

Hull's systematic behaviourism theory

Psychology



Hull's Systematic Behaviourism Theory

Brief History of the theory

The theory of systematic behaviourism was developed by Clark Hull during the 1930s when he undertook research with the aim of coming up with a theory, which could explain an approach to behaviourism. The arguments brought forth by Hull were related to the aspect of homeostasis, a concept that the theorist borrowed from the field of biology. According to the beliefs held by Hull, behaviour could be associated with the regulation of the body by an organism. Just like an organism regulates its body processes through homeostasis, so does the same organism employ behaviour with the aim of maintaining health. Hull postulated that motivation theories such as behaviourism could borrow a leaf from the homeostatic processes, which take place in the human body (Lefrançois, 2012).

A description of the theory

Hull's theory can be regarded as a systematic approach whose aim was to explain the notion of motivation as it relates to human behaviour. According to Hull, the behaviour exhibited by all organisms could be explained based on the way organisms conducted themselves. According to Hull, the way humans behaved was in accordance to the interactions that took place between the environment and the organisms that inhabit this environment. The organism responds to the stimuli provided by the environment and this behaviour can be easily observed. Hull postulated that some of the components of this behaviour may not be observable; for example, the adaptation of the organism to the conditions in the environment cannot be easily observed. This takes place despite the fact that the organism has to undergo some changes, which will enable it survive in the environment that

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it finds itself (Hull et al, 1985).

Based on the systematic behaviourism theory, an organism can be regarded as needy when its survival in the environment is jeopardized. In such a case, the biological needs that the organism requires in order not to survive may not be in adequate supply. As a result, the organism modifies behaviour with the sole aim of reducing that need. This implies that the behaviour of the organism is based on reinforcing the conditions, which are necessary for its survival in the environment. The learning theory developed by Hull places a lot of emphasis on the aspect of reinforcement. Based on this theory, reinforcement mainly dwells on reducing the primary needs of the person responding (Hull et al, 1985).

Hull argues that humans tend to have both secondary reinforcements, as well as secondary drives. Secondary reinforcement results from the reduction in the magnitude of the stimulus. According to Hull, the S-R response can be made stronger by making sure that the number of reinforcements is many; as a result the habit will become stronger. A high number of positive reinforcement results to greater motivation as compared to negative reinforcement, which may not motivate employees in the workplace. Hull postulated that drive could be regarded as stimulus; the behaviour exhibited by humans is stimulated by the drive. In order to ascertain whether a drive can be regarded as strong or weak, there is a need to consider the duration of deprivation, as well as how strong or weak the behaviour that results can be classified (Hergenhahn, 2013).

According to Hull, the role of drive is to make sure that the behaviour is strong; as such, behaviour is not directed by the drive. Reinforcement results from the reduction of the drive; learning takes place because behaviour that

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was previously neutral may exhibit some characteristics as a result of the stimuli (Hergenhahn, 2013).

There are various examples where the theory by Clark Hull can be employed. One of the examples is motivation whereby based on the theory, motivation of employees comes from within them, especially from the biological drives that these employees possess. Based on this theory, motivation emanates from the desire to be successful in life. Thus, employees' desire to succeed will motivate them to perform well in the workplace. Based on this theory also, employees may have the desire to reduce their drives, which means that they will act in appropriate ways that will enhance the reduction of such drives. This theory can be used to teach employees at the workplace regarding the best strategies to reduce their drives (Lefrançois, 2012).

Conclusion

Hull's systematic behaviourism theory can be regarded as instrumental in various aspects. This theory can be used to teach adult learners about how drives can be reduced and the benefits of reducing these drives. Based on the theory, adults can learn how to respond to certain stimuli, which they are likely to encounter.

References

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