

Apophenia

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Abstract

Apophenia is patterns. The patterns consist of images, numbers, or other objects. Apophenia or patternicity is a form of schizophrenia. It could be found in criminal activities. It would lead to whether a person used it positively or even negatively input. Furthermore, scientists were able to discover that it was caused by a traumatic event or experience that the person could have been through. Later it was stated that it all has to do with the theory of mind. With this mindset, they develop a survival of the fittest mode to where they feel as if they were disciples. They fulfill their assignment by either being called, hearing voices, feeling as if they are being talked about and more. Through this, they start to self-isolate themselves from their community and others just to fulfill their needs. When their needs are met they start living in their mental mindset where they look for non-existing patterns. A person can get help by taking medicine. Furthermore, doing community service work can also help with social isolation and learning to live with apophenia. It is also good to bring more awareness to the topic and help the family of the person. By this, a person can discover a positive reaction to apophenia.

Friday the 13th, 11:11, 911, pictures in food, and unusual sounds in beats of music can cause one to act weird or different, but why? All of these things have one thing in common: they are a part of apophenia, where one acts out or is different because of patterns. These patterns have people believing in supernatural beings or matters. When picking a topic and wanting to do something involving mental health, apophenia was unique. It showed that anyone can experience seeing patterns or images of apophenia, whether it results in positive or negative feedback. The purpose is to educate and bring more awareness to this broad topic and show that anyone can experience a mental health disorder. Apophenia can have a positive or negative impact on the person but it depends on the trauma the person goes through.

Apophenia is seeing patterns where one does not exist. It consists of images, numbers, shapes, sounds, and other objects. Apophenia, also known as patternicity, is something that anyone can experience. It also features forms of paranoia and delusions. In 1958, apophenia originated by Klaus Conrad, a neurologist. He studied the structure of schizophrenia and concluded that apophenia is a form of schizophrenia. He also stated that anyone could suffer from apophenia without being schizophrenic. Apophenia is also a type of “cognitive bias” (Peterson, 2021). A cognitive bias is when a person believes in something about another thing or person and restates that fact frequently causing them to create a bias towards that thing, either adoring or despising it. It causes a person suffering from apophenia to create a “normal phenomenon or an abnormal one” (Stoppler, 2021). Furthermore, implying that the person can not tell reality from unreality, it is as if they are stuck in their virtual reality and looking for clues to help them be set free. So, they are looking for a "connection and meaningfulness in unrelated things" (Stoppler, 2021). Stoppler is stating that a person is looking for patterns that connect to their circumstances. They can find these patterns through a sequence of numbers, seeing a sign in a painting, or even random images. After all, because of research, one can learn the background

of apophenia before going into the depth of the term. One can also see the connection of it with schizophrenia and understand the background knowledge and how it became known.

As scientists studied apophenia they wondered what causes it to occur. Some say that it is through creating linkages. The linkages come from the survival of the fittest theory where people create instincts to survive. Another theory was the low levels of latent inhibition or no known causes. Even with this theory, there was barely any evidence. With theories not holding, one came up with the “theory of mind” (Health Jade Team, n.d.). The theory of mind is where one trains their mind into thinking a certain way. It causes them to impair the ability to correctly think of “mental states”. This theory relates to human biology and occurs when a person goes through traumatic experiences. It causes the person to document the phenomenon and create a bias toward the incident. The bias leads the person to see patterns in their traumatic experiences, with the patterns the person sees in their daily life, and starts to behave irrationally or rationally. Furthermore, it causes a tendency to perceive meaning in unrelated events. They feel as if they are in a cycle of history repeating itself. Since studying human behavior and biology, researchers have ruled that apophenia may have no known causes but is linked to human events and the theory of mind. Finally, it explains how apophenia is formed and how it relates to the individual.

