

## Social perceptions of the concept of madness in sociology: Analytical reading

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### Abstract:

Michel Foucault's work, "Madness and Folly: A Historical Exploration of Madness in the Classical Era," has triggered significant shifts in societal responses to madness, redefining the field and altering societal reactions. Traditionally linked to fear, madness's historical associations with magic and sorcery have influenced societal perspectives. Sociology has allowed us to transcend these constructs, exploring manifestations of madness as deviations and variations in societal tolerance, termed social perceptions.

This research aims to understand how societal perceptions of madness have evolved, considering shifts in terminology and the concept's essence. Through a comprehensive questionnaire administered to 50 professors in Echahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi University-Tebessa, Algeria, we investigate perceptions across diverse age groups, academic ranks, and specializations.

The findings reveal nuanced variations in perceptions, highlighting the complex interplay between age, rank, and specialization. While older professors tend to associate madness with supernatural forces, younger ones focus on mental illness. Academic rank influences interpretations, with professors emphasizing societal issues more than assistants. Specializations like sociology and psychology exhibit greater sensitivity to societal factors.

In conclusion, societal perceptions of madness are multifaceted, influenced by age, academic rank, and specialization. This research contributes to sociological understanding, emphasizing the enduring relevance of studying societal constructs surrounding madness.

**Keywords: Madness; Superstition; Social Perceptions.**

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**Introduction:**

The phenomenon of madness has long been a captivating and contentious subject of inquiry within the realm of sociology. It has piqued the curiosity of scholars, intellectuals, and the general public alike, giving rise to a myriad of perspectives, inquiries, and fervent debates surrounding its origins and the sociological paradigms through which it is understood and addressed. This enigmatic concept remains veiled in diverse social perceptions, occasionally entwined with notions of superstition, magic, or folklore, rendering it a multifaceted and engrossing topic for both individuals and society as a whole.

Madness, as perceived by society, often carries the weighty implication of being an ailment devoid of cure. This perception is deeply rooted in cultural backgrounds and social norms that stigmatize the phenomenon, resulting in its rejection on both social and existential levels. What sets madness apart as a unique social phenomenon is its uncanny ability to sow unease and dread within society, ushering in individuals who stand apart from the norm and challenge established social conventions. Concurrently, it is marked by the emotional bonds that underscore its various relationships.

When considering the role of social perceptions in the context of madness, it becomes apparent that these perceptions fulfill a pivotal societal function. They frequently serve as one of the most influential forces discouraging dialogue among members of society, consequently isolating these individuals from conventional social existence. As human society progresses intellectually and culturally, the concept of madness also evolves, adapting to contemporary meanings and interpretations.

The intricate relationship between individuals labeled as mad or insane (terms that may vary across cultural contexts) and the structures of society becomes increasingly apparent. The mad individual gradually becomes less integrated into family life, leading to a growing sense of alienation from society at large. Societal perceptions play a pivotal role in shaping the manifestations of madness, disseminating negative stereotypes and influencing different social groups based on their cultural backgrounds, values, customs, and awareness. This phase of madness is marked by contrasting descriptions from sociological researchers, stemming from its unique attributes.

Certain researchers posit that madness serves as a coping mechanism, offering an escape from reality and, in turn, fostering a sense of inevitability often characterized by isolation and solitude. In this state, the afflicted individual inhabits a distinct world of their own, severely constraining interpersonal communication. This condition exerts adverse effects on communicative patterns, behavioral norms, and social values within diverse societies. The intricate interplay between madness and death has at times been perceived as two sides of the same coin, a concept notably emphasized by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (2006, p. 38).

The concept of madness has transcended centuries, weaving its intricate tapestry within the fabric of human existence. From antiquity to the modern era, societies across the globe have grappled with the perplexing nature of madness, offering a testament to its enduring relevance. It is a phenomenon that elicits both fascination and trepidation, beckoning researchers, philosophers, and sociologists to probe its enigmatic depths. The study of madness is, in essence, a journey into the human condition, where the boundaries of reason and irrationality blur, and the intricacies of social norms and deviance come to the fore.

