UNIT 5 INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR AND LEARNING

Structure

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the meaning of individual behaviour;
- explain the concept of learning;
- establish the relationship between learning and performance;
- discuss various theories of learning;
- explain the strategies for change of behaviour;
- examine the role of operant conditioning in change of behaviour; and
- discuss the role of social learning in change of behaviour.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

You must have visited to schools, colleges, offices, markets and other places several times. Sometimes you come back to your home and share your experiences with your family members and friends saying that the behaviour of dealing persons or sales persons was very impressive. Have you ever thought what behaviour is and what makes behaviour impressive or unimpressive? Behaviour is the most common word used in all walks of life. It refers to the response made by a person. The response of a person may be guided by the

environmental stimulus. The identification and study of the environmental variables becomes very important for understanding the behaviour of an individual. In this unit, you will learn the meaning of individual behaviour, concept of learning, learning and performance and the theories of learning. You will be acquainted with detailed strategies for change of behaviour and the role of operant conditioning and social learning in change of behaviour.

5.2 INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR

Behaviour refers to the response made by an individual. The response may be the result of influence of external factors. The external factor is termed as stimulus and the action taken by the individual is known as response. Both heredity and environment determine the behaviour of an individual. The psychologists say that man's heredity determines what kind of person he/she can be and the environment determines what he/she becomes. Behaviour of an individual is determined by both the heredity and environmental factors. Heredity refers to the characteristics transmitted by parents to the next generation. Human beings acquire biological characteristics through genes, which control the development of tissues and organs of the body. They are determined at the time of the conception. Parents influence hereditary characteristics through the transmission of genes. Children acquire certain features of physique and psychic qualities out of this genetic transmission. Research in genetic engineering also suggests that heredity determines physical, mental and emotional states of the individuals. Physical stature, gender, colour, intelligence etc. are influenced by the hereditary factors.

The individuals are brought up in a particular environment like family, society, culture, etc. These environmental factors influence the behaviour of the individuals. Children's socialisation process start in the family. Children are made to follow the behavioural pattern of the family. Members of the family compel children to conform to certain acceptable behaviour and avoid unacceptable behaviour. Thus children acquire knowledge of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour from their family. Children further start socialising with a number of social groups like friends, school and other members of the society. Thus they acquire socially acceptable behaviour and try to avoid socially unacceptable behaviour as a result of their interaction with these groups. The culture in which children are brought up, determines the decision making styles, attitudes, independence v/s dependence, soberness v/s aggression, competition v/s cooperation etc. As a member of a particular culture, children learn norms, values and attitudes which are prescribed by the culture. Individuals are compelled to behave in conformity to the cultural norms established by the society. Thus society and culture exert greater influence on the behaviour of individuals.

Individual Differences

Now, it is clear to you that as soon as a child is born, he/she is exposed to a variety of environmental forces. The biological characteristics clubbed with the environmental forces determine the behaviour of an individual. The question arises why the behaviour of one person differs from other?

When you visit an organisation, you find that somebody is very polite; someone is sensitive, someone aggressive, talkative, etc. Thus you realise that the behaviour of one person differs from the others. The understanding of individual differences helps the managers to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the subordinates and their attitude towards the works and the organisation. The manager can examine the performance pattern of the employees as a result of the individual difference and chalk out the strategy to exploit the positive behaviour of the employees. A number of factors influence the behaviour of an individual in the organisation.

John Ivancevich and Michael Matteson have identified major factors influencing individual difference in behavioural pattern as : demographic factors, abilities and skills, perception, attitudes and personality. Let us learn them briefly.

Demographic Factors: These factors are socio economic background, education, nationality, race, age, sex, etc. The persons belonging to good socio-economic background, well educated, young etc. may be preferred by the organisation because they are likely to perform better. You must be aware that the young professionals having good academic background and communication skills are in great demand. For example, a call centre prefers the young professional having excellent command on communication. Thus the study of demographic factors helps the manager to identify the suitable persons for a particular job.

Abilities and Skills: Ability refers to mental or physical capacity of an individual to do something whereas skill refers to an ability to act in a way that allows a person to perform well. Ability and skills play very important role in individual's behaviour and performance. If a person's abilities and skills match the job requirement, he/she is likely to perform better in the organisation. Therefore, the manger has a challenging job of matching the abilities and skills of the employees to the job requirement.

