Individual Behavioral Patterns and Implicit Theories of Personality

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Abstract

The unique personalities of individuals influence how they react to challenges. A person's belief system affects how they behave. People's views of setbacks vary, and their reactions to negative feedback differ based on their attribution structure. The perspective of implicit theories, such as fixedness or malleability of personal attributes, determines the meaning of traits and abilities differently. This review paper examines the relationship between a person's behavioral patterns and implicit theories, as personal attributes can predict behavior and shape how they perceive challenges and setbacks.

Introduction

Human behavior is a complex subject [1], and our understanding of ourselves and others is limited. In this ever-changing world, individuals are trying to adapt and meet social needs. Behaviorism is the study of why humans behave the way they do. The inference of traits plays a significant role in this. People infer traits based on their perceptual experiences. The dispositions and inferences people make vary depending on the perceiver's inferential goals and cultural background [2]. Individual judgments are influenced by specific implicit theories [3-5]. These implicit theories have two perspectives: entity theorists and incremental theorists. Entity theorists believe in fixed traits, while incremental theorists believe in malleable characteristics. Therefore, a person's view on judgment and reactions differs due to their personal beliefs.

When individuals experience negative events, their way of responding differs. According to entity theorists, they believe that their lack of ability or innate characteristics is responsible for their failure, and as a consequence, they may tend to give up. On the other hand, incremental theorists see negative feedback as opportunities for growth and learning. They develop effective strategies to correct their mistakes [4,6]. Both theorists consistently exhibit their behaviors across different situations, and their traits are employed to predict their future actions.

Human beings vary in their behavioral patterns, emotions, cognition, learning, and how they navigate their environment and deal with the problems they encounter in their daily lives. Central to this is individual behavior and belief systems. This paper delves into why people behave differently and how individual belief systems are formed. Therefore, the paper highlights a person's behavioral patterns within the framework of the implicit theory of personality. That explains how individual attributes are fixed (entity theorists) and malleable trait beliefs (incremental theorists).

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Human Behavioral Patterns

Humans are social beings [7]. The person's behavioral pattern is influenced by their community's habits and beliefs. Neglecting interpersonal relationships when trying to understand human behavior is inaccurate and incomplete. An individual life goal is to adapt to situations and build meaningful connections with people around us. Understanding human behavior requires paying attention to the context in which individuals are embedded and their interpersonal relationships [8]. Life is a journey of trial and error, a continuous process of learning and growing. A person's personality is developed through cultivating self-awareness. Individual personality includes all variations of a person's overt social behavior and internal experience [9].

In this ever-changing world, we sometimes encounter failure. However, people interpret setbacks differently [5]. Individuals with mastery goals are open to learning. They evaluate setbacks based on merit and are willing to change and adapt to the environment. They perceive failures as a valuable source of feedback. In contrast, those who emphasize helpless patterns tend to view failures differently. Mastery-oriented individuals analyze the events and turn them into powerful learning opportunities to achieve their goals. They navigate their journey with resilience and adaptability.

Due to social inequality in society leads to unequal distribution of good opportunities [10]. Moreover, a person's belief system significantly influences their goal attainment, strategy development, persistence, and expectation of success. Additionally, those who endorse a growth mindset believe that intellectual abilities can be developed. In contrast, individuals with a fixed mindset believe that their intellectual abilities are unchangeable [11]. People with a growth mindset are more open to learning, even in challenging conditions, and prioritize adaptation over those with a fixed mindset.

Implicit Theories Perspective

Implicit theories influence how we process and understand information about ourselves and others [4]. Implicit theories are about belief systems that people hold and shape the interpretation of challenges and setbacks [10]. Individuals with fixed trait beliefs (entity theorists) perceive personality traits as unchangeable, while those with dynamic trait beliefs (incremental theorists) see traits as malleable and developable. Implicit theories have different weights and influence how individuals cope with intellectual challenges. Entity theorists placed more emphasis on static traits, while incremental theorists on malleable traits [6]. The personal attributes of the entity and incremental theorists and their trait-relevant information can predict behavioral patterns and inferences. Entity theorists tend to interpret behavior in fixed traits, whereas incremental theorists view personal attributes as dynamic and mediated by goals, behavior, needs, and intentions [4].

