

# Clinical psychology: history, influences and applications



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

- Myrto Giannakopoulou

“ Each student is expected to select info and produce an information pack targeted at a field/career of his/her interest in Psychology (e. g. Clinical Psychology, Educational Psychology, Cognitive Psychology – for example, you can select information via observing or/and interviewing a professional [preferable] or secondary reading). The above package will be accompanied by an academic, reflective essay supporting the choice above (e. g. explain your interest on this scientific area of Psychology, describe the basic issues of the professional’s interest in this field, refer to the basic taught psychological terms and concepts that you noticed to this scientific area, etc.)”.

Nowadays, applied psychology has four main sub-categories which are clinical, educational, occupational/industrial and criminological/legal. Clinical psychology refers to treating emotional and behavioral disorders.

Educational psychologists work with children and adolescents and their families and they give more importance in the efficacy of teaching and learning methods. Occupational psychology is applied into workplaces in order to improve the productivity of the employees and to increase the levels of job satisfaction. Criminological psychology is involved in the criminal and legal system and facilities such as prisons and courts or the police force. It has two branches, forensic and investigative psychology.

In this project we are going to analyze the field of Clinical psychology.

Clinical Psychology is a part of applied Psychology and it focuses on the treatment and understanding of behavioral and psychological problems.

Clinical psychology is often confused with psychiatry because clinical psychologists also work with people with mental disorders and they use the same methods of therapies. Their difference is that psychiatrists can give medicine, thus clinical psychologists are forbidden to do so.

Clinical psychology was developed in 1896, when Lightner Witmer, who is regarded as the father of Clinical psychology, established the first psychological clinic in the University of Pennsylvania. The clients of Witmer's clinic were children with learning difficulties and with behavioural disorders. Next, in 1904 Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon created the Binet-Simon scale which is a test that can identify children with mental disablement and children with normal mentality and it influenced the development of clinical psychology in USA. Witmer denied the helpfulness of this scale and this is why he disappeared from the scene of clinical psychology. Later, in the early 20's, the psychiatrist William Healy established the Juvenile Psychopathic Institute, the world's first child guidance clinic. Additionally, Healy in his clinic used the Binet-Simon scale for the children and adapted Freud's theory for the unconventional behaviour.

Clinical psychology has been influenced from human physiology. For example, the term " psychopathology" includes the words " pathology" (disease) and " psyche", which means that mental disorders have a biological basis. In other words, a mental disorder is considered as a dysfunction in the physiology of a person that appears in his behaviour.

According to the medicine, the causes of a mental disorder are separated in three general categories: the infectious diseases (e. g. encephalitis which is an inflammation of the brain and its symptoms are familiar with those of <https://assignbuster.com/clinical-psychology-history-influences-and-applications/>

dementia, such as memory loss), diseases that are related with the dysfunction of a human organ (e. g. diabetes) and traumatic diseases that arise from external or environmental causes (e. g. a hit in the head can cause cerebral hemorrhage and can also provoke problems in behavior such as coma, memory loss, and personality disorder).

Clinical psychologists do more than talk to people who are distressed about personal matter. They often do different types of activities from teaching to psychotherapy to laboratory research and this is why they need to have a special training program in clinical psychology. After obtaining their degree, they can apply for a master course in clinical psychology, which usually lasts three years and at the same time do their apprenticeship, in order to gain experience in their field.

Furthermore, research is the basis of all clinical psychology activities. Research programs, help to understand which approach could be more effective for a clinical problem such as depression, anxiety, eating, or panic disorders, personality disorders, phobias, etc. They can also focus on various populations like families, couples, ethnic minority groups such as gay, lesbians, etc. Although not all of the clinical psychologists are involved with research, they should be informed about other researches, in order to improve their own clinical work. Most of them use various tests or questionnaires to help them to their work or to their research. These tests have many measures, such as cognitive, behavioral, neuropsychological etc.

On the other hand, in research there are certain problems. The most important is the fact that the researchers and the participants are human

and the results are not solid, because the participants behave in a different way than their ordinary life, for example they are too defensive because they try to hide their thoughts from the researchers or they behave too normal, because they know how the experiment works. This happens because the participants are part of the society and in this way they try to be socially accepted and it is known as the “Hawthorn effect”. Despite all that, psychologists try to use multiple ways of reducing such effects, for example by using double-blind questionnaires.

Another important practice that is used in the fields of Psychology is the Evidence-based practice (EBP). It is a process that involves “the conscientious, explicit, judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients” (Sackett, Rosenberg, Gray, Haynes, & Richardson, 1996). Specifically, this practice gives to therapists a general guidance for addressing any given disorder in the best possible manner, based on research that they can use, but even if they don’t follow it to the letter is not wrong as long as they act in accordance to their professional experience. Although, it must be pointed out that these guidelines are general and do not take into account each person’s individuality and uniqueness. Another approach to EBP is the Ideographic one that takes into account each individual person and its singularity and is used by most health professions. Furthermore, there are three circles of Evidence - Based Clinical practice, also known as the “three-legged stool”. The first circle represents the best available research proof, the second circle represents clinical expertness and finally the third circle includes the patient

values, the preferences, the characteristics and the circumstances. Those three have to be combine in order to achieve the best clinical practice.

Overall, Clinical Psychology is a complex field that parallels the complexity of human behavior and emotion and it combines and links human behaviour to stimulus created by people external environment such as everyday human relationships and interactions, health etc, and it explains the way it affects us.

## **References:**

Barker M. (2003). *Introductory Psychology: History, Themes and Perspectives*, Crucial

Kendall D., C., & Norton – Ford J., D. (1982). *Clinical Psychology: Scientific and professional dimensions*. New York: J. Wiley.

Plante T., G., (2005). *Contemporary Clinical Psychology*, New Jersey: J. Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Sackett, D. L., & Wennberg, J. E. (1997). Choosing the best research design for each question. *British Medical Journal*, 315, 1636.

Wiley Periodicals, Inc. *J Clin Psychol* (2007). Evidence-Based Practice in Clinical Psychology: What It Is, Why It Matters; What You Need to Know. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 611-631