

Albert Bandura's Socio-Cognitive Theory

Introduction

The socio-cognitive theory is a learning theory that posits that people learn by watching what others do. It emphasizes that, if people are motivated to learn a particular behaviour, they could do so through clear observation. According to Albert Bandura people acquire complex behaviour through modeling. He explains behaviour in terms of a person's interactions with the environment (either external or internal). Bandura stressed that behaviour, cognition and the environment mutually influence each other, a process he called reciprocal determination. For example, the children's television watching habits (past environment) influences their interest or preferences (cognition or personal factor), which in turn determines the channel they select (behaviour). The television here is an environmental factor.

The following are ways in which people interact with environment;

1. Different people prefer different environments. They will make different choices on, for example, the school to attend, the television programme to watch, the music to listen to and the friends to associate with. These environments shape the individual's personality.
2. Different people respond to the environment differently. For example, anxious people are easily distracted. They perceive the world as more threatening and read more anxiously than individuals who are non-anxious.
3. The way people perceive and react to other people influences how they, in turn, treat them. For example, if we are angry at a person, they in turn become angry at us. People with easy-going temperaments attract and enjoy close and supportive friendship with others than difficult individuals.

In the development of personality, a person is influenced by two factors. These are:

1. **Observational learning.** This is the ability to learn complex behaviour from watching and imitating others.
2. **Self-regulation** also known as self-efficacy. This involves the ability of individuals to exercise influence over their own behaviour. It involves the thought process because individuals must believe and think how to perform a given behaviour.

Observational learning process

The following are the four components of observational learning:

1. **The attentional process.** This is perceiving and paying close attention to the model's actions. This involves accurately observing the model in order to imitate.
2. **Retention process.** This involves recalling and remembering the model and its actions over a long period of time. It involves two processes of mental representation/coding of the model's actions and behaviour: These are imagery coding (representing images of the model's actions in the mind) and verbal coding (representing the model's actions or images in form of language or verbal representations in the mind).
3. **Motor-reproduction process.** This is the ability to reproduce or re-do the actions of the model. It involves translating the memory or what has been represented in our minds, into