

Course Name: Organizational Behaviour: Individual Dynamics in Organization

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Week – 09

Lecture – 03

Lecture 43: Theories of learning- 1

Hello students. Welcome back to the course on Organizational Behavior, Individual Dynamics in Organization. Today we move to the third lecture of module 9 where we look into learning in organization and specifically today, we will deal with some of the very core fundamental theories involved in learning.

So, in previous few classes we have looked into learning, we have understood what learning is specifically, we have also had a bit of understanding with respect to what learning happens in an organization and how learning is relevant in an organization. If you remember in the previous class, I also mentioned in fact underline the fact that learning has to lead a person to behavioral change. If that is not happening that is not learning.

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So straight away moving into today's session, “the consequence of organizational behavior can change the environmental situation and can greatly affect subsequent employee behaviors”.

So this is the theme of today's lecture where we look into the relevance of learning in changing the organization behavior, the behavior of individuals within organization and how it acts as a precursor for the further change that is about to happen.

So let us look into the learning theory background. It has been not been so popular in organizational behavior. Let us be very honest with the different theories. Learning has a certain level of significance or it has a better footing when it comes to psychology. But when it comes to OB the aspects like let us say motivation or let us say personality those theories are more considered or discuss or deliberate. I would not say that these are not important but the deliberations have happened mostly when it comes to OB in terms of

personality, in terms of motivation etc. When compared to learning these are the certain aspects or certain disciplines which have gained prominence and I am not saying that learning theories are irrelevant but in fact learning theories are more relevant when it comes to OBM and we will discuss that today. Perfected theory of learning would have to be able to explain all aspects of learning. They have universal application and can predict and control learning situations.

So an understanding, specific understanding of certain theories specifically the core learning theories is vital to the study of OB in general and behavioral performance and specifically interpersonal performance, interpersonal relationship and the performance of individuals in management or in organization in particular.

So let us look into the fundamental theory, the behavioristic theories. The most traditional and research theory of learning comes out of the behavioristic school of thought. When I am looking into behavioristic theory or behavioristic school of thought the basic understanding should be the quiz or the cues or the signals are coming from outside. There is nothing that is intrinsic, it is more reactive, it is more dependent on the outside world.

So the environment is guiding or triggering the behavioral pattern. So, with that understanding it will be more clear that you can understand or grasp or get a grip over the behavioristic approach or behavioristic school of thought. When you look into the classic behavioristic specifically such as the Russian pioneer, Ivan Pavlov, you must have already, some of you at least would have heard about the Pavlovian experiments etc. And the American John Watson attributed learning to the association of connection between stimulus and response. Again, please understand that environmental cues or the determinants of behavior essentially lies outside the organism or outside the individual that is the basic, that is the fundamental principle of behavioristic school of thought.

So the operant behaviorist mainly in particular well-known American psychologist Skinner would give more attention to actually to the role of that consequence that happens in terms of the behavior, play in learning or the response stimulus situation. So operant conditioning is more of an RS type of arrangement, response stimulus whereas classical conditioning more of stimulus response arrangement. We will discuss this in detail in the coming slide specifically but the basic understanding with which we move to the further topic is that environmental cues guide the behavior.

I will react to a certain behavior, certain environmental cues outside, it could be a behavior also of some other individual. I react to that, that is a fundamental school of thought of behavioristic approach or the behavioristic school of thought.

So let us look into classical conditioning very specifically with respect to Pavlov. Pavlov's experiment is all about giving conditioning to a particular dog. So, there is an unconditioned stimulus, unconditioned response and starting from that it comes all the way to a conditioned stimulus and conditioned response. So, Pavlov's classical conditioning experiment uses dogs as a subject and it is one of the most important studies that has happened in behavioral science. There is no doubt about it, there cannot be any study or any quote or any reference in classical conditioning which goes without Pavlov's reference.

So classical conditioning can be defined as a process in which a formerly neutral stimulus, I would like to underscore the word neutral when paired with an unconditioned stimulus. So, we have first the former neutral stimulus, second the unconditioned stimulus becomes a conditioned stimulus, this is the third part that elicits a conditioned response. So, my attempt here is if you are not aware of the Pavlovian experiment, I am more interested to make you understand the theoretical understanding as well as the practical takeaways from this particular experiment.

