

LESSON 3

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

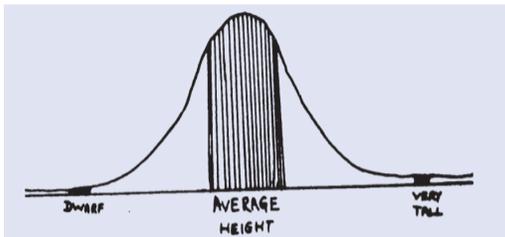
SUMMARY

Any two individuals are not exact duplicates of each other; they differ from each other in some way. The job of the psychologist is to identify and understand this uniqueness in individuals.

Individual differences refer to the extent and kind of variations or similarities among people on some of the important psychological aspects such as intelligence, personality, interest, and aptitude.

Nature of Individual Differences

If we collect information about people's characteristics from a large sample and examine the pattern of distribution, a large majority of the people fall in the middle range while a small proportion lies in extreme categories. Observe the graph given below.



The differences in psychological characteristics are often consistent and form a stable pattern. People develop their unique traits/ characteristics and patterns of behaviour due to their genetic

make-up and the environment in which they are brought up.

Once we know these differences systematically, we can utilize the capabilities of people efficiently for their healthy development, extend support and utilize his or her potential to optimal level.

Assessing Individual Differences

- **Psychological assessment** refers to the use of specific procedures for evaluating personal qualities, behaviours and abilities of individuals.
- These procedures describe people by specifying how they are different from or similar to other individuals.
- Psychology tries to systematize these procedures so that assessment can be made with minimum error and maximum accuracy.
- A **Psychological test** is a structured technique used to generate a carefully selected sample of behaviour.
- It is necessary that the test is reliable, valid and standardized.
- A test is **reliable** if it measures a given characteristic consistently.
- The **validity** of a test refers to the degree to which it assesses what it intends to assess.

- **Standardization** involves establishing the procedure of administration, norms. It ensures uniformity and objectivity in administration and makes the results interpretable.
- **E.g.** – achievement tests, ability tests, intelligence tests, aptitude tests etc.

Nature of Intelligence and its assessment

- Intelligence refers to “multifaceted abilities of people”.
- **Binet and Simon** in 1905, defined intelligence as the “ability to judge well, to understand well, and to reason well”.
- **Wechsler** defined it as “the aggregate or global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with the environment”.
- **Gardner** defined intelligence as “the ability or skill to solve problems or to fashion products which are valued within one or more cultural settings”. He used the term ‘Multiple Intelligences’ and advocated that there are eight types of intelligences such as Linguistic, Logical-mathematical, Spatial, Musical, Bodily-kinaesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Naturalistic.
- IQ is defined as mental age divided by chronological age, and multiplied by 100: **(IQ = MA/CA × 100)**.
- Mental Age (MA) refers to an individual’s level of mental development relative to the environment in which he/she lives.
- The intelligence test developed by Binet was revised subsequently and in 1916 the test was given the name of **Stanford - Binet test of intelligence**.
- Wechsler Scales of Intelligence have been designed for individuals of different age groups such as
 - a. **Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale** (WAIS) for adults
 - b. **Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children** (WISC) for children between the age of 6 and 16 years.
- Intelligence tests are of two kind Individual test and Group test.
- On the basis of nature of items, intelligence tests are Verbal, Non-verbal, and Performance Tests.

Aptitudes and Interests, and their assessment

- An aptitude is a combination of characteristics that indicates an individual’s capacity to acquire some specific knowledge or skill, after

training. These qualities can be harnessed by appropriate training.

- Intelligence relates to the ability of a person to do certain thing at a given time, whereas, aptitude refers to the potential ability of an individual to perform a task, which generally consists of a combination of abilities.
- Achievement involves performance at any given point of time in a particular subject with which you have been made familiar.
- Example of aptitude tests - Differential Aptitude Test (**DAT**), the General Aptitude Test Battery (**GATB**), and the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (**ASVAB**).

Nature of Personality

- In psychology personality is thought as a person's unique and relatively stable behaviour pattern which remains consistent across situations and over a period of time.
- Allport, 1937 gave definition of personality- "Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment".

Psychologists have approached personality from different

perspectives. Some of these perspectives are given below –

Trait Perspective

- describe personality in terms of various traits
- E.g. - introversion and extraversion are two types of personality traits

Psychodynamic Perspective

- Based on Sigmund Freud's ideas
- focuses on unconscious needs and conflicts as well as the influence of earlier stages of development on our lives

Socio-cultural Perspective

- focuses on importance of the social and cultural environment

Humanistic perspective

- emphasize the potential for freedom and growth present in all of us

Techniques of Personality Assessment

In personality assessment focus is on the study of the nature and intensity of various characteristics, which are generally reflected through behaviour in a given situation.

Personality assessment measures are classified into three categories-

- Objective or Self report measures of personality** - In measures of this kind, a person is asked to report about themselves on a set of statements organized in the form of a questionnaire or inventory. The nature of the statement can be either closed ended or open ended. E.g. -

Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness- Personality Inventory-Revised (**NEOPI-R**), Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (**16 PF**).

- b. **Projective or Indirect measures of personality** - the individual has to respond to unstructured or ambiguous stimuli. The basic assumption behind using unstructured test stimuli in projective test is that the individual projects his/her latent or unconscious feelings, needs, emotions, motives etc. on to the ambiguous stimulus. The responses of the individual in the form of projection reflect the nature of his/her personality. E.g. - Rorschach Ink Blot Test, Thematic Apperception Test, Rotter Incomplete Sentences Blank.
- c. **Situational measures of personality** - observe the behaviour of the individual in purposefully designed situation. Such tests are more effective in the assessment of leadership, dominance, responsibility, extraversion-introversion etc.

Do you know?

The first attempt to measure intelligence was made by **Sir Francis Galton**.

Alfred Binet, a French Psychologist, in 1905, gave the concept of Mental Age (MA).

The term Intelligence Quotient (IQ) was first devised by **William Stern** in 1912.

Evaluate yourself

1. Distinguish between 'reliability' and 'validity'.
2. Describe the role of aptitude, interest and abilities in making educational and vocational choices.
3. Describe the three categories of personality assessment measures and give at least three examples for each category.