



A Cultural-Ecosocial Systemic Approach to Psychiatry with an Emphasis on Neuroscience Integration

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ABOUT THE STUDY

Neuroscience is the scientific study of the nervous system, including the brain, spinal cord, and peripheral nerves. Neuroscience aims to understand how the nervous system functions in health and disease, and how it influences and is influenced by behaviour, cognition, emotion, and social interactions. Neuroscience has made remarkable advances in recent decades, thanks to new technologies and methods that allow researchers to explore the structure and function of the brain at different levels of organisation, from molecules and cells to circuits and networks. Neuroscience has also contributed to the development of new diagnostic tools and therapeutic interventions for various neurological and psychiatric disorders.

Psychiatry is the medical specialty that deals with the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of mental disorders. Psychiatry relies on clinical observation, psychological assessment, and diagnostic criteria to identify and classify mental disorders. Psychiatry also uses various forms of treatment, such as psychotherapy, medication, psychosocial interventions, or Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT), to help patients cope with their symptoms and improve their functioning and well-being. Psychiatry is influenced by various theoretical perspectives, such as psychoanalysis, cognitive-behavioral therapy, interpersonal therapy, biological psychiatry, social psychiatry, cultural psychiatry, or critical psychiatry.

Integrating neuroscience in psychiatry is a challenging but promising endeavour that aims to bridge the gap between brain science and mental health care. Integrating neuroscience in psychiatry can have several benefits for both fields. For neuroscience, it can provide a better understanding of the complex phenomena of human experience, behaviour, and

cognition that are often studied in isolation or under artificial conditions. It can also offer new insights into the causes and mechanisms of mental disorders that are often multifactorial and heterogeneous. For psychiatry, it can provide more objective and reliable measures of brain function that can complement clinical observation and assessment. It can also offer more precise and personalised diagnosis and treatment that can target specific brain regions or pathways involved in mental disorders.

However, integrating neuroscience in psychiatry also faces several challenges and limitations that need to be addressed. One challenge is to overcome the reductionist tendency that dominates much of neuroscience research, which tends to focus on single variables or levels of analysis without considering the interactions and dynamics among them. Another challenge is to acknowledge the limitations of neuroscientific evidence, which is often based on animal models, healthy volunteers, or selected samples that may not reflect the diversity and complexity of psychiatric populations. A third challenge is to respect the ethical, social, cultural, and humanistic aspects of psychiatry, which are essential for providing compassionate, respectful, and person-centred care. A fourth challenge is to foster interdisciplinary collaboration among neuroscientists, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, nurses, patients, families, and other stakeholders who have different backgrounds, perspectives, values, and interests.

A possible way to address these challenges is to adopt a multilevel explanatory framework that can integrate neuroscience with knowledge and evidence in psychiatry. Such a framework can recognise that mental phenomena are emergent properties of complex adaptive systems that involve multiple levels of organisation across neurobiological, psychological, interpersonal, social, cultural activities.

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