So, we are looking at a stimulus response arrangement. So here the stimulus is the bell and saliva happens to be the response. So basically, this experiment is all about a dog was given food and it is natural that when you give food to the dog it has a particular saliva or its saliva. So, saliva is a natural outcome or it is a natural observation when we give food for any dog and in those perspective or with respect to that perspective Pavlov had a different arrangement altogether. He tried to condition the behavior of the dog or change the behavior of the dog with respect to a stimulus and this is what we are trying to see in this particular experiment.

So, there was a bell that was rung or sound of the bell was made so that the dog gets an idea that the bell was later when it was coupled with the food it salivates. So basically the first part was that the food was given naturally the dog salivates or the dog produces saliva there is no doubt about it we can observe that in any dogs that is the basic instinct of the dog but the second part was the sound of bell was made and the third part was the bell was coupled with the food.

So it happens that he experimented in such a way that when you sound the bell then the food is given. So, there is a conditioning that is happening in the mind of the dog that after the bell the food is going to come. So, the fourth point or the fourth quarter is more significant where even when the bell sound is heard the dog starts salivating. Now this is critical this is what Pavlov tried to establish that condition stimulus can give you a condition response. If you look into the particular stimulus at the first phase the food was an unconditioned stimulus whereas the dog had an unconditioned response of salivating.

Now when you look into the neutral stimulus which is the bell was given as a neutral stimulus the dog essentially did not respond to that because to the sound of a bell the dog need not respond and dog will not respond unless and until it is some other alarm or the dog is being tried or made to respond in some other way but for a natural setting for a natural ring of a bell the dog need not salivate or dog need not even respond to that. When it was coupled, I mean the neutral stimulus bell was coupled with the food it produces an unconditioned response. So again, please understand that the food plus a bell happens to be a combination of neutral stimulus plus unconditioned stimulus. So, in fact there was an unconditioned response which was the saliva but after conditioning what happened is that the bell in itself which was the condition stimulus generates saliva in the dog which is a conditioned response. So, if you look into the entire conditioning experiment Pavlov's dog experiment despite the fact that you know the neutral stimulus warrants no response, we have seen that condition stimulus can be given to get conditioned response as in this particular case.

So despite the theoretical possibility of let us say the widespread applicability of classical conditioning and its continued refinement and application because it does not stop here. So in the conditioning experiment though Pavlov have done it a lot of theories who have tried to improve on that but even after those attempts most contemporary learning theories and theorists technically agree that it represents only a very small part of total human learning and behavior because we there are strict critics who talk against the conditioning process there are people who talk against the behavioristic school of thought there are people who talk against the approach of conditioning altogether. So, there are critical criticisms that come against classical conditioning but that said we cannot ignore the relevance of the Pavlov's dog experiment in terms of the conditioning and in terms of behavior that is being produced within the organization.

If you look into specifically the classical conditioning Skinner when it came to the RS approach in particular felt that the classical conditioning explains only reflexive behaviors or respondents behavior because you see that there is a condition stimulus of the bell ringing and there is a condition response of Saliva that is happening. So, Skinner felt that more complex the common human behaviors cannot be explained by classical conditioning alone.

So what happens with respect to the entire classical conditioning is that let us understand this from a different perspective you are being trained to do something in a certain manner with certain stimuli. Now this is to extend true but it can also have a certain bit of criticism involved in that because when you look into some behaviors which are very complex in nature like in in in an organization let us say it is like your subordinate or let us say your boss wants to train you or condition you to some particular job that is let us say it could be as simple as you know you are part of a meeting and he wants to be make

you let us say the secretary of the meeting or let us say condition you to take the minutes of the meeting something like that where which you are not supposed to do in the first place but when it comes to the actual undertaking of that entire behavior it is not simple as it thinks because there are other considerations other social considerations other you know physiological considerations other practical considerations which the employee will do that okay at this point if I start taking minutes I will be acting effectively as a secretary to the particular head. Now that should not be it is not as simple as it looks like so this is what Skinner specifically tells that classical conditioning is good no doubt about it but that said it cannot explain complex behaviors in itself there are practical problems associated with the entire classical conditioning issue in a classical conditioning test. So, Skinner through his extensive research posited that behavior was a function of consequences not the classical conditioning eliciting stimuli. So, we are looking into now more of a set of consequences that happen rather than just conditioning eliciting stimuli and here comes the relevance or the critical operant conditioning because Skinner was very critical about the classical conditioning.