Apophenia can lead to positive and negative criminal activities. A positive point is the prosecution of Stephen Wright. Wright was charged with the murder of five women in Suffolk, England. The forensic team in charge of the case relied heavily on Locard’s principles. They used “forensic sense-making” (Forensic Apophenia: Sensing the Bioinformation Archive, 2021). Forensic sense-making is a type of apophenia that shows patterns in crimes. They discovered that Wright would have sexual intercourse with the women on his couch, then take them into his car and murder them. They also used bioinformation. The bioinformation was used for descriptive and derivative designations. The scientist would collect evidence, that they saw as a

pattern, and make assumptions. This caused them to feel as if they were thinking like Stephen Wright when identifying his patterns. They would later find biological substances, information, and archives in the dataset. Which led to Wright's conviction.

Another criminal activity resulting from apophenia would be the "sea of data" (Steyerl, 2016). The sea of data was a term used to describe British analysts hacking video in Israel. The analysts would hack video cameras in Israel and spy on the citizens living there. They would collect data on government officials and their plans for missions. The analysts stated that they did this because they believed to see Amani-al Nasasra's face in a cloud, which led them to believe that Israel was planning an attack on Britain. After collecting the illegal data, a small city was bombed a couple of days later. The analyst was blamed for the bombing since they collected the data and gave out the information. They stated that they were defending their homeland. Also, they stated they should not be held accountable for protecting their home. Because of apophenia, one may act out and this can lead to positive or negative criminal activities. This shows how a person living with apophenia can function positively and how it can have a negative effect.

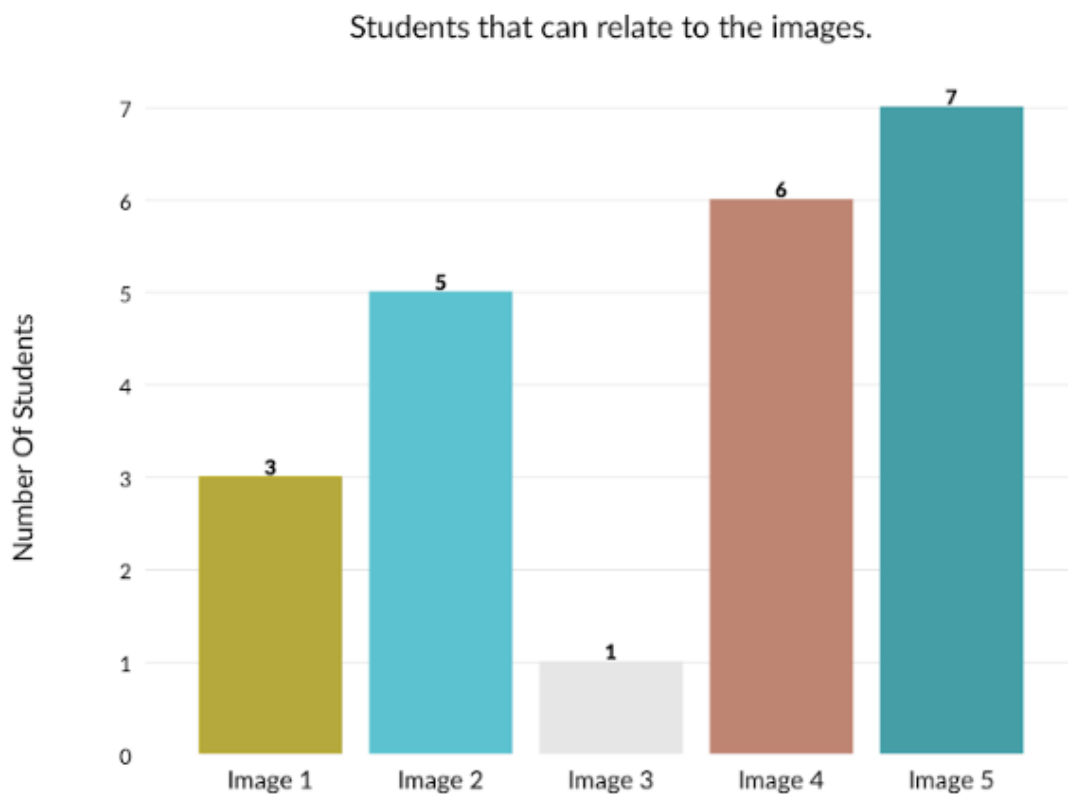
As someone may behave irrationally, scientists wondered what caused them to fulfill their needs. The person may feel as if they are being watched or followed. Some may hear voices or be under the assumption that they are being talked about. It also depends on the trauma that they went through and seeing signs from their traumatic experience. Another thing would be their mental state. Their mental state can tell if they are being socially withdrawn from a certain situation. Also, they could suffer from schizophrenia. With that, one believes that they are being prepared or are disciples for an event. For example, seeing the face of Jesus on a piece of toast a person feels that they are called to preach the gospel. Furthermore, the personality of the person could be "psychosis and anhedonia" (DeYoung & Longenecker). Psychosis means that the

