

# **Abnormality and Mental Illness in Social Psychology**

## **Describe and Evaluate the Definition of Abnormality**

Abnormality, in the context of psychology, is often defined by deviation from statistical norms, violation of societal norms, personal distress, and maladaptive behavior. However, these definitions are not without controversy, as what is considered "normal" or "abnormal" is largely dependent on cultural, historical, and individual variations. For example, what is considered abnormal in one culture may be normal in another. Furthermore, defining abnormality based solely on deviation from statistical norms can be problematic, as it does not consider the desirability or adaptiveness of the behavior. For instance, exceptionally high intelligence is statistically abnormal but not undesirable (American Psychiatric Association, 2020).

## **Explain and Evaluate the Main Theoretical Approaches to the Causes of Mental Health Problems**

The primary theoretical approaches to understanding the causes of mental health problems are the biological, psychological, and social approaches, often combined in the biopsychosocial model.

The biological approach suggests that mental disorders result from physiological factors such as genetics, brain chemistry, and hormonal imbalances. However, while this approach has helped develop various treatments like pharmacotherapy, it tends to overlook the roles of psychological and environmental factors (Kandel, 1998).

The psychological approach emphasizes the role of individual thought processes, behaviors, and emotional regulation in developing mental illnesses. For example, cognitive-behavioral theories suggest that dysfunctional thought patterns contribute to mental health problems. Despite its effectiveness, particularly in psychotherapy, the psychological approach may underestimate the biological and social aspects of mental health problems (Beck, 2011).

The social approach focuses on the influence of societal factors, such as socioeconomic status, culture, and interpersonal relationships. While this approach recognizes the impact of societal factors on mental health, it may underplay the role of individual biological and psychological factors (Hogan & Roberts, 2004).

## **Explain and Evaluate the Main Therapeutic Approaches Used to Treat Mental Disorders**

The therapeutic approaches to treating mental disorders are as varied as the theories about their causes. The biological approach has given rise to pharmacological treatments, including antidepressants, anxiolytics, and antipsychotics. These treatments can be highly effective but may have side effects and do not typically address psychological or social factors contributing to mental illness (National Institute of Mental Health, 2021).

Psychotherapy, rooted in the psychological approach, includes cognitive-behavioral therapy, psychoanalysis, humanistic therapy, and other counseling techniques. These treatments can help individuals understand and manage their symptoms, build coping skills, and work through underlying psychological issues. However, they require active participation and may be less effective for certain severe mental health conditions without additional biological interventions (National Institute of Mental Health, 2021).

Social interventions may involve family therapy, support groups, community mental health programs, and efforts to improve living conditions or social support. These approaches are essential for addressing social factors contributing to mental illness. Still, they may not be sufficient for individuals with significant biological or psychological components to their conditions (National Institute of Mental Health, 2021).

Abnormality and mental illness in social psychology are complex and multifaceted concepts. They are best understood through a biopsychosocial lens that considers the interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors. Similarly, effective treatment typically involves a combination of biological, psychological, and social interventions tailored to the individual's unique needs and circumstances.

## References

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