

# Abnormal psychology assignment

[Psychology](#)



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Rather than being geared towards individuals, epidemiology focuses on groups and the number of recurrences of mental disorders within a given population. The occurrences and distributions of diseases are recognized in epidemiology. A term we cite in epidemiology when speaking of measuring the number of mental disorders is prevalence. Prevalence refers to the total number, usually expressed in percentages, of active cases over a period of time, or a moment of time, in a population (Butcher & Holey, p. 12). A lifetime prevalence estimate is one of the numerous ways in which prevalence estimate can be made.

A lifetime prevalence estimate would focus on the number of people who have had a particular disorder, whether still dealing with it or completely recovered, at any point in their life. For example, if we wanted to study depression in a certain population group and wanted a lifetime prevalence estimate, we would include those still in the midst of dealing with their depression and those who have recovered. We will find that the lifetime estimate of those with depression will more than likely be higher than other prevalence estimates of depression since the lifetime estimates span an entire lifetime. ). What are some of the biological causal factors of abnormal behavior? While the scientific community has come up with several different biological factors of abnormal behavior, there are four categories that seem pertinent to the development of maladaptive behavior: (1) neurotransmitter and hormonal abnormalities in the brain or other parts of the central nervous system, (2) genetic vulnerabilities, (3) temperament, and (4) brain dysfunction and neural plasticity (Butcher & Holey, 2013, p. 61) Neurons,

which are composed of a billion tiny nerve cells, form the building block of our brains.

If our brains are to function correctly, all these nerve cells must be communicating to one another properly (Zipped, 2012). The axon, which is the trunk of the neuron, contains chemical substances called neurotransmitters which are released into the brain synapses when a nerve impulse occurs (Butcher & Holey, 2013, p. 61). Often times, psychological stress can trigger neurotransmitter imbalances. Morphogenesis, dopamine, serotonin, glutamate, and gamma-aminobutyric acid are five of the most studied (of over hundreds) neurotransmitters.

These five play important roles in how we handle stress, depression, anxiety, pleasure, cognitive processing and even suicide. (Butcher & Holey, 2013, p. 63) When these are out of balance abnormal behavior can ensue. Hormone imbalances have also been linked to abnormal behavior and psychopathology (or behaviors which are indicative of mental illness). Hormones are chemical messengers that are secreted into the blood stream and then carried to different parts of our body.

They influence a large number of body processes and functions such as mood, growth, sexual functions and responses, cognitive processing, etc. When we have an imbalance of hormones, too much or too little, it can cause depression, postgraduate stress disorder and other various forms of psychopathology (Butcher & Holey, 2013, p. 64). Genetic vulnerabilities can be another biological cause for abnormal behavior. According to Butcher, “research in developmental genetics has shown that abnormalities in the

structure or number of the chromosomes can be associated with major defects or disorders (64). For example, a child born with Down syndrome, which is a form of retardation, is born with an extra chromosome. This would be the abnormality that caused the disorder. However a simplistic outcome such as the aforementioned example is actually not the norm, and a “genetically vulnerable person has usually inherited a large number of genes, or polymorphisms of ones, that operate together in some sort of additive or interactive fashion to increase vulnerability (Butcher & Holey, 2013, p. 5).”

Temperament can be yet another biological factor for abnormal behavior, although unlike the previous causal factors, temperament seems to be proven difficult to test. Temperament refers to the way a child acts and how he/she learns to behave in a certain environment or situation. One child might be super-sensitive to sound and act in a negative or harsh way, while another might be totally oblivious to loud noises and in fact seem to engage in positive way.

As a mother of seven children, I have seen first-hand just how different each child's temperament can be, even when raised in a similar environment. Early temperament seems to be the basis from which our personalities grow and develop and can set the stage for us later in life for the development of various abnormal behaviors (Butcher & Holey, 2013, p. 69). With new techniques that have come out to study the brain, more and more advances have been made in understanding mental disorders as they relate to slight flaws or quiet shortcomings in brain function and even structure.

These techniques have shown that ‘ there is a considerable amount of neural plasticity – flexibility of the brain in making changes in organization and

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function in response to pre and postnatal experiences, stress, diet, disease, drugs, maturation and so forth (Butcher & Holey, 2013, p. 70). " Several prenatal and postnatal experiments have been done that have shown both positive and negative effects to the test subjects. The experiments that had negative effects almost always dealt with unstable, insulating deprived environments which have shown to eventually lead to retarded development later down the road. ). Briefly describe the psychodrama, humanistic and cognitive behavior respective. There are several psychological viewpoints, or perspectives, that help us to better understand human behavior. Three of these are the psychodrama perspective, the humanistic perspective and the cognitive behavior perspective. The psychodrama perspective stems from Freud's psychoanalytical theory, in which Freud keyed in on the unconscious mind and believed has the most influence on our behavior at large.