thoughts and emotions are impaired and the person loses contact with external reality. Meaning that the person is stuck in their delusions or mindset. Anhedonia means that the person is unable to feel pleasure or happiness; they are depressed. With anhedonia, the person becomes socially withdrawn from the environment. Since one may suffer from urges, it shows that causes the urge to be fulfilled. By this, one may catch the symptoms ahead of time depending on the person.

Because some who suffered from apophenia, it is great to spread awareness and research treatments that can help the person. The medical treatment that can help patients with apophenia would be antipsychotic medications. The medicine can help the patient not feel so depressed and help them away from their urges. Another option would be cognitive behavioral therapy. The therapy would focus on the behavior of the individual and how they control their urges and talk about their past experiences with their trauma. There are also treatments available in the community. The community and family can gather around and reassure that the person is safe while remaining calm. They could put together community projects so that they could stay busy and teach them that they can deal with their apophenia in a healthy environment. This teaches them not to social withdrawal from their environment. Bringing awareness to the family and community is important. Awareness teaches how to educate and support people with apophenia. It also shows how to be a proper skeptic. Being a proper skeptic means not being angry when a person relapses from apophenia and being there to reassure them that everything is alright. One will also learn to recognize unconscious distortions. The important one to bring awareness is by “analyzing their assumptions”(MasterClass, 2021). Analyzing assumptions is one of the hardest things to do because families sometimes refuse to believe what they see. Through awareness, they can accept what they see and help the individual before it worsens. Since apophenia is not a well-known topic, spreading awareness may help the person and their family from suffering and also help prevent or even better the person. Also with the treatment, there may not even be a

