

# International Journal of Social Science and Education Research



ISSN Print: 2664-9845  
ISSN Online: 2664-9853  
Impact Factor: RJIF 8.15  
IJSSER 2024; 6(2): 86-88  
[www.socialsciencejournals.net](http://www.socialsciencejournals.net)  
Received: xx-06-2024  
Accepted: xx-07-2024

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## A comparative exploratory study of psychodynamic theory and social learning theory: An analysis of their significance in education

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26649845.2024.v6.i2b.127>

### Abstract

This paper explores and compares two influential psychological theories: Psychodynamic Theory, formulated by Sigmund Freud, and Social Learning Theory, developed by Albert Bandura. Each theory offers unique perspectives on human behavior and development, focusing on internal psychological processes versus external social influences. Basically Freudian approach is beyond the realization. If we have to reach the world of unconscious then we have to back away from the world of self-realization or actualization. Because the idea of self-actualization is the proper and purposeful expression of the individual's conscious thoughts, feelings and behaviour. But Bandura's theory is categorically behavioural but according to nature it's a cognitive approach of learning. Psychologists and modern learning scientists are say that it's make a bridge between the two extreme paradigms (Behaviourism and cognitivism). The theory emphasised that modification of behaviour (Behaviourist notion) throughout observation, perception modelling (Cognitivist notion). Bandura accepted the social outlook after the invention of television and he rejected the practice of direct experience. And inaugurate the practice of socio cognitive dimension in the field of education, psychology and learning science.

**Keywords:** Social learning theory, psychodynamic theory, freudian approach, behaviourism and cognitivism, psychology and learning science

### Introduction

The quest to understand human behavior and learning processes has led to the development of various psychological theories. Among them, Psychodynamic Theory and Social Learning Theory stand out due to their distinct approaches to understanding and influencing behavior. Psychodynamic Theory delves into the depths of unconscious motives and childhood experiences, while Social Learning Theory emphasizes the role of observational learning and social reinforcement. This study seeks to explore these theories, compare their implications for education, and assess their relevance in contemporary educational practices. Psychodynamic Theory, introduced by Sigmund Freud in the late 19th century, revolutionized psychology by proposing that unconscious conflicts and childhood experiences significantly shape personality and behavior (Freud, 1905) <sup>[6]</sup>. Freud's structural model of personality, comprising the id, ego, and superego, delineates the dynamic interactions influencing human behavior (Freud, 1923) <sup>[7]</sup>. In contrast, Social Learning Theory, developed by Albert Bandura in the mid-20th century, emphasizes observational learning and the role of social environments in behavior acquisition (Bandura, 1977) <sup>[1]</sup>. Bandura posited that individuals learn new behaviors through observation and modeling of others, with reinforcement playing a crucial role in the persistence of learned behaviors (Bandura, 1986) <sup>[2]</sup>.

### Objectives of the study

- To explore Psychodynamic & Social learning theories
- To compare Psychodynamic and Social Learning Theories

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### Psychodynamic Theory (Freud) Key Concepts

Freud's Psychodynamic Theory underscores the unconscious mind's influence on behavior. The id, ego, and superego constitute the tripartite structure of personality, where the id represents instinctual drives, the ego mediates between the id and external reality, and the superego internalizes societal norms and values (Freud, 1923) <sup>[7]</sup>.

1. **Structure of Personality:** Freud's psychosexual stages (oral, anal, phallic, latency, genital) outline developmental phases where conflicts arise and are resolved, shaping personality (Freud, 1905) <sup>[6]</sup>.
2. **Defense Mechanisms:** Freud introduced defense mechanisms (e.g., repression, projection) as unconscious strategies to manage anxiety and protect the ego from threatening impulses (Freud, 1936).
3. **Criticism:** Freud's theories have been criticized for their lack of empirical validation and overemphasis on sexual and aggressive instincts (Popper, 1963). Despite these criticisms, Freud's conceptualization of unconscious processes continues to influence contemporary psychoanalytic thought (Kernberg, 2016).

### Social Learning Theory (Bandura) Key Concepts

Bandura's Social Learning Theory posits that behavior is learned through observation and imitation of others, particularly role models (Bandura, 1977) <sup>[1]</sup>. Cognitive factors, such as attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation, mediate the learning process (Bandura, 1986) <sup>[2]</sup>.

1. **Modeling and Imitation:** Bandura demonstrated through experiments how children learn aggressive behaviors by observing adults (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961). This observational learning process extends to various domains, including educational settings and media influence (Bandura, 2001).
2. **Reinforcement and Reciprocal Determinism:** Bandura expanded his theory to include reciprocal determinism, where behavior, environment, and personal factors interact bidirectionally (Bandura, 1986) <sup>[2]</sup>. Positive reinforcement strengthens learned behaviors, while negative reinforcement diminishes their occurrence (Bandura, 1977) <sup>[1]</sup>.
3. **Applications:** Social Learning Theory has been widely applied in educational psychology and learning science, influencing teaching methods and interventions (Holloway, 2018). Bandura's research on media effects has also shaped discussions on how exposure to violence in media impacts behavior (Bandura, 2001).

### Comparison of Psychodynamic and Social Learning Theories Focus

Freud's Psychodynamic Theory emphasizes internal psychological processes and unconscious conflicts, while Bandura's Social Learning Theory focuses on external social influences and observational learning.

1. **Developmental Frameworks:** Freud's psychosexual stages versus Bandura's emphasis on observational learning and modeling across the lifespan. It based on the perceptual efficacy and perspective oriented theory.
2. **Determinism:** Freudian determinism posits that early experiences shape future behavior, whereas Bandura allows for cognitive agency and the influence of environmental factors.

3. **Empirical Support and Criticism:** Social Learning Theory benefits from extensive empirical validation, whereas Freud's theories face challenges in empirical verification (Eysenck, 1986) <sup>[2]</sup>. Both theories continue to generate debate and research in contemporary psychology (Fonagy & Target, 2006).

### Some other comparisons are Theoretical Focus

Psychodynamic Theory and Social Learning Theory offer different perspectives on behavior and learning. Psychodynamic Theory focuses on internal psychological processes and early experiences, while Social Learning Theory emphasizes external influences and observable behaviours. These differing focuses lead to varied approaches in addressing educational challenges.

### Educational Approaches

In practice, Psychodynamic Theory may lead educators to prioritize emotional and psychological support, fostering a safe and nurturing environment for students. Social Learning Theory, on the other hand, encourages educators to use modeling and reinforcement to directly influence behavior and learning outcomes. Both theories provide valuable insights, but their application depends on the specific needs and context of the educational setting.

### Relevance and Integration

Both theories offer valuable contributions to education. Psychodynamic Theory's focus on emotional and psychological factors can complement Social Learning Theory's emphasis on observable behavior. Integrating these perspectives allows educators to address both internal and external factors affecting student learning. For example, understanding a student's emotional background (Psychodynamic) while simultaneously employing effective teaching strategies (Social Learning) can lead to a more holistic approach to education.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, Psychodynamic Theory and Social Learning Theory offer complementary yet distinct perspectives on human behavior and development. Freud's emphasis on unconscious conflicts and early experiences provides insights into deep-seated psychological processes, while Bandura's Social Learning Theory highlights the importance of social context and observational learning in shaping behavior. Despite their differences, both theories have significantly influenced psychological research and practice, contributing to our understanding of the complexities of human behavior.

### Reflection

Reflecting on these theories underscores the dynamic interplay between internal psychological processes and external social influences in shaping human behavior. Future research should continue to explore how these theories can be integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of human development and behavior across diverse contexts.

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