

Introduction to health psychology

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Introduction: Wikipedia (2018) defines health psychology as study of psychological and behavioral processes in health, illness and healthcare. It looks at how psychological, behavioral and cultural factors contribute to illness and physical health. Also according to Kaplan (2009), human behavior plays a major role in most of the leading causes of death, health psychology a new and emerging field of Psychological Science attempts to improve collaboration with other fields of medicine by sharing information and identifying behavioral interventions that help to find solutions to health issues. In this short paper I will be looking at Fatima a 30 year old single mother who has 2 young children who due to the stress of working long hours, poor eating habits and lack of rest ended up fainting one day and was diagnosed with hypertension.

How did Fatima get from being a single mother taking care of two (2) young children to being diagnosed with hypertension? Two of four key theoretical framework discussed in Jane Ogden's book *The Psychology of Health and Illness* will be used to examine how Fatima moved from one stage of health to the other. With respect to the biopsychosocial concept we clearly see that Fatima is a 30 year old single mother with two (2) kids to cater for. At age 30 her biological system has gone through stages that may predispose her to cardiac issues. We also observe the stress of being a single parent, the behavior of working 50 hour weeks to support her kids' upbringing, paying rent and meeting other needs of her family and her belief that she is responsible for her kids upbringing and success all contributed to how the hypertensive condition developed. Even though the story did not state Fatima's ethnicity, it states that she belongs to a lower class having to work

50 hour weeks to support her family. Even though we might deduce from the information given that Fatima's does not have a very high level of education and so she did not have enough knowledge about the effects of too much salt in her diet, we can conclude that even if she had that information, it will be difficult for her to prepare home cooked meal because of time constraints.

With respect to the Health and illness as a Continuum, we notice Fatima's quality of life which involves eating processed foods which are high in salt as predisposing factors to her having cardiac issues; her lack of rest due to working long hours during the week, her not seeking medical attention and not having enough social support as contributory factors to her ending up with hypertension. Fatima even though was trying to ensure that her children were well taken of, neglected the fact that her health was important and that she needed to take care of herself first to be able to live to take care of her family. Even though hypertension is not an immediate emergency situation, continuous and lingering high blood pressure can silently lead to her death. Conclusion: The above named frameworks help in explaining the basis of health psychology; they also show how important psychology is in playing an important role in all aspects of health and illness. As we learnt in this week's readings, biological, sociological and psychological factors all play significant roles in how we perceive illness, how and why we get ill and how we can utilize all the resources at our disposal to improve our health.