

Cognitive Approach

Background

The cognitive approach assumes that behaviour is the result of internal mental processes like memory, thinking, perception or language. It suggests the mind works like a computer, taking information in as input, processing it and storing it or deleting it as output. This machine reductionist view explores the similarities in mental processing and argues that human behaviour is predictable.





Evidence

Research into memory explores how memories are stored and how information can be distorted. **Loftus & Palmer (1974)** found that leading questions can alter people's recognition of events when asked to recall information as an eyewitness.

Beck (1967) believed that faulty thinking processes can alter behaviour. He created the 'negative triad' to explain why some people are more vulnerable to depression. This proposes that individuals take a negative view of themselves, the world and their future.

Cognitive therapies have been devised to correct the dysfunctional thought processes and help people with mental illness. **David et al (2018)** suggested that cognitive treatments like Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) can change negative beliefs and reduce symptoms of depression.

Evaluation

-  The cognitive approach studies behaviour using objective methods, often under controlled conditions in the lab. Therefore, has high reliability.
-  There are many practical applications from the cognitive approach such as therapies like CBT. They have been proven to be effective with many mental health disorders.
-  The cognitive approach is very machine reductionist and fails to account for human emotion or behaviour caused by biological factors.
-  One problem with explanations from the cognitive approach is that they are all based on inferences, as many of the internal processes, such as thinking or perception cannot be objectively measured. They are open to demand characteristics and social desirability.

