TOPIC 6
COGNITIVE THEORY, MOTIVATION AND HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT
LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Able to explain cognitive theory.
2. Able to explain the application of cognitive theory to motivation and human achievement.
INTRODUCTION

- Cognitive psychology is the branch of psychology that focuses on the way people process information.
- It looks at how we process information we receive, and how the treatment of this information leads to our responses.
- Cognitive psychology is interested in what is happening within our minds that links stimulus (input) and response (output).
- Cognitive therapy helps people to develop alternative ways of thinking and behaving which aims to reduce their psychological distress.
COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Thoughts create feelings

Behavior reinforces thoughts

Feelings create behavior
There are three major contributing theories in cognitive psychology:

1. Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT)
2. Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy (CT)
3. Donald Meichenbaum's Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)
ALBERT ELLIS' RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY (REBT)

- Proposes that each of us hold a unique set of assumptions about ourselves and our world that serve to guide us through life and determine our reactions to the various situations we encounter.

- Unfortunately, some people’s assumptions are largely irrational, guiding them to act and react in ways that are inappropriate and that prejudice their chances of happiness and success. Albert Ellis calls these basic irrational assumptions.

- Ellis believes that people often forcefully hold on to this illogical way of thinking, and therefore employs highly emotive techniques to help them vigorously and forcefully change this irrational thinking.
COMMON IRRATIONAL ASSUMPTIONS

- The idea that one should be thoroughly competent at everything.
- The idea that it is catastrophic when things are not the way you want them to be.
- The idea that people have no control over their happiness.
- The idea that you need someone stronger than yourself to be dependent on.
- The idea that your past history greatly influences your present life.
- The idea that there is a perfect solution to human problems, and it’s a disaster if you don’t find it.
<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Irrational Beliefs Challenged by REBT</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I must be loved by everyone or I am not lovable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I must do everything well or I am incompetent.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>I must damn others if they do not treat me well.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>I must damn life if things do not go well.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>I must control events and people, because they control how I feel.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>I must worry about anything fearful or risky.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>I must avoid responsibilities and problems in order to be comfortable or content.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>I must depend upon others else my life or self will fall apart.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>I must be controlled by my past and disturbed by anything that once disturbed me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I must damn other's problems and be disturbed by them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I must damn life if I cannot find the perfect answers to human problems.</td>
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These 11 irrational beliefs were rewritten, modified, and condensed from *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy, Revised and Updated* by Albert Ellis, Birch Lane Press, 1994.

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- **REBT** focuses on uncovering irrational beliefs that may lead to unhealthy negative emotions.

- It examines this relationship through what is called the **A-B-C-D-E framework**.
Ellis believes that it is not the **activating event (A)** that causes negative emotional and **behavioural consequences (C)**, but rather that a person interpret these events unrealistically and therefore has an **irrational belief system (B)** that helps cause the consequences (C).

**A-B-C-D-E FRAMEWORK EXAMPLE**

- **Activating event**
  - Gina is upset because she got a low mark on a math test. The Activating event, A, is that she failed her test.

- **Beliefs (irrational)**
  - She must have good grades or she is worthless.

- **Consequences**
  - Gina feels depressed

- **Disputation to challenge irrational belief**
  - A therapist would help Gina realise that there is no evidence that she must have good grades to be worthwhile, or that getting bad grades is awful.

- **Effective new belief**
  - If she realises that getting bad grades is disappointing, but not awful, and that it means she is currently bad at math or at studying, but not as a person, she will feel sad or frustrated, but not depressed.
REBT is widely used, such as

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Anger
- Marital difficulties
- Poor interpersonal skills
- Parenting failures
- Personality disorders
- Obsessive compulsive disorders
- Eating disorders
- Psychosomatic disorders
- Addiction
AARON BECK'S COGNITIVE THERAPY (CT)

• Beck's (1967) approach is similar to Albert Ellis in that it emphasises recognising and changing negative thoughts and maladaptive beliefs.

• Beck believes that a person’s reaction to specific upsetting thoughts may contribute to abnormality.

• As we confront the many situations that arise in life, both comforting and upsetting thoughts come into our heads.

• Used to treat people with a wide range of mental health problems.

• CBT is based on the idea that how we think (cognition), how we feel (emotion) and how we act (behaviour) all interact together.

