

# Social Cognitive Theory By Albert Bandura

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## Abstract

Not to put it lightly, Albert Bandura is one of the greatest psychologists who is still alive today. Many know him for his contributions to the field of social cognitive psychology, including his social learning (cognitive) theory, which is now a cornerstone in psychology. Not to mention his work studying children in the Bobo Doll experiments and the concepts of self-efficacy. While Bandura and his works are a relatively “new” concept in psychology, they play off many concepts that have been forming for thousands of years. Obviously, the concepts of classical and operant conditioning were the main building blocks, but many theories come into play, and the mediation and observation steps he added redefined how we see learning and behaviour, especially in children. The concepts of learning, mental development, and even some concepts of nature versus nurture can be explained using the theories that Bandura is now well known for. His concepts in social learning (cognitive) theory have been the starting point for many other psychologists and even scientists who still strive to discover why we do what we do. While it may not have been a perfect theory that explains everything ever, this step in psychology and history, for that matter, Bandura, makes it one of the most important to discover the process of learning, where behaviour comes from, and how humans think, ever.

## Introduction

Social cognitive theory by Albert Bandura has represented the neo-behaviourist aspects of human behaviour. The theory has multidisciplinary implications. Since the publication of social cognitive theory, Albert Bandura has gained an influential position for his works in the fields of psychology, social learning, and mass communication. Scholars from all these fields are taking notions from social cognitive theory. Though this theory is not the only milestone work presented by Bandura, it has attained the widest attention from scholars and practitioners from various fields. His Bobo Doll experiments are famous in the fields of psychology and communication. He has been ranked the fourth most influential psychologist in the twentieth century by a survey conducted in 2002.

Bandura is Canadian-born and belongs to a small town about 50 miles away from Edmonton. He was the last of six siblings, and his early education was in a small school with only two teachers. He once said, *“The students had to take charge of their own education”* because of limited access to educational resources. He added further that he realized that *“the content of most textbooks is perishable...the tools of self-directedness serve one well over time.”* His emphasis on self-efficacy and personal agency might be attributed to such experiments in his early life through his interest in the field of psychology, which was purely accidental. He used to arrive at school as early as before his

courses started, and this was despite his working at night and commuting to school. He started taking filler classes to pass the time in these early hours at school, which made him take an interest in psychology studies. Bandura, during an interview, said that one day, he was wasting his early hours at the school's library: *"Someone had forgotten to return a course catalogue, and I thumbed through it, attempting to find a filler course for occupying the early time slot. I noticed a course in psychology that would serve as an excellent filler. It sparked my interest, and I found my career."* He earned his MA degree in psychology in 1951 and PhD in 1952 from the University of IOWA, home to a number of renowned scholars of behavioural sciences. Bandura joined Stanford University in 1952 and continues to work there to this day. While working on aggression in adolescents, Bandura found interest in vicarious learning, imitation, and modelling. In his social learning theory, Bandura emphasizes the importance of observational learning. Modelling and imitation. Explaining the subject of social learning, he wrote in his book, *"Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do."* He developed a model of interaction among behaviours, an individual's cognition, and the environment in social learning theory.



Bandura posits that these three learning factors interact with each other in a reciprocal manner, determining an individual's social learning. Through his famous Bobo Doll experiments, Bandura came up with three elements influencing the social and behavioural learning of individuals, especially children's learning. The Bobo Doll experiment was based on a film in which an adult model played with the Bobo Doll, beating it and using aggressive words. In an observational setting, a group of children was exposed to the film and later were given room to play in a room with a Bobo doll present in it. Kids who saw the movie were more likely to imitate the model in the film by beating the Bobo doll and uttering abusive words. They clearly imitated the violent model in the movie. The experiment produced highly significant results for behavioural learning as it broke the insistence of behaviourism on learning reinforced by rewards and incentives. The group of children playing with the Bobo doll was given no gifts or rewards, yet they learned to behave in a certain manner that was underpinned by simply imitating what they observed. Bandura gave this phenomenon of learning the name of "observational learning" and described four elements that characterized this phenomenon: attention and retention. Reciprocation and motivation.

