

**TYPES AND CAUSES OF ABNORMAL BEHAVIOUR: CHALLENGES TO
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKERS**

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to examine the evolution of human behaviour, causes of abnormal behaviour, and how such behaviours can affect the smooth conduct of community development activities. In the final analysis, suggestions are offered for community development workers as to how they could manage the behaviours of community members to achieve community development.

Introduction

Behaviour can be described as the most complex, technical and unpredictable part of human beings. Apart from the fact that no two human beings have exactly the same behavior, even within an individual there is no specific act or behaviour that is static. In spite of its complexity however, it is the most important part of human beings. Behaviour is the primary factor to judge a person to be either good or bad, accepted or rejected by his community. On a general note, societal peace, harmony and development are largely determined by the collective behaviour of individual members of a society. Since human beings differ in terms of their behaviours, it is obvious that some will be of good behaviours while others will be the opposite. Considering the importance of acceptable behaviour in ensuring community or societal harmony, peaceful coexistence and possibility for development, it is essential for community development workers to learn how to manage the behaviours of community members in order to ensure that all community members participate actively in community development activities.

Psychologists such as Buss (1997), Adams (1997), and Hadley (1992) have extensively studied human behaviour with a view to understand the causes of such

diversities, particularly in a similar species of animals. Being the scientific study of human behaviour and mental processes, psychology strives to find out how biological and environmental factors work separately and/or together to influence behaviour and mental processes. It tries to find out the extent to which a given behaviour is influenced by biological and/or environmental factors (Smith, 1998).

The Evolution of Human Behaviour

The popular theory of evolution postulated by Charles Darwin in 1859 has laid what can be described as a solid foundation for the study on the origin of human behaviour. The theory is known as "Theory of Evolution or Evolution by Natural Selection". To Smith (1998, p.4) posit that; living organisms including humans evolve or change continuously over generations through a process of natural selection in which not all members- and therefore not all genes- of a species survive and reproduce. Those that do reproduce are more likely to have the inherited characteristics that are best adapted to the environment, and it is therefore these adaptive attributes that will be passed on to the next generation.

According to Buss (1997), the species undergo natural selection, the characteristics that endured are selected for and those that failed to survive are selected against. As a result of the selection, successive generations evolve in a positive, adaptive way; they become more likely to survive and reproduce in their environment and less likely to die (Smith, 1998, pp 5).

As environment changes, the species also try to adapt to the changes of the environment, especially as it pertains to changes caused by certain natural phenomena or other agents of change. Human beings are naturally bestowed with mechanisms for adjustment. This adaptation to changes of the environment allows eventual modifications in the heritable characteristics of the species (Smith, 1998). An example of such mechanism is the mate selection, both men and women across the cultures studied, have a definite preference for mates with attributes such as dependability, intelligence and kindness, because the characteristics are attributed to the promotion of species (Adams, 1997, Buss D. M; Abbot, M; Agheitner, A. & Asherian, A. 1990).

According to Buss (1995), the main focus of evolutionary psychology is to highlight on the evolution and development of psychological mechanisms. Psychological motives such as hunger, thirst, pain and sex have been found adaptive, because they are needed for survival of either the individual or the species which is basic to the evolution theory. Similarly, complex social motive systems have been adapted to as a

result of the need to solve specific environmental problems over the course of time (Thornhill and Thornhill, 1992).

Behaviours are caused by different types of needs. For example, eating and mating exist to satisfy physical needs and support the survival of both the individual and his species. Such motives can therefore be considered psychological motives. There are other motives which are not physiological such as the need to achieve. To clarify issues, psychologists have conducted several studies with a view to understanding how motivation affects/ influences behaviour. The results of these studies have given birth to some interesting theories.

The theories have addressed certain psychological issues such as, the major motive systems and how they motivate behaviour, how such systems relate to each other, the underlying psychological, environmental, and physiological causes of motivated behaviour and how they interact. The issues have been discussed in Basic Instinct, Drive, Incentive, and Arousal theories postulated by the researches of Timbergen (1989), Weinsinger et al, (1993), Smith (1994), Nielsen, (1994).

Instinct Theory

According to Hadley (1992), and Tinbergen (1989), some behaviours are caused by instincts. These are biological motives believed to be inborn or innate, and are expressed in a consistent way. A good example of instinctual behaviour according to these psychologists is nest building in birds which is taught by no one other than nature triggered by a combination of internal and external events. The researchers have enumerated a number of automatic inborn behaviour patterns such as curiosity, gregariousness, flight, pugnacity and self-assertion. These behaviours are considered instincts because they are natural or innate with organisms, especially human beings.

