Psychology of Personality and Individual Differences: Theory and Applications
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Week 8
Lecture 18: Mini cognitive theories of personality

I welcome you all to module 8 of this course. So, module 8 is about cognitive and social cognitive perspectives, and today we will have lecture number 18 overall, which is the third lecture of this module. Today we will be discussing mini-cognitive theories of personality, which means we will be talking about many theories that are small concepts, not full-fledged theories like the ones we discussed earlier. Still, such small concepts also contribute to the understanding of human personality. So, before we talk about today's lecture, let me give you a brief recap of the last lecture, which is lecture number 17.

So, in the last lecture, we talked about Albert Bandura's social learning theory or social cognitive theory. There, we discussed the basic concept of reciprocal determinism, which was proposed by Bandura. It talks about how environmental, personality, and behavioral factors all dynamically interact with each other in our lives. It's not just environmental factors or personal factors, but the behavior of the person itself can also come into the equation. So, all these three factors interact with each other and give rise to various outcomes in our lives.

We discussed in detail the concept of reciprocal determinism. We also talked about the concept of personal, proxy, and collective agency, which talks about how many behaviors come from personal factors, personal intentions, or typically from the free will of the person. So, those behaviors fall under the personal agency. There are certain behaviors for which we take help from other individuals. When we engage in those kinds of behaviors by taking help from other individuals, they are called proxy agency, and collective agency is when, collectively, as a group of people, we try to engage in certain behaviors and produce certain outcomes that become collective agency.

We also discussed in detail the concept of observational learning or modeling. We discussed various factors involved in it and the various dynamics involved in observational learning. In detail, we discussed all these things, and at the end, we discussed the concept of self-efficacy, and we also tried to understand the importance of self-efficacy. In addition, we also talked about the various sources of self-efficacy and the practical implications of this understanding. So, these are some of the things that we discussed in the last lecture.

Today we will be talking about some of the mini-cognitive theories. In that, we will be focusing on Julian Rotter's locus of control, the concept of locus of control, and how it contributes to the understanding of personality. We will be talking about the concept of learned helplessness and how it is related to personality, and we will be talking about explanatory style as a personality variable. So, these are some of the mini concepts or theories within the cognitive theories that we will be talking about in today's lecture. Let us start today's lecture. We will start today's lecture with the concept of Rotter's locus of control.

Julian Rotter, the photograph of whom is given here, introduced the concept of locus of control in 1966, which is a kind of personality trait or dimension that describes how much people believe they control the events in their lives. Locus of control captures the essence or idea of our belief system that to what extent we believe that we can control the events in our life. To what extent we are the agency for controlling events or to what extent do we think that outside factors control the outcome of an action or an event? So that belief is the locus of control. So where is the sense of control, is it within you or is it outside of you? So that is called locus of control. We will be talking about both internal and external aspects in upcoming slides.

Locus of control is a very important research tool in terms of understanding personality dimensions. Just like the concept of self-efficacy that we discussed in the last lecture, a lot of studies have been conducted on it, and they try to understand its application in the real-life context. So, similar to Bandura, Rotter also believed that animal studies are too simplistic to fully understand the complexity of human behavior. A lot of these theories that evolved out of animal research have been extended to human understanding, but when we talk about animal behavior, it is a much simpler behavior; we do not have much

complexity involved in animal behavior. But when you talk about human behavior, a lot of complexities are involved in it. So, that is what Rotter believed, just like Albert Bandura, whom we discussed in the last lecture.

One of the major concepts within this idea of locus of control is called expectancies of the person. So that is the idea that there are two aspects of expectancies. Rotter in 1975 suggested that individuals can form two types of expectancies or expectations about the outcomes of their behavior. One is called specific expectancies and another is called generalized expectancies. Specific expectancies talk about an individual's judgment of the likelihood that a behavior will lead to a particular outcome within a particular situation. So basically, it is an expectation: what are your expectations that if you engage in a behavior, what is the probability of X outcome? There can be many outcomes of a behavior; we will be giving examples. Whenever we engage in a behavior, there can be many outcomes of that behavior. What is your expectation that if you engage in this behavior, X outcome or Y outcome is likely to happen? That is your expectancy.

Now, when this expectancy is related to a very specific situation, then it becomes a specific expectancy, but when you have a general expectation that applies to various situations in life, then it becomes a generalized expectancy. So, these expectancies are connected to the concept of locus of control, and this also influences a lot of our thought processes, actions, and belief systems. Now, Rotter in this context predicted which option an individual might choose in a situation, and what kind of behavior a person will engage in a situation, given there are various possible outcomes, he used the term behavior potential, which refers to the likelihood of a specific behavior occurring in a particular situation, what is the probability of a particular behavior occurring in a particular situation, so that's called behavioral potential.

