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Commentary

The Role of Cognition in Drug and Addiction: Cognitive Behavior Therapy

John Hartney*

Department of Health Sciences, Yozgat Bozok University, Yozgat, Turkey

DESCRIPTION

Cognitive psychology is the branch of psychology that studies the mental processes involved in perception, attention, memory, reasoning, decision making, problem solving, and language. Cognitive psychology also examines how these processes are influenced by emotions, motivations, beliefs, and expectations. Addiction is a complex phenomenon that involves biological, psychological, and social factors. Addiction can be defined as a chronic and relapsing disorder characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences. Addiction can also refer to behavioral addictions, such as gambling, internet use that share similar features with substance addictions.

Cognitive psychology and addiction are closely related, as addiction can be seen as a disorder of altered cognition. Addiction affects the brain regions and processes that are involved in essential cognitive functions, such as learning, memory, attention, reasoning, and impulse control. Addiction also involves distorted cognitions that support and maintain the addictive behavior. One of the main cognitive processes involved in addiction is learning. Learning refers to the acquisition and modification of knowledge and skills through experience. Learning can occur through various mechanisms, such as classical conditioning, operant conditioning, observational learning, and social learning.

Classical conditioning is a type of learning in which a neutral stimulus becomes associated with an unconditioned stimulus that elicits an unconditioned response. For example, a drug user may associate the sight of a syringe with the pleasurable effects of heroin, and develop a conditioned response of craving when seeing a syringe. Operant conditioning is a type of learning in which the consequences of a behavior influence the likelihood of its repetition. For example, a drug user may learn to increase their drug intake to obtain positive reinforcement (such as euphoria or relief from withdrawal) or avoid negative reinforcement (such as anxiety or pain).

Observational learning is a type of learning in which a person acquires new behaviors or attitudes by observing others. For example, a drug user may learn to imitate the drug use patterns of their peers or role models. Social learning is a type of learning that involves the interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors. For example, a drug user may learn to adopt certain beliefs or norms about drug use from their social context. Another cognitive process involved in addiction is memory. Memory refers to the encoding, storage, and retrieval of information. Memory can be divided into different types, such as sensory memory, short-term memory, working memory, and long-term memory.

Sensory memory is the initial stage of memory that holds sensory information for a brief period of time. For example, a drug user may have a fleeting impression of the smell or taste of a drug. Short-term memory is the stage of memory that holds information for a limited duration (about 15-30 seconds) and capacity (about 7 items). For example, a drug user may remember the phone number of their dealer for a short time. Working memory is the stage of memory that allows for the manipulation and processing of information for complex tasks. For example, a drug user may use their working memory to plan their next drug purchase or injection.

Long-term memory is the stage of memory that stores information for an indefinite period of time and capacity. Long-term memory can be divided into declarative memory (memory for facts and events) and non-declarative memory (memory for skills and habits). Declarative memory is the type of memory that allows for conscious recollection of past experiences. For example, a drug user may recall the details of their first drug use or overdose. Non-declarative memory is the type of memory that does not require conscious awareness and is expressed through performance. For example, a drug user may develop automatic or habitual responses to drug-related cues or situations.

Memory plays an important role in addiction, as it influences the formation and maintenance of associations between drugs and their effects, cues and contexts, and emotions and motivations. Memory also affects the recall and retrieval of drug-related information, the consolidation and reconsolidation of drug-related memories, and the extinction and reinstatement of

Correspondence to: John Hartney, Department of Health Sciences, Yozgat Bozok University, Yozgat, Turkey, E-mail: johnhartney@edu.tr

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drug-seeking behavior. A third cognitive process involved in addiction is attention. Attention refers to the selective focus on certain aspects of information while ignoring others. Attention can be divided into different types, such as selective attention, divided attention, sustained attention, and executive attention. Selective attention is the type of attention that allows for the filtering of irrelevant information while processing relevant information.

In conclusion, cognitive psychology and addiction are interrelated domains that can help us understand how addiction affects our mental processes and how our mental processes affect our addiction. By applying cognitive principles and techniques to addiction treatment and prevention, we can enhance our ability to change our addictive behaviors and improve our well-being.