People pursue different goals in similar situations [5]. People who emphasize helpless patterns view their difficulties as failures and indicators of their low ability, assuming that further effort is futile. On the other hand, mastery-oriented people view their difficulties as unsolved problems that can be mastered through effort, maintaining unflagging optimism that their efforts will be fruitful. Entity theory believes that people can learn new things; however, fundamental intelligence would remain the same. On the other hand, incremental theory conceives intelligence as cultivatable, and a person can become intelligent through effort [4]. These two frameworks of implicit theories foster different reactions regarding setbacks [3]. Entity theory is more likely to view negative outcomes as indicators of their level of intelligence, while incremental theory views setbacks as a motivator to focus on addressing a lack of strategy and effort. Incremental theorists invest their time and energy in challenging tasks rather than avoid them.

Furthermore, Dweck CS and Leggett EL. [5] suggested that people with a helpless pattern view their difficulties as failures or indicators of low ability and assume that further effort is futile. In contrast, mastery-oriented people do not see setbacks as failures. Instead, they view them as unsolved problems that need to be mastered through effort. They believe that one's abilities and intelligence can be developed through time and effort. They perceive failure as a source of feedback and invest time and energy toward their goals, leading to growth and success. They analyze failure systematically, observe what went wrong, and consider how they can improve. In short, implicit theories may help navigate their academic and social situations.

Implicit theories have different approaches and wavelengths to pursuing goals; incremental theorists might pursue learning goals to improve their ability, while entity theorists might pursue performance goals to establish their adequacy and ability [3,4,12]. They view achievement situations as a means to judge competent and avoid unfavorable judgment. In contrast, learning goals enable skill acquisition and willingness to take a high risk of negative ability judgment. Thus, they have different perspectives regarding success and failure. When encountering setbacks, incremental theorists are more engaged in finding remedies and curious to learn than entity theorists.

How do Different Individuals handle Feedback and Being Resilient?

The world is vast, complex, and constantly changing. People encounter setbacks once in a while. How we perceive setbacks

and handle feedback is what sets us apart. Individuals tend to establish their way of life according to their implicit views. Implicit theories create meaningful frameworks, and endorsing different theorists may hold unequal weights on effort and ability [12]. Even if people face similar situations, they may pursue varied goals. In failure situations, entity theorists emphasize ability, while incremental theorists prioritize effort. People infer traits from behavior based on their perceptual experience [2]. Behavioral traits are perceived as part of a person's disposition. The interpretation of disposition and the inferences made vary based on the perceiver's goals and cultural experiences.

People trusted their feelings while acknowledging setbacks, learning from mistakes, and using them as a motivator or stepping stone to move forward or quit [3]. Entity theorists are more willing to take a step back instead of pursuing the task under the setback condition [4]. Incremental theorists are resilient and determined to pursue a task, even if they face negative feedback [5]. In addition, people's goal creation depends on the event they interpret and react to. Helpless children pursue performance goals to gain positive judgment about their intellectual ability; on the other hand, learning goals focus on increasing their ability, and they take the risk of exposing negative judgments [12].

Implicit theories emphasize different wavelengths of belief systems. Incremental theorists put effort into tasks even if they require more time and effort. They pursue learning goals to improve their intellectual competence, are willing to learn new approaches and do not bother to be exposed to negative judgment. Even if they encounter setbacks in their journey, they maintain unflagging optimism that their effort will be more fruitful than entity theorist holders [4,5]. In addition, incremental theorists perceived that personal achievements are a consequence of hard work and dedication to a task. They believe that no one reaches the peak of their potential without working hard, and they navigate their journey with patience, calm, and focused determination. They prepare effective strategies to overcome challenges and believe one can achieve significant achievements in life.

Conclusion

Human behavior is a complex phenomenon. An individual's personality traits guide a person's belief systems, and their way of interpreting to adapt and build resilience is unique. The distinct attribution of implicit theories can predict a person's behavioral patterns, resilience, and goal attainment. Moreover, individuals with fixed or malleable beliefs perceive setbacks differently. Entity theorists interpret setbacks as caused by a lack of intellectual abilities, whereas incremental theorists interpret them as a lack of effort. Thus, this distinct belief system impacts individuals' personality traits.

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