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Personality

Psychology

Meaning, definition, classification, measurement, evaluation, personality alterations and role of nurses.

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CHAPTER 05: PERSONALITY

1. Introduction

Personality refers to the characteristic patterns of thoughts, emotions, attitudes and behaviours that distinguish one individual from another.

Personality influences how individuals respond to stress, communicate, establish relationships, make decisions and adjust to their surroundings.

2. Definition of Personality

Personality is the relatively enduring pattern of psychological characteristics that influences an individual's behaviour and adaptation to the environment.

Gordon Allport described personality as a dynamic organization of psychological and physical systems that determines an individual's characteristic behaviour and thinking.

The word personality is derived from the Latin word persona, meaning a theatrical mask or character.

3. Characteristics of Personality

- Personality is unique to each individual.
- It develops through heredity and environmental influences.
- It is relatively consistent but can change over time.
- It includes conscious and unconscious processes.
- It influences emotional and social adjustment.
- It develops through learning and life experiences.
- It affects interpersonal relationships and behaviour.

4. Components of Personality

Component	Description
Physical	Appearance and physiological characteristics
Intellectual	Intelligence, thinking and reasoning
Emotional	Emotional responses and regulation
Social	Interpersonal behaviour and social adjustment
Moral	Values, beliefs and ethical behaviour

Motivational	Needs, interests and goals

5. Determinants of Personality

Biological Factors

- Genetic inheritance
- Temperament
- Brain functioning
- Hormonal activity
- Physical health

Psychological Factors

- Motivation
- Intelligence
- Emotional experiences
- Self-concept
- Learning
- Coping mechanisms

Social and Environmental Factors

- Family relationships
- Parenting practices
- Education
- Culture
- Peer groups
- Socioeconomic conditions
- Life experiences

6. Classification of Personality

A. Carl Jung's Classification

Introvert

- Prefers relatively quiet environments.
- Often enjoys independent activities.
- May be reflective and reserved.
- May prefer smaller social groups.

Extrovert

- Generally enjoys social interaction.

- Often demonstrates outward expressiveness.
- May prefer group activities.
- Gains satisfaction from social engagement.

Ambivert

- Demonstrates a combination of introverted and extroverted characteristics.
- May adapt behaviour according to circumstances.

Introversion and extraversion exist along a continuum rather than as rigid categories.

B. Historical Temperament Classification

Type	Traditional characteristics
Sanguine	Sociable, cheerful and expressive
Choleric	Assertive, energetic and dominant
Melancholic	Reflective, sensitive and reserved
Phlegmatic	Calm, patient and relatively passive

This historical classification originated in ancient medical theories. It is not a validated diagnostic system.

C. Type A and Type B Behaviour Patterns

Type A	Type B
Competitive	Relatively relaxed
Time-conscious	Less time-pressured
Achievement-oriented	More flexible
May display impatience or hostility	Generally patient

These are historical behaviour patterns rather than fixed personality diagnoses.

7. Major Theories of Personality

A. Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory

Sigmund Freud proposed three interacting components of personality.

Component	Function	Principle
Id	Instinctual desires and impulses	Pleasure principle
Ego	Balances impulses with reality	Reality principle
Superego	Internalized moral values and standards	Moral standards

Example: A nurse experiencing anger may want to express it immediately (id), recognize professional consequences (ego) and consider ethical responsibilities (superego).

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Levels of Consciousness

- Conscious: Thoughts and experiences currently in awareness.
- Preconscious: Information that can be brought into awareness.
- Unconscious: Mental processes outside conscious awareness.

Freud's structural theory is historically influential but is not an established biological model.

B. Allport's Trait Theory

Gordon Allport classified traits into three categories:

1. 1. Cardinal traits: Dominant characteristics that may strongly influence a person's life.
2. 2. Central traits: Major characteristics used to describe personality.
3. 3. Secondary traits: Preferences or characteristics expressed in particular situations.

C. Cattell's Trait Theory

Raymond Cattell identified 16 primary personality factors and developed the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF).

D. Eysenck's Personality Theory

Hans Eysenck proposed three major dimensions:

- Extraversion
- Neuroticism
- Psychoticism

The term psychoticism in this theory refers to a personality dimension and does not establish a diagnosis of psychosis.

E. Big Five Personality Theory

The Five-Factor Model describes personality through five broad dimensions.

Mnemonic: OCEAN

Trait	Characteristics
Openness	Curiosity, creativity and willingness to explore
Conscientiousness	Organization, responsibility and self-discipline
Extraversion	Sociability and assertiveness
Agreeableness	Cooperation, consideration and interpersonal warmth
Neuroticism	Tendency towards negative emotional experiences

Individuals vary along each dimension.

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F. Humanistic Theory

Carl Rogers

- Emphasized self-concept.
- Proposed that acceptance and supportive relationships facilitate personal growth.
- Described congruence between self-concept and experience.

Abraham Maslow

- Emphasized human needs and motivation.
- Described self-actualization as realization of personal potential.

G. Social-Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura emphasized interactions between:

- Personal factors
- Behaviour
- Environment

Important concepts include observational learning, reciprocal determinism and self-efficacy.

8. Measurement and Evaluation of Personality

Personality assessment involves collecting information about characteristic behaviour, emotional functioning, attitudes and psychological traits.

