

Book Review

Behaviour therapy: Techniques, research and applications, S.P.K. Jena (Sage Publications, New Delhi) 2008. Pages 261. Price: Rs.695.00

This book on Behaviour Therapy stands out with a rare combination of professionalism and simplicity. The professionalism is reflected in the depth of thought, analysis and research gone into it while the simplicity is manifested in the expression and explanation of the complex phenomena related to behaviour therapy.

The volume is systematically organized into three parts. Part I titled as the Foundations, Developmental Issues and Assessment initiates a motivated novice into the understanding of behaviour therapy by explaining the basic concepts related to behaviourism. This part is divided into five chapters – viz., The Philosophical and Historical Foundations, Conceptual Issues, Psychobiological Basis of Behaviour Therapy, Developmental Perspective, and Behavioural Assessment and Diagnosis.

The very first paragraph of the chapter dealing with philosophical and historical foundations throws an interesting and speculative statement that the scientific study of behaviour may have its origin in ancient civilization in India, China and Greece. This highlights the richness of the science that evolved to this stage presumably after continuous research in the field. The chapter broadly chronicles the evolution of behaviour therapy from early 1900s till date. Discussions on Radical Behaviourism, Cognitive Behaviourism and Systematic Eclecticism received due justice.

Chapter 2 of part I has extensively dealt with basic concepts for understanding behaviour therapy. Starting with fundamental concepts such as antecedents and consequences to the technical concepts such as Stimulus Control, Generalization and Discrimination

received excellent treatment. Interesting examples from everyday life enriches the application value.

The Chapter on Psychobiological Basis of Behaviour Therapy highlighted the symbiotic relationship between physiological and psychological aspects as the scientific basis for behaviour therapy.

The author while discussing Developmental Perspectives in behaviour therapy has cautioned the practitioners to take extra care in applying behaviour therapy on children. Considerations on age and developmental stage of children are reiterated. However, a practitioner would certainly appreciate the author's punch line in the chapter that the therapist in the process of diagnosis must explore the source of the problem behaviour in children; sometimes the major problem could be an adult in the family.

Chapter 5 relating to Behavioural Assessment and Diagnosis details multifaceted approach to assessment and diagnosis. This includes analysis of problem, motivation social relationship and developmental analysis, and direct behavioural observation. The chapter also discussed the suitability of various behavioural conditions with microscopic details such as recording of frequencies. One of the significant ready-to-use contributions from the author is the proforma on Behaviour History for Adults (which is appended).

Part II of the book extensively deals with the techniques of behaviour therapy in eight separate sections. This part comprehensively translates the basic principles of learning into techniques of Behaviour Modification and Therapy. Simple techniques such as Token Economy, Shaping and Modeling, to complex methods such as Aversion Therapy, Flooding, Implosion Therapy and Systematic Desensitization are treated in detail with meticulous professional care. This is evident in the case reports, discussion

of ethical issues and caution of exercising discretion in the choice of therapy. The author has aptly focused on Indian cases. The detailed explanation of restricted environmental stimulus (REST) and eye movement desensitization reprocessing (EMDR) elicits great interest in the reader. The cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) has been rightfully given a very extensive treatment.

The section on Techniques of Behaviour Therapy, in fact, serves as a handbook for practitioners as well as aspirants in the field of behaviour therapy.

Part III of the book dedicated to research and practice, opens new horizon for innovations in this field. The multifaceted designs for research investigation are highly stimulating for students.

The only gap seen in the entire book is in the explanation of figures. The reader feels a sense of inadequacy while trying to comprehend the figures.

The books on Behaviour Therapy is rich in theoretical inputs, useful for students pursuing a course in Behaviour Therapy and also for practitioners. At a time when the need for therapeutic application is on the rise in Indian society, this book is very timely and is a 'must read' for every student and practitioner in the field of Clinical Psychology and Counselling.

Meena Hariharan

Centre for Health Psychology
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad 500 046, India
meena_haren@yahoo.com