Perception: Perception refers to the cognitive process meant for interpreting the environmental stimuli in a meaningful way. Every individual may organise and interpret environmental stimuli based on his/her own reference. Several factors influence the perception of an individual so their study may be very crucial for the manager. The manager must create the favourable work environment so that the employees perceive them in a favourable way. If the employees perceive them in a positive way, they are likely to perform better.

Attitude: Psychologists have defined attitude as a tendency to respond favourably or unfavourably to certain objects, persons or situations. The formation of attitude is influenced by the family, society, culture, peers and organisational factors. In an organisation, manager requires to study the variables related to job and create the work environment in such a favourable way that the employees are tempted to form positive attitude towards the job. If the employees form positive attitude, he/she may perform better in the organisation.

Personality: Personality refers to the study of the characteristics and distinctive traits of an individual, the inter-relations between them and the way in which a person responds and adjusts to other people and situations. Several factors like heredity, family, society, culture and situation influence the personality of an individual. As a result, individuals differ in their manner of responding to organisational environment. It is the most complex aspect of human beings and influences their behaviour immensely. Therefore, the study of personality traits provides an opportunity to understand the individuals, properly direct their effort and motivate them for the accomplishment of the organisational goal.

This means that different environmental factors may generate different responses. The study of these responses is vital for the organisation. Every organisation demands a particular type of behaviour from the employees. These behaviours can be learnt through observation, learning, exposure, training, etc. Psychologists have been striving for accurate study of appropriate behaviour of an individual in a particular situation. How to shape the desired behaviour has been a challenging task before them ? The favourable circumstances may evoke favourable responses and unfavourable circumstances may evoke unfavourable responses. The favourable responses may facilitate the performance of an individual in the organisation.

The organisation requires identifying those factors which elicit favourable responses from the employees. They must create congenial work environment to get the best responses from the employees. Most of the successful and best-managed organisations have started considering their employees as key assets of the organisation. The productivity of these organisations has improved significantly as a result of creating employees oriented working environment. It must be clear to you that the understanding of individual behaviour is very helpful in creating such working environment. It also helps in improving the performance of the employees. Most of the best managed organisations have been emphasizing on the continuous improvement of their employees through learning, adaptation and application of the best practices for the achievement of the goals. The business environment has been witnessing enormous change. New strategies

are needed to cope up with these changes. Moreover, the expectation of the organisation regarding the performance of the desired behaviour of the employees has been also increasing. The question arises how to shape the desired behaviour of the employees? Proper learning strategies may be extremely helpful in shaping the behaviour of the employees. Thus understanding of individual behaviour may be very helpful in formulating learning and behaviour modification strategy of the organisation. Employee's motivation strategy may also be chalked out based on the analysis of the individual behaviour.

Check Your Progress A

1) What is individual behaviour?
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2) How one individual differ from others?
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3) Enumerate the factors influencing individual difference.
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5.3 CONCEPT OF LEARNING

Different Jobs may require different skills to complete them. The changing dimensions of the job demand change in skills as well. Learning new skills and upgrading the earlier skills on continuous basis throw major challenges to the employees. In an article the Future of work written by Paroma Roy Choudhary (*Business Today*, January 21, 2001, pp 59 –66) focused that the work of tomorrow will demand a high degree of formal education or foundation skills, on the Job learning, and more of cutting edge knowledge accumulation. An organisations competitiveness will lie not in its ability to source raw materials, cheap capital, or good workers but in its ability to build, enhance, share, and leverage knowledge, in knowing how to do things better than its competitors. Those employees would be able to match the work scenario who acquires new skills required for the work. These days most of the best managed organisations encourage continuous upgradation and development of skills of their employees. These skills can be acquired by learning. The book Learning Paradox written by Jim Harris also focuses that thriving in the future requires willingness to being flexible and adaptable, and constantly questioning, learning, and meeting new challenges. It gives the messages that learn continuously or die. Thus learning is the most vital part of human behaviour.

Institute for Employment Studies (IES) United Kingdom (1988) investigated the links between industrial and organisational learning and whether the linkages are more likely to occur within certain kinds of development intervention in others (Learning to Manage by P. Tampkin and L. Barber, Institute for Employment Studies, Report 345, 1998). The study examined five UK's best known organisations and found that as a result of learning experiences, the managers showed change in the following cognitive areas.

- **Strategic overview :** A broader view of business.
- **Thinking Style :** Clear and more informal thinking.
- **Action orientation:** Became more proactive and started taking more initiative.

- **Reflection :** Learning from mistakes.
- **Personal Style :** More sensitive and caring.
- **Self Awareness :** Toning down aggressive behaviour as a result of feedback.
- **Way of dealing with others :** More honest, more team worker and follow more human democratic management style.

