

Introduction to Personality Psychology

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Key concepts, major theories, research methods, and practical applications

1. What Is Personality Psychology?

Aspect	Description
Definition	The scientific study of enduring patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that make each individual unique.
Scope	Explains who we are , why we act consistently , and how personalities develop and change over the lifespan.
Goals	1. Describe personality traits and structures. 2. Explain the origins of those traits (genetic, environmental, developmental). 3. Predict behavior across situations. 4. Apply findings to clinical, occupational, and social contexts.

2. Core Concepts

Concept	Meaning	Example
Trait	A relatively stable characteristic that influences behavior across time and situations.	Extraversion, conscientiousness
Temperament	Biologically based, early-life tendencies (e.g., reactivity, self-regulation).	A newborn who is easily soothed vs. one who cries persistently
Personality Structure	The organization of traits into broader dimensions or hierarchies.	Big-Five model (OCEAN)
Personality Development	Changes in traits due to maturation, life experiences, or intentional interventions.	Increases in agreeableness during middle adulthood
Individual Differences	Variability among people that is systematic, measurable, and meaningful.	Some people are risk-averse, others risk-seeking

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3. Major Theoretical Perspectives

Perspective	Central Idea	Key Figures	Typical Measures
Psychoanalytic / Psychodynamic	Personality emerges from unconscious drives, early childhood conflicts, and defense mechanisms.	Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Erik Erikson	Projective tests (Rorschach, Thematic Apperception Test)
Trait Theory	Personality consists of a finite set of traits that can be quantified.	Gordon Allport, Raymond Cattell, Robert McCrae & Paul Costa	Self-report inventories (NEO-PI-R, IPIP)
Humanistic	Emphasizes growth, self-actualization, and free will; people strive toward fulfillment.	Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow	Open-ended interviews, Q-sorts
Social-Cognitive	Behavior is a product of reciprocal interactions among personal factors, behavior, and environment; emphasizes self-efficacy and schemas.	Albert Bandura, Walter Mischel	Situation-specific questionnaires, behavioral observation
Biological / Evolutionary	Personality traits have genetic bases and adaptive functions shaped by evolution.	Hans Eysenck, Robert Cloninger	Twin studies, neuroimaging, hormone assays
Cultural / Cross-Cultural	Personality is shaped by cultural norms, values, and socialization practices.	Harry Triandis, Shalom Schwartz	Cross-cultural surveys, emic/etic comparisons

4. The Big Five (OCEAN) Model

Dimension	Description	Typical Behaviors
Openness to Experience	Curiosity, imagination, openness to novel ideas.	Enjoys art, seeks new experiences.
Conscientiousness	Organization, self-discipline, reliability.	Meets deadlines, plans ahead.

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Dimension	Description	Typical Behaviors
Extraversion	Sociability, assertiveness, positive emotionality.	Prefers group activities, feels energized by interaction.
Agreeableness	Compassion, cooperativeness	