Methods of Personality Assessment

Method	Description
Observation	Systematic assessment of behaviour
Interview	Collection of personal and psychological information
Case history	Review of developmental, medical and social history
Rating scale	Structured rating of selected characteristics
Personality inventory	Standardized questionnaire assessing personality traits
Projective technique	Responses to relatively ambiguous stimuli
Behavioural assessment	Examination of behaviour in specific situations

9. Important Personality Tests

Objective Personality Tests

- Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)
- 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF)
- Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ)

- NEO Personality Inventory

These instruments use structured responses and standardized scoring procedures.

Projective Tests

- Rorschach Inkblot Test
- Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)
- Sentence Completion Tests

Interpretation of projective techniques requires specialized training. Scientific evidence varies across instruments and scoring methods.

No personality test should be interpreted independently of the individual's history, circumstances and other assessment findings.

10. Alterations in Personality

Personality alterations refer to significant changes in characteristic behaviour, emotional responses, interpersonal functioning or personality patterns.

Causes

- Brain injury
- Neurological illness
- Dementia
- Substance use
- Severe psychological stress
- Trauma
- Mood disorders
- Medication effects
- Other psychiatric or medical conditions

Possible Manifestations

- Sudden irritability
- Social withdrawal
- Emotional instability
- Impulsive behaviour
- Increased suspiciousness
- Inappropriate behaviour
- Reduced judgment
- Changes in motivation

Sudden personality changes require assessment for possible medical, neurological or substance-related causes.

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11. Personality Disorders

Personality disorders involve enduring, inflexible patterns of inner experience and behaviour associated with significant distress or impairment.

Traditional DSM Cluster Classification

Cluster	Personality disorders
Cluster A - Odd or eccentric patterns	Paranoid, schizoid, schizotypal
Cluster B - Dramatic or emotionally unpredictable patterns	Antisocial, borderline, histrionic, narcissistic
Cluster C - Anxious or fearful patterns	Avoidant, dependent, obsessive-compulsive personality disorder

Brief Characteristics

- Paranoid: Persistent distrust and suspiciousness.
- Schizoid: Social detachment and limited emotional expression.
- Schizotypal: Unusual beliefs, behaviour and interpersonal difficulties.
- Antisocial: Persistent disregard for the rights of others.
- Borderline: Difficulties with emotional regulation, self-image and relationships.
- Histrionic: Excessive emotionality and attention-seeking patterns.
- Narcissistic: Grandiosity, need for admiration and impaired empathy.
- Avoidant: Social inhibition and sensitivity to rejection.
- Dependent: Excessive reliance on others.
- Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder: Preoccupation with order, perfectionism and control.

ICD-11 primarily classifies personality disorders according to severity and trait patterns rather than these traditional clusters.

Personality traits alone do not establish a personality disorder.

12. Factors Promoting Healthy Personality Development

- Positive self-esteem
- Supportive relationships
- Emotional regulation
- Constructive feedback
- Realistic goal setting
- Effective coping
- Healthy communication
- Self-awareness
- Opportunities for learning

- Professional psychological support when required

13. Role of Nurses

Assessment

- Observe behaviour and emotional responses.
- Obtain relevant medical and psychosocial history.
- Identify recent changes in personality.
- Assess coping and interpersonal difficulties.
- Report significant behavioural changes.

Nursing Interventions

- Establish a therapeutic relationship.
- Maintain clear professional boundaries.
- Communicate without judgment.
- Encourage emotional expression.
- Promote effective coping strategies.
- Support realistic goal setting.
- Maintain a safe therapeutic environment.
- Encourage appropriate psychological and psychiatric follow-up.

14. Important Examination Questions

Long Answer Questions

1. 1. Define personality and explain its determinants and classification.
2. 2. Explain the major theories of personality.
3. 3. Describe personality assessment methods.
4. 4. Discuss personality alterations and the role of nurses.

Short Answer Questions

1. 1. Freud's structure of personality.
2. 2. Introvert, extrovert and ambivert.
3. 3. Big Five personality traits.
4. 4. Allport's trait theory.
5. 5. Personality inventories and projective tests.
6. 6. Classification of personality disorders.
7. 7. Factors influencing personality development.

15. Quick Revision

- Personality describes characteristic patterns of thoughts, emotions and behaviour.
- Jung: Introversion and extraversion.
- Freud: Id, ego and superego.
- Allport: Cardinal, central and secondary traits.
- Cattell: 16 personality factors.
- Eysenck: Extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism.
- Big Five: OCEAN.
- MMPI and 16PF: Structured personality inventories.
- Rorschach and TAT: Projective techniques.
- Personality assessment requires appropriate professional competence.

Conclusion

Knowledge of personality helps nurses understand individual differences and behavioural responses to illness. It supports therapeutic relationships, individualized care, early recognition of behavioural alterations and appropriate psychological support.

Practice questions

Choose one best answer. The answer key and explanations follow the questions.

1. OCEAN is a mnemonic for:

A. Five stages of memory
B. Five personality dimensions
C. Five defence mechanisms
D. Five intelligence tests

2. Which Big Five trait includes organization, responsibility and self-discipline?

A. Openness
B. Extraversion
C. Conscientiousness
D. Neuroticism

3. The 16PF is a:

A. Personality questionnaire
B. Reflex assessment
C. Blood investigation
D. Visual acuity chart

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Answer key and explanations

1. B - Five personality dimensions

OCEAN represents the Big Five personality dimensions.

2. C - Conscientiousness

Your source table associates these qualities with conscientiousness.

3. A - Personality questionnaire

The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire is a personality assessment instrument.

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