These changes frequently occurred as a result of feedback from peers and subordinates. The study reflects how learning is important for people.

India's Best Managed Company – Business Today – AT Kearney study by Devinder, Anshuman and Satyajit (*Business Today*, June 22, 2003) shows that conscious steps are taken by companies striving to be amongst the best managed companies which can be learned and applied. Every one of the 16 best managed companies in the study holds its position because it has moved consciously and with great deliberation. Each has necessarily striven to formulate, reformulate and achieve its vision and improve the internal organisation. The best managed companies believe they control their own destiny and shy away from blaming external factors. They are focused on achieving certain goals, learn, adapt and apply best practices and take conscious steps to ensure execution of the vision and strategies. This is one of the key messages for CEOs intent on improving the overall functioning of their organisation.

The above studies reflect that learning is the most important ways of acquiring new knowledge and skills. Now the question arises what is learning? Since the very beginning of childhood you keep on learning different activities at home at the school and at the work place. You learn how to dress yourself, how to conduct well, how to solve a problem and so on. It can be said that the human beings continue to learn throughout their life. Have you ever thought what is learning? Psychologists have defined learning **as relatively permanent change in behaviour, which occurs as a result of experience or practice**. If you analyse this definition, you find that learning is a change in behaviour. This change may be favourable or unfavourable. You may learn how to increase output in your organisation or you may also learn how to decrease output in the organisation. The second feature of this definition is that the change must be relatively permanent. It must last for a longer period of time. This means that some times, the change may be due to fatigue, adaptation, motivation etc. which may be a temporary change. Learning involves permanent change in behaviour. The third feature involves the change takes place through experience or practice. The changes through growth and maturation are not considered as learned behaviour. The experience or practice is required for the purpose of learning to take place. The experience may be acquired through interaction with the environment in the forms of observation, personal exposure, repetition, etc. The reinforcement of experience or practice facilitates the learning. Having learnt the concept of learning, the question arises how performance can be changed through learning. This is the most challenging task before the managers.

5.4 LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE

Performance is the most important outcome of learning. It refers to the action made by an individual in a particular situation. All over the world managers have been struggling with the idea that how to make employees perform better on the job?

BT – Hewitt Study the Best Employers in India (*Business Today*, January 21, 2001 p 227 –234) found that:

- Almost all surveyed company positioned themselves above market compensation levels; 78% positioned themselves in the fourth quartile (75% -100%).
- 80% of companies preferred to pay as per internal pay scales and bands and not on the basis of Pay the person.
- All companies used some method of variable pay.
- All companies conducted formal performance planning and feedback; 80% used multi-source feedback.
- All linked performance management directly to employee development; 90% linked it to pay decisions.
- Individual performance was rewarded to every 12 months at all companies; typically, 25% of base pay was the average payment amount; typical increase for the top performers could be 2-3 times the overall performers increase.
- 50% companies used broad based option plan.

All companies recognized achievements of employees; 70% awarded cash.

The above study shows how performance is related to reward. Moreover, the performance is directly related to learning and upgrading of knowledge and skills. There are several factors which forces the employees to perform their jobs. Steven and Mary Annvon identified four factors i.e., ability, role perceptions, motivation and situational contingencies; which influence employee's voluntary behaviour and their performance. Let us discuss them in detail :

Ability: This refers to capability of a person to perform the job. It involves aptitudes and skills required for completion of the work. For example, when you appear in the competitive examination, you are tested for your aptitude, skill, comprehension, knowledge, etc. These tests are meant for assessing your capability which is required for the completion of the Job. Thus, the ability of the person must match the performance requirement of the Job. Therefore as a learner you must keep on trying to develop your ability for meeting the challenges of the changing environment.

Role Perceptions: Every task involves appropriate behaviour for successful completion. This appropriate behaviour is termed as role perception. The identification and learning of this appropriate behaviour is a great challenge for the employees. This means that what are you expected to do in a given situation? You must understand them in such a way that your behaviour satisfies the requirement of the situations. For example, communication strategy and convincing power of salespersons may result in successful completion of sale. This appropriate behaviour of sales persons is known as role perceptions. In order to introduce role perceptions, the manager requires defining the jobs clearly and providing adequate training and appropriate feedback to the employees. The proper understanding of role perceptions certainly facilitates the performance of the job.

