

What Do Psychology and Psychologists Offer Humanity?

What is psychology and what do psychologists do?

The science of psychology generates knowledge about the nature and development of human thoughts, emotions, and behaviors at both individual and societal levels. Psychology is an autonomous scientific discipline that applies to nearly every aspect of our boundless experience. Psychologists work in a broad range of settings — effectively any place where human functioning is relevant. Psychological science deepens our understanding of human behavior within social, cultural and linguistic contexts.¹ Psychologists have a role in supporting health and well-being globally within a human rights framework with the goal of improving lives.

Why do governments need psychology and psychologists?

It is humanly and financially beneficial for governments to recognize that psychologists make critical independent contributions to the alleviation of suffering and the enhancement of lives². Social determinants of health, such as education, adequate food and nutrition, a reasonable standard of living, work opportunities and equitable treatment are recognized as fundamental human rights enshrined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals³⁻⁷. Failure to address mental health challenges, such as depression and anxiety, that are often a consequence of lack of attention to social determinants of health costs the global economy \$1 trillion annually in lost productivity². Prevention and intervention of psychological health conditions, however, have been proven highly cost beneficial². When psychological science is applied to the contexts in which humans live, work, and play, potential and productivity increase⁸⁻⁹. Yet, in spite of the existence of both money-saving and clinically effective services for at-risk populations or those demonstrating symptoms of mental disorders, the majority of youth and adults in almost every country in the world receive no psychological treatment due to limited resources, stigma and lack of healthcare providers¹⁰⁻¹¹.

What is unique about psychology and psychologists?

Psychologists understand biological, social and environmental research and are trained to apply solid evidence to improve human lives across cultures and languages. To become a psychologist, one must demonstrate high professional, scientific and ethical knowledge and standards. Psychologists' advanced preparation emphasizes technical and scientific autonomy and independent roles within transdisciplinary teams to promote human well-being in every area of life (e.g., family, school, university, health, workplace, public service, and communities to name a few)¹². Psychologists work by applying the scientific method and complementary diagnostic, assessment, and reasoning skills to provide comprehensive and integrated approaches to human health. Employing psychologists for independent, decision-making roles aligns with their advanced training. As the world faces crises without precedent, psychologists' contributions to the alleviation of physical, emotional, and mental impacts on individuals, groups, and communities are critical¹³.

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