

Faculty of Human and Social Sciences

Department of Psychology

Level: MA1 Clinical Psychology

Instructor: Ms. Saci Meriem

Module: English

Lesson n°2: Psychotic Symptoms

Introduction

Psychotic symptoms are serious mental health disturbances that affect a person's thinking, perception, emotions, and behavior. Individuals experiencing psychosis may lose contact with reality, making it difficult for them to function in daily life. These symptoms are commonly associated with disorders such as schizophrenia, severe depression, and bipolar disorder, but they can also appear in other medical or neurological conditions.

I. Definition of Psychotic Symptoms

Psychotic symptoms refer to abnormal mental experiences characterized by a distorted perception of reality. A person with psychosis may have difficulty distinguishing between what is real and what is not. These symptoms can vary in intensity and duration, ranging from mild and temporary to severe and chronic.

II. Types of Psychotic Symptoms

I. *Hallucinations*

Hallucinations involve perceiving things that are not present. They can affect any of the senses:

- ✓ Auditory hallucinations: hearing voices (most common)
- ✓ Visual hallucinations: seeing things that are not there
- ✓ Olfactory hallucinations: smelling unusual odors
- ✓ Tactile hallucinations: feeling sensations on the skin

II. *Delusions*

Delusions are strongly held false beliefs that are not based in reality and persist despite evidence to the contrary. Common types include:

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- ✓ *Persecutory delusions*: belief of being harmed or targeted
- ✓ *Grandiose delusions*: belief of having special powers or importance
- ✓ *Reference delusions*: belief that events or media messages are directed at oneself

III. *Disorganized Thinking*

This symptom affects the way a person organizes thoughts and speech. It may appear as:

- ✓ Incoherent or illogical speech
- ✓ Rapid topic changes
- ✓ Difficulty maintaining a conversation

IV. *Abnormal Motor Behavior*

Individuals may display unusual movements such as:

- ✓ Agitation or restlessness
- ✓ Catatonia (lack of movement or response)
- ✓ Repetitive or purposeless actions

V. *Negative Symptoms*

These involve a reduction or loss of normal functioning:

- ✓ Lack of motivation (avolition)
- ✓ Reduced emotional expression (flat affect)
- ✓ Social withdrawal
- ✓ Difficulty experiencing pleasure (anhedonia)

VI. *Causes of Psychotic Symptoms*

Psychotic symptoms can result from multiple factors:

- *Biological factors*: brain structure abnormalities, neurotransmitter imbalances (especially dopamine)

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- **Genetic factors:** family history of mental illness
- **Psychological factors:** trauma, stress, or emotional distress
- **Substance use:** drugs such as cannabis, amphetamines, or alcohol
- **Medical conditions:** brain injuries, infections, or neurological diseases

VII. Diagnosis

Diagnosis is usually made by mental health professionals based on clinical interviews, observation, and diagnostic criteria such as those found in the DSM-5. It is important to rule out other causes such as substance use or medical illnesses.

Conclusion

Psychotic symptoms are complex and serious mental health conditions that require early diagnosis and proper treatment. Understanding these symptoms is essential for reducing stigma and improving care for affected individuals. With appropriate medical and psychological support, many people can manage their symptoms and lead fulfilling lives.