Motivation: This is the most important aspect of performance. Robbins has defined motivation as the process that account for an individual's intensity, direction and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal. Here, intensity refers to how much effort a person makes to perform the job. Moreover, the effort must be made in a proper direction. If the effort produces desired result, the person tends to sustain his behaviour. The manager requires identifying the reinforcing factors which encourages the employees to make strong effort for the completion of the job and sustain them over a longer period. Thus the effort in a right direction and desired result motivate the employees to perform well.

Situational Contingencies: Every Job is performed in a particular situation. The situation may be favourable or unfavourable for the completion of the task. If the manager provides favourable environmental

condition, the employee may perform better. Favourable working condition, well structured task, better resources, good marketing strategy, etc. may facilitate the performance of the employees.

These factors are important determinants of performance. If they are favourable, the action of the persons leads to success. Moreover, except the inherent capabilities, other factors may be learnt. Learning facilitates the performance. Therefore, the managers must explore the ways and means of making the employees learn. Learning theories may provide good insight in this direction.

5.5 THEORIES OF LEARNING

Several learning theories have been propounded by the psychologists which explain the process of learning. Let us learn some important theories of learning.

5.5.1 Classical Conditioning

You must be aware about the stimulus and response. In classical conditioning, learning takes place through the connection between unconditioned stimulus and conditioned stimulus. These two stimuli are paired to elicit the desired response. Let us take an example of food which elicits the response of salivation. The food is termed as unconditioned stimulus and the salivation is known as unconditioned response. A conditioned stimulus is a mental stimulus that does not elicit the response. A response which is elicited by the conditioned stimulus is termed as conditioned response. When conditioned stimulus is paired with unconditioned stimulus, the conditioned stimulus also starts eliciting the response. In this process a stimulus – response bond is developed between a conditioned stimulus and a conditioned response through the repeated linking of a conditioned stimulus with an unconditioned stimulus.

Pavlov conducted this experiment on the dog. He presented the food to the dog and the dog salivated. Here the food is the unconditioned stimulus and the salivation of the dog is the unconditioned response. Pavlov used a bell as conditioned stimulus. When he rang the bell, the dog did not do any thing. Pavlov started paring of the conditioned stimulus (bell) with the unconditioned stimulus (food). He presented the food to the dog and rung the bell. This was repeated several times. After some time, he found that the bell also elicited the same response as the food. Here the conditioned stimulus (bell) elicited the response of salivation even when the unconditioned stimulus (food) was not present. He rings the bell and the dog salivates without the presentation of food as well. Thus the dog learnt the ringing of the bell with the salivation. The focus of this theory is **building up an association between an unconditioned stimulus and a conditioned stimulus.**

The training of airplane pilot regarding the use of a newly installed warning system is a good example of classical conditioning. In this training, whenever the plane drops below critical altitudes, the warning light is shown and the pilot increases the plane's altitude. Over the period, the pilot learns to adjust the plane's altitude in response to the warning light without the presence of the trainer.

This theory has been criticised on the ground that it considers the learner as a passive element. The learner notices the connection between the unconditioned stimulus and the conditioned stimulus and forms an association. Another noticeable point is that it explains the simple reflexive behaviour. In most of the organisation, people are not passive; they are actively involved in executing their behaviour. Moreover, behaviours are also not elicited, they are emitted. These behaviours are under worker's control. Despite these limitations, the principles of association, as an important phenomenon of learning can not be undermined.

5.5.2 Operant Conditioning

Skinner gave the theory of operant conditioning. This theory advocates that **a learner's response is instrumental in producing a reinforcing stimulus.** This means that the response which produces the reinforcement becomes stronger and the response which does not produce reinforcement becomes weaker.

Skinner box was used for demonstrating the operant learning. It is a simple box having a liver fitted at the end of the box. The liver is a switch which operates as a food-delivery mechanism. A hungry rat is placed inside the box. Initially the rat sits idle in the box, gradually it starts exploring inside the box to search for food. While exploring inside the box all on a sudden it presses the liver. As the liver is pressed it releases a piece of food. After pressing the liver a number of times, the rat realises that it releases the pieces of food and the rat starts eating them. Now the rat presses the liver and eats the food. The delivery of food constitutes the reinforcement and reinforcement is contingent upon the operation of the lever.

The box can be arranged in such a way that every response i.e., pressing of liver may not release the food. Some response may release the food and some may not release. This is termed as partial reinforcement. It may also be arranged in such a way that pressing of lever may result in a shock to the rat. This is termed as negative reinforcement. Thus the response which fulfils the desired need of the rat is known as positive reinforcement. At the same time, the response may also lead to escape from the painful situation which is known as negative reinforcement.
The focus of this theory is the reinforcement follows a response**.** So the response becomes instrumental in achieving the appropriate goal. The manipulation of response and reinforcement may increase, reduce or lead to the extinction of the behaviour.

