Your notes

GCSE Psychology: revision notes

Schizophrenia

Contents

1. What schizophrenia is
2. Mental health in society
3. Explaining schizophrenia
4. Treatments
5. Key terms
6. Quick questions
7. What to do next

What schizophrenia is

- **Schizophrenia** is a serious mental health problem that affects how someone thinks, feels and behaves. Doctors use the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) to diagnose it.
- Positive symptoms add to normal experience: **hallucinations** (seeing or hearing things that aren't there) and **delusions** (firmly holding false beliefs).
- Negative symptoms take away from it: flat emotion, less motivation and withdrawing from other people.
- About 1 in 100 people develop it in their lifetime. It usually starts between the late teens and the early thirties, and often earlier in men. With treatment many people improve, and some recover fully.

Mental health in society

- Mental health can be seen as a continuum, from good to poor. Anyone can move along it.
- **Stigma** is the shame and negative attitudes that people can face, and discrimination is being treated unfairly. Both can affect people before and after a diagnosis.
- Attitudes in the UK have changed a lot since the 1959 Mental Health Act, and many people now get care in the community and not in long-stay hospitals.

Explaining schizophrenia

- The **dopamine hypothesis** is a biological explanation: too much of the neurotransmitter dopamine in the brain, from overactive dopaminergic neurons and synapses, causes the symptoms.
- Brain dysfunction is another part of it. Differences in brain volume and activity have been found in the frontal lobes, the hippocampus and the temporal lobes.

- A criticism is that it ignores nurture: the environment and life experiences matter as well.
- The **social drift** theory is a psychological explanation: people are rejected by society, disengage from it and drift into poverty and isolation, which keeps the problem going.
- A criticism is that cause and effect are hard to separate: does being isolated make it worse, or do the symptoms cause the isolation?
- Daniel, Weinberger, Jones et al (1991) gave people with **schizophrenia** amphetamine during a thinking task. Blood flow to the front of their brains and their performance both changed, which suggests that monoamines such as dopamine are involved.

Treatments

- Anti-psychotic drugs change the action of neurotransmitters such as dopamine at the synapses, which reduces symptoms. They work for many people, but can have side effects, and don't deal with the causes.
- Psychotherapy means talking with a trained therapist, which helps people to cope with their symptoms and thoughts. It takes time, and needs someone to be well enough to take part.
- Neuropsychology studies these problems with tests and with brain imaging, such as fMRI scans.

Key terms

Schizophrenia	A serious mental health problem that affects how someone thinks, feels and behaves.
Hallucination	Seeing or hearing things that aren't there.
Delusion	A firmly held false belief.
Dopamine hypothesis	The idea that too much dopamine in the brain causes the symptoms of schizophrenia.
Social drift	The idea that rejection and disengagement lead people to drift into poverty and isolation.
Stigma	The shame and negative attitudes someone can face because of a mental health problem.
Anti-psychotics	Drugs that reduce the symptoms of schizophrenia by changing neurotransmitter activity.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is a hallucination?
2. What is a delusion?
3. Which of these is a negative symptom of schizophrenia?

Your notes

4. About how many people develop schizophrenia in their lifetime?
5. Which neurotransmitter is the biological explanation about?
6. What is the social drift theory of schizophrenia?
7. Which is a criticism of the dopamine hypothesis?
8. What does stigma mean?

Answers

1. Seeing or hearing things that aren't there
2. A firmly held false belief
3. Withdrawing from other people
4. About 1 in 100
5. Dopamine
6. Rejection and disengagement lead people into poverty and isolation
7. It ignores the environment
8. Shame and negative attitudes someone can face

What to do next

Practise 11 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

Free revision for GCSE and KS3 at lycolearn.co.uk. Some notes are for one exam board only, and say so in brackets.

Your notes