Operant conditioning is a type of learning in behavioral psychology that focuses on how behavior is influenced by its consequences. Now when we look into classical conditioning it was as I already mentioned it was more of a stimulus response approach but when we look into operant condition specifically it is more of an RS approach primarily with learning that occurs as a consequence of behavior that is a response stimuli approach it is a reverse of what we had actually discussed before. So operant conditioning has much greater impact on human learning than classical conditioning because that is more practical when it comes to OBM organizational behavior management operant conditioning also typically explains at least in a very simple sense much of organizational behavior why you actually do a certain or undertake a certain behavior in an organization classical conditioning might not be able to explain that because many a time your behavior is not conditioned by anybody your behavior is not actually influenced by anybody rather it would be a consequence of some other behavior some other response and that is an RS arrangement which Skinner details on.

It might be that employees let us say they are working for 8 hours a day 5 days a week in order to satisfy their needs let us say needs like we detail that in the module of motivation physiological needs you know recognition safety security needs so all different types of needs for different individuals at different point in time. So, to satisfy that to have a satisfaction guaranteed with respect to those needs to get those needs actually fulfilled you are actually performing so it is part of a consequence it is part of a response and that will generate another stimuli. So, this is what Skinner was very particular about in operant conditioning.

So let us sum up the differences between classical and operant conditioning. In classical conditioning a change in stimulus let us look into unconditioned stimulus to condition stimulus will elicit a particular response in operant conditioning on the other hand one particular response out of many possible once occur in a given stimulus situation. So, this is the classical difference that is there between classical conditioning and operant conditioning the stimulus situation serves as a cue in operant conditioning. Whereas if you look into the case of you know classical conditioning the stimulus situation was eliciting the response but that is not the fact or not the critical point in when it comes to operant conditioning.

During the classical conditioning process the unconditioned stimulus serving as a reward is presented every time in operant conditioning on the other hand the reward is presented only if the organism gives the correct response. Now this is what actually differentiates classical conditioning from operant conditioning. The reward happens or the reward is presented only if the organism gives the correct response and this is vital to actually understand operant conditioning in detail. So, I hope that I was able to clarify see most of you might have already a clear understanding of this Pavlovian experiment and how Skinner was a critic to that and how operant conditioning came into picture. But that said we have to understand and appreciate when you also feel that there are certain behaviour certain behavioural tendencies in organisation when you are part of an organisation which is triggered by outside elements. We call it stimuli, we call it the environmental cues but definitely it is triggered by the outside elements. So that is the contribution of conditioning specifically be it classical or operant to the realm of theories associated with learning.

Now let us look into cognitive theories. We have looked into conditioning; we have looked into different types of conditioning. When we come to cognitive theories specifically, cognitive theories can also be used to understand learning as an input into social and social cognitive theories.

So you are looking into a social element here we are bringing the human interface into picture to better understand behaviour and performance management. So, we are not stopping at behaviour because when we ideally talk about conditioning be it classical or operant our thought process hovers mainly around behaviour. But when we are coming into cognitive theory we are taking it a step further by understanding or relating it with behaviour or performance management specifically.

So, Edward Tolman is widely recognized as a pioneering cognitive theorist. He felt that the cognitive learning consists of a relationship between cognitive environmental cues and expectation.

So expectation is the fundamental aspect when it comes to cognitive theory. Rather than just a mere stimulus guiding the behaviour or triggering the behaviour or a consequence triggering the behaviour it is more of the environmental cues as well as the expectation of achieving something, expectation of getting something, expectation of conquering something that is leading a person or an individual towards a certain behaviour. He felt that cognitive learning consists of a relationship between cognitive environmental cues and expectation. So he developed and tested this theory through a lot of collaborated experiment. We look into the Tolman's theory in detail.