Behavioral potential is the possibility that a particular behavior will occur in a particular situation. We have a lot of expectations about certain behaviors or certain outcomes that are going to happen if we engage in a particular behavior. Based on that, we think about the future course of action, which is called behavioral potential. What is the probability that something is going to happen if we engage in a certain behavior? Based on those expectations, we engage in further actions in that particular situation. So, that is called

behavioral potential. According to Rotter, the response chosen by an individual in a situation will be the one with the strongest behavioral potential in that particular situation. If a person has a higher behavioral potential as per their expectation, then they are more likely to engage in that behavior. Now, there are other things involved in it as this behavioral potential can be calculated. Rotter tried to make a mathematical formula for it. He says the strength of a behavior potential, i.e., to what extent the expectations or expectation of a behavior to occur in a situation, will depend on two important factors. One is the reinforcement value, meaning the reward value and the second is expectancy. So basically, Behavioral potential = Reinforcement value* Expectancy. What is the expectation that a behavior or outcome is going to result from a behavior? And what is the reinforcement value of that outcome? How much value do you place on it? These two factors and their product will determine the possibility of a behavior happening in a situation.

So, expectancy, as we kind of discussed, is our subjective estimate of the likely outcome of a course of behavior. So, if I engage in a behavior, what is the likely outcome of that behavior? That is the expectation or expectancy value. It reflects what we expect will happen based on our experiences of similar situations. Mostly, this expectancy comes from our past experiences. If we have engaged in similar situations, or similar kinds of behavior, we know what is the likely outcome of that behavior. So, we derive that expectancy mostly from past experiences. For instance, in a scenario of a nasty insult, somebody has insulted you, let us say, the expectancy would be your estimate of what you expect will happen. For example, you mock the person. So, a situation has arisen; somebody has mocked you or insulted you. Now, expectancy is your estimate that if you retaliate against that person, let us say you mock that person, what is the possible outcome of that situation? Somebody has insulted you, or let us say you also insult back. So, what is the possible outcome of that situation?

So that is the expectancy. And we develop this expectancy mostly from past experiences based on our interactions with that person or a similar person. If it is related to a very specific situation, it is a specific expectancy. You might estimate that if you walk back to that person, the person will blush and feel ashamed of their remark. This may be one

possibility. There may be other possibilities as well. So based on that, you will determine which one is more likely to happen if you mock back to that person. Each option will have a different expectancy associated with it, influencing how that person behaves in that situation. So, we will try to understand using some examples.

The next factor is the reinforcement value. This refers to our preferences among the possible reinforcements available. So, what are the possible reinforcements available or rewards available for all these outcomes? Do you prefer those outcomes? Whatever will happen if you, let us say, if you mock back to that person, what is your reinforcement value of this outcome? So, based on that, you will decide whether to go ahead with that action or not. That is called the behavioral potential, which is a product of reinforcement value and expectancies. So, let us see by giving some more specific examples.

Rotter proposes that to predict behavior in a situation, we must understand what kind of behavior will happen in that situation. To predict that, we need to understand the available options and the possible outcomes associated with each option. What are the possible options available to that person, and whenever a person engages in a particular option, what is the outcome of that particular option when he chooses it? So, both will decide and determine the behavior of that person in a particular situation. So, that individual then evaluates the likely outcome of each option, and the expectancy, and assesses how much they value these outcomes.

The same formula is kind of explained in different words. The behavior most likely to occur will be the one that receives the highest rating based on this assessment. If there is a highest rating, then the most likely behavior is going to happen in that situation. Let us understand this by an example. So here is the situation. Someone, let us say, for example, Angela. Makes a nasty remark about you in front of other people. That is the situation. Now what will be the possibility of your behavior in that situation? So, this is the situation: someone named Angela made a nasty remark about you in front of others. Now what are the behavioral options you have? One option is that you give an angry reply to that person. Another option is that you make a mocking comment about that person. The next option is that you get upset, next is that you say nothing, and lastly is that you simply walk away. These are different possibilities that people can show in this particular situation. Now for

each of these behaviors, whatever you engage in, there is a possible outcome. So let us say what you can expect. What is the possible outcome of this situation? Everybody has certain expectations. If I do this behavior, what is the likely outcome? So let us say you give an angry reply to that person. Somebody insulted you, and you also gave an angry reply. The most possible outcome is that there will be an argument in this situation. So, what is the rating of expectancy? The possibility of an argument is very high. So, the expectancy of an argument happening is very high. What is the value of this outcome? Let us say you do not like to be in an argument in an argumentative situation. For you, the value of the reinforcement may be very low in a situation where there is an argument happening. Therefore, the value of this outcome may be very low for you as a person. It is possible; it depends on the other person, who may have different values. We are giving a hypothetical example. So, the outcome of an argument is very high in this situation, but the value of this outcome is very low for you. So, the possible final behavioral potential would be low, and maybe this behavior will not happen if, the value of this outcome is low for you. So, you may avoid this situation of argument.

The second one is that you make a mocking comment against that nasty remark given by another person. The possible outcome is that this person, Angela, who made a kind of nasty remark about you, will feel embarrassed. When you give a mocking comment in reply. So, the possibility is very high i.e., the expectancy of this embarrassment is very high, and you want that person to get embarrassed. So, the value of this outcome is very high for you, which means this behavior is very likely. Since The behavior potential of this behavior is very high, if you give high value to this outcome, it means it is the most possible behavior that is likely to happen for you because you value that outcome.

Other possibilities include situations where you feel upset and assume that Angela experiences remorse. However, the likelihood of her feeling remorse is quite low. Similarly, if you think, *"If I get upset, the other person will feel remorse or at least guilt,"* the probability of that happening remains low. Despite this, you strongly desire that outcome—you want the person to feel remorse or guilt because you place significant value on it. However, the probability or expectation of this outcome is very low. So probably you will not engage. So overall behavior potential may be low.