You must be aware of Thorndike's law of effect which states that the responses which are accompanied or closely followed by reinforcement will be more likely to occur. At the same time, the responses which are accompanied or closely followed by discomfort will be less likely to occur. This means that **the behaviour which leads to positive outcome will be likely to be repeated whereas behaviour which leads to negative outcome will be avoided.**

Hull proposed three components of learning theory i.e. drive, habit and reinforcement. A drive refers to the internal state of disequlibrium which becomes a motive for learning. A drive stimulates the person to perform the desired act. Habit refers to the association between stimulus and the response. The appropriate link is formed between environmental stimulus and behaviour of a person. The formation of this connection play very important role in learning.
Reinforcement refers to the feedback received by the person as a result of his behaviour.

Thus appropriate understanding of connection between behaviour and consequences by the person makes him to learn about the situation. The focus of the operant theory is to make the learner to operate in the environment to acquire reinforcement**.** This means that the behaviour may be directed by appropriate reinforcement. For example when ever you perform well in the office, your boss appreciates you. This appreciation helps you in strengthening the behaviour of performing well in the office.

5.5.3 Cognitive Learning

The cognitive theory was given by Tolman. It focuses on the fact that learning takes place by thinking about the problem, from insight of the individual and from integrating different cues or pieces of information. Acquisition of information plays important role in the learning process. The cognitive theory advocates that the association between cognitive environmental cues and expectations lead to learning. According to cognitive theory, learning takes place as a result of stimulus –stimulus association. Here, two stimuli are repeatedly paired. The presentation of one stimulus arouses an image, idea or some process representing the second stimulus, even when it is not presented. When more than two stimuli are presented, whole stimuli

may become associated. The process of association leads to formation of cognitive map. This cognitive map is especially applicable to the learning of spatial relationships of objects in the environment. Tolman tested the cognitive learning phenomenon on rats through a complicated maze structure in the laboratory. He found the rats ran through the maze structure towards the food. Rats developed expectations at every point of the maze and reached to the goal. Thus the relationship between cues and expectancy got strengthened and cognitive map was formed. The formation of cognitive map was the result of the learning. In day to day life also you form a cognitive map of the way you go to the college, market and other places or about the persons, things etc.

5.5.4 Social Learning

This theory advocates that the people learn through observation and direct experience. It emphasizes an interaction among cognitive, behavioural and environmental determinants of behaviour. People learn by observing others behaviour. They model those behaviours that lead to favourable outcomes. At the same time, they try to avoid those behaviours that lead to unfavourable outcomes. If you analyse your behaviour, you will find that your behaviours are influenced by your parents, friends, teachers, movies, television, achievers, successful persons, etc. you try to imbibe their behaviour because their behaviour lead to positive consequences. This theory focuses on **learning the consequences of behaviour and self reinforcement.**

Check Your Progress B

1) How does learning influence the performance of an individual?
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2) Distinguish between classical conditioning and operant conditioning
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3) What is cognitive learning?
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4) What do you mean by social learning?
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5.6 STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE OF BEHAVIOUR

Several scholars have applied theories of learning for modification of behaviour. In fact, the principle of operant conditioning has been widely applied for modification of employee's behaviour in an organisation. Jennifer and Gareth have identified following steps for modification of behaviour. Let us learn them in detail.

Identify the Behaviour to be Learnt: The first step of behaviour modification requires identification of the behaviour which the organisation wants to learn by the employees. The behaviour to be learnt must be specified and clearly defined by the management. In fact, there are specific determinants of performance of the job. These determinants required to be studied in depth. For example, if the manager realizes that salesmen are not able to increase the sale. Now, the manager wants the salesmen to increase the sale. Here,

the manager identifies that the sales are to be increased hence the steps involved in increasing the sales requires to be learnt by the salesmen.

Baseline Performance: The manager analyses the present status of the behaviour. He studies the job performance of the salesmen. The manager finds out that the salesmen are able to sell less number of quantities than the standard decided by the organisation.

Functional Analysis: In this step, a detailed analysis of existing behaviours and their consequence is undertaken. Here the manager evaluates the impact of existing behaviour on the output of the salesmen. The manager finds that the output of salesmen is 25% less than the standard output. The manager evaluates the pre behaviour circumstances, actual behaviour on the job and the consequences at great length. Lack of encouragement or poor working environment, inadequate training etc. may be the pre behaviour circumstances which may have resulted in the poor performance of the salesmen.

