

# Abnormal Psychology

## Chapter 2: *Research in Abnormal Psychology*

### Definitions:

- **Nomothetic Understanding**- a general understanding of the nature, causes, and treatments of abnormal psychological functioning in the form of laws or principles.
- **Scientific Method**- the process of systematically gathering and evaluating information through careful observations to gain an understanding of a phenomenon.
- **Hypothesis**- a hunch or prediction that certain variables are related in certain ways.
- **Case Study**- a detailed account of a person's life and psychological problems.
- **Internal Validity**- the accuracy with which a study can pinpoint one of various possible factors as the cause of phenomenon.
- **External Validity**- the degree to which the results of a study may be generalized beyond that study.
- **Correlation**- the degree to which events or characteristics vary along with each other.
- **Correlational Method**- a research procedure used to determine how much events or characteristics vary along with each other.
- **Epidemiological Study**- a study that measures the incidence and prevalence of a disorder in a given population.
- **Incidence**- the number of new cases of a disorder occurring in a population over a specific period of time.
- **Prevalence**- the total number of cases of a disorder occurring in a population over a specific period of time.
- **Longitudinal Study**- a study that observes the same participants on many occasions over a long period of time.
- **Experiment**- a research procedure in which a variable is manipulated and the effect of the manipulation is observed.
- **Independent Variable**- the variable in an experiment that is manipulated to determine whether it has an effect on another variable.
- **Dependent Variable**- the variable in an experiment that is expected to change as the independent variable is manipulated.
- **Confound**- in an experiment, a variable other than the independent variable that is also acting on the dependent variable.
- **Control Group**- in an experiment, a group of participants who are not exposed to the independent variable.

- **Experimental Group**- in an experiment, the participants who are exposed to the independent variable under investigation.
- **Random Assignment**- a selection procedure that ensure that participants are randomly placed either in the control group or in the experimental group.
- **Blind Design**- an experiment in which participants do not know whether they are in the experimental or the control condition.
- **Placebo Therapy**- a sham treatment that the participant in an experiment believes to be genuine.
- **Double-Blind Design**- experimental procedure in which neither the participant nor the experimenter knows whether the participant has received the experimental treatment or placebo.
- **Quasi-Experiment**- an experiment in which investigators make use of control and experimental groups that already exist in the world at large. Also called a *mixed design*.
- **Natural Experiment**- an experiment in which nature, rather than the experimenter, manipulates an independent variable.
- **Analogue Experiment**- a research method in which the experimenter produces abnormal-like behavior in laboratory participants and then conducts experiments on the participants.
- **Single-Subject Experimental Design**- a research method in which a single participant is observed and measured both before and after the manipulation of an independent variable.

## **Key Concepts:**

### *What Do Clinical Researchers Do?*

- o researchers use the *scientific method* to uncover *nomothetic* characteristics of abnormal psychology
- o 3 methods used to examine relationships between variables
  1. *case study*
  2. *correlational method*
  3. *experimental method*

### *Case Study*

- o detailed account of a person's life & psychological problems
- o purposes...
  - i. source of ideas about behavior

- ii. support for theories
- iii. challenges existing theories
- iv. clarifies new treatment techniques
- v. offers as an opportunity to study rare cases
- o downfalls...
  - i. observer bias
  - ii. relies on subjective evidence
  - iii. **low internal & external validity**

### *Correlational Method*

- o systematic observation of the degree to which events or characteristics vary together
- o allows researchers to draw broad conclusions about abnormality in the population at large
- o *correlation* may have a POSITIVE or NEGATIVE DIRECTION
- o *correlation* may be HIGH or LOW in MAGNITUDE
- o correlational coefficient =  $r$
- o  $p < .05 \rightarrow$  correlation is considered statistically significant
- o **high external validity**
- o **low internal validity**
- o two widely used forms
  1. *epidemiological studies*
    - goal  $\rightarrow$  DESCRIBE the incidence or prevalence of a disorder within groups or populations without trying to predict or explain why it occurs
  2. *longitudinal studies*
    - goal  $\rightarrow$  observe the same participants over a long period of time

### *Experimental Method*

- o researchers manipulate suspected causes to see whether expected effects will result
- o aspects of an experiment  $\rightarrow$ 
  - i. *independent variable*
  - ii. *dependent variable*
  - iii. *control group*
  - iv. *experimental group*
  - v. *random assignment*
  - vi. *confounds*
  - vii. *blind designs*