For other situations, similarly, like when you say nothing or walk away, the possible outcome of feeling silly in this situation may be very high but then for you, the value is low. You do not want that person to just feel silly and get away. For you, that is not a good enough result of this particular action. So, you may not engage in this behavior. The probability or potential is very low. Only for the present case, for you as a person, making a mocking comment against that nasty remark will have the highest potential and is most likely to happen in that situation because the behavior potential is very high in this case, as the outcome is very likely to happen, and you give a high rating to this outcome. In all situations, this particular case is most likely to happen because of your expectancy and the reward value of this particular outcome of this behavior. So, this is an example of how people can and what is the possibility of a behavior happening in a situation? All these calculations can happen very fast within the mental calculation of a person, and based on their past experiences, they can choose one particular option in a particular behavior in a particular situation. So, these are more like specific expectancies that we can generate from past experiences.

In many situations where we may not have any past experiences, then we rely on something called generalized expectancies. From similar experiences from the past, we have some general expectations. So, he highlights the importance of this concept, indicating that individuals develop beliefs based on their past learning experiences regarding whether reinforcement is controlled by external forces or if their behavior controls reinforcement. In many situations, we develop from our experience certain general expectancies, and based on that, we decide or choose to engage in certain behaviors. Rotter was particularly interested in the concept or in the idea of whether it makes a difference if individuals believe that the reinforcement, they receive is linked to their performance compared to those who believe the reinforcement is unrelated to their behavior. So, Rotter, from this particular understanding, extended this idea to understand what happens, and what differences occur when a person believes that the reward they receive is linked to their performance. So, whenever they take an action and whatever the result and reward they get out of that action, what is the belief of that person? Is this reward or outcome happening because of their action or is it within their control? Or is something outside of that

controlling it? Or is it not related to their behavior? Is it simply random factors coming from the outside? So, what kind of belief system do people have, and how does it make a difference when you have this kind of belief? So, based on this idea, the whole locus of control concept came into the picture.

This locus of control is one of the central ideas of Rotter's theory and he talked about two types of locus of control. One is external, and one is the internal locus of control of reinforcement. Individuals possess a generalized expectation that their actions lead to desired outcomes. Whenever you take an action, it is you or the control is coming from within you. You are the one who is controlling the rewards and outcomes of particular actions, and your locus is within you. You are the one whose actions are deciding your rewards, outcomes, and everything which is called an internal locus of control. The control is within the person. Or when they believe that external factors such as chance, luck, or the power of other people determine whether a desired outcome happens, then it becomes an external locus of control. When you think certain outcomes in your life depend on external factors, and it is not within you. It comes from, let's say, chance or luck, or someone outside, very powerful, will control this. Something like that, so your control is outside you. What is the outcome of a particular behavior? Or what is the possibility of reward linked to that behavior? So, it will be linked to external factors called an external locus of control. Now, what happens when people develop a generalized expectancy? So, in most situations, some people have an internal locus of control. When you base it on your experiences, you develop a certain locus, and patterns of locus of control show that some people are consistently internal locus of control, while some people are consistently external locus of control. These are called externals, and those who have a consistent internal locus of control are called internals. Now, when you develop a pattern of behavior, it becomes like a personality trait. In most situations, you will feel that if you are internal, you control the outcomes of your behavior, so you will always try to control your behavior or outcomes of behavior. You will put in a lot of effort and some people are consistently externals which means they believe whatever they do doesn't make much difference. It depends on their luck, chance, or something outside then they are called externals. And then their behavior will also follow accordingly. So, individuals who believe that

reinforcement depends on external forces are labeled as externals. Those external forces may include powerful others in the person's life, luck, God, fate, whatever it is. The key characteristic of externals is the belief that the locus of control is external to them. Their actions do not influence their outcomes so they cannot make much difference. So, that is one group of people called as externals. And similarly, the internals will follow the opposite trend. Individuals who believe their behavior does make a difference, whatever they do, their outcome depends on that are called internals. Rotter demonstrated that locus of control is a relatively permanent, stable characteristic. It becomes a kind of personality trait. Some people are internals, some people are externals because, in most situations, their interpretations are similar. Internals will mostly think about controlling outcomes, and externals will mostly think about external factors. Rotter's locus of control is a stable individual difference variable within the dimensions of external and internal, influencing a variety of behaviors. So, whether you are internal or external will influence a lot of actions and consequences in your behavior. What is the impact of this locus of control? Individuals with an internal locus of control are more likely to achieve an achievement orientation because they perceive that their behavior can lead to positive outcomes. They are more likely to be achievement-oriented people because they will think whatever they do can make a difference, and they will put in the effort and accordingly try to control the results and outcomes of their lives. Consequently, they are more likely to be high achievement-oriented people.

On the other hand, individuals with an external locus of control tend to be less independent and more prone to experiencing depression and stress because they will always feel they don't have control over things, they will always feel something else, luck, chance, or whatever it is, some external person or external factor can control or make a difference. Because you will always feel dependent on external factors, you will not feel a sense of independence. So, that may also lead to other experiences, and emotional experiences may lead to something similar to high stress, depression symptoms, and so on.

