

Social psychology

is the scientific study of how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, and implied presence of others

Social psychologists typically explain human behaviour as a result of the relation between mental state and social situation, studying the factors/conditions under which certain behaviour, actions, and feelings occur. Social psychology is thus concerned with the way these feelings, thoughts, beliefs, intentions, and goals are cognitively constructed and how these mental representations, in turn, influence our interactions with others.

Traditionally, **the emergence of this discipline** bridged the gap between psychology and sociology. During the years immediately following World War II, there was frequent collaboration between psychologists and sociologists. However, the two disciplines have become increasingly specialized and isolated from each other in recent years, with sociologists generally focusing on more macro features (e.g., social structure), whereas psychologists may be more concerned with more micro features.

There has also been a difference in emphasis between American and European social psychologists, as the former traditionally have focused more on the individual, whereas the latter have generally paid more attention to group-level phenomena.

Some of the phenomena studied by social psychology:

Attitude – is defined as learned, global evaluations of a person, object, place, or issue that influence thought and action. In other words, attitudes are basic expressions of approval and disapproval, or likes and dislikes.

Persuasion – is an active method of influence that attempts to guide people toward the adoption of an attitude, idea, or behaviour by rational or emotive means. Persuasion relies on "appeals" rather than strong pressure or coercion.

Self-concept – is a term referring to the whole sum of beliefs that people have about themselves.

Social influence – describes the persuasive effects people have on each other. It overlaps considerably with research on attitudes and persuasion. The three main areas of social influence include: *conformity*, *compliance*, and *obedience*. Social influence is also closely related to the study of group dynamics, as most principles of influence are strongest when they take place in social groups.

A special kind of social influence is the *self-fulfilling prophecy*. This is a prediction that, in being made, actually causes itself to become true.

Group dynamics – is a system of behaviours and psychological processes occurring within a social group (*intragroup dynamics*), or between social groups (*intergroup dynamics*).

A *group* can be defined as two or more individuals that are connected to each another by social relationships. Groups tend to interact, influence each other, and share a common identity. They are distinguished from aggregates.

A social aggregate is a social unit, whose members met by chance, unplanned, do not know each other and probably do not meet again in the same composition.

They are divided into *clusters*, i.e. groups of up to 40 people, and *crowds*. People group together in a certain place on the basis of the same stimulus. Clusters and crowds can be socially structured because they have a planned formation, or random, i.e. they have an unplanned formation.

The so-called *crowd psychosis* arises in the crowd. The person in the crowd suppresses his own individuality, primitive impulses are enforced, and the feeling of responsibility disappears. The crowd evokes a feeling of anonymity and security. One can behave in a way that one would never behave oneself.