

Behaviorism is the philosophical position that says that Psychology, to be a science, must focus its attention on what is observable – environment and behavior, rather than what is available to the individuals – thoughts, feelings and so on.

Behaviorism is based on learning – the change of behavior, which happens as a result of experience.

First Ivan Pavlov, a Russian psychologist, came up with theory of learning. Pavlov experiment was based on observable. His dogs were connected to machine which collected salivate. When he gave them food their salivated production increased. Moreover, he noticed that as soon as he opened the door, the dogs started salivate just because of the sound of open door. Dogs learned to response – open door – food coming --salivate in process. Pavlov called that Classical Conditioning.

Classical conditioning is built in reflexes: the food is an un-conditioning stimulus and salivation is un-conditioning response. The sound of the open door is called neutral stimulus. After a number of repetitions the neutral stimulus by itself would extract the response. At this point the neutral stimulus is renamed to conditioned stimulus and the response is called conditioned response.

Similar to Pavlov, other psychologist also outlined that learning is important in the Behaviorism – JB Watson. According to him, Psychology is science of stimuli and responses. Human beings begin with reflexes and, by means of conditioning, acquire learned response. For him brain processes were unimportant and emotions were the body responses to stimuli. Watson did his researches based on observable, denying the existence of any human instincts.

His best known experiment included a healthy 11-month-old boy called 'Little Albert', with no fear response to a white rat or rabbit.

Albert responded with crying to a loud noise made by banging a hammer on a metal bar. As he began to touch a rat, the noise was made behind his head. After a few repetitions Albert began to cry just on the view of white rat. That was emotional response and quickly generalized from rat to other white objects – rabbit or Santa Clause mask. This is called stimulus generalization

and demonstrate that human emotional response could be manipulated using the classical conditioning.

Other psychologist EL Thorndike did research and extended classical learning theory to include instrumental learning. His experiment included a hungry cat which was on box and fish outside the box. The cat scratched and meowed trying to escape and accidentally pushed the latch, escaping and grasping the fish. Second time it took less time to escape and repeatedly the cat had learned to get out immediately. Thorndike accounted that learning was essentially random to trial and error. It means: the error get less and the trial get increased. He called that 'Law of Effect' - if have Positive effect /reward/ is more likely to happen, if have Negative effect /punishment/ - less likely to happen.

This learning theory was developed into operant conditioning by BF Skinner 40 years later. For Skinner the cause of person's behavior was located somewhere in his developmental learning history, where he have learned particular responses, which were stimulated by something in the environment. In contrast to Pavlov, Skinner did not deny the existence of thoughts and ideas, but he strongly believed that they do not cause people's behavior. His experiments showed that person behave in some way by consequences. If this consequences of behavior is to encourage the repetition of that behavior is termed to positive reinforcement. The opposite, when the consequences discourage the repetition of some behavior is negative reinforcement. Skinners experiment was a rat in a cage and a bar, which if the rat pushed it, would receive food. What he demonstrated was that the bar pressing resulted in reinforced the rat with food, which increased the pressing- positive reinforcement.

The principles of learning theory do provide explanations of observed behavior in specific situations. However, human beings have rich mental life which is ignored in the behavioral approach. All people are capable of thinking and feeling and these mental processes are ignored in it.

Nova days, learning theory is applied in society as it is used from psychologists to cure mental illnesses and alcoholism. The image of a drink is

paired with image of being sick or other negative images, which increase the number of people stop drinking.

As a conclusion, according to Pavlov, Watson and Skinner, the Behavioral Approach is based on the learning theory, excluding feelings and thoughts. People behave on some way as a learned response that has previously been reinforced from stimulus.

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References

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