Whether you are internal or external may also influence your emotional consequences in life. Over the past half-century, some research shows that Over the last few decades, there has been an increased trend towards an external locus of control among young Americans.

So, some data shows that an external locus of control may be increasing in a lot of the population in certain countries like America. They believe that their lives are more controlled by external forces than what their parents believed at the same age. The newer generation is becoming more external in the context of certain countries. Unfortunately, such perceptions are in line with increasing cynicism and depression. As a result, such perceptions may also have emotional consequences like depression and so on. These individuals increasingly attribute their problems to external factors and tend to blame others for their difficulties. When you think that the controlling factor is outside of you, you are more likely to blame outside factors like other persons, luck, chance, or God, whatever it is. When things don't happen, you will likely blame those factors, you will not see what your problem is or where you lack, but you will blame it on those factors because you believe they are the ones who are controlling it.

So accordingly, your emotional consequences and all these things will influence your behavior. Rotter developed a scale called the Internal-External Locus of Control Scale to measure people's locus of control, by using this scale, we can measure whether we are more toward internal or more towards external, and so on. So, this was a scale that can be developed, and one can get a score for this internal-external locus of control. It is a scale with 29 items that looks at what kind of locus of control people have.

Now there are certain limitations to these views, particularly in certain ideas of this approach. Most studies that find differences in individuals with an internal versus external locus of control tend to depict internal in a positive light. Most of the time, there is a trend in the research that shows the internal locus of control is somewhat better as compared to the external locus of control in terms of life outcomes. However, some researchers make a cautious attempt in terms of understanding. Now this may be a one-sided view, which is overly simplistic and fails to look at the complexities of life because both orientations may be helpful in certain situations. In certain situations, an external locus of control may be appropriate, and in other situations, the internal locus of control could be more appropriate. So, it is not like black and white, where one is better than the other and so on. Depending on the situation, they may have different outcomes. For example, within the internal locus of control, or people who are internals, because of this trait, there may be certain negative

aspects to their life also. Like they have many positive things but they can also have negative aspects to it. When people are too much in the internal locus of control category. However, some early studies indicate that internals may possess certain negative qualities, such as too much compulsivity in behavior, who have an excessive concern for order and control, and often score high on internal locus of control. Some people, when they are very strictly in the internal locus of control category, may be highly obsessive and compulsive in terms of controlling the outcome. So, they may become highly obsessed and highly compulsive individuals which may have a negative impact on their life.

Some researchers also noted that the internals might have an exaggerated need for control because they have a very strong sense of control over the outcomes of things. Because the internals frequently attribute events to their actions, they may unjustly blame themselves also for failures beyond their control. Sometimes failure can happen in one's life which is not in your control. So, many times external reasons could be there for your failure, but people with a very strict internal locus of control in such situations may start blaming themselves because they always see, that the locus is within themselves, which may lead to unnecessary self-criticism problems and emotional issues in certain situations.

So, there may not only be positive things associated with the internals but there may also be some negative aspects to it. On the other hand, similarly, there can be positive things for external people with externals. Research suggests that adopting an external perspective can be beneficial in specific situations particularly, the situation which is beyond one's control. In many situations in our life, it is not in our control. We cannot decide the outcome of many situations in our lives because there are many factors outside of us and outside of our control, working in many situations in our life. So, in such situations, people with an external locus of control may be in a much better position. For example, an internal patient facing major heart surgery, is somebody who has a very strong internal locus of control. Let us say when facing major heart surgery, one might initially take steps to secure the best care, but ultimately, one must trust the chosen medical team. Things like surgery and other things, ultimately, you cannot control the outcome of such issues. Let's say very serious surgery and such kinds of things. Even though you may go to the best possible medical teams and hospitals, still you don't know what the possible outcomes are, anything can

happen. In such a situation, you cannot control the situation. You have to only trust those people and, ultimately you have to trust and make it external to decide the outcomes, whatever happens. So, continuing to stress about the outcome can be detrimental. So, in such a situation, if you stress all the time about the outcomes, it is useless because you do not have control over them. On the other hand, externals who perceive such situations as out of their control might handle the scenarios by trusting the teams and experiencing less distress. So, in such a situation, people with an external locus of control may be more relaxed because they think, it is not in their control.

So, they may not be very obsessive or compulsive in those situations. There can be advantages to both sides. The idea is to kind of, make a healthy balance of both perspectives depending on the situation. So healthy individuals are those who learn to balance both internal and external orientations, adapting their responses based on the situation. Such individuals recognize that it is unrealistic to control every aspect of their environment, yet equally unwise to relinquish control. So, both extremes are not good because there are situations where you do not have control, and there are situations where you should take control. So, based on that, one should have a healthy mix of both loci of control. But the problem is when it becomes a personality trait; people generally are not able to balance both cases because they are always biased towards one particular approach, which can happen very automatically. But a healthy approach is always about balancing both the sense of control, depending on the situation. So, flexibility is important to adapt to situations.

Now, let us come to another concept that comes under the mini cognitive theories of personality, which is called learned helplessness. So, the concept of learned helplessness evolved out of animal studies. First, it was described by Martin Seligman. So, here is the photo of Martin Seligman, who is also called the father of positive psychology. He proposed this concept of learned helplessness, which they accidentally discovered out of animal research, which is connected to the concept of giving up or avoiding, how people or animals give up in certain situations based on certain past experiences and they learn to become helpless. So, this is not real helplessness, but it is a learned kind of helplessness.

