

Autism and mental retardation

Psychology



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Autism and Mental Retardation Autism and Mental Retardation Autism is known as one of the childhood disorders that normally emerged at childhood and persist throughout a person's life. Symptoms of the disorder tend to manifest at age three. Among the major primary features of the disorder include general difficulties in communication with most affected children displaying a failure to develop language skills. Those who manage to speak tend to have echolalia a problem characterized by repetition of words spoken by other people. Additionally, autistic children are usually unresponsive those around them. Also, they typically display unusual motor movements with others exhibiting self-injurious behaviors such as self-biting or hair pulling.

The social cultural causes of autism have been deemed invalid especially due to lack of research. According to Comer (2010), the social cultural phenomena suggest that autism is likely to be as a result of social stress and environmental stress within a family, which in turn interferes with proper child development. However, research on disturbed parents has failed to support this claim.

Comer (2010) posits that there is no treatment that can totally reverse the disorder. However, there are four major forms of treatment that aim at aiding autistic individuals to adapt to their environment. They include community integration therapy, behavioral therapy, parent training as well as communication training, which can be combined with chemotherapy.

The diagnosis of mental retardation entails the assessment of intellectual functioning alongside adaptive behavior for persons under the 18 years.

Mentally retarded persons therefore normally have a low IQ and exhibit poor adaptive behaviors such as poor communication and interaction skills.

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One of the most common tests that have a high propensity for bias is the intelligence test. Intelligence test ordinarily favors children from well socioeconomic backgrounds, who are well exposed to some of the issues that the test purports to measure including language. On the contrary, children from poor socioeconomic background, who may have good survival skills, tend to be disadvantaged due to lack of exposure to the language used for this test.

Mental retardation can be broadly categorized into four levels; mild retardation, moderate retardation, severe retardation and profound retardation. Most people with mental retardation fall under the mild retardation level translating to 85% of the total mentally retarded persons. Most of them can enjoy the benefits of education as they are educable (Comer, 2010).

The main types of biological causes of mental retardation can be classified as follows; chromosomal causes, which are due to changes on the chromosomal structure such as down syndrome and fragile X syndrome. Metabolic disorder is also another biological cause of mental retardation, which is due to production of certain chemicals. There are also prenatal and birth-related causes in which certain problems may occur to the mother during pregnancy resulting to malformation of the unborn child.

Fetal alcohol syndrome is only prevented by avoiding alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

Normalization refers to the provision of normal living condition such as education and medical, as well as opportunities for self-development and fulfillment services to mentally retarded persons. Mainstreaming on the other hand refers to the placement of mentally retarded children together

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with their non-retarded counterparts.

In my opinion, normalization ensures that mentally retarded students have the full attention of their caregivers and teachers owing to the fact that they are separated from other non-retarded students. However, this may at the same time limit their creativity level and interactional skills. On the contrary, mainstreaming enhances development of social skills of mentally retarded children. However, the strategy may further worsen their condition due to stigmatization from non-retarded students.

Reference

Comer, R. J. (2010). *Fundamentals of Abnormal Psychology*. New York: Worth Publishers.