
Frames in psychiatric classification

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Our project, Frame Analysis of Mental Disorders, deals with the definition and classification of mental disorders using Barsalou's Frame Theory.

The current debate in psychiatry about the conceptualization and classification of mental disorders covers different questions about the applicability of the underlying concepts used to define mental disorders.

The most widely used classification systems are the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10/11) and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5).

Currently, the major research issue is to define functional domains, understood as faculties of the mind, which could be considered relevant for classificatory issues besides clinical phenomena. The clinically relevant disorders are associated with different disturbances in the areas of cognition and another mental functions. The functional domains underlying these functions may be defined by frame theory and reduced to a set of relevant attributes, values, and constraints.

Therefore, Barsalou's approach seems appropriate to represent the complex structure of the faculties of mind which are considered to be altered in mental disorders.

The aim of the current project is to provide a systematic analysis in terms of frame theory that can serve as a foundation for further ontological and classificatory discussions in psychiatry. We address the current knowledge about mental disorders, as it is reflected in clinical practice and the current classification systems, taking five major levels into account: Clinical phenomena (C), Faculties of mind (F), Neuronal Level (N), Genetic Factors (F), Institutional Level (L), which encompass classification systems (ICD-10/11, DSM-5).

Such frame-based approach is helpful to address the following issues: a) how can mental disorder with complex biopsychosocial causes be conceptualized in a coherent manner; b) how can changes over time in the kinds and severity of symptoms of mental disorders be represented by frame theory; c) how can changes in concepts of the classification of mental disorders be represented by frame theory?

We will present results from frame-based analyses on specific phobias based on a systematic literature review and will describe how we will proceed in the field of schizophrenia research, which lends itself to frame analysis as a complex and challenging example due to its phenotypic variability over time, its historic role as a paradigmatic mental disorder, and the recent progress in elucidating elements of its pathophysiology. Further aspects include an analysis of the agency of actions, which is pertinent to the discussion of symptoms of reference or influence in schizophrenia.