Learned helplessness occurs after an individual repeatedly experiences negative or uncontrollable situations and becomes passive and unmotivated, staying that way even after the environment changes so that success is possible. So learned helplessness happens when an individual experiences repeated failures or repeated negative outcomes or repeated negative uncontrollable situations that they could not control. So, when this happens a few times in the past, the person develops certain mental tendencies to become passive and unmotivated and, in the future, they also remain like that. Even if a situation changes and you are more likely to control and achieve success, you don't even try to achieve success because of your past conditioning. As you experience failure a few times, you develop a sense of passivity and you stay unmotivated. So, in the future, when another situation arises, where success may be possible, in a similar situation, you don't even try to make any effort. So that is called learned helplessness, as a result, you have learned to become helpless. This is a learned phenomenon from your past experiences. When a new situation arises, where success or control is possible, you don't even try to attempt to control or make an attempt to succeed in those situations. So, the sense of passiveness arises in that person called learned helplessness. So, it evolved out of some animal studies.

Learned helplessness was discovered accidentally by Martin Seligman and his colleague Stephen Maier in 1967. They were studying the effects of an inescapable shock upon subsequent escape and avoidance learning in an animal model with dogs. So, they are experimenting with a dog to see what happens when an animal is given an inescapable shock. So basically, the animal is put in a chamber, and below the chamber, there is a metal plate. Through that metal plate, certain mild electric shocks can be given to the dog. Now they did this experiment with different groups of dogs. One group of dogs was given inescapable shocks, and they could not stop these electric shocks. So, when electric shocks were given, they could not do anything because there was no switch or anything to remove these shocks. So, one group of dogs was given inescapable shocks because they could not stop that. Another group was given shocks they could escape because there was a switch that they could press with their nose, and when it was pressed, the shock was stopped. Like this, there was a control condition where, there were no shocks given and so on. So, like that, they used different groups of dogs. For one group, they had to endure these electric shocks and they could not do anything as it was beyond their control. Another group had a

sense of control as they could switch off the electric shock by pressing a particular switch through their nose and so on. So, these groups of dogs were transferred to another kind of shuttle box. Therefore, researcher Immobilized a dog and exposed it to inescapable electric shock. They are talking about the experimental group. So, other groups were there where they could control it. Now, this group of dogs who were experiencing inescapable shock, after 24 hours when they were transferred to another chamber, could stop it. Earlier, there was no escape. Now, they were placed in a chamber where they could press a certain switch and stop the electric shock. They found most of these dogs did not react and passively endured the shock even though they could stop it, they passively endured it. This contrasted with the control group of dogs that reacted vigorously and learned to stop the shock. On the other hand, the dogs in the initial first phase, could stop the electric shock. When they were put in the same chamber box, they immediately actively tried to find out how to escape that, and they jumped and they made an effort.

On the other hand, those who learned in the first phase that there was no possible escape from this did not try, even in the new situation where it was possible to stop. So, from this model, they said this dog has learned to become helpless. So, this was the kind of chamber where they were put in the second phase, they could easily jump from here to here. So here there was an electric shock, but if they jump and come here, there is no electric shock.

Even if such a simple barrier was given; where they could easily jump. The experimental dog who experienced an inexplicable shock in the first phase did not even try to jump. On the other hand, those who could control the shock in the first phase immediately jumped here. So basically, in past experiences, this passive dog had learned to become helpless as it had previously experienced that the action did not influence the shock. This led to the expectation of helplessness in new situations, resulting in motivational, cognitive, and emotional deficits. This is known as the learned helplessness phenomenon.

Now like this learned helplessness, similar behavior can also be observed in human beings. So, psychologists studying human problems quickly recognized some parallels between this learned helplessness of uncontrollable events in the laboratory experiment with some of the behaviors of human beings in real life. This promoted research on learned helplessness in a human context as well. For example, in one study, researchers induced

helplessness in people similar to how it was done with animals by exposing them to uncontrollable events such as unsolvable problems instead of electric shocks and observed the resulting deficits. Further similar studies were done with humans, but here electric shocks were not given; instead, they were given situations where they could not solve problems, such as unsolvable problems. So, they tried and tried, but they could not solve it because it was not possible to solve.

They were in a situation where it was not possible to solve. So, complete helplessness was induced, and when they were put in newer situations where it was possible to solve, they probably did not even try to solve them. So, similar findings were reported in a human context where human beings also experienced learned helplessness. Further studies also revealed more similarities between animal phenomena and human laboratory results. These uncontrollable adverse events increase the likelihood of anxiety and depression. However, prior exposure to controllable events could immunize people against learned helplessness. In the case of human beings, they do not always experience only uncontrollable events, many times they also experience a lot of controllable events in their lives. So, those past experiences of controllable events can also immunize people against learned helplessness. Human beings, because of so many things we experience, and we can make a lot of calculations, a lot of thinking processes can be involved. So learned helplessness can be more complex in the case of human beings as compared to animals. So, this additionally demonstrates the subject that their responses could change outcomes, helping reverse the helplessness of deficits.