## Observational Learning

Observational learning, posited by Bandura, subsequent to his Social Learning Theory, published in 1977, is based on Bobo doll experiments, which demonstrate how children learn from what they observe. People who are observed are termed models, and children in society observe many influential models, such as family members, especially parents, friends, their families, teachers, and instructors at schools, as well as mass-mediated models on television screens and movies. These models present examples of behaviours that are imitable for the children. They assist kids'

perceptions about social characters and roles such as masculinity, femininity, and pro-social and anti-social behaviours. Children observe them, encode their behaviours as examples, and imitate them in the social roles that they have to perform.

Though departing from behaviorism in cognitive psychology, Bandura agrees with the social learning theory, with the theories of operant conditioning and classical conditioning; however, to both of these phenomena, he has added important new concepts. Firstly, he posits that between stimulus and response, there occurs a cognitive process; secondly, through observational learning, behavior is learned from the environment. According to observational learning theory, based on Bobo doll studies in 1961, children attentively observe the social models around them in different roles and cognitively encode their behaviours, which they exemplify in their actions later in their social roles. It is highly probable that they may not realize if those behaviours were gender appropriate or not. However, numerous factors and processes exist that make it more likely that children will reproduce a behaviour that social peers deem appropriate for their gender.

Observational learning suggests that children tend to pay attention to and imitate those behavioural examples that fit them more. Subsequently, it is probable that a child will imitate modelled behaviours of individuals from the same gender. Secondly, social peers will respond to the exemplified or imitated behaviour of children either by punishment or by reinforcement. If an imitation of a modelled behaviour receives appreciation or rewards, the child will be more likely to continue with that behaviour on a permanent basis, in every respective situation. For instance, if a girl plays with sympathy and love for her toy and her parents tell her that she is a kind and good girl, the girl will most probably continue adopting such behaviour because she received a certain sort of reward for such behaviour. Such reinforcement, however, may be in the internal or external form and positive or negative.

Bandura has a contradictory position with peers and scholars as per his designation as a behaviourist or non-behaviourist. Throughout his works and theories, which are placed among the works of behaviourists, he noted that he “ never really fit the behavioural orthodoxy.” Throughout his works, from the initial ones, Bandura has been arguing that behavioural learning is reduced to stimuli and that the response cycle is too simplistic. In his works, while using behavioural terms such as reinforcement and conditioning, he has explained that he was conceptualizing those as operatives through the process of cognition. He complains that psychological scholars in their texts have continuously mischaracterized his approach as being rooted in behaviourism, whereas his works have a perspective of social cognitivism.

Albert Bandura's contributions to psychological research and theory formulation are enormous; his works are recognized as revolutionary in cognitive psychology that began in the latter half of the 1960s. Theories posited by him tremendously impacted the branches of psychology, such as cognitive psychology, psychotherapy, education, and personality psychology. He is recognized as one of the greatest psychology scholars whose works are milestones in the academics and practices of the psychology field.

# An Agentic Perspective on Positive Psychology

Bandura presents his perspectives on positive psychology in “An Agentic Perspective on Positive Psychology” (Bandura, 2008). He communicates his perspective on agentic positive psychology. He accentuates human limits instead of human failings and brokenness. Bandura clarifies how efficacy can be affected and created, and how it emphatically impacts all aspects of the human experience.

As indicated by Albert Bandura, self-efficacy isn't a quality that some have, and others don't (or someplace in the middle). Rather, he suggests that anybody paying little heed to their past or current condition can practice and fortify their self-efficacy.

All through his written work, Bandura studies the overwhelmingly negative, pathology-centered perspectives in the train of psychology, differentiating it from the positive brain research's genius self-efficacy approach. He additionally addresses the “pathology of hopefulness”, which will be clarified below, when contrasted with authenticity when successfully moving toward life occasions. The consequence of this part is a persuasive and urging push to keep seeking research into human organization, efficacy, and positive psychology viewpoints, all in all. He offers four approaches to do this, which we will dive into now: Mastery experiences, Social persuasion, social modeling, and the physiological condition of the individual.s

Social Cognitive theory is an important base for understanding learning from mass media and social media channels. Bandura's social cognitive theory (2001) gives an intriguing point of view on social media by concentrating on how practices are learned and authorized. One proposal of the theory is that people learn by demonstrating practices they watch. Demonstrating impacts, such as vicarious sparks and social endorsement helpers, have solid behavioural consequences for people. Bandura's composition on social authorization sparks can enable us to comprehend the current ascent of digital tormenting.

