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APPSC PAPER I: GENERAL STUDIES & MENTAL ABILITY · PSYCHOLOGY

Introduction to psychology

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1 Psychology: nature, history, schools, branches and social problems

Psychology is the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes; it became a laboratory science with Wundt at Leipzig in 1879, grew through rival schools, now works in many fields (clinical, counselling, school, forensic, industrial and more) and is applied to social problems such as violence, discrimination, poverty and delinquency.

Core facts

- **Word, first use, the soul → behaviour journey, Wundt, James, Thorndike and the "fathers" list:** see EDU-PS-01. This note adds the degree-level points.
- **Woodworth:** psychology is the **scientific study of the activities of the individual in relation to the environment**.
- **Morgan and King:** psychology is the **science of human and animal behaviour**, and it **includes applying** that science to human problems.
- **Baron:** the science of **behaviour and cognitive processes**.
- **NCERT:** the study of **mental processes, experiences and behaviour** in different contexts.
- **McDougall:** the positive science of **conduct and behaviour**; **Watson:** the science of **behaviour** (1913).
- **Nature:** a **science** (systematic, empirical, objective, open to checking) that is both a **biological / natural** science (brain, nerves, hormones) and a **social** science (people in groups and cultures). APPSC 2023 keyed **social science**.
- **Milestones:** Fechner, *Elements of Psychophysics* (**1860**) → Wundt's laboratory, Leipzig (**1879**: scientific psychology begins) → Ebbinghaus on memory (**1885**) → William James, *Principles* (**1890**) → APA founded (**1892**, G. Stanley Hall first president) → Witmer's first psychological clinic (**1896**) → Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* (**1900**) → **Binet-Simon scale (1905), the first intelligence test** → Watson's behaviourism (**1913**).
- **India:** first department of experimental psychology and laboratory at **Calcutta University, 1915** (**N.N. Sengupta**); **Girindrasekhar Bose** founded the **Indian Psychoanalytical Society (1922)**.
- **Schools (seven named by APPSC):** structuralism, functionalism, **behaviourism**, Gestalt, psychoanalysis, humanistic, cognitive.

School	Founder	Focus	Main method
Structuralism	Wundt, Titchener	Elements of consciousness	Trained introspection
Functionalism	William James, Dewey	Use of the mind in adapting	Introspection + observation
Behaviourism	J.B. Watson	Observable behaviour, S-R	Experiment, conditioning
Gestalt	Wertheimer, Köhler, Koffka	Wholes, perception, insight	Experiment (phenomenological)

School	Founder	Focus	Main method
Psychoanalysis	Sigmund Freud	Unconscious conflicts	Free association, dream analysis
Humanistic	Maslow, Rogers	Growth, self-actualisation, free will	Case study, client interview
Cognitive	Neisser, Piaget	Thinking, memory, information processing	Experiment, computer models

- **Fields, one line each:** **clinical** (diagnose and treat mental disorders), **counselling** (everyday adjustment problems of normal people), **school** (work inside schools: testing, learning and behaviour problems), **educational** (theory of teaching and learning), **forensic** (law, courts, offenders, police), **evolutionary** (how evolution shaped behaviour), **industrial-organisational** (people at work: selection, training, morale), **developmental** (change across the lifespan), **social** (individual in groups), **health, community, environmental, sports, cognitive, biological / physiological**.
- **Violence (WHO typology):** **self-directed** (on oneself: suicide, self-harm), **interpersonal** (family / intimate partner and community), **collective** (by groups: war, riots, state violence).
- **Racism:** unfair treatment of people because of their **race or skin colour**. **Discrimination** is the **behaviour**; **prejudice** the **attitude**; **stereotype** the **belief**.

Explained

1. Reading a definition question. The two most-asked definitions differ in what they stress.

Author	Key words	What it adds
Woodworth	activities of the individual, environment	Behaviour always happens in relation to surroundings
Morgan & King	human and animal behaviour, application	Animals included; applying psychology is part of it
Baron	behaviour and cognitive processes	Inner processes are studied too
NCERT	mental processes, experience, behaviour, contexts	Experience (subjective) and context matter

Behaviour is any response that can be observed or measured (walking, speaking, a change in heart rate).

Mental processes are inner activities (thinking, remembering, feeling) known through behaviour and self-report. **Experience** is the person's own awareness of a state.

2. Nature of psychology.

- **A science:** uses systematic methods (observation, experiment, tests), tests hypotheses and accepts only findings others can repeat.
- **Natural and social:** biological roots (neurons, hormones, genes) and social roots (family, culture, groups). This is why some boards place it in science faculties and others in arts.

- **Positive, not normative:** it describes behaviour as it is; it does not set moral rules (contrast ethics).
- **Pure and applied:** pure psychology builds theory (general, experimental, physiological); applied psychology uses it (clinical, industrial, educational, forensic).
- **Its data are relative:** behaviour depends on the person and the setting, so laws are probabilistic, not exact like physics.

3. Scope. Psychology studies the whole range of behaviour: of children, adults and the old; of normal and abnormal people; of individuals and groups; of humans and animals; in the laboratory and in daily life (home, school, work, court, hospital).

4. Milestones in context. The year to remember is **1879**: Wundt's laboratory turned psychology from philosophy into a laboratory science (APPSC 2023 asked "scientific psychology was first accepted in"). **Binet** (with Simon, 1905) built the **first intelligence test** to identify French schoolchildren who needed special help; Terman's Stanford–Binet (1916) made the **IQ** popular. **Witmer** (1896, University of Pennsylvania) opened the first psychological clinic and is called the founder of clinical psychology.