Several aspects of human helplessness differ from animal helplessness, like dogs' helplessness. So, human beings differ in certain contexts because human thought processes are different. They have a unique ability to make meaning out of life events, while animals learn about controlling events in literal terms. When an animal is in a situation of learned helplessness, it only learns about or its conditioning is only about that situation, and literally, they think about that situation only and respond to that situation. Human beings make a lot of meaning out of it as they can think complex thought processes and can exaggerate things to so many other events associated with those events. So, those meaning-

making processes are something very unique to human beings, which can make it much more complex in terms of expression.

It's important not to misinterpret human behavior, such as passive behavior or withdrawal behavior, as a sign of helplessness. Many times, human beings simply become passive, not because of helplessness but because of many other factors in their mind. Alternative forms of control, such as belief in religious faith, can help people feel less helpless in the face of trauma. As a result, sometimes people simply become passive in certain situations, and they don't do anything actively, but they make a lot of other complex thinking around it, where they simply think, that an outside factor like God is controlling their event. In such situations, they might think that God will make things right. Now, here, they are not completely losing control but giving it to some external factors. So, even though in this situation, the person may become very passive, it may not be a typical case of helplessness.

So, in human cases, they may make meaning out of a situation and be involved in complex thought processes which we do not see in animal conditioning. Another difference is vicarious helplessness, that humans can develop helpless behavior or deficits by merely observing others facing uncontrollable situations. Sometimes we learn to become helpless not because we have experienced it but because we observe other people. If I see someone else has failed in a certain task, it may instill a sense of failure in me also, so I will not even try to do that because I have learned that another person also failed. Person X, Y, and Z failed, so what is the point of trying myself? So, by observing others, one can also feel a sense of helplessness or uncontrollability in a situation that we don't see in animals. Another difference could be that a group of people can exhibit helplessness after exposure to uncontrollable events. A group faced with an unsolvable problem shows problem-solving deficits. So, in the case of human beings, a whole group can experience helplessness. In animals, it is mostly an individual thing. So that's why it shows that in the case of human beings, the concept of learned helplessness could be much more complex and may include a lot of thought processes that we don't see in animals.

Now, this concept that there is a difference in the thought processes in the case of learned helplessness between animals and humans, led to the attributional reformulation of learned helplessness, and a new concept came to explain the human situation, which is called

explanatory style. How do you explain a situation, or how do you find the causes of certain behaviors or outcomes? Can help in explaining the human situation in a much better way. So basically, it evolved from the learned helplessness paradigm, and the explanatory style seems to be much more befitting or fitting in the context of human explanation. So, to resolve discrepancies in the helplessness model, Abramson and colleagues integrated it with the attributional theory. This learned helplessness theory was modified using attributional reformulation.

Attribution means how human beings try to find the causes of behavior. So, they reinterpreted helplessness, and learned helplessness, in the human context using attributional reformulation, and they called it the explanatory style concept or theory. They suggested that people interpret uncontrollable bad events by asking why they happened and their causal attribution, by stating what is the cause behind it to determine the subsequent helplessness. So, in the case of human beings, as we have seen, which doesn't happen in animals when we face an uncontrollable event, we try to find out why this is happening. We try to interpret the situation and try to find the causes behind it. So, that is called attribution. Attribution is associated with explanatory style or finding the causes. This concept of explanatory style became important in finding or explaining helplessness in the human context. So, this attribution or finding causes could be based on many factors in the human context.

One can attribute the cause of a behavior or an outcome as a stable cause. A stable cause means something that is going to last for a long time. Let us say if one attributes the cause of a failure or a situation where there is an uncontrollable situation, you could not control the situation, then human beings try to find the cause behind it. Why did I fail in a situation? What led to my failure in a situation? Then they try to find the causes. Now what is the nature of this cause? Is this cause stable? If it is a stable cause, that means it is going to last for a very long time. For example, if you think the cause of your failure is your lack of ability, now this is a stable cause. Abilities are something that you cannot change overnight. You have a certain ability, and this ability can be modified and improved, but it is not an easy thing to do.

People have different abilities. Some people have higher abilities, some people have lower abilities, and so on. So, if you think you failed because of a lack of ability in a particular situation, then it is a stable attribution. Then your sense of helplessness will be more long-lasting. Because you think, 'I can't succeed', which means it will lead to much more long-lasting helplessness. One can also think about a cause as an unstable cause. When you think of some cause as unstable, that means you think the cause is for a very short time only, and it will be a temporary thing. So let us say you think the cause of your failure was, a lack of hard work. Now this is an unstable factor: hard work. Why it is unstable because this can be changed very easily. I could not succeed because I should have put more effort, but the hard work input was less from my side as a result of this, I failed, therefore it is a temporary thing. Next time when I put more effort, I am going to succeed, as a result, this hard work is an unstable thing.

If you explain your failure as a lack of hard work, then your helplessness will be for a very short time only because you think you can change it, but the ability is something that cannot be changed so easily. So that will lead to more helplessness. One can also attribute the cause as a global cause. A global cause means it is going to affect most of the things in my life. So, helplessness affects various situations in life. So, if you failed in a particular situation or you find the cause of that failure as a lack of ability or a lack of intelligence or something like that. But then you say this lack of intelligence is going to make you fail in many things in your life, then it becomes a global cause. So, you may think that one failure leads to failure in so many other dimensions of life, and as a result, you are connecting that. So, then the cause is a very global factor. You think lack of intelligence or lack of ability is causing failure in many aspects of your life, that means this cause is a global factor, which means it influences many things. So global factors affect many dimensions of your life. As a result, the helplessness will become much more global, or its impact will be in many situations, and many aspects of your life.