As indicated by Bandura (2001), two noteworthy wellsprings of sanctions– social authorisation and disguised self-sanctions—direct transgressive conduct. Individuals evade transgressive conduct since they expect that their associates will react negatively to such conduct. Disguised measures direct a person's lead. In any case, such guidelines work just when enacted, and various procedures can make moral responses progress toward becoming withdrawn from unfeeling behaviour (Bandura, 1991b, 1999b).

For instance, in cyber-bullying cases, self-regulation neglects to keep spooks from conferring ethically unforgivable practices due to dehumanization occurring because of the online setting of the connections. Online, individuals are not “human”; similarly, they are disconnected. They are regularly delineated basically by client names, symbols, or profile pictures. Notwithstanding, when online cooperations use spilling video, individuals still show up as “talking heads” without the instantaneousness and nearness people convey in eye-to-eye communications. As an outcome, online collaborations dehumanize members.

From Bandura's social cognitive theory, we realize that people regularly experience considerable difficulties abusing adapted people without gambling self-judgment; however, "self-sanctions against remorseless lead can be separated or blunted by dehumanization, which strips individuals of human characteristics or equips them with savage characteristics" (2001).

Social Cognitive Theory serves as an exceptionally fascinating focal point through which to take a gander at social media use. When joined with the "traditional" media theory thoughts behind Uses and Gratifications Theory, Social Cognitive Theory opens up another universe of things to consider in regard to social media utilization. When we talked about Uses and Gratifications Theory in class, one of the essential subjects of discussion that surfaced was that the (generally unaddressed) needs a bit of Use and Gratifications (in-class discourse, September 11). Sensibly along these lines, the uses and gratifications theory basically states that people utilize certain media in certain approaches to gratify certain requirements. In this way, the inquiries of what those necessities are and where they originate from (freely) unquestionably emerge. It appears that social cognitive theory can be filled in as a mental focal point through which to consider where such needs originate and why they may show in certain ways.

This is a significant expansion to more traditional broad communications speculations since Social Cognitive Theory considers the impact of what I would call "human-based" constructs, as opposed to only the more unthinking "parts" of traditional hypotheses. The readings for this unit essentially appear to recommend that media utilization is fixed to Social Cognitive Theory in such routes as the connections between self-efficacy and media use, and furthermore, self-direction and media use a control (Bandura, 2001b; LaRose and Eastin, 2004). Notwithstanding, I would place the social cognitive theory as being associated with media utilization, and particularly with the development of uses and gratifications theory, on significantly more profound mental levels. Given that Social Cognitive Theory portrays the impact of such developments as social standards and self-efficacy on the individual's office (Bandura, 2001a), it bodes well that with regard to media use, Social Cognitive Theory could clarify the impact of such developments as social standards and self-efficacy on particular media utilization decisions people make to fulfil their needs.

Accordingly, advancing with social media exploration, the Social Cognitive Theory system could be utilized as a beginning stage for examining the particular mental inspiration people have for utilizing media to gratify certain necessities (in this manner, effectively binds Social Cognitive Theory to Uses and Gratifications Theory) as an approach to pinpoint particular needs people might attempt to meet. This would expand the Social Cognitive Theory system past basically tending to the issues of self-efficacy and self-direction (among different issues) into the territories of really tending to the particular needs going before Uses and Gratifications Theory – an auspicious subject in social media inquiry.

SCT can be utilized to both complement and investigate the existing theory and ought to be considered by researchers for its capability to improve and expand their current work. In the first place, it can give valuable mental benefits to help clarify human practices. Second, it gives a way to

move past a basic deterministic perspective of media impacts to one that perceives the role of the person and, in addition, the transaction between numerous determinants. Thus, it can, finally, add to a more far-reaching way to deal with media impacts, particularly with regards to an advancing media environment, as researchers get a handle on a way to clarify examples of reception and utilization of social media. Social Cognitive Theory has been utilized to grow to inquire about directed through less complex models, similar to Uses and Gratifications theory. Bandura has contributed marvellous works in psychology that have helped scholars from other fields, such as communication, to understand the interaction of environment, personal perceptions and traits, and behaviour.