

Researching the four goals of psychology



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Psychology refers to a discipline which involves the scientific study of human mental functions and behaviors. This study aims at understanding the role played by an individual mental function in determining why different people behave differently. This paper aims at exploring the four goals of psychology and how these goals can help or hurt humanity.

The four goals of psychology are all based from scientific findings and critical thinking. The ideal methods used in obtaining information about an individual behavior include direct observation and measurement. Many people may think that psychology is merely studied so as to identify a specific behavior in an individual by looking at the classic symptoms only. However this is not the case because the four major goals of psychology are: to describe, explain predict and change mental processes and an individual behavior through the use of scientific methods. The use of these four goals is to help psychologists in understanding in a better way what factors influence different kinds of behavior and also as a means of identifying the problem at hand. In order to understand human personality better psychologists have come up with different scientific models which use one of the goals of psychology which is to describe. These models have been established to help in describing human behavior and personality in a better and a clear manner. One of the famous models used in contemporary psychology is the five-factor model of personality (Digman, 1990). This theory is one of the latest models developed for describing human personality. In addition to that it is one of the most applicable and practical models available in the psychology field today. The five factors used in this model include: openness to experience, Extroversion, agreeable, conscientiousness, and neuroticism

(Ewen, 1998). Openness to experience in this model is used to refer to how people are willing to make adjustment in activities and notions in accordance with the new ideas and situations that come their way. Extroversion on the other hand refers to well an individual is socially adaptable. This factor is very important because it helps in describing why different individuals behave differently in varying social environment. Agreeableness in this model is used in measuring how well individuals are compatible with other people. This is very important because it is through this factor that we basically get to learn how different get along with each other.

Conscientiousness in this model refers to how different people consider other people when making decisions. And finally the fifth factor which is neuroticism refers to a dimension of an individual personality which is defined by how well an individual experiences stability and low anxiety on one end as opposed to high anxiety and instability at the other end (Pervin, 1989). The use of this goal has been very helpful in that it is used for clinical use to determine whether an individual has got some kind of an abnormality. For example, those individuals who fall at the extreme end of one or more of the five variable is likely to be having some kind of a psychological abnormality associated with that particular trait. This is very important because it guides the psychologist in determining how well they can help an individual (Langston & Sykes, 1997).

The second goal of psychology which is explanation is used by psychologist in attempt to explain the behavior of an individual which help to understand our universe and what place we old in it. In doing so several theorists like Rogers, Freud, Jung and Skinner, have come up with different theories, to

explain an individual personality motivation and development. However, these explanations are often culturally restricted because it is not possible to have one explanation which can be used universally to explain similar behavior for people of different cultures. To do explanation, psychologist use quantitative and qualitative observation including experimentation techniques (Alexander & Winnie, 2006).

Prediction which is the third goal of psychology is used by psychologist in their attempt to predict behavior in an individual. This is very important in determining how an individual is likely to behave and perform within a given environment or when an individual is likely to make healthy and unhealthy choices in life (Coon & Mitterer, 2008). This goal is very helpful in our daily life. For example, it can be used to determine how well a given student will be successful at a certain college based on past behavior in a similar environment. Although we can never be sure of the outcome, prediction always helps people in making more informed decisions of future choices.

The fourth goal of psychology which is changing behavior of an individual is used by psychologist in their attempt to encourage individuals and groups to voluntarily modify their behavior. Modifying behavior in an individual can either be healthy or unhealthy given the prevailing circumstances but within ethical constraints. Different theories on personality and development, offers different suggestions on how best an individual may be encouraged to change his or her behavior. Some of the theories believe in repetitive reinforcement (behaviorists) while others believe in honest cognitive dialogue (Coon & Mitterer, 2008). This goal has had a lot of impact in humanity. For example, it is usually used in correction facilities like in prisons

to determining the best way to change the inmates behaviors based on the crimes they committed.

In conclusion, this paper has explained in details what the four goals of the psychology are and how beneficial and harmful they are in humanity. This has helped us understand how important the field of psychology is in that it help us understand why different people behave differently, why people interact with others the way they do, how best we can utilize prediction to achieve positive results in different circumstances and finally how well we can change the behavior of people. Without all these, the world would be a very dangerous place to live in.