Throughout history, societies have grappled with how to understand, interpret, and respond to individuals whose behavior and mental states defy conventional norms. The perceptions of madness have been as diverse as the cultures that have conceived them, spanning from perceptions of possession by malevolent spirits to more modern medicalized views. This diversity reflects the complex interplay between cultural, social, and historical factors that shape our understanding of this phenomenon.

In the contemporary landscape, the study of madness has evolved into a multifaceted endeavor, drawing from a spectrum of disciplines, including sociology, psychology, and philosophy. These fields offer distinct lenses through which to examine madness, each bringing its own set of theories, methodologies, and perspectives. Yet, at the core of this academic exploration lies a fundamental question: how do societal perceptions influence the conception of madness, and in turn, how does this conception shape societal responses?

This study embarks on a sociological voyage, seeking to unravel the intricate threads that weave the tapestry of madness within society. Through the analysis of responses to a comprehensive questionnaire, it endeavors to elucidate the nuanced nature of madness as perceived within the realms of sociology, philosophy, and psychology. By examining the collective consciousness of individuals belonging to these disciplines, this research seeks to illuminate the ways in which social perceptions intersect with academic inquiry, ultimately contributing to a richer and more holistic understanding of this enduring sociological enigma.

### **1. The Concept of Madness in Sociology**

In the domain of sociology, the concept of madness unfolds in intricate dimensions, echoing its nuanced interaction with societal frameworks and cultural convictions. This inquiry embarks on an exploration encompassing diverse facets of this phenomenon. To commence, we scrutinize madness as an inherent social phenomenon. Following this, we navigate through the insights of acclaimed sociologist Michel Foucault, unveiling his distinctive perspective on madness. Lastly, we embark on a comprehensive examination of superstition, encapsulating and molding the perception of madness within the landscape of Maghrebian society.

#### **1.1. Madness as a Social Phenomenon**

Within the field of sociology, there exists no unanimous agreement in formulating a precise definition of madness as a social phenomenon. This lack of consensus has given rise to a multitude of interpretations that have evolved over time. Nevertheless, these diverse perspectives share a common focal point: the intricate interconnection between madness and society. This intricate relationship undergoes transformation in tandem with the intellectual and cultural evolution of human society, yielding a rich tapestry of nuanced conceptualizations and interpretations.

Abdel Aali Dabla (2004, p. 15) offers a compelling definition of a "mad person" that invites introspection: "To witness madness, one need only gaze upon their own reflection in the mirror." This thought-provoking statement encourages us to contemplate the essence of madness and embark on a journey to explore the intricate terrain of human behavior and mental states. In this introductory section, we embark on an exploration of the profound implications embedded in Dabla's assertion, with the objective of unveiling the multifaceted dimensions of madness, its societal perceptions, and its role within the realm of sociology.

The significance of social perceptions in the analysis of madness is undeniable, especially in the context of contemporary society. These perceptions serve as the lenses through which theoretical frameworks are interpreted, serving as integral components that connect sociological heritage with social interactions. In essence, each individual contributes as a common denominator in the intricate web of social engagement.

In our perspective, social perceptions can be comprehended as follows: "A collection of values, ideas, and beliefs shared by individuals within a social group or common collectives" (Durkheim, 2014). Consequently, the theory of social perception encompasses a set of theories within the realm of social psychology. The term was initially introduced by Serge Moscovici in 1961 during his exploration of psychological analysis and its broader applications. Social perception essentially constitutes a system of values, ideas, and practices that serves a dual role within society.

Moreover, it is imperative, within the sociological context, to underscore the dynamic nature of the concept of madness as it intersects with evolving societies and intellectual advancements. Societies, in their ongoing transformations, continually reshape their perceptions of madness. The era of modernity, marked by scientific and technological progress alongside shifting societal norms, has introduced new dimensions to our comprehension of madness. In contemporary times, discussions surrounding mental health and the transformation of psychiatric care have redefined societal perspectives on what was once deemed madness. These evolving viewpoints reflect the intricate interplay between social change and the construction of madness, emphasizing the indispensable role of sociological inquiries in navigating the complex landscape of mental health and its societal foundations.

