Enriching Life Experience using Behavioural Science Practices

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A body of knowledge on how and why people behave in specific ways produced by research in sociology, psychology, and neuroscience is referred as behavioural science. Due to the fact that people frequently make decisions that are not in their best interests long term, behavioural scientists created the "dual system" idea to explain better the mental processes that underpin human decision-making. Behavioural scientists assert that the interaction between these two systems, in particular, causes deliberate errors in decision-making that manifest as behaviour that may seem illogical (Marteau 2017). According to behavioural science, before developing and putting into practice new behaviour-change strategies, we need to have a more profound knowledge of why and how they happen.

Social science simplifies who we are, how we relate to one another, and how we engage with our surroundings. Every day, our findings have an impact on people's lives. For instance, many companies in the public and private sectors use our experience to manage various highly challenging situations. These challenges include global poverty, national security, child development, and neighbourhood safety. Global behavioural science research enhances the precision and effectiveness with which companies, first responders, and many other professionals carry out essential services.

The behavioural sciences today provide insight into a wide range of topics. Social scientists are discovering remarkable things on every level. Our most recent generation of behavioural scientists is more diverse and significant than ever regarding approach and demographics. These scientists from many eras, both fundamental and applied, are working together to give students and professionals new abilities to handle the opportunities and difficulties of our day.

Behavioural science is now more crucial than ever. We are related in a variety of ways. Some connections promote understanding and solidify relationships. Scientists can help us evaluate theories about our reality based on how well they fit with reasoned arguments and thorough evidence rather than how many likes or clicks they obtain. Behaviour science allows us to group ideas about how our activities affect others,

following how well they corroborate carefully recorded observations. By providing this service, we aid in fostering improved intercultural communication and future development for people everywhere.

Research in Behavioural Science

Applied behaviour analysis (ABA), a subfield of behavioural science, studies motivation, learning, and behaviour-modification strategies. Schools, clinical settings, and behavioural health facilities are just a few places where applied behaviour analysts can work.

Based on observation and data analysis, they are in charge of creating and implementing behaviour change programmes. There is little doubt that the fields of counselling, psychology, and special education are included in applied behaviour analysis.

Human behaviour research spans a wide range of academic and social disciplines. According to the American Psychological Association, behavioural science is any field that uses experiments and observation to study the actions and reactions of humans and other animals in a methodical way.

The various fields that make up behavioural science include anthropology, economic behaviour, psychology of cognition, consumer behaviour, psychology of social interaction, and sociology, to name just a few.

Some behavioural scientists combine theories, concepts, and methodologies from other fields to fully comprehend the complexities of human behaviour.

When studying behaviour, researchers attempt to comprehend why people occasionally act in ways detrimental to their well-being. They investigate the sporadic influences of environmental circumstances on our judgements, beliefs, and attitudes. Researchers are also looking into ways to convince customers to accept, reject, or change their purchasing decisions.

Behavioural Science for Better Health

Behavioural sciences aim to comprehend the underlying reasons for particular actions and decision-making processes. Therefore, behaviorally informed policies that support

supportive environments and improve the delivery of people-centred health services by making them more accessible, acceptable, and beneficial can be created using empirical data on health-related behaviours. Therapies based on behavioural science seek to alter health-related habits.

Behavioural sciences include the study of health-related behaviours in a specific environment at the cognitive, social, and environmental levels. They frequently interact with the social determinants of health, as shown, for instance, by the fact that poverty can impair cognitive function and thus result in poor decision-making. In the context of interventions aimed at social and behavioural change, health literacy's influence on adopting health-related activities must be considered. This impact has been thoroughly demonstrated in the scholarly literature during the last few decades.

Non-medical factors that influence health-related outcomes and function at multiple levels are the focus of a growing research community. For instance, the social sciences study the social determinants of health, which include a person's birth, growth, job, place of residence, and ageing, in addition to a wider variety of variables and systems influencing their everyday circumstances, health outcomes, and other consequences. The distinction and relationship between more major determinants operating at the societal and economic levels and behavioural factors influencing people's health-related decision-making in smaller and more specific contexts are poorly understood, even though both perspectives are necessary and complementary to improve health outcomes and reduce inequalities.

The phrase "applied behavioural sciences" covers various academic specialities, including marketing, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and cognitive science. The methodological toolbox for studying behaviour contains a wide range of options, depending on the theoretical framework employed, the specific behaviour of interest, and the specific research question (whether it involves understanding the causes of a particular behaviour or how people may respond to a public health initiative). In-depth interviews, participant observation, focus groups, surveys, experiments, randomized controlled trials, and other quantitative and qualitative methods are available.