5. Clinical, counselling and the others: telling them apart.

Field	Works with	Typical work
Clinical	People with mental disorders	Diagnosis, psychological testing, therapy
Counselling	Normal people facing problems	Career, marriage, study and adjustment counselling
School	Pupils, teachers, parents in schools	Assessing learning problems, behaviour plans
Forensic	Courts, police, prisons, offenders	Fitness to stand trial, risk assessment, witness accuracy, offender treatment
Industrial-organisational	Employees and organisations	Selection, training, leadership, motivation
Evolutionary	Behaviour as adaptation	Mate choice, aggression, cooperation as products of natural selection
Health	Patients, public	Stress, lifestyle, illness behaviour
Community	Neighbourhoods, groups	Prevention, community mental health programmes
Environmental	People and surroundings	Crowding, noise, personal space, pollution

A **psychiatrist** is a medical doctor (MBBS, then an MD, DNB or diploma in psychiatry) who can prescribe drugs; a clinical psychologist is not a medical doctor and uses tests and psychotherapy. **Psychiatric social workers** handle the family and community side of treatment.

6. Psychology and social problems. The syllabus asks how psychology helps society. For a probation officer these are the core cases.

- **Violence and aggression.** Aggression is behaviour meant to harm another. **Hostile** aggression aims at hurt; **instrumental** aggression uses harm to get something. Explanations: instinct (Freud, Lorenz), **frustration–aggression hypothesis** (Dollard and others, 1939), **social learning** (Bandura's Bobo doll

studies: children copy aggressive models), and media and family violence as models. WHO also classes violence by **nature**: physical, sexual, psychological and **deprivation or neglect**.

- **Prejudice and discrimination.** Prejudice is a negative attitude towards a group; discrimination puts it into action (refusing a job, a house, a seat). Forms: **racism** (race, colour), **casteism**, **sexism**, **ageism**, religious and regional prejudice. Reducing it: **contact** between groups on equal terms (Allport's contact hypothesis, 1954), **superordinate goals** that need both groups (Sherif's Robbers Cave study), education, laws, and re-categorising "them" as part of "us".
- **Poverty.** Psychology studies its effects: poor nutrition and health, low self-esteem, **learned helplessness**, a short time horizon, and lower school achievement. **Relative deprivation** (feeling worse off than others one compares with) predicts anger and unrest better than absolute poverty. Programmes that add skills, self-efficacy and social support work better than cash alone.
- **Juvenile delinquency.** Law-breaking by a person under 18 (in India, a "child in conflict with law": a child alleged or found to have committed an offence who was under 18 on the date of the offence, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, s. 2(13)). Psychological risk factors: broken or abusive families, poor supervision, school failure, delinquent peers, substance use, low self-control. Psychologists assess the child, advise the **Juvenile Justice Board** (for example in the preliminary assessment of a 16–18-year-old accused of a heinous offence, s. 15 of the 2015 Act), and run counselling, family work and skill training in homes.
- Other problems in the same list: **substance abuse**, **gender discrimination** and violence against women, **health and HIV awareness**, **environmental** stress, and **disaster** trauma.

Common traps

✗ "The word psychology was first used by Goclenius in 1950." ✓ **1590** (APPSC 2023 printed "1950" in the option; read it as the 16th century).

✗ "Scientific psychology began in 1779 or 1889." ✓ **1879**, Wundt, Leipzig.

✗ "William James or Watson built the first intelligence test." ✓ **Alfred Binet** (with Simon, 1905).

✗ "Woodworth defined psychology as the science of the soul." ✓ Woodworth: **activities of the individual in relation to the environment**.

✗ "Morgan and King studied only human behaviour." ✓ **Human and animal** behaviour, plus its application.

✗ "School psychologists and clinical psychologists do the same job." ✓ **School** psychologists work in educational systems; **clinical** psychologists treat mental disorders.

✗ "Evolutionary psychology studies child development." ✓ It studies the role of **evolution** in behaviour; development is **developmental** psychology.

✗ "Violence on oneself is interpersonal violence." ✓ It is **self-directed**; interpersonal is between individuals; collective is by groups.

✗ "Prejudice and discrimination are the same." ✓ Prejudice = **attitude**; discrimination = **behaviour**; stereotype = **belief**.

✗ "A clinical psychologist prescribes medicines." ✓ Only a **psychiatrist** (a medical doctor) does.

Quick revision

- Psychology = science of behaviour and mental processes.
- Woodworth: activities of the individual in relation to the environment.
- Morgan & King: human and animal behaviour + application; Baron: behaviour and cognitive processes.
- Both natural and social science; APPSC key: social science.
- 1860 Fechner; 1879 Wundt Leipzig; 1890 James; 1896 Witmer clinic; 1905 Binet test; 1913 Watson.
- India: Calcutta University lab 1915; Girindrasekhar Bose, psychoanalysis 1922.
- Seven schools: structural, functional, behaviourist, Gestalt, psychoanalytic, humanistic, cognitive.
- Clinical = disorders; counselling = normal problems; school = in schools; forensic = law; evolutionary = evolution.
- WHO violence: self-directed, interpersonal, collective.
- Racism = unfair treatment by race or colour; prejudice (attitude) → discrimination (act).