**Compare and contrast biological and psychological explanations of schizophrenia.**

(24marks)

One aspect of the biological explanation of schizophrenia suggests that the illness is transmitted from parents to their children via genes. It has been found that a person has a 1% greater chance of developing the schizophrenia if they have a family relative suffering schizophrenia. Gottesman and Shields looked at the medical records of 57 schizophrenic twins. They found that if an MZ twin had schizophrenia their identical twin had a 42% chance of developing the disorder. There was also an increase for DZ twins as they discovered that if one twin had schizophrenia the likelihood of their twin developing the illness was as high as 9%. Kety et al conducted an adoption study to separate the effects of genes and environment. They looked at 5483 Danish children and found that 32% of adoptees separated from a schizophrenic biological parent developed the disorder compared to 18% of the control group. Nevertheless, some argue that neurochemicals cause schizophrenia as Snyder’s Dopamine Hypothesis states that an excess of the neurotransmitter dopamine is responsible for the symptoms. However, others suggest that the illness is a result of neuroanatomical factors as Torrey found that the ventricles of sufferers are 15% larger than those of non-sufferers. Ho et al followed their participants over several years and found that the larger the ventricles became the less likely symptoms would ease and become controllable.

One of the psychological explanations is the psychodynamic approach in which Freud blames parents for the development of the schizophrenia. A child raised by uncaring parents will employ the defence mechanism regression, psychologically reverting back to the oral stage of development. The theory also indicated that a child with cold parents has a weak Ego in which the Id is in full control causing primary narcissism, when a person is totally focused on themselves. Freud saw schizophrenics’ common behaviours, like withdrawal from society and the inability to communicate as evidence of their self centred focus. Nonetheless, in the cognitive explanation Frith’s Attention Deficit Theory indicates that schizophrenia is the result of a faulty attention system in which thoughts that would usually be filtered out as irrelevant are interpreted in the conscious awareness as more significant. Bentall also supports the cognitive approach as he suggests that schizophrenics have an attentional bias towards stimuli of a threatening and emotional nature. This can be seen in how schizophrenics perform in emotional stroop tests as they take longer naming the colour of the ink as the meaning of the word receives a disproportionate amount of attention. Nevertheless, the behavioural approach proposes that families and important role models in the lives of young, future schizophrenic sufferers don’t reinforce the appropriate behaviour towards social stimuli; therefore they notice less socially acceptable stimuli resulting in bizarre behaviour.

There are many similarities between the biological and psychological explanation of schizophrenia. Both approaches may be deemed deterministic as they provide complete reasons for the psychosis, however fail to consider free will as many would argue that there is a considerable amount of choice regarding behaviours and thoughts. Nonetheless, both explanations take into account the role of the family which is a vital aspect to consider when looking at the development of schizophrenia. Both explanations explore family influence in order to discover the origin of the disorder and how it builds a foundation over the years until the illness triggers in adolescents.

Conversely, there are many differences between the explanations. It may be suggested that the biological approach is reductionist as it focuses fully on the bodily and natural causes, ignoring any environmental aspects they may contribute to the development of schizophrenia. Yet, the psychological explanation is holistic as it provides arguments for environmental and natural causes as it mentions family influence and deficits in bodily functions. Therefore, it may be proposed that the psychological approach is more credible and is explores more than one factor that could effect the initiation of schizophrenia. Nevertheless, the biological explanation is highly scientific whereas the psychological approach has little scientific elements. This may indicate that the biological reason for the disorder is more trustworthy as our ability to observe genes, brain structure and dopamine levels provides strong supporting evidence. The psychological suggestion is difficult to trust as Freud has little scientific evidence to support his theories; therefore many people tend to avoid psychodynamic ideas. The biological explanation allows us to deal with schizophrenia as it has helped in the development of various treatments which have been proven highly successful in controlling the unbearable symptoms of schizophrenia. However, the therapies attached to the psychological approach are less effective, thus many would argue that the biological explanation is more valuable and constructive.

Although there are many similarities and differences between the two explanations, the Diathesis-stress model is a theory that looks at both biological factors and environmental factors. According to the model a combination of genetic predispositions towards diseased conditions and environmental stresses result in abnormal behaviours. The theory suggests that the mental disorders are the consequence of an interaction between nature and nurture, merging biological and psychological approaches to explain schizophrenia.

**Key**

Outline (AO1)

Evaluation (A02)

Key words

Connectives to indicate evaluation (AO2)