When it comes to applying strategies and policies that target context-specific behaviours and evaluating and measuring the impact of interventions in particular

situations, behavioural science theory and methodologies are very beneficial in the field of public health. Behavioural science theory is still underutilized in public health, despite the fact that behaviours can be changed through several policies, interventions, and communications. Techniques for behavioural change that are ineffective are still in use. At the same time, successful people are either not employed or are challenging to imitate because practitioners and researchers frequently fail to identify, characterize, or comprehend their mechanisms of action. More research, funding, capacity-building, and increased cooperation between public health professionals and behavioural scientists are necessary to address these and other difficulties.

Application of Behavioural Science for good Mental Health

A wide variety of ideas, principles, and methodological approaches are available in psychology as a discipline to help us comprehend mental health, abnormal functions and behaviours, and mental diseases.

However, the evidence does highlight the alarming reality of the prevalence of mental illness; the WHO reported in 2019 that around 970 million people worldwide live with a mental health condition, which is one in every eight people. For those aged 10-19, it is one out of seven, accounting for 13% of the global disease burden for this age group. This number, still a rough estimate considering underreporting, is likely to have increased after 2020, centring mental health in national and international public health agendas, with a particular focus on early detection targeting children and young adults.

The impact of financial crises on mental health has been well-researched. Economic instability, catalyzed by the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the effects of inflation felt worldwide can have long-lasting and inconspicuous effects that manifest as depression, self-harm, substance abuse, etc. Often, these are diagnosed too late or go completely undiagnosed. This is particularly relevant among young people, who are at a greater risk of social exclusion and are less able to access quality support and services. Low-income countries tend to experience a magnified version of these crises: they are less equipped to provide poverty relief, they are less able to overcome the many challenges posed by COVID-19, and they are also less prepared to tend to a more severely afflicted population.

The WHO estimates that the rate of mental health workers can be as low as 2 per 100,000 people in developing countries.

The COVID-19 outbreak was a crisis of many sorts; mandated confinement and the fear of the virus put unprecedented stress on people by disrupting their livelihoods with an uncertain future. Global intermittent or extended lockdowns resulted in unemployment and income loss. The effects of what was first seen as a medical emergency lingered as depression, anxiety, PTSD, etc. If anything, COVID-19 led individuals and institutions to rethink mental health and kickstart meaningful conversations, yielding efforts and initiatives centred around facilitating access to services.

A deep dive into behavioural factors is necessary to gather data about people's practices and their knowledge, concerns and attitudes towards these services. In the case of youth, this is all the more important in increasing the success of relevant initiatives. While young people's cognitive decision-making processes are similar to those of adults in many ways, there are aspects specific to youth that should be considered when designing interventions, particularly regarding their risk perceptions, as they tend to be more risk-seeking. Examples of considerations in that regard include establishing positive social norms in peer groups, engaging young people in communicating risk-prevention messages, and facilitating safe social connections to reduce negative impacts on mental health.

Behavioural science tools such as social norms have been instrumental in advancing accessibility and uptake, especially when stigma continues to represent one of the main reasons why people hesitate to access services, even if they are available and easy to use.

The role of behavioural insights is medullar in designing and implementing such programs. This can look like behaviorally informing corporate welfare programs to promote work-life balance or conducting interventions to increase parental engagement to reduce youth risk-seeking behaviours. It can also look like behaviorally telling efforts to encourage help-seeking behaviours (i.e., designing interventions that prompt individuals to seek help when needed). Some relevant early intervention programs, such as Unplugged, rolled out in schools in various European countries, engage children

aged to develop critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, emotional regulation and empathy.

The program was associated with significantly lower self-reported use of cigarettes, alcohol, and cannabis. Other programs, such as the Utrecht Coping Power Programme, rolled out in the US, Italy and the Netherlands, targeted children as young as 8 and their parents in a 23-weeklong intervention to foster emotional development and social problem-solving. The program's effects in tackling behavioural disorders and substance use were detected even four years after the program had concluded, highlighting the importance of early detection and active parenthood in mitigating the drivers of mental health conditions.

There is valuable research in behavioural science that explores the effect of social norms on health outcomes. For instance, a recent survey conducted before the COVID-19 vaccine revealed that respondents' willingness to vaccinate positively correlated with their perceptions of others getting vaccinated. Additionally, research has found that stigmatized beliefs often arise from erroneous perceptions of social norms and further reveals that updating these norms can significantly impact promoting a desirable behaviour. This was seen in a famous experiment in Saudi Arabia, where young married men (26 years old on average) were asked about their perceptions of other men's level of approval of women working outside the home and their level of acceptance. Researchers found that overall, actual acceptance levels were significantly higher than what participants thought they were. Upon informing participants that other men viewed their wives working outside the home quite favourably, researchers found that these men were more likely to register their wives to find a job outside the home.

