

Faculty of Human and Social Sciences

Department of Psychology

Level: 2<sup>nd</sup> year LMD Psychology

Instructor: Ms. Saci Meriem

Module: English

## Lesson n°3: Behavioral Psychology

### Introduction

**Behavioral Psychology** (also known as **Behaviorism**) is a branch of psychology that focuses on studying observable behaviors and the ways in which they are learned and influenced by the environment. Unlike cognitive psychology, which looks at internal mental processes, behavioral psychology emphasizes the external factors that shape behavior, such as stimuli, reinforcements, and punishments.

### I. Key Concepts of Behavioral Psychology:

#### 1. Stimulus and Response:

- Behavioral psychologists believe that behavior is a response to external stimuli. A stimulus is any event or situation that triggers a behavior, and a response is the behavior that follows. For example, if a person hears a loud noise (stimulus), they might jump in surprise (response).

#### 2. **Conditioning:** Conditioning refers to the process by which behaviors are learned. There are two main types of conditioning:

- **Classical Conditioning** (*Pavlovian Conditioning*):
  - Developed by **Ivan Pavlov**, this type of learning occurs when a neutral stimulus is paired with an unconditioned stimulus to produce a conditioned response.
  - **Example:** Pavlov's famous experiment with dogs. He paired the sound of a bell (neutral stimulus) with the presentation of food (unconditioned stimulus), and over time, the bell alone (now a conditioned stimulus) caused the dog to salivate (conditioned response).
- **Operant Conditioning** (*Instrumental Conditioning*):

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- Developed by **B.F. Skinner**, this type of learning involves associating a behavior with its consequences (reinforcements or punishments).
- **Example:** If a child is rewarded with candy for cleaning their room, they are more likely to clean their room again in the future (positive reinforcement).

### 3. Reinforcement:

- Reinforcement is any event that strengthens or increases the likelihood of a behavior occurring again.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Giving a pleasant stimulus to increase a behavior (e.g., giving a dog a treat for sitting).
- **Negative Reinforcement:** Removing an unpleasant stimulus to increase a behavior (e.g., turning off a loud noise when a person presses a button).

### 4. Punishment:

- Punishment is any event that weakens or decreases the likelihood of a behavior being repeated.
- **Positive Punishment:** Adding an unpleasant stimulus to decrease a behavior (e.g., scolding a child for misbehaving).
- **Negative Punishment:** Taking away a pleasant stimulus to decrease a behavior (e.g., taking away a child's video game for not following rules).

### 5. Extinction:

- Extinction occurs when a behavior that was previously reinforced is no longer reinforced, and as a result, the behavior gradually diminishes and eventually disappears.
- **Example:** If a child is no longer given attention for throwing a tantrum, the tantrums may eventually stop.

### 6. Shaping:

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- Shaping involves reinforcing successive approximations of a desired behavior. It's used when teaching complex behaviors by reinforcing small steps toward the final goal.
- **Example:** To teach a dog to roll over, you might first reinforce the dog for lying down, then for turning on its side, and finally for completing the full roll.

## II. Major Figures in Behavioral Psychology:

### 1. *Ivan Pavlov:*

Known for his work on **classical conditioning**, Pavlov's experiment with dogs and salivation showed how a neutral stimulus could become associated with an unconditioned stimulus to produce a conditioned response.

### 2. *John B. Watson:*

Watson is often considered the father of **behaviorism**. He believed that psychology should focus only on observable behavior and dismissed introspection as a valid method of study. His famous "Little Albert" experiment demonstrated that emotional responses (like fear) could be conditioned in humans.

### 3. *B.F. Skinner:*

Skinner expanded upon **operant conditioning** and is best known for his work with **Skinner boxes**, where he used reinforcement to train animals. Skinner's research showed how behavior could be shaped through rewards and punishments. He also developed the idea of **schedule of reinforcement**—the timing of reinforcement can significantly influence the frequency of a behavior.

### 4. *Edward Thorndike:*

Thorndike developed the **Law of Effect**, which states that behaviors followed by satisfying outcomes are likely to be repeated, while those followed by discomfort are less likely to recur. This theory laid the groundwork for Skinner's operant conditioning.

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### III. Applications of Behavioral Psychology:

#### 1. *Education:*

Behavioral principles are widely used in classrooms to reinforce good behavior and discourage bad behavior. For example, teachers might use praise (positive reinforcement) to encourage students to raise their hands before speaking.

#### 2. *Therapy (Behavior Modification):*

**Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)** and **applied behavior analysis (ABA)** are therapies based on behavioral principles. ABA is often used to help children with autism develop appropriate behaviors by reinforcing positive actions.

In therapy, clients might be taught to change their behavior through the use of rewards and punishments.

#### 3. **Animal Training:**

Animal trainers often use **operant conditioning** principles to teach animals behaviors. For example, dolphins can be trained to perform tricks by rewarding them with fish (positive reinforcement).

#### 4. **Behavioral Economics:**

Behavioral psychology has applications in understanding consumer behavior, how people make decisions, and how they are influenced by rewards and penalties in economic contexts.