When the cause is specific it means, it is only related to this situation. So, I failed in this particular case because I was not prepared for this particular interview or this particular examination, something like that. It is not that bad because it was only related to this situation, it is not going to influence other aspects of my life. So next time maybe I can

change this situation but this is only related to this particular XYZ situation. So, you are not connecting this cause with other aspects of your life. So, I failed in an interview, which means it was only the interview, not other aspects of my life. I am not a failure in other aspects of life. So, you are finding only specific causes.

Causes can be internal, which we kind of discussed in internal and external locus of control. When you think the causes are internal, that means you are finding causes only within you. So, your self-esteem will drop, you are more likely to experience helplessness and so on. When you say the reason was within me, you are more likely to be influenced by that. When you say the reason is more typically, let us say, lack of intelligence or some kind of thing, these are all internal factors. For example, I failed because I could not face those situations. On the other hand, the cause could be external. Under this situation an individual might think, it's not my fault, someone else was creating an obstacle. As a result, then it may not influence your self-esteem much, because you think you are not the reason, something else is the reason, or you may think that you simply had bad luck. So, what kind of causes do you find in the situation or leading to the outcomes of a situation, success, or failure, will influence your behavior in so many diverse ways depending on what your explanation of that behavior, or explanation of certain outcomes of your behavior. So, all these factors can come into play when human beings come into the picture. From this, we can talk about explanatory style. Psychologists use this term, explanatory style, to describe the tendencies of some individuals to habitually behave with a certain type of explanation for events. Human beings develop certain tendencies or fixed patterns of explanations for events in their lives. When events happen, successes happen, failures happen, and people tend to explain in a certain fashion, in a particular style that is called explanatory style. So, what your explanatory style is will determine your emotional outcomes, your future motivation, and the future effort that you put in, everything will be determined by your explanatory style.

How do you explain the cause of a particular action in your behavior, particular outcomes of events in your life, or particular outcomes of your actions in your life? What is your explanatory style? How do you explain it using all these factors that we discussed? So, this explanation can be categorized into internal, external, stable, unstable, global, and specific,

as we all discussed. So, the explanation could be based on whether you are explaining using internal factors or external factors, or whether you are trying to find the causes of the outcome as stable, unstable, global, or specific. So, these are the three possible ways in which we can explain things that happen in our lives.

So, when we explain using internal or external factors, this dimension addresses whether we attribute the causes to within ourselves or outside, as we have already discussed. For example, a poor grade on a paper might be attributed internally to a lack of skills or ability, or externally to the professor not being good, and he was very harsh as a result of which he gave me a bad grade. So, this could be one explanation where it is external. Or when you say, I got a bad grade because I lack ability, that could be an internal explanation, or I didn't work hard could also be an internal explanation. People who frequently use internal explanations are more likely to blame themselves for negative events, even for those beyond their control. Stable and unstable, we have already discussed, but just to summarize again, it talks about the permanence of the cause. To what extent this cause will remain: if it remains for a long time, then it is a stable factor; if it remains for a short term, then it is an unstable cause. An unstable cause is temporary, such as, 'I am not able to write well because of distraction.' When you say, 'I am not able to write this assignment properly' because a lot of distractions are there in my surroundings, can be called an unstable cause which is a temporary thing. This distraction will not remain permanently in your case, therefore you can go to some other place to remove the distraction, so it is an unstable factor. While a stable cause is more permanent, like perceiving, 'I lack writing skills.' When you say, 'I don't have writing skills, so I am not able to write properly.' It is a more stable cause which means wherever you go, you cannot change your ability immediately, so you will not be able to write. So that is like a stable cause.

While global specific talks about how many areas the cause affects. The more it affects, the more global it is. The less it affects, the more specific it is. For instance, believing one cannot write at all is a global explanation. So, when you are writing an assignment and you cannot write, you simply say, 'I cannot write anything', you are making it a global explanation. You are doing an assignment on a particular subject, and you are making it global, like, 'I cannot write well anything' So that means that is a global explanation,

implying poor performance in writing tasks while thinking one is struggling only on a particular paper is a specific explanation. When you say, 'I am not able to write properly this particular subject or assignment of this subject,' then it is a specific explanation.

So, individuals may develop consistent explanations. A lot of people have consistent patterns of finding causes. Similar causes you will find all the time as a result of which it becomes a kind of personality trait, where you are habitually using certain types of explanations. So, these explanations can be of two broad categories. One is a pessimistic style, and one is an optimistic style of explanation. So explanatory style featuring stable, global, and internal explanations for bad events, is termed as pessimistic, while the opposite style is called optimistic attributing to unstable, specific, and external explanations.