Some tools could behaviorally inform the communication, e.g., making salient some of the facts around trends or positively framing certain information or available services. Other devices could be choice-architecture based, such as using default screening mechanisms for early detection or making it easy to seek help. Behavioural insights have also been used to address some of the root causes of depression, such as commitment devices to increase physical activity or using ego or feedback to curb harmful behaviours such as excessive drinking.

Because of the upcoming massive wave of mental health cases, the focus should be on using behavioural insights at the entire health continuum: from destigmatizing conversations about mental health using social norms or effective messengers to promoting a healthy lifestyle through physical activity, healthy eating, work-life balance and positive social interactions, to simplifying access to resources like therapy or psychiatric intervention, all the way to promoting treatment adherence, making it easier for professionals to follow up with their patients and aiding them in tracking their mood, making appointments or reaching out to helplines.

Behavioural Science to Support Public Health

Among the leading causes of death in the modern world are behavioural and societal issues, including smoking, eating poorly, exercising insufficiently, misusing drugs and alcohol, engaging in risky sexual behaviour, and not having access to medical treatment. Over the past ten years, studies have demonstrated the efficacy of interventions based on social and behavioural science concepts in preventing HIV, cardiovascular disease, alcohol-related problems, cancer, homelessness, and mental health. These studies demonstrate the relevance of behavioural and social science to public health practice. It is more likely that multiple layers of interventions that consider the interaction of social, environmental, biological, and behavioural factors can improve community health.

A small number of clinical services, such as those for maternal and child health and sexually transmitted diseases, are provided by state and local public health departments. These departments have historically prioritized disease surveillance, protecting the public from health threats like tainted food and water and establishing policies to prevent and control epidemics and disease surveillance. The duties of health departments have increased in recent decades to include wellness promotion and illness prevention initiatives.

The results of human behaviour have an impact on health. Behavioural and social scientists investigate the cognitive, social, and environmental incentives and constraints that influence behaviours connected to one's health. Applying behavioural evidence on what drives behaviour at the individual, social, and population levels can improve the design of policies and initiatives, communications, goods, and services to promote

improved health for all. A multidisciplinary approach and the use of theory, methodologies, research, practical tools, and techniques from various fields, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, communications, marketing, economics, systems thinking, and design thinking, are required to apply behavioural and social sciences. Other public health programmes that concentrate on the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes can benefit from and be complemented by evidence from the behavioural and social sciences.

Behavioural scientists are researching many of the world's most urgent issues, such as violent crime, alternative energy, and cyber security. They have significantly influenced every aspect of civilization.

Public health is one of the crucial areas where behavioural science can be used. The current Ebola outbreak in West Africa serves as a prime illustration. While improving knowledge of the underlying infections and boosting medicine spending were essential parts of the solution to this issue, there were also several social science requirements. Understanding the sickness, the people who had it, and the larger culture in which they lived were significant. For instance, clinicians needed to comprehend how attitudes towards practices like hand washing and other hygienic behaviours were formed. It was also vital to look into broader socioeconomic issues, like why states fall apart and how to build them back again. Additionally, experts in management, marketing, drug pricing, human resources, fund-raising, and leadership were required for the fight against Ebola.

Behavioural scientists have much to offer in other medical specializations, and they work with several UK agencies in this area. For instance, scientists are looking into how cancer patients and those caring for them understand the ongoing and recent developments in cancer science. Social scientists and the National Institutes of Health are working to create a more realistic picture of patients' interactions with community hospitals. Researchers from the Medical Research Council and sociologists are looking into the possible causes of erratic sleep habits.

There are numerous other applications for behavioural science. To better comprehend the world and be better equipped to address the daily military and security challenges, the Ministry of the Military of the United Kingdom consults social scientists at think tanks and universities. Another intriguing example involves the UK's Home Office,

which has enlisted the help of criminologists, engineers, and automakers to develop automobiles that are more difficult to steal. For this effort, it is crucial that criminologists shed light on the motivations behind the theft and the tactics thieves use.

In the commercial world, behavioural scientists are in high demand. EasyJet, for instance, contributes to the Consumer Data Research Centre, which employs geo-demographic mapping to provide the airline with information on its customers' service consumption, travel preferences, airport accessibility, and more. There is typically a significant demand among businesses worldwide for the kind of enhanced client knowledge that behavioural scientists may offer. Behavioural scientists might discover an understanding that others might have overlooked because of their capacity to examine the world from various perspectives.

