

**Chapter 2**  
**WHAT WE'RE ABOUT: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SIZE**  
*Definition and Prevalence*

**OUTLINE**

*Learning Outcomes*

Common Terminology

Definition

- Different Conceptual Models
- Different Purposes of Definitions
- Complexities in Measuring Emotions and Behaviors
- Range and Variability of Normal and Deviant Behavior
- Developmental Norms and Sociocultural Expectations: Ecology
- Relationships to Other Exceptionalities
- Transience of Many Emotional and Behavioral Problems
- Disadvantages in Labeling Deviance

Importance of Definition

- Current Federal Definition
- Perspectives on Definition
- An Emerging Alternative Definition
- Examples of Disorders

Prevalence

- The Meanings of Prevalence and Incidence
- Why Should We Care about Prevalence
- Making Prevalence Estimates
- Reasonable Estimates and Percentage Served

Factors Affecting Prevalence

- Presumed Link Between Causes and Prevalence
- Reluctance to Identify EBD
- Disproportionality
- Social Policy and Economic Factors

Prevalence and Incidence of Specific Disorders

Summary

End-of-Chapter Quiz (eText)

Case for Discussion

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- 2.1 List common terms used to describe the students we are talking about in this book.
- 2.2 Explain why EBD should be considered a disability.
- 2.3 State reasons that explain why defining EBD is so difficult.
- 2.4 Explain why identifying students with EBD requires arbitrary decisions.
- 2.5 Defend the position that 2% of the student population is a conservative estimate of prevalence.
- 2.6 State the approximate percentage of the public school population that is now receiving special education in the federal category emotionally disturbed.

**TERMINOLOGY**

Adaptive behaviors

Autism

Behaviorally disordered

Developmental norms  
Developmental risk  
Deviance  
Disproportionality  
Ecological perspective  
Emotional or behavioral disorders  
Emotionally disturbed  
Externalizing behaviors  
Extinction  
False negative  
False positive  
Full inclusion movement  
Hyperactivity  
Incidence  
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act  
Internalizing behaviors  
Learning disabilities  
Maladjustment  
Mild intellectual disability  
Modeling  
Prevalence  
Projective tests  
Punishment  
Reinforcement  
Reliability  
Schizophrenia  
Social construct  
Social Maladjustment  
Validity

## CHAPTER 2: TRUE/FALSE

1. Most students with emotional or behavioral disorders are formally identified as having EBD before they enter school.
2. The identification of emotional or behavioral disorders is a human social process and as such is influenced by subjectivity.
3. The federal definition of emotional or behavioral disorders found in IDEA 2004 includes students with schizophrenia.
4. Students with emotional or behavioral disorders may be socially withdrawn.
5. Students with emotional or behavioral disorders typically demonstrate average or above average academic achievement.
6. It is unusual for a student to demonstrate more than one type of emotional or behavioral problem.
7. *Emotionally disturbed* is the label currently used in the federal regulations pertaining to special education.
8. Some disorders of conduct such as extreme aggression create developmental risk.
9. Emotional and behavioral problems are part of normal development.
10. Incidence refers to the number of new cases of X disorder in a given population.
11. The prevalence of identified emotional and behavioral disorders in the school-aged population tends to be approximately equal to that of learning disabilities, or about 5%.
12. An example of a false positive is the student who does not have an emotional or behavioral disorder, but who is identified by school personnel and then provided special education services.
13. Schools tend to respond to students with emotional and behavioral disorders with early identification and prevention.
14. Caucasian students with emotional or behavioral disorders tend to be over identified.
15. Estimates based upon the best available research suggest that most students who need services for EBD are identified by schools and receive special education services.

## CHAPTER 2: MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Emotional and behavioral disorders are usually described according to which two dimensions:
  - a. Behavioral and Physiological
  - b. Biological and Environmental
  - c. Externalizing and Internalizing
  - d. Persistent and Transitory
2. The idea that: "Teaching and learning are interactive processes in which teacher and learner frequently exchange roles" best exemplifies:
  - a. A biological perspective
  - b. A cognitive perspective
  - c. An ecological perspective

- d. An objective perspective
3. Using an ecological perspective, temper tantrums in school are best understood by examining
    - a. Chemical interactions in the environment
    - b. Genetic and environmental interactions
    - c. Social and chemical interactions
    - d. Social interactions in the environment
  4. Which disorders seem to heighten a child's level of developmental risk?
    - a. Covert antisocial behavior
    - b. Extreme aggression
    - c. Socialization to the norms of deviant peers
    - d. All of the above
    - e. None of the above
  5. The majority of emotional or behavioral disorders are defined by:
    - a. Sociocultural development
    - b. Sociocultural expectations
    - c. Universal developmental norms
    - d. Universal expectations
  6. When studying the social context of behavior, researchers examine the effects of:
    - a. Modeling
    - b. Punishment
    - c. Reinforcement
    - d. All of the above
    - e. None of the above
  7. If a student's disability status changes from "normal" to "disturbed" merely by moving across a state line, we should conclude that:
    - a. The disordered behavior is probably evidenced infrequently
    - b. The disordered behavior is less severe than originally presumed
    - c. State policies differ in how they interpret and apply the federal definition of ED
    - d. State policies often preclude the identification of internalizing behavior disorders
  8. Projective tests measure:
    - a. Achievement in other domains
    - b. Observable actions
    - c. Future achievement
    - d. Internal states
  9. An observation of adaptive behavior would be most valid if performed in a:
    - a. Classroom
    - b. Clinical setting
    - c. Doctor's office
    - d. Laboratory setting
  10. Students with and without behavior disorders differ in terms of:
    - a. Frequency of behavior
    - b. Types of behavior
    - c. Both of the above
    - d. None of the above