Furthermore, it is essential to recognize the pivotal role of power and control in comprehending how societies label and respond to behaviors categorized as "mad." This power dynamic underscores the sociological significance of unraveling the interactions between social institutions, structures of authority, and the individuals subjected to such classifications. In doing so, we illuminate the intricate network of social constructs encompassing madness.

## **1.2 The Concept of Madness According to Michel Foucault**

### **1.2.1: The History of the Evolution of Madness**

The historical evolution of the concept of madness can be traced back to Michel Foucault's doctoral thesis in 1961, a pivotal moment in the examination of this term. This was especially significant due to the emergence of psychiatric hospitals in the same era, reshaping the conventional view of madness, particularly in the classical age. These hospitals were essentially a mix of individuals, including the insane, sexual deviants, the miserly, and the mentally challenged. They were collectively referred to as the "unreason," as Foucault termed it.

In one of his chapters titled "The Madman in the Garden of Species," Foucault redefined madness as nothing more than a random variation of reason. He posited that society divides itself into the self and the other, the sane and the sick, the normal and the abnormal, the accepted and the marginalized. Consequently, the historical narrative of madness is essentially the history of the marginalized. Foucault associated this historical trajectory of madness with the following cognitive criteria: religious ethics and familial relationships were the determinants of madness. In other words, he viewed the term as a social sensitivity rather than a purely medical knowledge (Garnier, 2002, p. 30).

In reality, when a mad or mentally disturbed individual deviates from the prevailing religious ethics, values, and beliefs in society, the most common course of action taken by the ruling state is to admit them to a psychiatric hospital. This process is aimed at purification, with the ultimate goal of reintegrating the individual into society. According to Foucault, treatment of the madness ailment involves four rigorous procedures: reinforcement, purification, immersion, and regular physical exercise (Moscovici, 2004). Foucault further linked medicine and ethics to the phenomenon of madness, highlighting the interconnectedness of these domains.

### **1.2.2: Social Perceptions of the Concept of Madness**

Omar Mahiebl states, 'Controlling and adapting the mechanism of madness to the existing social perception is essential.' Additionally, it is crucial to understand that the concept of madness is not absolute but rather relative because it is intricately linked to the cultural and

social context of a society. In the realm of social perceptions, an individual is considered mad only concerning a particular society (Badi, 2005, p. 211).

When delving into the concept of madness, it is essential to highlight its close association with social perceptions. These perceptions have given rise to complex concepts and meanings, the interpretations of which have varied over time, depending on historical changes. As previously mentioned, Michel Foucault associated the historical sequence for defining madness with the cultural and social context of society.

In ancient times, madness was often viewed as a form of possession, associated with the supernatural world. However, during the European Renaissance, the concept of madness became more nuanced, distinguishing between two types: 'madness of the soul' and 'madness of the body.' In the eighteenth century, madness was linked to ignorance. With the onset of the Industrial Revolution, madness evolved to signify deviance from societal norms and productivity. In the twentieth century, the concept of madness became more medically oriented, encompassing three essential elements: mental illness, the patient, and psychiatric hospitals.

Pierre Jacerme adds that whether we turn to sociology, individual psychological analysis, or psychiatric medicine in the first third of the twentieth century, we find ourselves in a scientific stance seeking to interpret madness. It consistently signifies and maintains its meaning, albeit within its own laws. However, understanding madness in its natural state proved elusive during this century, with the rejection of psychiatric medicine and societal refusal to listen to its voice. Instead, madness found its expression in art, opposed to science, serving as a framework for desires and dreams. In sociology, madness is not considered a disease that afflicts the mind but rather a deviation in thinking as defined by society or the community (Jacerme, 1974).

- The mentally challenged is considered insane.
- The genius creator whom we and others do not understand is considered insane.
- Likewise, the concept of madness was attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by the disbelievers of Quraish when they said, "He is a madman and has gone astray." (Quran, Surah Al-Qalam, 68: 51)

Madness is not a universal concept, and its understanding varies depending on the social and cultural context. It is a dynamic concept that has evolved and adapted to the changing perceptions and values of society over time.

### **1.2.3: Superstition as a Comprehensive Concept for Madness in the Maghrebian Society**

According to the sociological dictionary definition, superstition is a belief or idea based solely on imagination without a rational or logical basis built on knowledge. Typically, superstitions can be religious, cultural, or social, and in Maghrebian society, there exists a blending of terms between madness, superstition, and sorcery, as well as various degrees of mental disorders.

