

Social Learning Theory

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will discuss the topic of social learning theory. Our discussion breaks down as follows:

1. Social Learning Theory
2. Major Aspects of Social Learning Theory

1. Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory is an expansion on behavioral learning theories. This theory states that there is more at work than just a stimulus-response in reaction to different kinds of learning situations. A person is not passive in this process; there are interactions within a person and between people that also affect learning and personality.

Albert Bandura is a psychologist that performed the "Bobo doll" experiments in 1961-1963. A Bobo doll is an inflatable clown that can be knocked down, and it will pop back up--a popular toy that kids would play with at this time. Now, 72 children in these experiments were placed in different rooms containing toys. Some of those children had an adult who would come in with them.

Some of these children and adults would also be in a situation in which the adults would display aggressive behavior towards the Bobo doll. Sometimes they would punch it, hit it with a hammer, throw it, etc. The children in the rooms with these aggressive adults were more likely to show aggressive behavior towards the doll after the adult left the room.

Bandura called this observational learning, which is learning about a behavior from watching another person model it. What the children did was called **imitation**, which is performing the same, or similar, behavior observed in another person.

This influenced what Bandura called social learning theory, which is an approach to personality that incorporates behavioral learning theory with cognitive and social theories. Under Bandura's social learning theory, the cognitive aspect also has an effect on the behavioral and social.



TERM TO KNOW

Imitation

Modeling or repeating behaviors we have seen others perform

2. Major Aspects of Social Learning Theory

There are three major areas to look at that show the elements important to personality, as well as the individual differences in social learning theory:

- Expectancy
- Reinforcement value
- Self-efficacy

Expectancy refers to a person's thoughts about a reward or the effect of a behavior. If a person expects a reward to occur, this can influence whether a behavior is performed.

➞ **EXAMPLE** For instance, if you offer somebody money for completing chores, they're more likely to do it.

Reinforcement value represents the person's individual idea about the value of an activity. Different people have different ideas about what is rewarding. Internal reinforcement is the way a person motivates themselves.

➞ **EXAMPLE** For example, a sticker might be very rewarding for a small child, but if you try to give a sticker to a teenager, it's likely not going to motivate them to perform a behavior.

Self-efficacy is a person's belief that they can perform some task or action. This belief can affect whether or not an action will be performed. If a person thinks that they're likely to succeed, they are more likely to do something.

➞ **EXAMPLE** You're more likely to ask a person out on a date if you think that you're going to succeed and that person will say yes. You're less likely to do it if you think you're going to be rejected by that person.



TERMS TO KNOW

Expectancy

We learn to expect a response or a consequence following a behavior; from this, we learn to anticipate the response if we engage in a behavior.

Reinforcement Value

Costs/benefits have different values depending upon the individuals

Self-Efficacy

Belief in our own ability to perform a behavior, that we are competent to accomplish specific tasks



SUMMARY

Social learning theory posits that there is more than just stimulus-response in reaction to different kinds of learning situations. It states that there are interactions within a person as well as between people that play an important role. This was demonstrated in the "Bobo doll" experiments, which

showed that children could learn through observational learning and would perform imitation of behavior.

There are three **major aspects of social learning theory**: expectancy, reinforcement (both internal and external), and self-efficacy.

Good luck!

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia Author Erick Taggart.



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