• Specifically, our thoughts determine our feelings and our behaviour.

• Aaron Beck’s Cognitive Therapy focus on negative thinking.

• Negative/unrealistic thoughts can cause us distress and result in problems. When a person suffers with psychological distress, the way in which they interpret situations becomes skewed, which in turn has a negative impact on the actions they take.
TYPES OF NEGATIVE THINKING

All-or-nothing thinking

- See thing in black and white categories.
- If performance falls short of perfect, individual see their self as a total failure.
- Eg: “I have to do things perfectly, because anything less then perfect is a failure.”

Disqualifying the positives

- Individual reject positive experiences by insisting they “don’t count” for some reason or other.
- In this way, individual can maintain a negative belief that is contradicted by everyday experiences.
- Eg: You get praised by your teachers for an excellent term’s work, but you see this as trivial.

Overgeneralisation

- If something bad happens only once, we expect it happen over and over again.
- Drawing broad negative conclusions on the basis of a single insignificant event.
- E.g. you get a D for an exam when you normally get straight As and you, therefore, think you are stupid.

Catastrophising

- You expect that the worst will happen even when there is no evidence to suggest that it might
- Individual don’t consider other possible outcomes which might be just as, if not more likely.
- Eg: "If something is going to happen, it'll probably be the worst case scenario."
Negative views about the world

"Everybody hates me because I am worthless"

Negative views about oneself

"I am worthless"

Negative views about the future

"I'll never be good at anything because everyone hates me"
• Beck’s system of therapy is similar to Ellis’s, but has been most widely used in cases of depression.

• Cognitive therapists help clients to recognise the negative thoughts and errors in logic that cause them to be depressed.

• **Use constructive thinking to modify behaviour.**

• The therapist also guide clients to question and challenge their dysfunctional thoughts, try out new interpretations, and ultimately apply alternative ways of thinking in their daily lives.

• Beck’s Cognitive Therapy has also been successfully applied to panic disorders and other anxiety disorders (Beck, 1993).
DONALD MEICHENBAUM'S COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY/MODIFICATION (CBT/M)

- Focuses on identifying, understanding, and changing thinking and behaviour.

- Meichenbaum believed that learning to control behaviour begins in childhood, based on parental instruction.

- CBM is less direct than REBT and utilises self instructional training to help the client learn to become more self aware of their self talk.

- Through working with the therapist, the client uses role playing and practices self instructions to address everyday problems in life.

- In turn they can learn ways to change their aggressive or impulsive behaviours or even learn to overcome the fear of public speaking or taking tests.
THOUGHTS
What we think affects how we feel and act

EMOTIONS
What we feel affects how we think and act

CBT
CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

BEHAVIORS
What we do affects how we think and feel
She looks at the clock; it’s 11:20 p.m. Her teenaged son and daughter said they would be home by 10:30.

Mother thinks: They must have been in a fiery car crash, or kidnapped, or murdered. I know they’re dead. Why did I let them go out at all? I’m so stupid.

Panic, dread, utter terror

Behavior
Pacing, increased heart rate, sweating, racing thoughts

Feelings
Meichenbaum’s Self - Instructional Training (SIT), which remains today as a major part of self-control strategies. Originally developed to help impulsive children:

1. Adult performs the task while speaking to the child (cognitive modelling).

2. Child performs the task with adult supervision (external guidance).

3. Child performs on his/her while verbalising the directions out loud.

4. Child performs on his/her own while whispering to his/her self (self-guidance).

5. Child uses inside voice while performing the task (self-instruction).
Deals with how the social perceiver uses information to arrive at causal explanations for events.

Attributions are the perceived causes that individuals select or construct for events in their lives.

Attribution theory deals with what people believe about why they succeed or fail at different tasks and the effects on future behavior or learning.

A basic assumption of attribution theory is that a person’s understanding of the causes of past events influences his or future actions.
Weiner's Attributional Theory of Achievement

- Weiner (1985) has presented the most ambitious attribution theory of achievement motivation and emotion.
- This theory deals with the perceived causes of success and failure, the characteristics of causal thinking, and subsequent emotional experiences in relation to achievement behaviours.
- According to Weiner, the most important factors affecting attributions are ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck.
- He classified attributions along three causal dimensions:
  - **Locus of control**: where there are two poles: an internal locus versus an external locus
  - **Stability**: do causes change over time or not?
  - **Controllability**: causes one can control or not
Locus of control refers to one’s belief that her behaviour is guided by external factors, such as luck, fate, etc or internal factors, such as ability and effort.