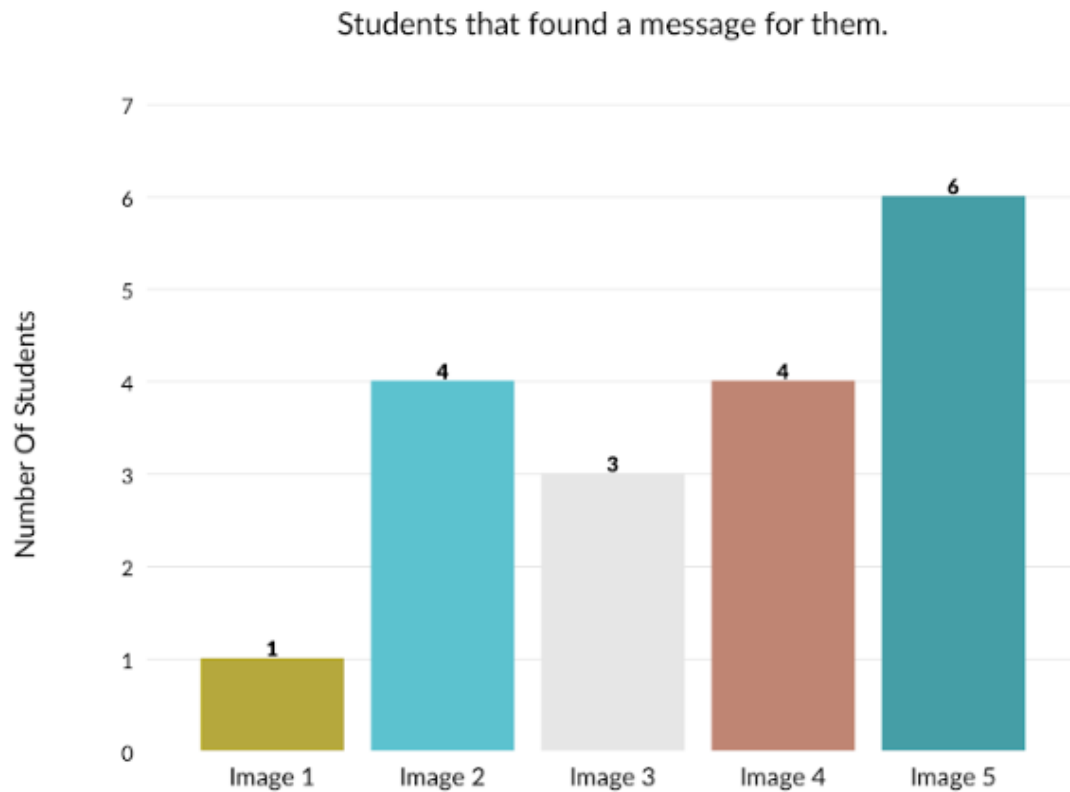
negative effect of apophenia with someone that has schizophrenia. By this, they would live with schizophrenia with minimum reaction from apophenia with treatment. They could no longer self-isolate and help out in the community while living with their patterns.

For research purposes, I used the method of conducting interviews. In the interviews, I showed images of numbers and different objects to see how the person may act or feel about the images. I interviewed seven students. The interview consisted of five pictures, including numbers, words, and images. The interviewees were asked the following questions: what do you see? How do you feel? Can you describe the image? Do you feel as if you can connect or relate to the image? Do you feel as if the image has a message for you? The results of the interviews showed how some felt as if they could relate to the images.



The relation of the images shows that some find a relationship with apophenia through emotions.

Another result was how they felt as if there was a message for them.



The graph shows how many students felt as if there was a message for them. Even though all the messages were not the same, they were able to find a connection to the image. The interviewees' results of my research supported my report by people finding something different and all creating this bias against something. The results from the interview and research, support my claim and research it also supports my thesis, and hypothesis. The results were that there are positive and negative effects from apophenia, it all depends on the trauma experience that the individual had gone through. My research does raise a proposal for my hypothesis and supports it also. It shows in depth how it all depends on the person.

Conclusion

From my research, I learned the background of apophenia. It gave me a better understanding of my topic and how it can relate to everyday life. Learning about what is the cause of apophenia shows how this has been around since the earth's civilization. It also explains how cognitive bias relates to apophenia with the survival of the fittest. People must develop an abnormal mindset and look for occurrences just to survive. With this, they develop bias that they use just to make a decision. Just by making the decision, it shows the positive and negative effects that can lead to criminal activities. Criminal activities can be positive like forensic apophenia that can be used to solve crimes. It can also be negative like the sea of data that ended up attacking a city. It all depends on the person's traumatic experiences. Apophenia could also lead to urges. Urges can lead to self-isolation and more. Learning all of this can build and help educate others on the topic. It could also lead to a person benefitting and designing a product that helps a family and a person living with apophenia. My research furthermore raises a proposal for my hypothesis and supports my claim. It goes in-depth that trauma affects a person physically and mentally. It can lead the person to change completely and live and see non-existing beings. Stating that apophenia can lead a person into positive or negative behavior.

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