committed any sin. Consciousness involves prior plans because people act according to their plans. The state of mind determines the condition in which one performs his actions. Amnesia is a condition in which memory is lost totally or partially. The term memory is used to refer to the remembrance of things, which happened sometimes back as well as keeping in mind events taking place presently. The Limbic system is a region in the brain whose function is to retrieve memories already stored in the brain.

The limbic system is composed of hippocampus, amygdale and the cortex. The lymphatic system enables the functioning of the endocrine system as well as the feelings and emotions (Holland, 2003). If the lymphatic system is interfered with, amnesia is likely to occur. Since Amnesia deals with mind, it is important in the scientific study of consciousness.

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Literature Review

Chapter Overview

The scientific study of human and animal behavior is referred to as psychology. Psychology is also concerned with the methods that affect and change the behavior of people. The study of behavior and processes of mind is collectively referred to as psychology.

Psychologists are mainly interested in the study of behavior and characteristics of people. A study of psychology includes issues that take place from individual's day of birth to death. Psychology became a discipline on its own in the 17th century during Greeks time.

During this time, Rene Descartes a French philosopher introduced the idea of dualisms, which asserted that human body is made up of two different parts, the body and the mind. The study of mind was supposed to be independent. Nature versus nurture theories of human behavior also explain the role played by psychology. According to the nature theory, human behavior is genetic. During the process of mutation, character traits are passed from the parents to the child so that the child behaves much more like the parents. The nurture theory is based on the assumption that human behavior depends on the environment in which an individual is brought up.

Background

Modern psychologists use scientific methods to study human behavior as well as his thoughts.

Physiology has contributed a lot towards the emergence of psychology as a discipline. In the study of brain and behavior, physiologists applied scientific

methods in an attempt to understand human behavior and thoughts.

Wilhelm Wundt founded psychology in 1879. He started the first Experimental psychology lab at Leipzig. In his book, "Principles of Physiological Psychology", he defined psychology as the study of human consciousness. He aimed at carrying out research to understand internal processes of mind. He used a method he referred to as introspection. Introspection is the process through which an individual examines and reports his/her thoughts, feeling and impressions for a period.

It involves observing the functioning of the brain to understand the laws that govern the mind. The process occurs consciously in mind. The behavior that individuals display is based on the thoughts. Behaviorists who suggest that psychology should base on objectives and ways, which can be measured, have criticized the method. Psychologists shifted their attention from consciousness and sensation to measurable behavior. There are two major schools of thought in psychology. Structuralism was founded by Edward Titchener, a former student of Wundt founded the first major school of thought. Structuralism is the perception that mental experiences is made up of simple events.

Structuralists are mainly concerned with the components of mind.

Structuralists argue that consciousness of human beings can be divided in to smaller parts. Structural psychology aimed at describing consciousness in its basic elements, putting together these components and determining the relationship to each other as well as their relationship to the nervous system. Edward classified sensations and thoughts as the major components of mind. The method used in structuralism was unreliable. This is because of the use

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of subjective methods in the study of the structures of mind. It is also blamed for emphasizing much on the internal behavior, which cannot be observed daily. There is no actual way of measuring internal behavior.

Functional psychology is concerned with the process through which the mind acts and functions instead of what it contains. Functionalism was advocated for by William James and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. It was a reaction against structuralism. They used systematic and accurate ways of explaining the processes of mind. In addition to elements of consciousness, functionalists were also interested in studying the purpose of behavior. They also dealt with differences between people, for instance, people have different levels of understanding in schools.

Functionalists wanted to know reasons behind this. Amnesia is related to scientific study of consciousness. This is because the behavior that an individual exhibits depends on the state of mind. Amnesia affects the consciousness of an individual because it changes the way in which the brain functions.

When people lose memory, they lose the control of their brain and therefore do things unconsciously. For example, mad persons do things unconsciously. They do things, which can never be done by a person in his right senses. Such people walk naked and eat food remainders from garbage. They are not in control of their mind and therefore do not have the knowledge that what they are doing is wrong. Such people have already lost their awareness. Consciousness is therefore influenced by amnesia. Amnesia

is related to consciousness in the sense that if an individual is amnesiac he is likely act unconsciously (Blackmore, 2005).