Drive Theory

A drive can be described as a force within the body system that arouses and motivates behaviour. It is a set of physiological forces that push for the satisfaction of needs; these factors include hunger, thirst, sleep, pain, and sex. The forces exist as responses to the physiological needs which upset body mechanism thereby creating a state of imbalance, discomfort or disequilibrium. It may also result from abrupt experience, such as a sudden contact with fire which causes pain. The physiological deficiency arising from the needs of sudden experience disrupts what is called 'homeostasis', that is, a state of equilibrium, balance or stability that the body tries to maintain (Weinsinger, R. S.; Denton, D. A.; Mckinley, M. J.; & Miselis, R. R. 1993).

When a person is deprived of food for instance, his blood glucose level is depleted thereby causing some other physiological changes that result in a need for food. To overcome the hunger drive, food has to be consumed (Smith, 1998).

Incentive Theory

Incentive has been defined as any external object or event that motivates behaviour (Smith, 1998). While drive theory viewed behaviour to physiological needs, the incentive theory emphasise external factors or stimuli. Drive theory attribute causes of behaviour to biological factors, whereas the incentive theory attributes behaviour to environmental factors. According to incentive theory, behaviour can be motivated to achieve some desired objective not necessarily to satisfy basic physiological needs. For example, when a student studies hard to obtain high grades, or a worker to earn promotion, their behaviours were not pushed by any internal drive, but the desire to achieve an objective, which would be the incentive (Smith, 1998).

Optimal Arousal Theory

According to psychologists, arousal is an increase in the level of activity of a number of physiological systems and heightened arousal is associated with activation, alertness and wakefulness (Smith *et al.*, 1993; Smith, 1994). Arousal is characterized by an increase in heart rate, blood pressure, respiration rate and muscle tension as well as changes in cortical activity (Smith, 1994). According to Nielsen (1994), everyone has a physiological need for stimulation.

The assertion of Nielsen has been supported by the experiment earlier conducted by Bexton, W. H.; Heron, W.; & Scott, T. H (1954) in Smith, B. D (1998) where some students were paid some incentives (\$100) for everyday they remained in a small, dimly lit, sound proof chamber. According to the researcher, only a few of the subjects were able to stay in the chamber for more than 2-3 days despite the monetary incentive. The researcher adds: Smith (1998, p.424) states that: they reported a strong desire for nearly any kind of stimulation, and this desire was accompanied by restlessness, irritability and sometimes seeing or hearing things that were not actually accruing.

Types of Behaviour

Broadly speaking, behaviour can be classified into two categories: normal and abnormal. Normality in behaviour however, is non- existent in a complete form, it only exists as a relative and quantitative approximation, and it must be considered in form of cultural relativity. The context or circumstances surrounding behaviour

influence whether behaviour can be viewed normal or abnormal. Accordingly, cultural or societal norms are the only criterion for labeling behaviour normal or abnormal.

However, a person can be considered relatively normal whenever he or she has a behaviour pattern which agrees with that of the majority of the people surrounding him or her (Abate, L. & Curtis 1975). In a related study Abate et al suggested certain parameters for normality of behaviour such as: physical normality which includes absence of disease, presence of good function, and maturity. Intellectual normality; absence of neurotic and psychotic symptoms; emotional maturity such as: ability to be guided by reality rather than by fear, use of long term values, conscience, independence, capacity to love someone else both with enlightened self-interest, a reasonable dependence, a reasonable aggressiveness, a healthy defense mechanism, among others.

For a person to be considered normal in terms of behaviour, he or she must have the capacity for adaptation to reality, relations with others must have a rational and effective content, there must also be some degree of mental efficiency; and happiness must be present together with the capacity for enjoyment and self-contentment (Abate et al, 1975). A normal person is therefore expected to have a balanced and well integrated personality. He should be emotionally mature, of sound character and should be able to deal with conflicting emotions and also maintain a balance between internal life and adaptation to reality. Such a person should also be able to love someone else apart from himself (Abate *et al*, 1975).

Abnormal behaviour on the other hand, can be considered as the lacking of or complete absence of normality. Abnormal behaviour has different names; it is sometimes called anti-social disorders, emotional and behavioural difficulties, juvenile delinquency, deviance, etc. and it takes many dimensions at school and the larger society. School children behave abnormally in form of absenteeism, lack of interest in learning activities, noisemaking, inattention, stealing, bullying, etc. In the larger society abnormal behaviour takes the form of stealing, aggression, illegal sexuality, rape, homosexuality and even adult criminality (Abate et al, 1975).

