

imitation. Neal Miller and John Dollard are considered to be the originators of this theory. According to them, the imitative learning takes place among observers who are motivated to learn. They considered social learning as an efficient form of stimulus–response learning.

Another name associated with social learning theory is that of Albert Bandura. His theory has been extensively used in mass communication research. For him, the media are active educators, but what they do is very subtle, and indirect. The example of television is given here as a medium capable of teaching its audience, both positive and negative attitudes and behaviours. The theory has been employed to show that children possibly model their pro-social behaviours when they see them in mass media programmes.

Social cognition is the contemporary term for social learning. It also speaks of behavioural learning, when people respond to stimuli; their responses are reinforced either positively or negatively. The two important assumptions of the theory are:

- 1) This is an insufficient method of learning and
- 2) We not only learn in the traditional or operant manner, but otherwise also.

Learning from observation of the environment is the main principle of social cognitive theory. The theory says that mass media can affect people’s behaviours that effect will be or is influenced by personal factors specific to the people and their situations. Social cognition through media representations functions through observational learning. There are inhibitory effects of media exposure. Viewing a person being punished for a behaviour not accepted will inhibit others from anti–social behaviour. Vicarious reinforcement is another factor of social cognition. Both rewards and punishments are basis for vicarious reinforcement. Social cognition theory has its own merits and demerits.

8.8 FURTHER READINGS

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8.9 KEY TERMS

Cognition: Mental process or action of acquiring knowledge; perception, thinking, reasoning.

Socialisation: It is a process of acquiring roles and also the skills and knowledge to execute these roles.

Syntax of television: Single words, repetitions and literal meanings used in television programmes.

Social prompting: Ignoring negative consequences displaying a behaviour associated with punishment or restriction.

Vicarious reinforcement: When we feel we ourselves are rewarded or punished after seeing a television character for some behaviour.

8.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS : POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The four stages of development of cognition capabilities of children are:
 - i) Sensorimotor
 - ii) Pre-operational
 - iii) Concrete operations
 - iv) Formal operations
- 2) In the second stage of their growth, between 18-24 months, children are exposed to reading and writing. They can learn and understand the symbolic messages of television.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) According to researchers, children learn from media the language socialisation; education and learning; mind, self and society; social cognitive development and dialogue.
- 2)
 - a) **Situated knowledge:** Facing new challenges of a new situation with whatever resource we can bring. It is the result of learning how to perform roles in defined activities. Communication depends upon situated knowledge.
 - b) **Scaffolding:** It is assistance or support from fellow performers. Parents and others help children. Apart from these, media also supports them. For example, there is a phenomenon called 'syntax of television'. It contains single words, repetitions, and literal meanings used in TV programmes. Actions and labels help recall objects, events, and characters and aid in information processing by children. These are called 'scaffolding'.
 - c) **The inquiry-based learning** is the basis of apprentice mode. Concepts of inquiry for learning can be seen in the works and philosophy of John Dewey. According to Piaget, children develop the understanding of the world through active participation, not by passive observation. Children create new ideas by active participation.
 - d) **Dialogue:** When we involve others in our learning, it leads to dialogue. Today the stress is on dialogue in learning as it is a powerful tool of

inquiry. It also provides scope for scaffolding and also to communicate their ideas. Dialogue is interpersonal communication and social interaction in the process of learning. The three important elements of dialogue are identity, interaction, and collaboration.

- e) **Framing:** It is a view of making sense of new activities and decides how to use what we are learning. The message frame can focus on knowledge of message point, topic or much needed background information, or may have the context for the interpretation of communication. People learning from communication narratives are directly related to the frames they have been given.
- 3) With digital technology, media have leap frogged in their functions and features. The symbol systems that media use make them unique. The multimedia presentations have changed the instructional environment. The interactive media can affect the cognition, emotions, social relation and even the physical health of children.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Richard Clark stated that media do not influence learning, but are merely vehicles of instruction delivery. However, due to certain developments in the field of educational technology, especially new digital media platforms have made video instruction and tutorials popular with the youth.
- 2) Digital technology, media convergence and multimedia instruction have made mediated learning very important. The concept of edutainment is also gaining popularity. The issue is to go beyond the behavioural approach of stimulus response model. Media do influence the cognitive, affective, and social processes of individuals.
- 3) If we want to learn the role of media in learning, it is necessary to have a media theory in the cognitive and social processes by which knowledge is produced. In other words, we must consider the structure and causal mechanisms of media, in terms of their interaction with cognitive and social processes. Media technology, symbol systems, and processing abilities are part of the process.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) The concept of imitation is 'the direct mechanical reproduction of behaviour'. It can be positive or negative. Identification is a distinct form of imitation in which the individual wants to be or trying to be an observed model of his/her broader qualities. Identification with media models lasts longer than imitation.
- 2) According to psychologists John Dollard and Neal Miller the imitative learning takes place among observers who are motivated to learn. However, the elements of the behaviour to be learnt must be present so that people can imitate behaviours they see. Behaviours can be reinforced. It is simply an effective method of traditional stimulus response learning. The trial and error method of learning is replaced by imitation. To them, actual reinforcement guarantees learning.

- 3) According to Albert Bandura, media are active educators, but subtle and indirect. The media teach people about the world around them which can be both positive and negative attitude and behaviour. What people cannot experience on their own can be brought into their personal world through media exposure.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) The two important assumptions of the social cognitive theory are:
 - a) According to operant or traditional learning theory, when each individual is presented with a stimulus he or she will have a chance response. It may be negative in character or a negative reinforce.
 - b) We not only learn in the traditional fashion, but otherwise also. All of us learn through observation, even when there is no stimulus response reinforcement linkage. Modeling from mass media is an efficient way of learning.
- 2) The three approaches are:
 - 1) **Observational learning:** Consumers of representation can acquire new patterns of behaviour by viewing such representations.
 - 2) **Inhibitory effects:** If we see a person is being punished for a behaviour, it will have a deterrent effect on others, who view it. The likelihood of us behaving the same way is decreased.
 - 3) **Disinhibitory effects:** A media representation that depicts reward for pursuing a prohibitory behaviour is considered enough to increase the likelihood of making such a response. For example, fear of snakes and dogs.
- 3) The strong points of social cognitive theory are :
 - a) It provides causal link between media and behaviour.
 - b) It can be applied across several viewers and viewing situations.
 - c) It has a strong power of explanation.

The limitations are:

- a) It suffers from the problem of generalisation as it cannot be applied to every situation.
- b) Over-estimation of media power is possible.
- c) The theory has failed to explain the long term effects of media consumption.
- d) It underestimates people's active use of mediated messages.
- e) It has a narrow focus on individuals rather than cultural effects.

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