

MODULE EIGHT

ABNORMAL BEHAVIOUR/ PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS / PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

When an individual is not able to adjust to daily life, he or she has an abnormal disorder.

The milder types of abnormal behaviour are called anxiety disorders and the more severe abnormalities include depression and schizophrenia.

Psychologists are trying to discover the causes of abnormal behaviour so they can effectively treat them.

Abnormality is viewed differently from the medical, psychological, biological and anthropological perspectives. For instance if we defined behaviour as a disease (mental illness) or as biochemical imbalance, therapy would be very different than if we defined as inappropriate learned response.

Price and Lynn (1986) suggested subjective distress of the individual, behaviour that is psychological or socially disabling and behaviour that violates social norms as criteria for abnormal behaviour.

Sue et-al (1986) proposed personal discomfort, inefficiency in coping with daily demands and bizarre behavior in a specific culture as criteria.

A general definition of abnormal behaviour would be;

- Behaviour that contributes to maladaptiveness in an individual.
- Behaviour considered deviant by the culture.
- Behaviour that leads to personal psychological distress.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE TREATMENT OF ABNORMAL BEHAVIOURS

Four major approaches to abnormal behavior have been reviewed and are used to study abnormality and describe how behaviors are classified.

The psychodynamic approach

This stems from Sigmund Freud's theory of personality. This approach suggests that abnormal behavior is the result of a person's inner conflicts. Thus the outward abnormal behavior is simply the symptom of some internal problem. The cure is to find the source of anxiety and solve conflicts.

The biological approach / MEDICAL MODEL

This approach suggests that abnormal behavior is caused by biological factors. According to this model when the brain biochemical balance is upset, the person behaves abnormally. This approach was favored by psychiatrists who are trained to treat disease. Therefore medical means such as drugs or surgery are used to treat abnormal behavior.

The social learning approach.

Many psychologists find it more constructive to view mental abnormalities not as a disease but as learned social maladjustments. According to this approach, the standards of normality are simply social standards of society. Abnormal behavior is therefore result of individual's learning inappropriate role expectations. Thus the cure is merely relearning the correct, socially acceptable behaviour.

The cognitive approach

This emphasizes inefficient thinking and problem solving as causes of abnormal behaviour. The individual is not able to adequately meet the daily demands. The cognitive model is closely related to the psychodynamic and learning approaches.

ACTIVITY

1. Explain the criteria taken to define psychology abnormality
2. What are the theories influencing the treatment of psychological disorders?