BA 3rd year psychology
PAPER1 APPROACHES OF PERSONALITY

Nomothetic approach

The term 'nomothetic' comes from the Greek word 'nomos' which means 'law'. Psychologists who take a nomothetic approach are concerned with establishing general laws, based on the study of large groups of people, and the use of statistical (quantitative) techniques to analyse data.

Idiographic approach

The term 'idiographic' comes from the Greek word 'idios', which means 'own' or 'private'. Psychologists who take an idiographic approach focus on the individual and emphasise the unique personal experience of human nature. What is Nomothetic approach and

Idiographic approach

The nomothetic approach describes the study of people as a total population and uses quantitative research methods. In contrast, the idiographic approach describes the study of the individual and uses qualitative methods.

Aim of idiographic

In particular, Allport called for the use of idiographic methods, which aim to identify patterns of behavior, thought, and emotion within an individual over time and contexts, rather than to strictly identify patterns of differences between individuals, as is the case with standard nomothetic approaches.

Aim of nomothetic

Nomothetic explanations are explanations that **seek to be general scientific laws or universal truths**. They apply to groups as a

whole and not to individuals.
uses of nomothetic approach

Biological Psychologists take a nomothetic approach when explaining psychological disorders, such as OCD and depression. They typically pinpoint biological factors, such as neurotransmitters, that are responsible for such disorders and use biological therapies (e.g. drugs) to treat all patients.

Nomothetic Vs Idiographic Approaches In Psychology

- Nomothetic Approach

- Idiographic Approach

The nomothetic approach in psychology

seeks general principles and patterns applicable to groups, while the idiographic approach focuses on understanding individuals in their unique context.

Nomothetic uses quantitative methods, while idiographic uses qualitative methods for studying human behavior and psychological processes.

Nomothetic Approach

The nomothetic approach in psychology focuses on general principles and laws that apply to groups of individuals.

It seeks to identify and understand universal patterns, traits, and characteristics that can be generalized across people, using quantitative methods

and statistical analysis to conclude human behavior.

The term "nomothetic" comes from the Greek word "nomos," meaning "law."

Psychologists who adopt this approach are mainly concerned with studying what we share with others (i.e., similarities between people).

Therefore, the nomothetic approach involves establishing laws or generalizations that apply to everyone.

Personality: – A Nomothetic Approach

The psychometric approach to the study of personality compares individuals in

terms of traits or dimensions common to everyone. This is a nomothetic approach, and two examples are Hans Eysenck's type and Raymond Cattell's 16PF trait theories.

The details of their work need not concern us here. Suffice it to say they both assume that there are a small number of traits that account for the basic structure of all personalities and that individual differences can be measured along these dimensions.

In the past 20 years, a growing consensus has begun to emerge about what those traits are. The "big 5" are considered to be extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience.

From a nomothetic point of view, these are considered to describe the psychologically significant aspects of any personality adequately.

Strengths

Regarded as scientific as it is: precise measurement; prediction and control of behavior; investigations of large groups; objective and controlled methods allowing replication and generalization.

Has helped psychology as a whole become scientific by developing laws and theories which can be empirically tested.

If a researcher uses the nomothetic approach, once a questionnaire, psychometric test, or experiment has been designed, data can be collected relatively

quickly.

Limitations

Predictions can be made about groups, but these may not apply to individuals.

The approach has been accused of losing sight of the 'whole person.'

Idiographic Approach

The idiographic approach in psychology focuses on understanding individuals in their unique context.

It aims to uncover specific, individualized factors and experiences that contribute to a person's behavior and psychological functioning, using qualitative methods and

in-depth analysis to gain rich insights into individual lives.

The term "idiographic" comes from the Greek word "idios" meaning "own" or "private." Psychologists interested in this aspect of experience want to discover what makes each of us unique.

No general laws are possible because of chance, free will and the uniqueness of individuals.

The approach tends to include qualitative data, investigating individuals in a personal and detailed way.
Methods of research include case studies, unstructured interviews, self-reports, autobiographies, and personal documents.

Personality: – An Idiographic

Approach

At the other extreme, Gordon Allport found over 18,000 separate terms describing personal characteristics.

Whilst some of these are common traits (that could be investigated nomothetically), the majority, in Allport's view, referred to more or less unique dispositions based on life experiences peculiar to ourselves.

He argues that they cannot be effectively studied using standardized tests. What is needed is a way of investigating them ideographically.

Carl Rogers, a Humanist psychologist, has developed a method of doing this, a procedure called the "Q-sort." First, the

subject is given a large set of cards with a self-evaluative statement written on each one.

For example, "I am friendly" or "I am ambitious," etc. The subject is then asked to sort the cards into piles. One pile contains statements that are "most like me," one statement that are "least like me," and one or more piles for statements that are in-between.

In a Q-sort, the number of cards can be varied, as can the number of piles and the type of question (e.g., How am I now?

How did I used to be? How does my partner see me? How would I like to be?) So there are a potentially infinite number of variations.

Limitations

The idiographic approach is very time-consuming. It takes a lot of time and money to study individuals in depth.