Behavioural Science- Lessons for Policy Makers & Researchers

Policymakers can create more efficient procedures by having an excellent grasp of the elements affecting how people behave and interact.

That may be done to increase the social and behavioural sciences' positive influence on public policy and our society. Even though each of these initiatives, if undertaken separately, may improve the social and behavioural sciences' relevance and shared value, collectively, they will be more valuable.

Utilize a collaborative, consensus-building approach to pinpoint reliable scientific techniques and conclusions that may interest policymakers. The social and behavioural sciences should create a high-level, cross-disciplinary project incorporating eminent authorities in communication and learning as well as genuine policymakers. The intention is to create functional, empirically supported, and immediately applicable presentations that policymakers at various levels of government may access and use.

This would not be a conventional scholarly paper. Instead, it would have a practical and translational goal and be inspired by understanding real-world policy needs and how our methods and findings might influence those needs. A considerable body of knowledge on these subjects, which social and behavioural scientists have taken the lead in developing, would be used to generate communication content and presentational techniques.

The following inquiries would serve as a roadmap for the consensus process from the research perspective: What are the most important guiding principles for social and behavioural scientists as they approach public policy issues? Which of our solid empirical findings and theoretical insights do policymakers consider most crucial? In addition, we would ask decision-makers to list the social science research they believe to be most important. What are the situations in which they would value an understanding of social and behavioural sciences the most? Are there instances where social and behavioural science techniques and research can aid decision-makers in avoiding inefficient or harmful policies and programmes while developing more useful ones?

The term "regression to the mean" (RTM) refers to the well-known tendency in social science research for scores at the extreme high or low ends of a distribution to "regress" towards the mean on subsequent assessment due to chance variables exclusively. This phenomenon provides an example of the possible outcomes of this process. The potential for erroneous regression to the mean effects is known to researchers.

However, policymakers frequently aim to assist individuals who fall at the furthest ends of the bell curve, such as pupils at the worst schools. As a result, policies might be passed, and programmes that appear effective but ineffective could be developed. Because of the tendency to gravitate towards the mean, a school with pupils who test at a deficient level one year will likely perform at a less-dire level the following year, regardless of any policy interventions. This could occur for several reasons, such as when several high-achieving children enrol or when several incredibly challenging pupils leave the school.

However, those unrelated adjustments can raise the school's average scores, causing the policymaker to detect a change and credit the intervention for it. Again, policymakers are unlikely to be very familiar with research design or statistical methods, even though researchers know the methodological design and statistical analytic techniques to prevent this error. Policymakers are also unlikely to be aware of the problem of regression itself.

More resources could be allocated to policies that actually have effects and prevent ineffective or even harmful effects if decisionmakers who deeply care about issues and

the people affected by them are assisted in developing policies less prone to this and other comparable fallacies.

Giving policymakers valuable tools to help them evaluate whether or not the results of randomized, controlled trials can be effectively translated from one environment or application to another could be very helpful. One way to increase the public value of existing social and behavioural science knowledge is through collaborative efforts between researchers and policymakers to identify and communicate methods and ideas more effectively for greater policy effectiveness and efficiency. To develop more efficient communication methods, construct a comprehensive, result-driven entity. This organization would provide content and commit to assessing and disclosing the relative efficacy of various science communication tactics. The effectiveness with which the information is communicated will determine whether or not social and behavioural science knowledge that has the potential to help the public is realized.

Create a resource independent from the government that decision-makers can use to engage in more frequent and continuous discussions. Policymakers can use this website to get reliable and impartial information regarding current or prospective laws and programmes.

Let's say a policymaker is worried about the costs and effects of high rates of high school dropouts. This resource would give decision-makers a place to learn how social scientists have approached the problem, which aspects are most and least likely to be impacted by different policy options, and any errors or achievements researchers have reported. If the resource could offer this knowledge to decision-makers in an approachable and helpful manner, it might aid them in making better choices.

We aim to alter how decision-makers and employees view and use directly applicable scientific approaches, findings, and concepts. However, for this project to be successful, we must focus on how to help social and behavioural scientists better understand the situations that policymakers regularly face and how to enlighten policymakers about science. This resource will be helpful to decision-makers only if academics are sufficiently aware of policymakers' needs to provide the kinds of information that policymakers can use.

For individuals responsible for developing environmental policy, behavioural science is especially helpful in assisting those tasked with creating long-term plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In addition to carefully identifying and using practical solutions to achieve strategic goals, these strategies must also ensure that progress is tracked throughout plan implementation.

