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PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

*F*eeling happy, or crying when one is hurt, are some common actions which we all engage in some time or the other. Most of the time we act as the situation demands us to, that is, we control our emotions and behaviours according to the norm prevalent in the society. But if behaviour is perceived to occur without any reason or against the context—how will you evaluate it? It will not be called normal behaviour, in other words, it will be termed as abnormal behaviour. But again at some point of time in our life many of us behave irrationally or away from normal behaviour. Does it mean that we have become abnormal? Perhaps not.

So what is the definition of abnormal behaviour, what are the factors which cause abnormal behaviour and many such other questions arise in our mind. This lesson attempts to explain and answer such questions.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain the term psychological disorder;
- enumerate and describe the major types of abnormalities;
- describe the symptoms of various types of psychological disorders such as anxiety disorders, somatoform disorders, mood disorders, schizophrenia.

20.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

As the name itself suggests, any disorder, which prevents a person to function in effectively in the social domain, is termed as a psychological disorder. Psychological

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disorders can be defined as a pattern of behavioural or psychological symptoms that causes significant distress, impairs the ability to function in one or more areas of life or both.

The important feature is that the symptoms which a person is showing must represent a serious departure from the prevalent social and cultural norms. Cultural and social norms are being emphasized here because the traditions in each culture differ. Some actions which may form an essential part of one culture may be a serious disturbance in others. For example tribal societies have different norms and culture. Their way of living and habits will be considered abnormal in the urban context.

To determine any behaviour as away from normal, seven considerations are used as the distinguishing criteria. They are:

- (i) Suffering – experiencing distress and discomfort in one’s own life.
- (ii) Maladaptiveness – engaging in behaviour or thought pattern which makes it more difficult to lead one’s life.
- (iii) Irrationality – unable to communicate in a reasonable manner with others.
- (iv) Unpredictability – acting in ways which are entirely unexpected.
- (v) Vividness and intensity – experience sensations which are far more vivid and intense than those of other people.
- (vi) Observer discomfort – acting in ways which others find embarrassing.
- (vii) Violation of moral and ideal standards – habitual breaking of norms.

As we have read earlier, normality and abnormality are not very rigid concepts. As states of mind, they lie in a continuum, and, most of us experience them in different phases of life.

It can be said that abnormality is a matter of the degree to which a set of behaviours of an individual are considered inappropriate as against accepted norms of the society, and which are problematic for the person in his/her social functioning and adjustment. Now let us study about the various causes of abnormal behaviour.

20.2 CAUSES OF ABNORMAL BEHAVIOUR

There are many factors which contribute to the causes of abnormal behaviour. Some of them are:

- (a) **Biological factors:** The biological factors which give rise to abnormal



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behaviour include the genetic factors, chromosomal dysfunctions, brain or endocrine dysfunctions that may cause the development of abnormal behaviour.

- (b) **Psychological factors:** The psychological factors causing abnormal behaviour are difficult to identify and measure as they work indirectly. The effect is not very predictable but if one tries to analyze the various processes adopted during childhood like over-protection or over-indulgence, inconsistent rewards and punishments, these factors significantly contribute in the development of maladaptive behaviour.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 20.1

- (a) Explain irrationality as a property of abnormal behaviour.

- (b) What are the causes of abnormal behaviour.

20.3 TYPES OF DISORDERS

Till now in this lesson we have learnt about abnormal behaviour and the causes. Now let us study in detail about some psychological disorders. Some of the major psychological disorders are –

- 1) anxiety disorder
- 2) mood disorders
- 3) schizophrenic disorders
- 4) substance related disorders.

20.3.1 Anxiety Disorder

All of us have experienced anxiety in our life in some way or the other. Whether it is during examination or waiting for interview results or maybe due to death of a loved one, anxiety is experienced by us. We also have our own way of coping with it but anxiety can take the form of a disorder if not treated properly at the correct time. Anxiety disorders are disorders which decrease the performance or social functioning of an individual due to hyper-anxiety. Anxiety disorder can be of many types. Some of the anxiety disorders are:



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- (a) generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)
- (b) panic disorder
- (c) phobias
- (d) obsessive – compulsive disorder
- (e) somatoform disorder
- (f) post traumatic stress.

