Learning Outcome: Examine the concepts of normality and abnormality

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| Concepts | Description | Example | Evaluation |
| Statistical abnormality | Looking at statistical data, people who are outside of the statistically normal deviation they are classified as abnormal. Those inside this deviation are classified as normal. | **Intelligence**  People with an intelligence that lies in the statistically normal area are normal. People with significantly lower IQ are considered abnormal, also those who have a higher IQ is considered abnormal. | Impossible to quantify all behaviours-reductionist. Does not provide details of the disorder.  **This does not take into account different cultures, so what is abnormal in one culture is not abnormal in another culture.**  Some disorders are not that unusual (17% Depression)  **However having a higher IQ is a desired trait that is abnormal, however the lower IQ is not desirable.** |
| The mental illness criterion (the medical model) | **Description**  Mental illness criterion (medical model)   * Sees psychological disorders (abnormality) as psychopathology (illness) * This criterion is linked to psychiatry, which is a bran of medicine. * Patients with psychological problems are seen as “ill” in the same way as those who suffer from physiological illness   Diagnosis of mental illness is based on   1. Clinician’s observations 2. The patient’s self-reports 3. A clinical interview 4. Diagnostic manuals (classification systems)   that classify symptoms of specific disorders to help doctors find a correct diagnosis | **Example – Schizophrenia**  Schizophrenia is a mental disorder that makes it hard to:  • Tell the difference between what is real and not real  • Think clearly  • Have normal emotional responses  • Act normally in social situations  Schizophrenia is a complex illness. Mental health experts are not sure what causes it. However, genes may play a role.  • Certain events may trigger schizophrenia in people who are at risk for it because of their genes.  • You are more likely to develop schizophrenia if you have a family member with the disease. | **Evaluation**  + Proponents argue that it is an advantage to be diagnosed as sick beacuse it shows that people are not responsible for their acts  + Origin of most physical disorders (alzheimer's disease) can be linked to physiological changes in the brain. Most psychological disorders cannot phobia.  - Critics argue that there is a stigma (mark of disgrace) associated with mental illness |
| Deviation from social norms | Social norms constitute informal or formal rules of how individuals are expected to behave. Deviant behavior is behavior that is considered undesirable or anti-social by the majority of people in a given society. Individuals who break rules of conduct or do not behave like the majority are defined as “abnormal”, according to this criterion.  Social, cultural and historical factors may play a role in what is seen as ‘normal’ or ‘abnormal’ within certain societies. | Homosexuality was seen as abnormal in Britain around 1900 where the famous writer, Oscar Wilde, was imprisoned for homosexuality. Homosexuality was classified as abnormal (sexual deviation) in the American Diagnostic and Statistical Manual DSM – II (1968). | This criterion is not objective or stable, since it is related to socially based definitions that change across time and culture. Because the norm is based on morals and attitudes, it is vulnerable to abuse. For example, political dissidents could be considered “abnormal” and sent to hospitals for treatment as occurred in the former Soviet Union.  Using this criterion could lead to discrimination against minorities including people who suffer from psychological disorders. Psychological disorder may be defined and diagnosed in different ways across cultures and what seems to be a psychological disorder in one culture may not be seen in the same way in another culture. The American classification system DSM includes disorders called “culture-bound syndromes”. This indicates that it is impossible to set universal standards for classifying a behavior as abnormal. |
| Maladaptiveness and adequate functioning | Maladaptive: behaviours that threaten one’s ability to function well within that social context  A type of behavior that inhibit a person’s ability to adjust to a particular situation | Alcoholism  anorexia  attention seeking  workaholism  internet addiction  gambling addiction  revenge behaviors  Extreme sports  videogame addiction | - The most frequently cited problem with this approach is that people whose motivation is clearly not indicative of a serious disorder will sometimes engage in maladaptive or dangerous behavior (boxing).  - Maladaptive is when the person's behaviour interferes with ability to function in daily life this would include interacting social groups.  - Some maladaptive behaviours are done it to decrease their own anxiety or stress, which is why getting rid of these behaviors can be troublesome. Self harm. |
| Suffering and distress | When a person suffers distress, anxiety and/or unhappiness from their behavior, then that behavior is abnormal. | OCD affecting a person’s life when they feel compelled to organize and fix everything around them | It allows those who feel like they need some kind of medical or psychological help to gain it  Problem is some symptoms of abnormal behavior such as irritability from depression don’t encourage those suffering from it to seek help.  It is also reliant on subjective experience on the part of the patient and those suffering from serious psychiatric problems such as schizophrenia may be indifferent or unaware of their behavior. |
| Jahoda’s (female psychologist) positive mental health (defining normal) | Jahoda tried to establish what is normal by identifying the characteristics of people who are normal. She identified six characteristics of mental health. | * Efficient self-perception * Realistic [self esteem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self_esteem) and acceptance * Voluntary control of behaviour * True perception of the world * Sustaining relationships and giving affection   Self direction and productivity | Jahoda’s list seems intuitively appealing, but if the criteria were applied, most of us would seem somehow abnormal. In addition, they are to a large extent value judgments. Most people can agree on what constitutes physical health. However, this is not the case with psychological disorders.  There is an obvious distinction between what is normal in one culture versus what is normal in another culture/society. The normality criteria often need to be changed or are changed due to changes in social norms. For example the social view on homosexuality. |