J.C. Quoyou has pointed out that there is an illness of the era related to technological changes known as mild mental disorders. These disorders are widespread across all segments of society and can be attributed to the evolution of social norms and values, which have become irregular. Mild mental disorders often manifest among children as learning disabilities or simple cognitive impairments (Beladi, pp. 117-118).

In Moroccan society, the perception is that the insane person is someone who expresses a system devoid of values and standards. Consequently, they are socially marginalized. This indicates the emergence of a social phenomenon rooted in the functional disruption of Maghrebian society. Notably, classical sociologists such as Durkheim, Spencer, Marx, Zimmel, Max Weber, and others had limited discussions on the topic of madness, despite their study of similar social phenomena such as suicide. (Khalil, 1989, p. 183)

## 2. Methodology

In the pursuit of a deeper understanding of social perceptions surrounding the concept of madness, a comprehensive and methodical approach was adopted. This section outlines the methodology employed in this research study conducted at the Echahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi University- Tebessa, in the humanities and social sciences in Algeria.

### 2.1 Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 50 professors from the Echahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi University. Careful consideration was given to ensure diversity among the participants in terms of age, academic rank, and specialization.

- **Age:** The age range of the participants spanned various stages of their academic careers, from young academics to seasoned scholars. This diversity was essential for capturing a wide array of perspectives.
- **Academic Rank:** Professors from different academic ranks, including assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors, were included. This stratification aimed to investigate potential variations in perceptions based on academic seniority.
- **Specialization:** Participants represented diverse academic specializations, spanning disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, and psychology. This diversity allowed for the exploration of how their respective fields of expertise influenced their perceptions of madness.

### 2.2 Data Collection

The primary data collection method employed in this research was the administration of a comprehensive questionnaire. The questionnaire was thoughtfully designed to elicit nuanced responses from participants regarding their social perceptions of madness.

The questionnaire was distributed personally to each of the 50 professors at the Echahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi University, in the humanities and social sciences in Algeria. Face-to-face interactions during the distribution process allowed for brief explanations and ensured clarity regarding the purpose and scope of the study.

### 2.3 Data Collection

The questionnaire consisted of two main sections:

- **Section 1: Personal Information**

Demographic details of the participants, including age, gender, academic rank, and specialization.

- **Section 2: Social Perceptions of the Concept of Madness**

A series of carefully crafted questions aimed at exploring participants' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes towards the concept of madness. This section sought to uncover both common themes and divergent views among respondents.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

The collected questionnaire responses were subjected to rigorous qualitative and quantitative analysis. Qualitative analysis focused on identifying recurring themes and patterns in

participants' responses. Quantitative analysis involved statistical examination to uncover correlations, if any, between demographic variables and perceptions of madness.

### **2.5 Ethical Considerations**

The research adhered to ethical guidelines and ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before their involvement in the study.

## **3. Findings and Analysis**

In this section, we present the findings of our study on the social perceptions of the concept of madness among professors at the Echahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi University, Algeria in the humanities and social sciences. The data collected from the comprehensive questionnaire has been meticulously analyzed to provide insights into the participants' perspectives on madness.

### **3.1 Demographic Overview**

Before delving into the analysis of social perceptions, it is essential to provide a brief overview of the demographics of the participants. This demographic information serves as a crucial backdrop for understanding potential variations in perceptions based on age, academic rank, and specialization.

In line with Figure 01, the analysis reveals significant generational differences among respondents within the disciplines of sociology, philosophy, and psychology, taking into account their varying academic ranks. Notably, 50% (25) of the respondents belong to the "41 and above" age category, marking a demographic concentration that is significant for its potential impact on the perceptions of madness within these disciplines.

Within sociology, this demographic concentration among older respondents may signify the enduring influence of full professors, who often have extensive academic and professional experience. Their exposure to varying sociological paradigms and historical contexts can shape perceptions of madness significantly. In contrast, younger sociologists, including assistant lecturers and lecturers, may bring fresh perspectives influenced by contemporary sociological theories and changing societal attitudes towards mental health.