Freud suggested that there were three components of a person's personality that determined their behaviors: the id, the ego, and superego. The id consists of two main drives: life instincts (sexual nature powered by the libido) and death instincts (aggressive thoughts and actions). The ego operates on the reality principle and arbitrates between the demands of the id and the external world. A superego then begins to develop and this is in essence, the conscious. The superego helps to distinguish right from wrong, and deals with controlling impulse desires (Butcher & Holey, 2013, p. 2). Another important aspect of Freud's psychoanalytic theory were his five psychosocial states of developments: Oral stage (first 2 years of life and focuses on the mouth and the sucking process), Anal state (2 to 3 years of age and deals with the anus being the main source of pleasure), Phallic

stage (3 to arrears of age and focus on manipulation of genitalia), Latency period (6 to 12 years of age and preoccupation with developing skills and activities), Genital stage (after puberty and focuses on pleasure from sexual relations) (Butcher & Holey, 2013, p. 3). The phallic stage is one of the most important stages in which the focus of the libido is on the genitals. During this time, little boys experience the ' Oedipus complex', and little girls experience the ' Electra complex'. These complexes result in children identifying with their same-sex parent, which enables them to learn sex-appropriate behavior and a moral code of conduct (McLeod, 2007). The Humanistic perspective is almost in complete opposition to the psychodrama perspective.

It is concerned with all things good in the human nature and focuses on self and processes such as love, hope, creativity, values, meaning, personal growth and self-fulfillment (Butcher & Holey, 2013, p. 78). The major focus is focus inward. In fact, one extremely prominent humanistic psychologist “ developed the most systematic formulation of the self-concept, based largely on his pioneering research into the nature of the psychotherapeutic process (Butcher & Holey, 2013, p. 78). Rogers believed that we existed at the center of our own world and that self-actualization was part of the healing process and healthy well-being. The humanistic perspective is all about achieving our full inner potential. The cognitive perspective focuses on the he notion that if we want to understand a person’s behavior, then we need to figure out what processes are actually going on in their minds. The cognitive behavior principle in abnormal psychology focuses, then, on how the way we process

our thoughts and incoming information can lead to behavior and emotions outside of societal norm.

The cognitive perspective is concerned with “ mental” functions such as memory, perception, attention etc. An important pillar in the cognitive behavioral perspective is the concept of schema. A schema is, “ an underlying representation of knowledge that guides the current processing of information and often leads to distortions in attention, memory, and comprehension (Butcher & Holey, 201 3, p. 80). ” Our schemas develop round our several factors including our environment, our personalities, our experiences, etc.

While our schemas help to focus us and interact in our daily lives, a skewed schema can result in distorted or inaccurate viewpoints. This could be especially seen in a person that might live a very sheltered life and doesn’t see “ real world” events play out in their lives frequently. Another important pillar or aspect of the cognitive behavior perspective is attribution theory. An attribution is the process of assigning causes to things that happen. This process can help explain our own personal behavior or analyze why money else behaved a certain way.

While attributions may not always be accurate, they do have a significant impact on how we view things around us and on our emotional state of mind. While many psychologists remain skeptical about the cognitive behavior perspective, it has gained much support as researchers see the effects of altering behavior in this way. 4. Explain classical and instrumental conditioning. Classical conditioning involves eliciting a specific response from

a specific stimulus. For example, a natural occurring stimulus would be the salivating process in response to smelling food.

There is an uncontrolled stimulus (USC) – smelling the food, and an unconditioned response (USSR) – the salivation. In the second part of the condition if you then pair the previously neutral stimulus with an unconditional stimulus, you will then have a conditioned stimulus (CSS). In the example above if a clapping sound was paired several times with the smell of the food, the conditioned response would be trigger. In this case, the clapping is the conditioned stimulus. Once this association has been made, the clapping alone will evoke a response even in the absence of the unconditioned stimulus.

Many psychological and emotional responses can be conditioned, thus making classical conditioning very important in abnormal psychology. Instrumental conditioning, also known as operant conditioning, was a learning process explored by B. F. Skinner in which reinforcements, in the form of rewards or punishments, are given to reach a desired behavioral outcome. Researchers have found that when a positive reinforcement is continually given, the response is extremely high and will most likely continue. However, when the reinforcement is negative or withheld constantly the response diminishes or goes away all together.

For example, if a child is rewarded with praise every time he/she sits properly in his/her seat at the dinner table, then that child will most likely begin to sit properly without being told. If that same child is scolded every time he/she gets up out of his/her seat at the dinner table then the child will



be less likely to cause commotion at the dinner table. Reinforcement is being used to strengthen the sitting properly at the table and weakening the interruptions at the dinner table. Instrumental learning is an important tool in life as we determine what is rewarding versus unrewarding.