

Abnormal psychology rosenhan seligman

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Exploring the Realm of Abnormal Psychology: Perspectives, Theories, and Case Studies**

What is Abnormal Psychology?

Abnormal psychology is the scientific study of the causes and treatment of psychological disorders. It examines thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that significantly deviate from social norms and cause distress or impairment.

Historical Context: Rosenhan and Seligman

In 1973, psychologist David Rosenhan published the groundbreaking "On Being Sane in Insane Places," where he and seven other researchers faked symptoms of mental illness to gain admission to psychiatric hospitals. This study challenged the reliability of psychiatric diagnoses and sparked a shift in the field's approach to mental health.

Perspectives of Abnormal Psychology

There are seven major perspectives in abnormal psychology:

- **Biological Perspective:** Focuses on the role of genetics, brain chemistry, and physical health in the development of disorders.
- **Psychodynamic Perspective:** Emphasizes unconscious conflicts and early childhood experiences in shaping mental functioning.
- **Behavioral Perspective:** Examines learned behaviors and environmental factors as the primary contributors to disorders.

- **Cognitive Perspective:** Concentrates on faulty thinking patterns and distortions in processing information.
- **Humanistic Perspective:** Emphasizes personal growth, self-awareness, and fulfilling one's potential.
- **Cross-Cultural Perspective:** Explores the influence of cultural factors on the definition and treatment of disorders.
- **Diathesis-Stress Perspective:** Recognizes the interplay between genetic predisposition (diathesis) and environmental stressors in the development of disorders.

Theories of Abnormality

Several theories attempt to explain the causes of abnormal behavior:

- **Medical Model:** Views disorders as illnesses with specific symptoms and treatment interventions.
- **Psychodynamic Model:** Emphasizes unconscious conflicts and unresolved childhood experiences.
- **Behavioral Model:** Proposes that disorders are learned through operant conditioning and social interactions.
- **Cognitive Model:** Focuses on faulty thought patterns and cognitive distortions as the root of disorders.
- **Humanistic Model:** Attributes disorders to a lack of self-esteem, growth potential, and fulfillment.

Rosenhan's Theory

Rosenhan argued that the labeling of individuals as mentally ill is subjective and influenced by social factors. His study demonstrated the difficulty in distinguishing between genuine mental illness and simulated symptoms, challenging the reliability of psychiatric diagnoses.

The Rosenhan Study

In his study, Rosenhan and his colleagues simulated schizophrenic symptoms to gain admission to psychiatric hospitals. They were swiftly diagnosed as

schizophrenic and kept in the hospitals for an average of 19 days. However, their true identities were quickly discovered, highlighting the limitations of psychiatric diagnosis and the stigma associated with mental illness.

Dimensions of Abnormal Psychology

Four key dimensions characterize abnormal behavior:

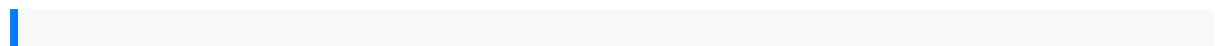
- **Distress:** The extent to which the individual experiences subjective psychological pain or discomfort.
- **Impairment:** The degree to which the behavior hinders the individual's functioning in major life areas (e.g., work, relationships).
- **Atypicality:** The extent to which the behavior deviates from social norms and expectations.
- **Dangerousness:** The potential for the behavior to harm the individual or others.

Failure to Function Adequately

Psychologists David Rosenhan and Martin Seligman proposed that failure to function adequately is a critical criterion for defining abnormality. They argued that the inability to meet basic needs, maintain interpersonal relationships, or engage in purposeful activities indicates a significant deviation from normal functioning.

Conclusions

Abnormal psychology offers a comprehensive understanding of psychological disorders and provides a framework for classification, diagnosis, and treatment. By examining the perspectives, theories, and case studies outlined above, psychologists strive to enhance our knowledge of mental health and improve the lives of those affected by psychological distress and impairment.



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