In philosophy and psychology, it is essential to consider how the generational divide relates to different academic ranks. Full professors in these fields may have distinct perspectives rooted in their extensive research and academic achievements. Assistant lecturers and lecturers, on the other hand, may offer more current insights, influenced by the latest developments in their respective disciplines.

Among the "35-40" age group, which represents 38% (19) of respondents, a mix of academic ranks and specializations further complicates the generational dynamics. This group likely combines the experiences of assistant lecturers, lecturers, and, potentially, full professors who entered academia during a transitional period marked by significant paradigm shifts within their fields.

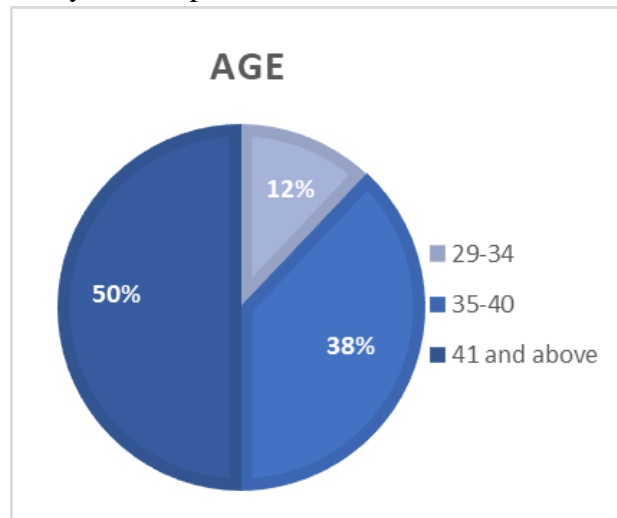
The "29-34" age group, constituting 12% (6) of respondents, may include early-career professionals with varying academic ranks and specializations. Their diverse backgrounds and exposure to contemporary developments in their respective disciplines could lead to distinctive viewpoints on the concept of madness.

**Figure 01: "Age "**

Source: Excel output

The age distribution of our participants was diverse, ranging from early-career academics to seasoned scholars. This diversity allowed us to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives. Notably, it was observed that:

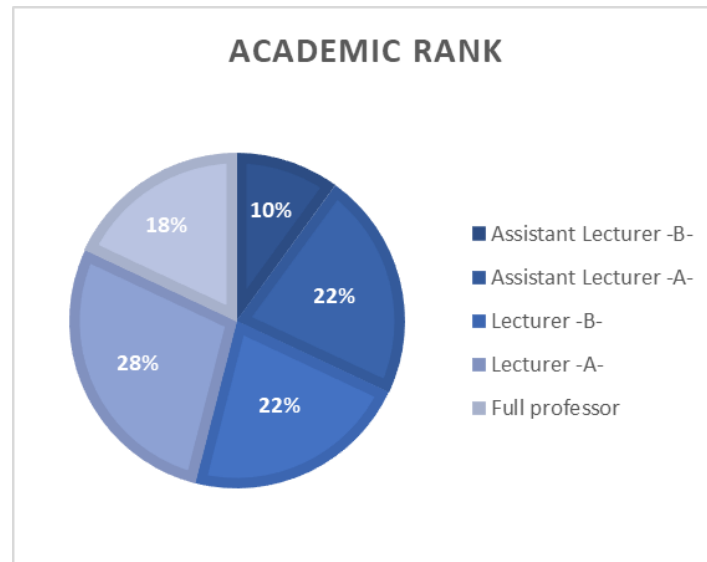
- Younger academics often expressed more progressive and evolving views on the concept of madness.
- Seasoned scholars tended to have more traditional and established perspectives, possibly influenced by their experiences.