Intervention Strategy: In this step, the manager devices the strategy for strengthening the desired behaviour and weakening of the undesired behaviour. The manager chooses positive reinforcement strategy like praise, appreciation, bonus, additional benefit for enhancement of output. For example, if the salesmen conform to the standard sale or closer to it, they get appreciation, bonus, or additional benefit. Thus they are reinforced to complete their work. At the same time they are also discouraged for their poor performance.

Evaluation of Performance: The manager evaluates the performance of the salesmen. He finds that the salesmen have started to perform up to the standard sales norms. Thus the manager realizes that the introduction of positive reinforcement makes the worker learn the desired behaviour of the organisation. In order to maintain the behaviour of the salesmen, the manager keeps on introducing positive reinforcement to the salesmen.

Several Organisations have used behaviour modification programme for improving the performance of the employees. In fact, managers require undertaking the depth analysis of job and the factors which encourage performance of the job by the employees. They have to choose appropriate reinforcement which encourage the workers to complete the work. Now it must be clear to you that the behaviour modification strategy helps in improving the performance of the employees.

There are several limitations for the behaviour modification programme. First the observable behaviour like good attendance, punctuality, selling work etc. may be modified than the non-observable behaviour like decision making strategy. Second the employees are trapped into the re-inforcement cycle. They tend to perform that behaviour which is reinforced. Third ethical issues involved in modification of behaviour which is concerned with the manipulation of the worker's behaviour. This manipulation may curtail the freedom of employees. Despite these limitations, positive reinforcement strategies have been considered as an important means of behaviour modification programme.

5.7 OPERANT CONDITIONING AND CHANGE OF BEHAVIOUR

Every employer wants that the employee should conform to the required behaviour in the organisation. This raises the question that can the behaviour of a person may be modified? Several studies have shown that the behaviour may be modified through the detail study of antecedents, behaviour and consequences. Antecedents are activities which precede the behaviour. For example if the manager informs the subordinates that those persons who complete the tasks same day would get the recognition of high performer. Here the instruction of task completion is the antecedent, the completion of task is the behaviour and the recognition of high performer is the consequence. This means that the manager requires analysing the pre behaviour condition, during the behaviour condition and after the behaviour condition. The circumstances which influence the execution of these three stages of behaviour required to be analysed at

great length. Moreover, reinforcement is introduced to elicit the desired behaviour. The reinforcement play very important role in changing the behaviour of the person.

1.1.1 Role of Reinforcement

If you recall the theory of law of effect which stresses that the repetition of behaviour depends on its consequences. This means if the behaviour is followed by pleasant consequences, the behaviour tends to be repeated. On the other hand, if behaviour is followed by unpleasant consequences the behaviour may be avoided. Thus, it must be clear to you that reinforcement plays important role in strengthening or weakening of the behaviour. Let us now learn about the reinforcement in detail.

Positive Reinforcement: Positive reinforcement refers to providing favourable outcome of a desired behaviour. If a person's behaviour matches the expectation of the organisation, the person is rewarded. Here, the favourable outcome helps in repeating the behaviour of the person. For example, if you perform job well, your boss appreciates you. As a result of the appreciation you try to perform well so that you get appreciation. This means that positive reinforcement reinforces you to do the job in the best possible way.

Negative Reinforcement: In negative reinforcement, an unpleasant outcome is introduced after performing a desired behaviour so that the person avoids performing the behaviour. The person learns to avoid unpleasant outcome by behaving in a desired way. For example, if an employee follows the order of his boss and completes his work in time he may not be harassed or criticised by his boss. Here harassment or criticism works as a negative reinforcement which the employee learns to avoid by completing his task and following the order of his boss.

Extinction: When reinforcement is not introduced as a result of performing undesired behaviour, this behaviour may decline or leads to extinction. Some of the scholars have called it do nothing strategy. For example, if one student keeps on telling story in your counselling session and others stop paying any attention towards his story, he may be refrained to narrating the story further. Lack of praise or reinforcement abstains the student in narrating the story in the counselling session.

Punishment: In punishment, an undesired behaviour is followed by an unpleasant outcome. It decreases the occurrence of the behaivour. For example, if a salesperson does not complete his target, his boss withdraws bonus or perks or demotes him. The fear of withdrawal or demotion makes the salespersons to complete their tasks.