Causes of Abnormal Behaviour

There are three major views regarding the causes of abnormal or anti-social behaviours. The views represent the opinions of psychologists as far as the cause of abnormal behaviour is concerned. Among the views, the oldest is the biological, sometimes referred to as criminal biology. According to this view, abnormal

behaviour has some elements of heredity. The proponents of this view included Sigmund Freud (1930) cited in Abate *et al* (1975). In a work called "Civilisation and its Discontent", Freud has described aggression as one of the basic instincts of man. He explains as follows: "Men are not gentle, friendly creatures wishing for love, who simply defend themselves if they are attacked, but that a powerful measure of desire for aggression has to be reckoned as part of their instinctual endowment" (Abate *et al*, 1975, pp. 292- 293).

The theory has been related to biological process, and the discovery processes that are at work continually in the cells of the body. According to this scholar, the formation of conscience and the experience of guilt are explained by the basic aggressive drive. By the biological perspective therefore, aggression and other forms of abnormal behaviour are inevitable, because they are part of human nature.

The second view regarding the causes of abnormal behaviour is that which represents psychological theories. The proponents of this view included Aichorn (1935) cited in Abate *et al* (1975). According to this view, abnormal behaviour is caused by the formation of an anti-social character which finds its root in faulty relationships within the family right from early childhood. He stated further: "Faulty development during infancy and early childhood makes it impossible for the child to control his impulses. The child remains a psychological infant, living in accordance with the pleasure principle and failing to develop the reality principle in his life. The defective development leads to an anti-social character structure which is incapable of coping with reality (Abate *et al*, 1975, pp 292.).

The psychological theories which themselves have some ideas of Freudian psychoanalytic theory, have argued that, the abnormal people have failed to develop a management system over their impulsivity. In essence, such people have failed to develop an adequate ego and super ego. Normal people repress and control their aggressive impulses or express them in a more socially acceptable way. Whoever fails to develop internal controls for his aggressive impulses is considered immature and abnormal since he has not adapted the values of society as his own. The third view which attributes causes of abnormal behaviour to environmental factors represents the stance of psychologists such as Maslow (1962) cited in Abate *et al*, (1975, p. 192). The scholar explains as follows:

Men's inner nature is not instinctively evil, but rather as either neutral or good. What we call "evil" behaviour appears most often to be a secondary reaction to expressions of individuals' intrinsic worth. Psychopathy

generally results from the denial or distortion of man's essential value.

The proponents of this theory are impliedly opposes to the biological-instinctual theorists because, according to them, aggression and destruction are not inherent in man, but rather caused by denial or deprivation. The fact that the moment such impediments are removed aggressions disappears proved beyond any doubt, that it is not instinctual. The final submission of the proponents of cultural perspective therefore, is that, abnormal behaviours are caused by the cultural environment. Having thrown light on the area of behaviour relevant to this work, a cursory examination of community is also made below.

Community Development

Community development has been defined differently by different scholars and organisations concerned with communities. Oduaran (1994) in Omoruyi, 2001, for example, defined it as:

A movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and if possible, on the initiative of the community, but if this not forthcoming spontaneously, by the use of techniques for, arousing and stimulating it in order to secure its active enthusiastic response to the movement (Omoruyi, 2001, p. 5).

UN on also in its part considered community development as the process by which the effort of people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress (Omoruyi, 2001, p. 5).

Community development has many perspectives. It is perceived as a process, a method, a programme or a movement (Sanders, 1970 in Omoruyi, 2001). As a process it lays more emphasis on the social and psychological life of the community. It also emphasises the development of positive relationships among community members, as well as behaviours, skills and attitudes that will enhance such relationships. As a method, the emphasis is on how social change activities take place, while as a programme, it emphasises on how specific activities can be

accomplished. As a movement, community development is perceived as a determined effort or a cause to which people are whole heartedly committed.

