Six primary elements of abnormal behavior

Psychology

There are six primary elements used to define and describe abnormal behavior. They are: deviation, maladaptive, distress, dysfunction, discomfort and disability (Comer, 2012). Jim's behavior is not abnormal despite him being a loner, has no social interactions, has never married and no children despite his age, doesn't communicate with his family, doesn't understand social cues. His behavior seems to deviate from the norm of the society, it is maladaptive because he is a loner, it can be said to cause a dysfunction in his neighborhood, cause discomfort to the few people he interacts with but it neither disables him nor does it cause distress to him hence not abnormal.

Explain which of these six elements is incorporated into the DSM-IV definition of mental disorders. Would Jim have a ' mental disorder' according to the DSM-IV definition? Why or why not? Explain.

There are only two elements included in the definition of mental disorders according to the DSM-IV. The DSM-IV defines mental disorder as " a clinically significant behavioral or psychological syndrome or pattern which occurs in an individual and is associated with present distress or disability…" Jim would still not have a mental disorder according to the DSM-IV definition because his live is does not cause any disability nor distress in his life (Comer, 2012).

If his life was causing a disability or distress, then he would not even be able to interact the few times he does with his neighbors or fellow workers or even his family but he does this though on very few occasions. His life does not also prevent him from working and hence not disabling him at all.

Analyze the pros and cons of having a classification system such as the DSM-IV.

One of the advantages of using classification is that it provides one common

language and reference point for all clinicians during diagnosis and even treatment of individuals with mental disorders. This therefore brings about reliability of the information and the diagnoses no matter which clinician a patient visits. Classification also helps keep record and statistical information that can be used long after it has been written and hence easier also for research and amendment in future for example the research and then amendment the DSM has been undergoing from the time it was written. The disadvantage however is that it leads to labeling of people and hence causes stigmatization which would not be the case if there was no classification hence no reference point. Patients may refuse to therefore visit mental hospitals or clinics due to the fear of stigmatization brought about by labeling using the classification system. Classification system uses strict formats and hence some information may be lost in the process of condensing the information to fit the classification. The final information may therefore be too shallow and hence may lead to clinicians having diagnosis problem if the patient's symptoms do not exactly fit the classification.

References

Comer, R. J. (2012). Abnormal Psychology. New York: Worth Publishers.