

Examrace

Psychology Study Material: Defining Abnormality and Perspectives on Abnormality

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Defining Abnormality

What is abnormal behaviour?

Abnormality can be defined in a number of ways.

People identify, understand and explain abnormality according to their past experience, common information, cultural tradition, societal attitude, and/or professional knowledge.

Definitions of Abnormal Behaviour

Statistical Definition

- People deviating from the norm are considered “abnormal” .
- But what if majority of people indulge into erratic behaviour?
- What about the creative artists who did not go along the norm?

Abnormality as Deviation from “Ideal”

- Ideal refers to the standard toward which most people strive.
- Abnormality, according to this definition, is not striving toward the ideal.
- But what about those for whom the ‘ideal’ is not the ‘ideal’ ?
- For example, a student who is a very good painter and does not want to pursue conventional education.

A Sense of Personal Discomfort Seen as Abnormality

- A person is seen as abnormal if his thoughts and behaviour are a source of discomfort for him.
- Discomfort can be in the form of anxiety, distress, or guilt.

Inability to Function Effectively

- People, who cannot function and perform as effectively as they ought to, are seen as abnormal.
- This definition includes adjusting and adapting to the social requirements.

The Legal Definition of Abnormality

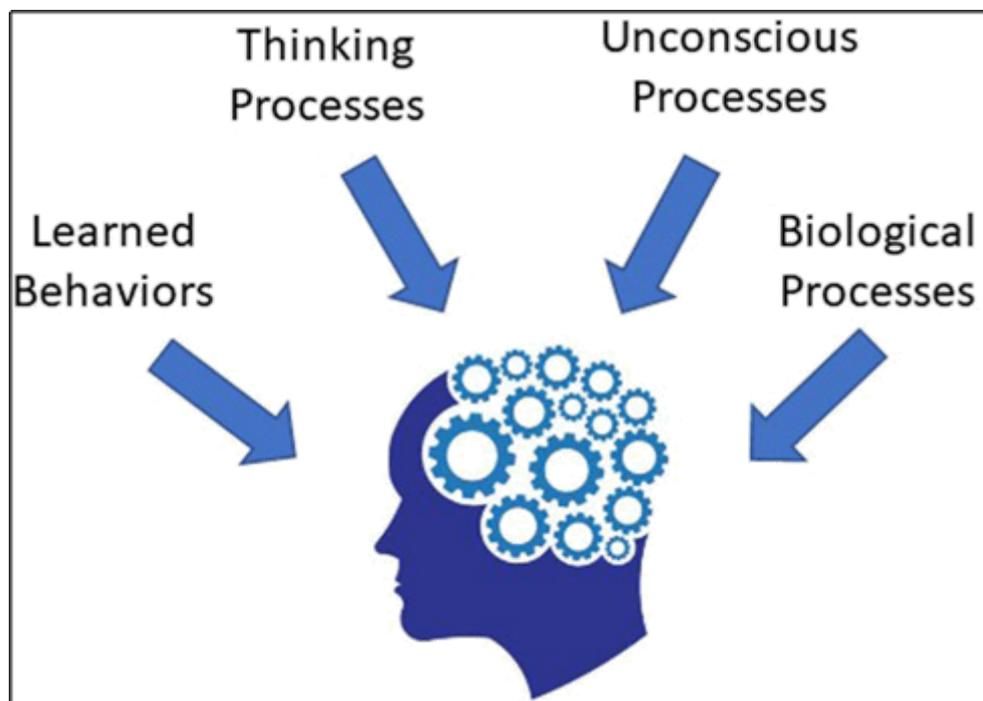
- Laws in different countries define abnormality according to their legal standards.

- It is primarily needed for differentiating sanity from insanity.
- Abnormality may be viewed as not being able to foresee and understand the consequences of the criminal act.
- Or it can be taken as inability to control one's own thoughts and behaviours.
- Or it can be the ability to see right as different from wrong.

Perspectives on Abnormality

- Approaches to studying, describing, and understanding, explaining, and predicting abnormality.
- These approaches affect the way a mental patient will be treated.

Perspectives of Abnormal Behaviour



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Medical Perspective

- Psychological problems are caused by physiological factors.
- These can be the biological processes and systems, genetic factors, the nervous system and the neurotransmitters, hormonal changes, or external variables affecting the biology of a person.

Psychodynamic Perspective

- Childhood experiences are the root cause of mental disorders.
- Unconscious determinants are significant.

Behavioural Perspective

- Abnormal behaviour is learned.
- Abnormality is a learned response.
- It results from our interaction with the external world.

Cognitive Perspective

The factors causing mental disorders are a person's cognitions, thoughts, and beliefs.

Humanistic Perspective

People's need to self-actualize, and their responsibility for their own actions, play a central role in abnormality behaviour.

Sociocultural Perspective

The social milieu in which one lives, the family and the people around, the society, and the culture at large are of primary importance in the onset, and later treatment, of mental illness.

Developed by: [Mindsprite Solutions](#)