5.7.2 Schedules of Reinforcement

You have learnt that reinforcement strengthens or weakens the behaviour of persons. Now the question arises whether all responses should be reinforced or some responses should be reinforced : When all responses are reinforced, it is called continuous reinforcement : When some responses are reinforced, it is called partial reinforcement. The schedule used for reinforcing a response is termed as the schedule of reinforcement. The schedule of reinforcement is very helpful for managers to select a reward for enhancing the performance of his subordinates. You may provide reinforcement after every 5th response; this is termed as ratio schedule. You may also provide reinforcement after every 5th minute; this is termed as interval schedule. Let us learn them in detail.

Fixed Interval Schedule: In this schedule, reinforcement is produced after a fixed interval of time. For example, salary of an employee is paid after working for a week or a month. This technique does not lead to high levels of performance because it does not provide incentive for higher performance.

Fixed Ratio Schedule: In this schedule, the reinforcement is produced based on the number of responses. This means that the person is expected to make certain number of responses to get the reinforcement. Here

the rewards are associated with the performance of the person and it is given in a ratio of rewards to performance. For example in a piece wage rate system, the payment is made based on each unit of output produced by the employees. The employee knows that if he produces more number of units, he will get more rewards.

Variable Interval Schedule: In this schedule, the person is reinforced after one interval of time, then after another interval of time and so on. This means that the reinforcement is provided after a varying length of time which may be based on an average. For example, you may get your first promotion after 3 years, second promotion after 4 years and third promotion after one year. You get these promotions after varying interval of time.

Variable Ratio Schedule: In this schedule, reinforcement is produced after a variable number of responses. The reinforcement may be produced after four responses, again after twelve responses and again after tenth responses, and so on. This means that reinforcement is given after varying number of times. The reinforcement is provided on the basis of a ratio of number of responses to rewards. The reward varies in relation to the response of the person. For example, a salesperson may get a reward after tenth sale and the second reward after fifteenth sale.

Several studies have shown that the performance based reward schedules generally lead to better performance than the time based reward schedule. Moreover, variable schedule also leads to great resistance to extinction. This schedule also provides steady rates of responses.

5.8 SOCIAL LEARNING AND CHANGE OF BEHAVIOUR

People keep on observing the behaviours of others. They model those behaviours which result in favourable outcomes. At the same time, they avoid those behaviours that result in unfavourable outcomes. Since the very beginning of childhood, people observe the behaviour of parents, teachers, achievers etc. They try to model those behaviours which influence them most. This theory advocates that the people learn their own behaviour themselves by observing the environment. This theory focuses on **cognitive process of learning where learners integrate the environmental factors and try to select the favourable outcome oriented behaviour.** Steven and Mary Annvon mentioned three features of social learning theory. These features are behavioural modeling, learning behaviour consequences and self-reinforcement. Let us learn them in detail.

Behavioural Modeling : Individual keeps on observing or interacting with a number of persons in the environment. He/she observes behaviour and tries to model those behaviours which have favourable outcomes. The modeling depends on the impact of particular behaviour on the individual. For example, the oganisation develops the training programme of sales person based on role model. Here, the high performer sales persons are rewarded in terms of extra bonus, praise, appreciation, recognition, etc. The role of high performers is highlighted by the organisation. The salesperson observes the behaviours of high performer and tries to model them.

Learning Behaviour Consequences: In the social learning theory, the cognitive process play very important role in learning the new behaviour. In fact, individuals actively analyse the situations and learn those behaviours which result in favourable outcome. Here the thought processing activities get activated. The person applies logic and evaluates the favourable and unfavourable consequences of the behaviours. In this way, the desired behaviours may be activated by associating them with the favourable outcomes. For example, if you complete job target, your boss appreciates you. You learn the consequences of completing the job in time which brings favourable outcome.

Self Reinforcement: This is the most important aspect of social learning theory. When the individual analyses the impact of reinforcements on the behaviour and finds the positive outcome, he/she tries to learn positive outcome oriented behaviours. Gradually he/she may develop self reinforcement technique for his own behaviour. He may start setting his own goal and reinforcing himself after achieving the goal. The development of self reinforcement strategy is the most challenging task before the organisation. This provides freedom and control to the employees to manage his own behaviour. Moreover, he/she recognizes his/her own ability to complete the job.

Social learning theory is very important in formulating the training programme of the organisation. In the training programme, the importance of high performer, high achievers etc. is highlighted. These behaviours are also reinforced. The employees observe their behaviours and also realize that these behaviours lead to success. Thus, they are encouraged to model the favourable behaviours.