11. The \_\_\_\_\_ should be the most important “imperfect test” in determining if and when a student needs help in school.
  - a. Psychiatrist
  - b. Psychologist
  - c. Social Worker
  - d. Teacher
12. Bower’s definition of emotional or behavioral disorders is criticized for its lack of
  - a. Precision
  - b. An appreciation of degrees of severity
  - c. A reliance on subjective judgment
  - d. Characteristic types of behavior
13. A disorder should be defined:
  - a. Specifically enough to be of value in working with children who have this disorder as a primary disability
  - b. Broad enough to include the possibility of the coexistence of other disabilities
  - c. So that professionals within the field can communicate successfully with the use of the term
  - d. All of the above
14. \_\_\_\_\_ refers to the total number of individuals with X disorder in a given population.
  - a. False positives
  - b. False negatives
  - c. Incidence
  - d. Prevalence
15. To say that emotional and behavioral disorders may be ‘episodic’ suggests that a student’s behavior
  - a. May change drastically over the course of a year
  - b. May change drastically over the course of a month
  - c. May change drastically over the course of a week
  - d. All of the above
  - e. Only A & B
16. Current political and economic trends most likely have what influence on the identification and educational services provided to students with EBD?
  - a. about the right number of students are probably identified and served
  - b. too few students are probably identified and served
  - c. too many students are probably identified and served
  - d. none
17. According to the National Mental Health Association, the distinction between socially maladjusted and severely emotionally disturbed is
  - a. essential to reducing false positives
  - b. meaningless
  - c. interpretable only within an ecological framework
  - d. particularly important when considering students from different cultures
18. The population of students with EBD identified and served in the schools are most likely cases of:
  - a. false positives
  - b. false negatives
  - c. true positives
  - d. true negatives
19. Prevalence estimates vary for all of the following reasons:
  - a. Definition is unsettled

- b. Differences in methods of identification
  - c. Differences in social policy
  - d. All of the above
  - e. Only B and C
20. False negatives are those students who
- a. Do not have emotional or behavioral disorders but are identified
  - b. Do not have emotional or behavioral disorders and are not identified
  - c. Have emotional or behavioral disorders and are identified
  - d. Have emotional or behavioral disorders but are not identified
21. True positives are those students who
- a. Do not have emotional or behavioral disorders but are identified
  - b. Do not have emotional or behavioral disorders and are not identified
  - c. Have emotional or behavioral disorders and are identified
  - d. Have emotional or behavioral disorders but are not identified
22. Emotional or behavioral disorders tend to be identified in approximately \_\_\_\_ of the school aged population:
- a. 1%
  - b. 2%
  - c. 3%
  - d. 4%
  - e. 5%
23. The problems of children with emotional or behavioral disorders tend to be:
- a. Addressed immediately
  - b. Identified early
  - c. Neglected for as long as possible
  - d. Unnoticed by peers, parents, and teachers
  - e. A & B
  - f. C & D
24. Issues of prevalence and ethnic disproportionality clearly suggest that
- a. Some ethnic groups are overidentified as having emotional or behavioral disorders
  - b. Some ethnic groups are more underidentified than others as having emotional or behavioral disorders
  - c. All of the above
  - d. None of the above
25. The federal definition of emotional disturbance excludes students whose problem behavior
- a. impedes the development of relationships with others
  - b. is due to social maladjustment
  - c. is a result of having schizophrenia
  - d. persists over an extended period of time

### **SHORT ANSWER/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Describe the limitations of the current federal definition used to identify students with emotional or behavioral disorders. Why is it so difficult to define emotional or behavioral disorders?
2. Discuss the ways in which students with emotional or behavioral disorders are different from and similar to students without these disorders.

3. Why does the idea that "exceptionalities can be episodic" appear to be in conflict with the federal definition of "seriously emotionally disturbed"?
4. Why do you think students with emotional and behavioral disorders are placed more often in restrictive environments (i.e., separate placements, and residential facilities) than students with other disabilities (e. g., learning disabilities, intellectual disability)? Under what conditions might a separate placement actually be the "least restrictive environment" for a student?
5. What problems currently exist related to emotional or behavioral disorders and disproportionate rates of identification across ethnic groups? What should teachers and school professionals do to offset this pattern?

## **ESSAY QUESTIONS**

1. Children and youth are often handicapped because their behavior violates standards peculiar to their culture or the social institutions in their environment. What types of behavior might be judged differently as deviant or normal depending on the social contexts? Discuss what types of behaviors these might be, what social contexts might define behaviors differently, and why this occurs.
2. Why do we need an acceptable definition of emotional or behavioral disorders? Discuss why defining emotional or behavioral disorders is important and why it is such a difficult task.
3. As a teacher, how would you differentiate between a "bad kid" and a kid with an emotional or behavioral disorder?
4. Explain the importance of prevalence and incidence. How do these estimates differ and which is more relevant to the field of special education?
5. Are emotional and behavioral disorders under- or over-identified? Explain why, and describe the impact of under- or over-identification upon students.
6. Describe the way that prevalence differs among ethnic groups. Explain why this occurs and what ramifications this pattern has for students with emotional or behavioral disorders.
7. Explain the differences between false positives and false negatives. In the field of emotional and behavioral disorders, which is more desirable? Explain why.

## **CHAPTER 2: TRUE/FALSE ANSWER KEY**

1. F
2. T
3. T
4. T
5. F
6. F
7. T
8. T
9. T
10. T
11. F
12. T
13. F
14. F
15. F

## **CHAPTER 2: MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS ANSWER KEY**

1. C
2. C
3. D
4. D
5. B
6. D
7. C
8. D
9. A
10. C
11. D
12. A
13. D
14. D
15. D
16. B
17. B
18. C
19. D
20. D
21. C
22. A
23. C
24. B
25. B