He was one of the first to extensively use what is now famous the white rat. If you look into most of the experimentation, we use white rat in plenty nowadays but he was the pioneer in doing that in basically in psychological experiments. So, he found that a rat could learn to run through an intricate maze which was his experimental setup with purpose and direction towards a goal. For rat the goal is food undoubtedly. Now Tolman observed that at each choice point in the maze expectations were established.

So you have a maze in picture and within that maze at each point there is an expectation that is established maybe with respect to the food that at this turning or at one point the food is being would be available. So that expectation is created within the rat. The rat learned to expect that certain cognitive cues associated with the choice point might eventually lead to food. So, the rat actually received the food the association between the cue and expectancy was strengthened and learning occurred. At one point let us say the rat is moving in a different maze setup and at one point the rat is finding food.

The rat is expecting and it is finding food the learning is happening. So next time possibility is more for the rat to exactly trace the route and similarly we can extrapolate this to a particular understanding of human behavior that when there is a cue and the expectancy happens and the actual reward happens the learning is strengthened or the learning occurs and the behavior is strengthened. In contrast to the stimulus response or the response stimuli learning in the classical and operant conditioning approaches respectively.

Tolman's approach could be depicted as more of a stimulus type of understanding because we are not talking about a specific reward at the point the learning association happens between when there is association between the cue and expectancy. There is a cue that the food will be provided at the point and also the expectancy is created in the rat that the food will be available at that point.

So that will initiate or that will trigger the behavior of the rat or that will aid the rat to

actually perform in a similar way. So, this is where cognitive theories are very critical when it comes to the learning.

In another early classical study to demonstrate cognitive learning Kohler, Wolfgang Kohler used chimpanzees presented with a problem of obtaining an out of reach suspended banana. So, what happened is that at first the chimps attempted to jump for it because it was naturally out of reach for them but they learned that that is not possible they gave up and rather they seized a box that had been placed in another part of the room that was deliberate dragged it under the object mounted on it and took down the fruit. Now Kohler called this more complex learning behavior as insight.

In a moment you are seeing that there is a goal which is out of reach which is out of reach for you, you are actually trying to take something which can aid and equip you to reach that particular goal. This was the first time that this was displayed as an experiment. So that's the reason why Wolfgang Kohler categorically named it as insight. Now industrial training program starting after World War II and in many respects even still today even in industry drew heavily on Tolman's S-S connection and Kohler's insightful learning ideas. So we have to be thankful to these two people when we look into cognitive theory specifically.

One is Tolman's S-S connection whereby he is actually trying to bring in the relevance of expectation and how the cues can match expectation and behavior can be made and Kohler's insightful learning ideas which is nothing but more of the understanding that there is something that is out of reach but you are bringing on something that will equip you or that will enable you to reach your target.

So, we have looked specifically in to some of the theories we will also again delve deeper into some other theories but these happen to be the fundamental blocks of learning theories. When we look into different disciplines be it psychology, be it social psychology all those streams or all those disciplines of knowledge will have a lot of consideration into these particular theories.

But as I have already mentioned OBM unfortunately does not give that much of weightage to learning theories rather it takes more of motivation theories into its account or maybe more of personality theories into its account. That said if you want to actually judge a person's behavior, if you want to actually understand your behavior in an organization how you actually move from one zone to another, one level to another you hierarchically may be moving one step to another but there are situations where people who sometimes make a big jump from one position to another within the organization it is because of learning.

That learning happens in some or the other way and to explain those learning either the

conditioning or the cognitive theories comes to your aid. So that should be the takeaway from today's lecture. We have seen classical conditioning, we have seen operant conditioning, we have also looked into other aspects of theories including cognitive theories. But that said one thing should be certain in your mind that the stimulus especially when you are looking into the behavioristic school of thought, your behavior is guided by external elements or triggered by external elements or external cues outside you. So, in the organization you feel that sometimes you are frustrated, you are angry it is because of somebody else, it could be.

So, your behavior should be triggered. We also look into a different perspective altogether why this should not be the case; this should not be only the case. But at this point learning theories of conditioning as well as cognitive theories help you to understand in judging your behavior as well as your co-workers' behavior. Thank you for listening to me patiently. We will see you with more theories in the next class. Till then take care. Bye bye. Thank you.