

PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

The social psychology option focuses on human relationships; these relationships may be **romantic, friendship, familial or antagonistic**. Humans are social animals but while we depend on others for our well-being, conflict with others can threaten our survival individually and as social groups.

Key goals of social psychologists are to understand the complexities of relationships, improve interpersonal relationships, promote social responsibility and reduce violence. Psychologists assume that we may actively change our environment and simply be manipulated by it.

Violence is defined here as a specific aspect of aggression characterized by victimization of another (for example, bullying, domestic violence, genocide). Though much of the research on aggression may be used to understand the basis of violence, the focus on this part of the option is to apply this research to social problems in which violence is often manifested.

One approach to the study of human relationships concentrates on the role of hormones and genetics. However, this gives a limited understanding of how relationships develop. Cognitive theorists have contributed to the understanding of relationships by applying schema theory, whereas social psychologists have focused on attribution theory, social identity theory and the role of culture.

Studying human relationships, however, has its challenges. It is tempting to oversimplify complex social issues or misdirect the blame for problems. When studying human relationships, psychologists must also be concerned about the objectivity of the researcher, the right to privacy of the individual and the temptation of social engineering.

IB LEARNING OUTCOMES

(General)

1. To what extent do biological, cognitive and sociocultural factors influence human relationships?
2. Evaluate psychological research (that is, theories and/or studies) relevant to the study of human relationships.

IB LEARNING OUTCOMES

(Interpersonal Relationships)

1. Examine biological, psychological and social origins of attraction.
2. Discuss the role of communication in maintaining relationships.
3. Explain the role that culture plays in the formation and maintenance of relationships.
4. Analyse why relationships change or not.