

Definition and Nature of Abnormal Behaviour

Introduction

In psychology, the study of human behaviour includes both normal and abnormal patterns. Abnormal behaviour refers to thoughts, feelings, and actions that deviate from what is considered typical or acceptable within a particular society or culture. Understanding abnormal behaviour is essential for identifying mental disorders, planning treatment, and promoting mental health. This topic forms the foundation of clinical psychology and abnormal psychology.

Definition of Abnormal Behaviour

Defining abnormal behaviour is complex because it varies across cultures, societies, and time periods. What is considered abnormal in one culture may be acceptable in another. Therefore, psychologists use multiple criteria to define abnormality.

1. General Definition

Abnormal behaviour is behaviour that deviates from social norms, causes personal distress, interferes with daily functioning, or is harmful to the individual or others.

2. Medical or Clinical Definition

According to modern clinical psychology and manuals such as the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, abnormal behaviour consists of behavioural, emotional, or cognitive disturbances that are clinically significant and impair personal, social, or occupational functioning.

3. Working Definition

Abnormal behaviour can be understood as a pattern of behaviour that shows deviation from normal functioning in terms of thoughts, emotions, or actions and leads to maladjustment in life.