Challenges of Behaviour Management to Community Development

For community development to be successful citizens must actively participate. In other words, the local people should take part in the planning, utilization and assessment of the social amenities or facilities, designed for the improvement of the community welfare (Anyanwu, 1992). The importance of citizens' participation in community development cannot be over-emphasised, for it creates faith in common understanding and also enhances the possibility of success in the execution of programmes designed for better living in rural communities. Citizens' involvement in community development also increases project efficiency, effectiveness and also helps to build the capacities of beneficiaries as well as enhancing and empowering the members of the community. The participation as observed also promotes confidence building and it also creates a sense of belonging in the people (Omoruyi, 2001).

There is no doubt, community development cannot take place when there is no massive and total commitment or involvement of the citizens, and when the resources (both human and material) necessary for its functioning are untapped or static. Static status of community resources may result from a number of factors such as: poor leadership, lack of societal cohesion, lack of conformity, lack of awareness, general apathy, illiteracy or other forms of abnormal behaviour (Omoruyi, 2001). The factors mentioned above have been identified as the major obstacles to effective and successful community development efforts. And such efforts can only be enhanced with the elimination of such obstacles and proper mobilization of community members.

Mobilization is the process by which people are gingered up to take part in the process of change. It is a means through which people are activated into the process of change. Mobilization serves as a vehicle for galvanizing the people in some kind of action, with the objective of making the people remain committed to the action (Omoruyi, 2001). At this juncture, it seems safe enough to examine the necessary inter-dependence of behaviour and community development.

Strategies for the Management of Behaviour for Effective Community Development

It is an obvious fact, that for any community to achieve its desired objectives, it must involve all its members in whatever effort it is making towards uplifting that

community. In other words, all hands must be on deck, if our communities are to make any meaningful progress. All members must be fully mobilized to participate actively in the execution of all community development projects.

In achieving this objective, community development workers have a great role to play in harnessing all the resources of the community both human and material. As community comprises of different types of people with different behavioural patterns, the workers in charge of community development must have to work with different kinds of behaviour. To be precise, all members of the community must be brought together to work for their community irrespective of their behavioural patterns.

The major task of change agents, that is, community development workers, therefore, is how to bring people with abnormal behaviour under the same ambit with those of normal people. In essence, community development workers have to learn to manage abnormal behaviours, if their effort towards mobilization of community members for effective community development is to succeed. Like politicians seeking for votes embrace all electorates just to win their votes during elections, community development workers too, have to embrace all community members during project execution. Some may not have money or ideas to offer, but they have their physical strength which is equally valued in community development activities. Abnormal behaviours can be best managed by studying persons with such behaviours, with a view to understanding the actual cause(s) of such behaviours with them. Some abnormal behaviours, as discussed earlier, are caused by environmental handicaps such as frustration as a result of parental rejection, poverty, lack of recognition by the community, influence of peer group, involvement in various types of gang activities. After diagnosing the cause(s) of the abnormal behaviour, persons with such behaviours should be placed on psychotherapy. Psychotherapy entails embracing such persons and integrating them into the affairs of the community.

Community development workers should also encourage members of the community to also embrace such people identified to have abnormal behaviours. They should be given roles to play in all community development activities, and should be encouraged to express their feelings and opinions about all community activities. By integrating them into community activities such people will be made to have a sense of belonging and thereby overcoming their inferiority feelings. This in return will encourage them to contribute voluntarily in all community development activities.

Recommendations

1. Community development workers should take note of the human behaviour and its main motives.
2. They should bear in mind that human beings differ in behaviour pattern.
3. They should know that human behaviour determine their actions.
4. They should bear in mind that communities comprise of people with good and bad behaviour patterns and that all are needed for community development activities.
5. Community development workers should try to study community members that have behaviour disorders with a view to knowing factors behind the abnormal behaviour.
6. They should learn and apply all psychotherapeutic approaches such as measurement and assessment of intelligence and general abilities; application of clinical skill and technique; desensitization therapy; environmental treatment among techniques.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it seems clear enough that, though human behaviour is technical and complex, it is still the most important part of human beings. And to achieve effective development therefore, workers in charge should learn and identify the complexity that exists in human behaviour and strategise on how best they can cope with them in the pursuit of their community development efforts. Hence, while the normal are involved, the behaviour disorderly persons who are considered a problem to the communities must also be involved in community development activities. This is on the premise that there is no one who is absolutely useless. They also have a role to play, and have some contributions to make. Despite their abnormality in behaviour, psychotherapeutic approaches can help them integrate fully with the community. Therefore, going by the above submission it is clear that the need for community development workers to know various ways of human behaviour in addition to their knowledge of community development strategies cannot be over-emphasised. Such combined knowledge will ensure a better management of man in respect to the overall community development.

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