4.1 The Four Definitions of Abnormality: Test Pack

AQA 7182 · about 20 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer all questions. Full sentences are required for questions worth 4 marks or more. Allow about 20 minutes for the whole pack.

1 Outline the definition of abnormality known as statistical infrequency, as it is used in the diagnosis of psychological disorders.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Briefly state whether deviation from social norms is sufficient on its own to justify diagnosing someone as mentally disordered. Give one reason to support your answer.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Priya frequently shouts at strangers, causes arguments and has lost two jobs because of this behaviour. She reports feeling unable to control her anger and finds daily life difficult. Which definition of abnormality fits Priya best and why? Give two points of justification linked to the definition named.

(Total for Question 3 is 3 marks)

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4 Explain one limitation of the statistical infrequency definition that is illustrated by a behaviour that is rare but desirable, such as very high intelligence.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Kwame lives in a country where talking to ancestors is a common and accepted spiritual practice. A visiting clinician from a different culture records Kwame as hearing voices and suggests diagnosis of a psychotic disorder under the failure to function criterion. Which issues with applying Western-based definitions does this scenario illustrate? Give two concise points.

(Total for Question 5 is 3 marks)

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Mark scheme · 4.1 The Four Definitions of Abnormality: Test Pack

Question 1

states that statistical infrequency defines abnormality as behaviour that is rare or uncommon in the population relative to a distribution	**B1**
may refer to being far from the mean on a measured trait, e.g. intelligence or depression score, oe	**B1**

Answer: Abnormality by statistical infrequency is defined as behaviour or characteristics that are rare or uncommon in the population, measured as being far from the average on a given distribution, for example very low or very high scores on an intelligence or symptom scale.

Question 2

states that deviation from social norms is not sufficient on its own	**B1**
gives reason, e.g. it risks pathologising non-harmful cultural or minority behaviours and does not assess distress or impairment oe	**B1**

Answer: No. Deviation from social norms alone is not sufficient because it risks pathologising culturally different or non-harmful behaviours; diagnosis should also consider personal distress and functional impairment.

Question 3

identifies failure to function adequately as the best-fitting definition	**M1**
justifies with personal distress or inability to cope in daily life: she reports losing jobs and cannot control her anger oe	**A1**
justifies with maladaptiveness: behaviour interferes with occupational functioning and social relationships oe	**A1**

Answer: Failure to function adequately. Priya reports she cannot control her anger, has lost jobs and finds daily life difficult, showing personal distress and maladaptiveness which meet Rosenhan and Seligman's criteria.

Question 4

states that statistical infrequency would label rare desirable traits as abnormal	**M1**
gives example such as very high intelligence being rare but not maladaptive oe	**A1**
explains why this is a problem, e.g. it can lead to incorrect labelling and does not consider value judgements or functionality oe	**A1**
may note that clinical decisions need to consider whether a trait causes impairment, not just rarity oe	**A1**

Answer: Statistical infrequency would label rare but desirable traits, like very high intelligence, as abnormal. This is problematic because rarity alone does not imply dysfunction or harm; clinical judgement should consider whether the trait causes impairment or distress, not only how uncommon it is.

Question 5

identifies cultural relativism or cultural bias in definitions of abnormality	**M1**
explains that practices acceptable in Kwame's culture would be misinterpreted by a clinician using a different cultural norm oe	**A1**
notes that who decides the norm and lack of cultural competence can lead to inappropriate diagnosis and stigma oe	**A1**

Answer: This illustrates cultural relativism and cultural bias: behaviour acceptable in Kwame's culture may be labelled abnormal by a clinician using Western norms, and lack of cultural competence or who sets the norm can lead to inappropriate diagnosis and stigma.

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