- The importance of an attribution that is internal, for example, the influence on self-esteem.

Stability refers to how likely it is the probability of causes will change over time.

- For example, Allison failed her History test, but she attributed this failure to lack of sleep the night before. Allison might consider this situation unstable because the attributed cause (fatigue) would likely change in the future.
- Stability is directly related to one’s expectancy for success.

Controlability

- Does the person have little control over the situation, or is the situation in their control?
- Control influences one’s affect (or feeling/emotion toward the situation or behaviour).
INTERNAL VERSUS EXTERNAL ATTRIBUTIONS

- The fundamental attribution error, which is the tendency to explain other people's actions in terms of internal causes and to explain one's own actions in terms of external causes.

- Causality attributions affect our affective (emotional) reactions to success and failure.

- A person may attribute success to himself, such as "I have a lot of ability and work hard."

- There is a common bias to attribute success to oneself "I am clever" but to attribute failure to outside factors "The exam was too hard".

- For example, "He fell down because he is clumsy" but "I fell down because the grass is slippery".
STABLE VERSUS UNSTABLE ATTRIBUTIONS

- A person might attribute success to ability (which is a relatively enduring characteristic) or to effort (which may be more fluctuating).

- Stability attributions affect our predictions about the future.

- Commonly ascribed stable and unstable external causes are task difficulty (stable) and chance (unstable).

- For example, "This is a very hard course" (task difficulty) or "I just didn't study the right things" (chance).
Controllability affects our persistence on task.

Both lack of trying and being ill are internal and unstable causes for failure, but there is an obvious difference between them.

The former is considered controllable, but the latter is not.

“I might decide to try harder and overcome failure, but I cannot at easily decide to overcome the flu.” Effort is more controllable than illness.

Weiner assumed that each specific causal attribution for success or failure has particular emotional consequences, which in turn influence future achievement-oriented behaviors.
COMMON PATTERNS

• People tend to attribute success to internal causes and failure to external causes.

• When student attributions for failure are stable and uncontrollable, students are unlikely to change their behaviours in ways that might lead to future success.

  ▪ When asked, people give four common and basic reasons for success or failure on specific tasks:
    ✓ Ability
    ✓ Effort
    ✓ Task difficulty
    ✓ Luck
WHY ARE ATTRIBUTIONS IMPORTANT?

- The attributions/beliefs influence:
  
  - **Learning outcomes**
    - Expectations
    - Performance
    - Choices
  
  - **Well-being outcomes**
    - Emotions
  
  - **Social outcomes**
    - Help seeking behaviours
GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ATTRIBUTIONS?

- **Males**
  - Attribute successes to ability and failures to lack of effort.

- **Females**
  - Attribute successes to effort and failure to lack of ability.
COVINGTON’S SELF-WORTH THEORY OF ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION

- Self-worth is the value one assigns to oneself or one's abilities in self assessment.

- The concepts of self-esteem and self-worth are closely linked.

- Self-worth (or self-esteem), which concerns individuals’ affects, emotions, or feelings about themselves or evaluations of themselves.

- Self-worth theory focuses attention on the prevalent need implied in the drive-theory model to approach success and to avoid failure, which causes a sense of worthlessness and social disapproval.

- Personal worth depends largely on one's accomplishment /achievement.
- **Ability** is seen as a critical component of success, and inability a prime cause of failure, self-perceptions of ability become a significant part of one's self-definition.

- Thus, **self-worth theory stresses ability perceptions as a primary activator of achievement behaviour.**

- Individuals are driven to succeed not only to reap the personal and social benefits of success, **but also because success increases a reputation for one's ability to achieve.**

- If success becomes unlikely, one's first priority is to act in ways that minimize the implications of failure-namely, that one lacks ability.
SUMMARY

- Establishing and maintaining a **positive self-image** (a positive view of self-worth) is a **primary human motive**.

- Negative thinking influence motivation.

- Motivation will decrease when we attribute our failures to stable factors like ability and task difficulty.

- Motivation will increase when we attribute our failures to unstable factors like effort.
Thank you!