Finally, behavioural science may provide policymakers with various cutting-edge techniques for assessing the efficacy of the behaviour-change initiatives that serve as the foundation for their long-term objectives. This takes the form of field studies, in which information on the behaviour under investigation—in this case, meat consumption—is gathered from groups of people who have both been exposed to and have not been subjected to the selected behaviour-change technique. Policymakers are more likely to say with certainty that their chosen strategy had a causal effect on any subsequent behavioural changes noticed after analyzing this kind of data. They have, however, primarily focused on methods intended to advance health rather than protect the environment. So far, such trials have been used to evaluate strategies in several settings, including workplaces, schools, and healthcare facilities (Mozaffarian et al., 2018).

It is now necessary to conduct more applied research at the interface between behavioural science and the environment, as well as to translate and communicate the findings to decision-makers and provide clear instructions on how to put such solutions into practice in their nations. The main goal is to make information more widely available so that decision-makers can take behavioural science into account early on in the policy-making process, resulting in entirely behaviorally informed solutions that can withstand rigorous experimental testing.

Creating a Better World through Behavioural Science

Strengthening the behavioural sciences is crucial because it can foster a sense of belonging, participation, harmony, integrity, creativity, critical and analytical thinking, acceptance of change, and good ties with other countries. Even if several new academic study programmes have been inspired by globalization, considerable work still needs to be done. As knowledge increasingly diversifies, we must develop new strategies for producing, organizing, and transmitting data in the many humanities and social science

areas. The sharing of knowledge is essential for the global movement to grow. Given their significance, it is necessary to realize that social sciences should be both a topic and a requirement for all technical and professional degrees.

Our inability to recognize this has repeatedly taken us down the wrong path since it is challenging to formulate questions and provide answers in the social sciences like some of the natural sciences can. The social sciences must therefore be made more accessible. Our social sciences can now, or soon be able to, serve as a roadmap for comprehending social life, but this knowledge will remain ineffective until it is broadly disseminated. The main obstacle in this situation is how financially unviable social sciences are. Given the low possibility of finding solutions to the issues caused by the relative underdevelopment of our social knowledge, it is critical to boost the social sciences' standing by paying them adequate attention. This is because the social sciences give people an understanding of the various social norms and values.

In an increasingly complicated environment, behavioural insights have provided a tool to understand why people behave the way they do and how interventions can change a person's behaviour. According to practitioners, the next ten years will be devoted to figuring out how to incorporate the study, its methods, and its takeaways into systems and organizations. For behavioural insights to advance, there are three essential factors to take into account:

Humility A paradigm shift is brought about by humility, which is the "getting real" moment when one decides to live in certain doubt rather than unfounded conviction. This modification acknowledges that those in positions of authority, whether public or private institutions employ them, have never had all the answers and shouldn't be expected to. Still, they can provide them if they are qualified and humble enough to do so.

Honesty: A mature attitude based on a deeper appreciation and understanding of human nature in relationships between people in leadership and those they lead or manage. This may sound frightening, but with the quick transmission of data and knowledge, "command and control" will need to give way to "collaboration and enabling" in many (but not all) situations, whether in governments or organizations.

Ethics: Ethics has been and will continue to be essential to successfully disseminating behavioural discoveries worldwide. There are already established ethical standards, checks and balances, oversight, and public responsibility for public bodies. As private institutions employ behavioural insights more, they will need similar frameworks, and both will need to ensure they are strengthened and deployed in system transformation.

"What we observe is not nature itself, but rather nature exposed to our particular method of questioning," observed Werner Heisenberg, the 1958 Nobel Prize in Physics. The most important lesson learned from behavioural insights is that our systems and processes can be biased, making them ineffective or even dangerous when used to make decisions. In the future decade, behavioural insights can help to solve this even more critical leadership lesson.

The Behavioural sciences can make such a path available in all their glorious forms by producing findings and ideas that are intersubjective or acknowledged from several points of view. Intersubjectivity may be a helpful ally when addressing problems like poverty or attempting to improve educational performance because these are situations where we genuinely need to understand where the rubber hits the road. When used deliberately and honestly, the social sciences produce questions and findings that can be applied to a wide range of beliefs and commitments that define many human communities.

Looking ahead, I think the behavioural science is entering a golden age that will see increased social scientific research, better dissemination of the benefits of these insights, and larger applications.

I want to conclude by expressing my gratitude to everyone who has devoted a sizable portion of their lives to the advancement and application of social science. Because when we work together, we can significantly raise the standard of living for our families, communities, country, and everyone else on the planet.

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