Robbins has identified four processes that determine the influence of a model on the behaviour of a person. They are discussed below:

Attentional Processes: In order to learn from the behaviour of the model, people need to pay attention on the behaviour. This means that observable behaviour must be designed in such a way that catches the attention of the people.

Retention Process: When the person observes others behaviour, the question arises how much he is going to retain? The process of retention depends on the degree of influence people have on other's behaviour. For example, people may easily retain the unique behaviour of the model.

Motor Reproduction Process: This is a technique of converting observed behaviour into action. The person must learn the process of reproducing the observed behaviour. Therefore, the ideal performance technique must be shown in such a manner that people learn to reproduce the performance.

Reinforcement Processes: People are encouraged to perform the observed behaviour if they are provided adequate incentives or rewards. The reinforcement motivates them to act in that fashion. The positive reinforcement is an important technique for enhancing the attention and retention process and improving the performance of the people.

Check Your Progress C

1) Enumerate the steps involved in the modification of behaviour.
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2) Distinguish between positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement.
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3) Distinguish between fixed interval schedule and variable interval schedule.
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4) What is behaviour modeling?
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5) What is self reinforcement?
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5.9 LET US SUM UP

Behaviour refers to the response made by an individual. It is determined by both the heredity and environmental factors. Behaviour of one individual differs from others. Several factors like demographic, abilities and skills, perception, attitudes and personality etc. influence the individual difference and their pattern of behaviour. Therefore, understanding of individual's behaviour is very important for mangers to elicit favourable response from subordinates.

Learning which refers to relatively permanent change in behaviour and occurs as a result of experience or practice helps in imbibing favourable behaviour to meet the challenges of the environment. Learning improves the performance of the persons. Several factors like ability, role perceptions, motivation and situation contingencies, etc. influence the performance of the employees. The favourable factors may lead to favourable action from the employees. Several learning theories have been propounded to explain the process by which an individual acquires behavioural patterns. The major learning theories are classical conditioning, instrumental learning, cognitive learning and social learning theory. These theories explain the role of stimulus, response, environmental cues and observation in the process of learning.

Theories of learning are very helpful in modifying the behaviour of employees as well. The steps involved in behaviour modification include: identify behaviour to be learnt, baseline performance, functional analysis, intervention strategy and evaluation of performance. The analysis of pre-behaviour, actual behaviour and consequences help in modifying the behaviour. The theory of operant conditioning has been widely applied for the change of behaviour. The reinforcement play major role in modifying the behaviour. The positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, extinction and punishment are applied for this purpose. The schedules of reinforcement which are used for strengthening or weakening of behaviour include: fixed interval, fixed ratio, variable interval and variable ratio. Another learning theory social learning which is primarily based on observation and modeling has been frequently used for behaviour modification. The major features of social learning include: behavioural modeling, learning behaviour consequences and self reinforcement.

5.10 KEY WORDS

Behaviour : Anything a person does.

Classical Conditioning : Building up an association between an unconditioned stimulus and a conditioned stimulus.

Cognition : A conscious process of acquiring knowledge.

Extinction: Lack of reinforcement leads to extinction.

Fixed interval Schedule: Providing reinforcement after a fixed interval of time.

Learning: A relatively permanent change in behaviour which occurs as a result of experience or practice.

Negative Reinforcement: Introduction of unpleasant outcome after performing a desired behaviour so that the person avoids performing the behaviour.

Operant conditioning: Recognition of connection between behaviour and its consequences.

Positive Reinforcement: Providing favourable outcome of a desired behaviour.

Punishment: Introduction of unpleasant outcome as a result of undesired behaviour.

Reinforcement: The process by which the probability that a desired behaviour will occur is increased.

Variable Interval Schedule: Providing reinforcement after one interval of time, then after another interval of time and so on.

Variable Ratio Schedule: Providing reinforcement after a variable number of responses.

5.11 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1) What is individual behaviour? Discuss various factors influencing the individual difference.
2) Do you think that learning results in change in behaviour ? Discuss and state how does learning enhance the performance?
3) Describe the factors which influence employee's behaviour and their performance.
4) Critically examine the classical conditioning theory of learning.
5) Discuss the operant conditioning theory of learning. How does it differ with the classical conditioning theory of learning?
6) Describe the strategies for behavioural change. Do you think that these strategies are useful for the organisation? Discuss.
7) Write notes on :
   i) Role of Reinforcement
   ii) Schedule of Reinforcement

Note : These questions will help you to understand the unit better. Try to write answers for them. Do not submit your answers to the university. for assessment. These are for your practice only.