There are three main categories of human memories. After the creation of a memory, it is stored regardless of the time duration. There are many events, which take place in people's lives, and if they are accommodated in the brain, it will be overworked. These stages help in sorting the information so that the most important things are permanently stored in the brain. They are sensory, short-term and long-term memory. Sensory memory involves the remembrance caused by stimulus received through the senses. People may remember something after seeing it (iconic memory), hearing a particular sound (echoic memory) or even touching it (haptic memory). Sensory memory is short term as events, which are of importance at that particular time, are stored in the brain.

In short- term memory information is stored for a limited time. The capacity of remembrance is low such that only few things are stored. Valuable information is transferred from the short term to long-term memory so that they are retained for remembrance after a long period. This memory stores large volumes of data. For example, the information that students learn in schools is stored permanently in their brains. This helps them later during their exams (Blackmore, 2005). In the process of remembering something, information is willingly retrieved from unconscious level to the conscious mind.

People are different in remembering where some people remember various things better than others do. Some people are said to have good memories

while others poor. People who have problems of remembrance and are physically fit, it is not an implication that the whole memory system is damaged, part of the memory system is not functioning. When an individual keeps books on the drawer before going to sleep, the mind should register where the books were kept. One should pay attention to the storage place or else he will not remember the following day. The information is stored in the mind for future retrieval. If the memory system is working well, the person will find it easy to remember the following day.

Difficulties in remembering may be due to lack of proper registration of the storage place, failure to retain what was registered in ones mind or poor memory retrieval. The above stages are very important in ensuring proper remembrance Relation between amnesia and consciousness. Distractions during encoding can make an individual to forget (Blackmore, 2005).

Amnesia comes in different forms. The most common form is called anterograde amnesia. It involves the inability to retain and recall events, which happened after the condition. Patients find it hard remember things that have just happened in their lives.

If you ask them of their last diet, they will not be in a position to tell. Another characteristic of those patients is their tendency to talk of disorderly things. They may be explaining things, which never happened, in the real sense. In this case, their minds are full of fabricated events. Dementia and Alzheimers diseases have such characteristics. Some Patients forget the events, which took place before the beginning of Amnesia. This is called retrograde amnesia. It mainly occurs because of head injuries.

Some patients lose memory of the events in the previous hours completely. This condition is mostly found among the old people. The conditions disorient the patients so that they keep asking the same questions repeatedly. Those people may not know where they are, what they do and some cannot tell their names.

Other mental diseases like madness contribute to memory loss (Elchenbaum & Cohen, 1995). Amnesia is also caused by drug abuse. Excessive usage of drugs affects the brain so that the normal functioning of the brain is affected. Most drugs are harmful to human health. Tobacco and alcohol for instance affects the lungs making the breathing system difficult.

When persons become addicted, they concentrate much on the drugs. In many cases, drug addicts do not have control on their actions. When they are under the influence of the drugs, they do things, which they cannot remember the following day. They cannot remember the words they utter once they come in their right senses. Stress also contributes to memory loss. When one is stressed, there is low concentration on what is done. It is difficult for example for a student to understand what is being taught by their teacher if he is under stress. The student is likely to forget what is taught in class at that particular time (Eichenbaum & Cohen, 1995).

Critique

In future, psychologists should employ accurate measures of explaining the behavior of human beings. This is because functional and structural theories of explaining human behaviors are not accurate. Even though amnesia leads to unconscious actions, some individuals take the advantage and prevent not

to be aware of their actions. For example, many drug addicts pretend that they do not know they previously did when drunk. Some are so chaotic when drunk after which they complain not to have any knowledge on their actions. Most of them just pretend not to be aware but in the real sense, they know what they are doing. However, some like mad people do not pretend, as they do not have control over their actions. They even do some things, which are harmful to themselves like garbage.

According to me, a research topic on the ways of ensuring that people's actions are really unconscious should be done. This research will differentiate those people who do things out of pretence from those others. This will be of great help because many people do things and pretend not to have done but they are actually aware (Eichenbaum & Cohen, 1995).

Conclusion

Studying the psychology of consciousness is important because it helps in understanding the behavior of amnesiacs. Amnesiacs do not have control on the things they do. They do things unconsciously. For instance, mad people usually do abnormal things. They eat dirty foods, dress indecently among other abnormal activities.

This is because they have lost their memory of differentiating the right from wrong. For the elderly people, their level of retrieving information is very low. As they grow old, the level of their understanding goes down. They forget easily, an effect that can lead to wrong steps.

In conclusion, amnesia and consciousness are intertwined because they affect each other. Loss of memory leads to unconscious actions so that the

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person is not conscious about the action he takes. Conscious individuals are accountable for the actions they take while unconscious individuals are not (Parkin, 1997).

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