So, in case of bad events who are called pessimistic and who are called optimistic? For bad events or negative events or failures, when you attribute causes or try to find causes of such failures or bad events as internal factors causing failure, a stable cause is the cause of failure and attribute global cause, thus when you connect with internal, stable, and global factors in the causes of bad events, and then you have a pessimistic explanatory style. So, for example, an individual with a pessimistic explanatory style most times attributes negative events to their internal personal factors. So, they believe the cause of these events lies within themselves, their abilities, their personalities, and their inherent flaws. Therefore, they will say, 'I failed in this particular task because I don't have the abilities' so it is an internal factor which is one factor. So, they are more likely to become pessimistic because they think the cause is within them where they feel, 'I am the one who is responsible for it', then stable factors, therefore it is not just internal factor, you also make it a stable factor. For example, I fail because of a lack of ability. So ability is an internal factor as well as a stable factor, as you cannot change it. So, you are more likely to become pessimistic. People become optimistic when they think, 'I can make changes in my life or causes can be changed and I can achieve success next time', but when you think I cannot achieve success next time simply because I cannot change the cause, as it is a stable cause. So, as a result if you think that you don't have abilities, how do you change them? It is very difficult. So, then it is a stable explanation, and for this reason, people like this are more likely to become pessimistic. Optimism is less likely to happen here. In the case of the third

factor, if you explain bad events as global factors, link them to global factors, this style involves attributing negative events to global factors, which affect many aspects of your life. For example, if they fail a test, they might think they are incompetent in all areas of life. So, they just failed in one thing in their life, but they will say every aspect of life is a failure. As a result, they are making it a global cause, therefore, such kind of attribution of causes to internal, stable, and global factors for bad events, and negative events, is called a pessimistic explanatory style. So, some people with a pessimistic explanatory style at most times are more likely to experience negative emotions because they are more likely to explain in a similar way forming a pattern which then becomes a kind of trait.

An optimistic explanatory style is just the opposite of a pessimist explanatory style. When the outcomes of bad events, or failures are linked with external factors. So optimistic individuals, on the other hand, attribute negative events to external situational factors. Most of the time, they will see that they might have failed more likely due to certain factors & circumstances, rather than personal inadequacies. So, that leads to more optimism. But just the external factors themselves cannot make you optimistic, but what kind of factors you are finding causes, it is an unstable factor. So, they believe that the negative events are temporary and unstable, believing that the situation can be changed or improved later on. So instability is very important in terms of optimistic explanatory style. As a result, they look at factors based on the situation & they don't make it global like every aspect of life. So optimistic individuals tend to see negative events as only specific to this particular situation and not to other aspects of life. Then you are more likely to be optimistic and try to change, take action, and make changes in life.

So, people sometimes consistently develop a certain style of explanation. Some people use a pessimistic explanatory style, while some people use a more optimistic explanatory style. So, these are some further examples given here, for people with an optimistic style, for bad events they consider external, unstable, and specific factors while for good events, they use internal, stable, and global factors. As a result, for good events, they probably do just the opposite. Similarly, for a pessimistic style. They connect bad events to internal, stable, and global factors. For good events, they use external, unstable, and specific factors. For pessimistic styles, for good events, they find the causes as external. For good events, they

see unstable factors as the cause stating 'It's a one-time thing'. Similarly, for good events, they see more specific things like 'it's just one situation'. So, they find out the reasons in such a way that for bad events, they become depressed, and for good events, they don't see it as that good. So, this is how the explanation works, and it influences one's emotions.

So, this explanatory style can also be found by using a certain questionnaire called the Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ), which was developed by Peterson and colleagues in 1982. This is a self-report questionnaire; one can assess oneself as well as other individuals to determine their explanatory style, and therefore such measurement questionnaires are available. So, this questionnaire measures what your explanatory style is for bad events and good events, and for both cases, how you explain things. So, based on the attribution of bad events, this explanatory style typically shows a stronger correlation with the outcomes. For bad events, the explanations found in the research are much more strongly correlated with the outcomes than good events. People also use content analysis, another procedure called CAVE (Content Analysis of Verbatim Explanation). CAVE allows researchers to analyze written or spoken explanations for events. So, one can also ask people to write about what caused certain events in their life, whether bad events or good events, and based on that, some scoring can be done from what they have written. That is called content analysis. And one can also find the patterns of their explanation based on whatever they write. So, questionnaires can be used. Some content analysis of the written material can also be used to find out the explanatory style.

Explanatory style, when it becomes a personality trait, is not so easy to change, but many procedures can be used to change the explanatory style of people. Most of the cognitive therapies that people use for the treatment of patients and so on, which try to change thought processes can be used effectively to change the explanatory style of people when they understand that their explanations or their thought processes are the cause behind psychological problems and depression. Slowly, healthier thoughts can be replaced. Cognitive therapy does that; it has been found to effectively alter individual explanatory styles from pessimistic to optimistic, which can reduce the symptoms of depression in many patients. Additionally, cognitive behavior interventions focusing on problem-solving skills can lead individuals to interpret events more optimistically. So, most of these

cognitive behavior therapies and techniques can be used to change thought processes and explanatory styles, which can also change emotions when thought processes or patterns are changed. A pessimistic explanatory style leads to more negative emotions while an optimistic explanatory style leads to more positive emotions. So a lot of these therapies aim at that, most of these cognitive behavior therapies. So those explanatory styles can be changed, but, when it becomes a pattern, it is not so easy and may take time. However, some therapies and techniques can be used.

So, with this, I stop here. So, these are some of the mini theories related to the cognitive perspective of personality, which explains how cognitive factors can be used to explain human personalities. With this, I stop here. We will start another module in the next lecture. Thank you.