

Psychology and Law: Research and Practice

Psychology is the study of mind and behavior. It encompasses the biological influences, social pressures, and environmental factors that affect how people think, act, and feel.

Gaining a richer and deeper understanding of psychology can help people achieve insights into their own actions as well as a better understanding of other people.

It's difficult to capture everything that psychology encompasses in just a brief definition, but topics such as development, personality, thoughts, feelings, emotions, motivations, and social behaviors represent just a portion of what psychology seeks to understand, predict, and explain.

Types of Psychology

Psychology is a broad and diverse field that encompasses the study of human thought, behavior, development, personality, emotion, motivation, and more. As a result, some different subfields and specialty areas have emerged. The following are some of the major areas of research and application within psychology:

Abnormal psychology is the study of abnormal behavior and psychopathology. This specialty area is focused on research and treatment of a variety of mental disorders and is linked to psychotherapy and clinical psychology.

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Uses

The most obvious application for psychology is in the field of mental health where psychologists use principles, research, and clinical findings to help clients manage and overcome symptoms of mental distress and psychological illness. Some of the additional applications for psychology include:

Developing educational programs

Ergonomics

Informing public policy

Mental health treatment

Performance enhancement

Personal health and well-being

Psychological research

Self-help

Social program design

Understanding child development

Careers in Psychology A background in psychology opens far more career paths than clinical practice. Learn more in this guide to 80 careers in psychology.

Impact of Psychology

Psychology is both an applied and academic field that benefits both individuals and society as a whole. A large part of psychology is devoted to the diagnosis and treatment of mental health issues, but that's just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the impact of psychology.

Some of the ways that psychology contributes to individuals and society include:

Improving our understanding of why people behave as they do

Understanding the different factors that can impact the human mind and behavior

Understanding issues that impact health, daily life, and well-being

Improving ergonomics to improve product design

Creating safer and more efficient workspaces

Helping motivate people to achieve their goals

Improving productivity

Psychologists accomplish these things by using objective scientific methods to understand, explain, and predict human behavior. Psychological studies are highly structured, beginning with a hypothesis that is then empirically tested.

Potential Pitfalls

There's a lot of confusion out there about psychology. Unfortunately, such misconceptions about psychology abound in part thanks to stereotyped portrayals of psychologists in popular media as well as the diverse career paths of those holding psychology degrees.

Sure, there are psychologists who help solve crimes, and there are plenty of professionals who help people deal with mental health issues. However, there are also psychologists who:

Contribute to creating healthier workplaces

Design and implement public health programs

Research airplane safety

Help design technology and computer programs

Study military life and the psychological impact of combat

No matter where psychologists work, their primary goals are to help describe, explain, predict, and influence human

behavior.

History of Psychology

Early psychology evolved out of both philosophy and biology. Discussions of these two subjects date as far back as the early Greek thinkers, including Aristotle and Socrates.

The word "psychology" itself is derived from the Greek word psyche, literally meaning "life" or "breath." Derived meanings of the word include "soul" or "self."

The emergence of psychology as a separate and independent field of study truly came about when Wilhelm Wundt established the first experimental psychology lab in Leipzig, Germany in 1879.

Throughout psychology's history, various schools of thought have formed to explain the human mind and behavior. In some cases, certain schools of thought rose to dominate the field of psychology for a period of time.

The following are some of the major schools of thought in psychology.

Structuralism : Wundt and Titchener's structuralism was the earliest school of thought, but others soon began to emerge.

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Later, the humanistic approach centered on the importance of personal growth and self-actualization. Cognitive psychology: By the 1960s and 1970s, the cognitive revolution spurred the investigation of internal mental processes such as thinking, decision-making, language development, and memory.

While these schools of thought are sometimes perceived as competing forces, each perspective has contributed to our understanding of psychology.

A Word From Verywell

As you can see, while psychology may be a relatively young science it also has a tremendous amount of both depth and breadth. The assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental illness are central interests of psychology, but psychology encompasses much more than mental health.

Today, psychologists seek to understand many different aspects of the human mind and behavior, adding new knowledge to our understanding of how people think as well as developing practical applications that have an important impact on everyday human lives.

Reference

[Good Goodbyes: Knowing How to End in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis](#)

[Clinical Research for the Doctor of Nursing Practice](#)