Let us look at the features of these disorders as described below:

- (a) **Generalised Anxiety Disorder:** It is the most common form of anxiety disorder. The chief symptom of this disorder is unrealistic or excessive worry. The various symptoms of GAD are nervousness, dizziness, sweating, trembling, tension, difficulty in concentration etc.
- (b) **Panic Disorder:** Intense anxiety along with marked physiological symptoms such as increased palpitation, breathing difficulty, and a sense of helplessness are seen in the case of panic disorder. Before and after the release of anxiety calmness prevails. The person suffering from this disorder may not remain always anxious.
- (c) **Phobia:** Phobia means an irrational fear of some object or situation. Most of us have a fear about something or the other but when this fear reaches a level when it disrupts normal functioning, then it is termed as phobia. One type of phobia is known as social phobia – when one is afraid of speaking on stage, or talking to strangers and there are some specific phobias, like fear of rats or cats.
- (d) **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders:** Persistent thoughts or wishes that intrude into one's consciousness and cannot be stopped are obsessions. Compulsion is an act which a person feels compelled to carry out despite knowing that it is unnecessary. Obsessive thinking often leads to compulsive acts.
- (e) **Somatoform disorder:** Somatoform disorders refer to physical problems which have no organic basis, for example, fatigue, headaches, vague body pains etc. The persons suffering from this disease remain preoccupied with symptoms.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 20.2

1. What is an anxiety disorder?



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2. List any two types of anxiety disorder.
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20.3.2 Mood disorders

Mood disorders are disorders of emotion. Heightened intensity and duration of emotion require immediate psychological and medical attention. The individuals suffering from this type of disorder are termed as emotionally disturbed. The three types of mood disorders have been characterized as - depressive disorders, bipolar disorders, and other disorders. Mood disorders include severe symptoms such as dissatisfaction and anxiety, changes in appetite, disturbances of sleep and psychomotor functions, sudden weight loss, inability to think clearly, and thought of death and suicide.

In some of the disorders genetic factors are involved. Drug therapies and biological therapies have been found to be very effective for its treatment.

20.3.3 Substance related disorders

It has been found that when people suffer from prolonged periods of pain or tension, they take drugs or alcohol. Drugs, like alcohol, influence our thoughts, actions and activities negatively. These drugs, if used for a long time, cause deterioration in attention, motivation, and motor co-ordination. People have suffered losses in their personal and social life due to the usage of drugs.

Substance related disorder is not only limited to the usage of alcohol but it also related to panmasala, tobacco, opium, marijuana etc. To help a person suffering from this disorder, the following issues are important. These are :

- (i) Detoxification
- (ii) Administration of drugs for easing withdrawal symptoms.
- (iii) Aversive conditioning
- (iv) Social support
- (v) Psychotherapy
- (vi) Rehabilitation
- (vii) Prevention and follow up.

20.3.4 Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is considered by the experts as the most devastating mental disorder.

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It can be defined as a cluster of disorders characterized by fragmentation of the basic psychological processes such as attention, perception, thoughts, emotions and behaviour. This fragmentation leads to serious maladjustments. Patients suffering from schizophrenia do not perceive things happening around them correctly, and they often see or hear things which are not there. Their thinking pattern is confused and disorganized and they fail to communicate properly with others.

The categorization of schizophrenia is given in the following table.

	Type	Symptoms
1.	Catatonic	Unusual patterns of motor activity, speech disturbances such as repetitive chatter or rigid postures.
2.	Disorganized	Verbal asymmetry, poorly developed ideas
3.	Paranoid	Preoccupied with one or more set of ideas.
4.	Undifferentiated	Hallucinations, incoherence
5.	Residual	Withdrawal, absence of motivation etc.

The primary symptoms of schizophrenia are disturbance of thoughts, disturbances of perceptions, disturbances in emotional expression, disturbances of speech, social withdrawal, low motivation.

20.3.5 Personality disorder

Rammohan is a clerk in a company. As a clerk he was able to do work that was assigned to him. But whenever any situation comes when he has to take a decision, he is not able to do so. He has a good rapport with his seniors because he was highly submissive, but when his promotion was due, his officers were not sure about his capability for that position.

This is an acute case of dependent personality disorder where the individual always shows a need to be taken care of and is not able to show any decision-making skill. Another form of personality disorder is antisocial personality disorder in which individuals show irresponsible and socially disruptive behaviour like destroying property, stealing etc.

Personality disorder is characterized by a maladaptive style of thinking, feeling and behaving which disturbs the normal functioning of an individual.



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INTEXT QUESTIONS 20.3

1. List any two steps to be followed for helping a person with substance related disorder.

2. State any two symptoms of schizophrenia.



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- Any disorder which prevents a person to function effectively in a social set-up is known as a psychological disorder.
- The behaviour should show a serious departure from the prevalent social and cultural norm.
- To determine any behaviour as abnormal, seven considerations are used as a criteria-maladaptiveness, irritability, unpredictability vividness, observer's discomfort and violation of moral standards.
- The cause of abnormal behaviour can be biological or psychological.
- Some of the major psychological disorders are anxiety disorder, mood disorder, substance related disorder and schizophrenia etc.
- Anxiety disorder decreases the performance of a person due to anxiety.
- The various forms of anxiety disorders are: Somatoform disorders, generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder.
- Schizophrenia is a severe psychological disorder. Schizophrenia is also characterized by fragmentation of basic psychological processes. The various forms of schizophrenia are catatonic, disorganized, paranoid, undifferentiated and residual.