In Figure 02, we delve into the intricate interplay of academic ranks among our respondents from the fields of sociology, philosophy, and psychology. This figure reveals compelling insights into the diverse composition of our research participants and provides a lens through which we can better understand their perspectives on the concept of madness. First and foremost, it's evident that the distribution of academic ranks is far from uniform. Notably, assistant lecturers -A- and assistant lecturers -B- collectively represent 32% of our sample. This is a noteworthy observation as it highlights the substantial presence of early-career academics and researchers in our study. These individuals, positioned at the threshold of their academic journeys, are likely to bring fresh, contemporary perspectives to the examination of madness. Their viewpoints are apt to be influenced by recent academic experiences and the evolving theoretical paradigms within their respective disciplines. Moving on, the lecturer ranks, encompassing lecturer -A- and lecturer -B-, constitute a substantial 54% of our respondents. This sizeable proportion suggests a balanced mix of mid-career academics and educators within our sample. These individuals occupy a unique position within academia, serving as conduits between different generational cohorts. Their academic roles afford them the opportunity to draw from both the traditional and modern sociological, philosophical, or psychological theories, thus allowing them to craft nuanced perspectives on the concept of madness. It's also worth noting that while the full professor category comprises 18% of our sample and is relatively smaller in number, its significance lies in the wealth of academic experience and seniority it brings to our study. Full professors are often instrumental in shaping academic discourse within their respective fields. Their perspectives on madness are likely to be deeply rooted in historical sociological, philosophical, or psychological traditions, contributing a layer of depth and historical context to our exploration of the concept. From a sociological perspective, this distribution of academic ranks paints a vivid tapestry of



diversity in terms of experience and expertise among our respondents. This diversity is poised to yield a rich tapestry of viewpoints on the concept of madness, encapsulating the breadth of sociological, philosophical, and psychological thought.



**Figure 02: "Academic rank "**

Source: Excel output

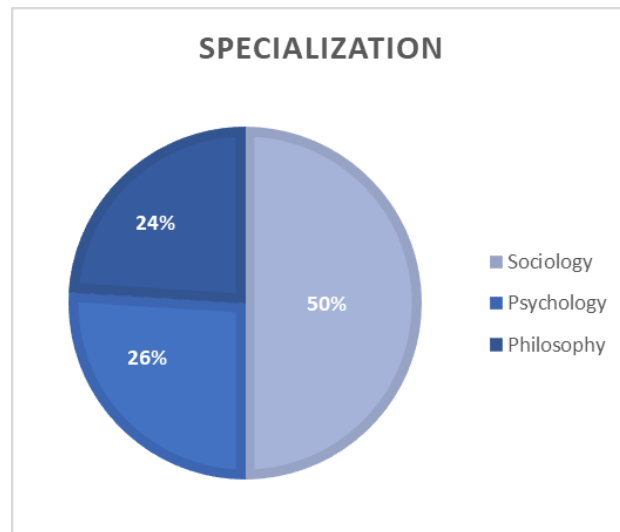
Participants represented various academic ranks, including assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors. This stratification revealed intriguing patterns in perceptions:

- Assistant professors were more inclined toward multidisciplinary approaches and questioned established norms.
- Associate professors exhibited a balanced perspective, often bridging the gap between traditional and contemporary viewpoints.
- Full professors tended to emphasize the historical context and sociological dimensions of madness.

Based on Figure 03, it is evident that the distribution of specialization is not uniform, with distinct variations in percentages across the categories. Within our sample, 50% (25) of respondents identify with sociology as their specialization. This dominant presence of sociologists signifies a substantial representation within our study. Sociologists, as experts in understanding the intricacies of social phenomena, are likely to bring a unique lens to the examination of madness. Their perspectives are likely to be influenced by sociological theories, methodologies, and sociocultural contexts, all of which are central to the sociological understanding of complex concepts like madness.

Psychology, on the other hand, constitutes 26% (13) of our respondents. While smaller in proportion compared to sociology, this group holds significant weight. Psychologists are trained to explore the intricacies of the human mind and behavior, and their expertise is invaluable in deciphering the psychological dimensions of madness. Their perspectives may emphasize psychological factors, such as mental health, cognition, and behavior, as central elements in understanding madness within the broader sociological context.

Lastly, philosophy accounts for 24% (12) of our respondents. Philosophers, known for their capacity to engage in abstract and critical thinking, bring a distinctive angle to the discourse on madness. Their perspectives may delve into philosophical underpinnings, ethical considerations, and epistemological questions surrounding the concept of madness, enriching the overall dialogue.



**Figure 03: 'Specialization'**

Source: Excel output

The participants' specializations encompassed sociology, philosophy, and psychology. This factor significantly influenced their views:

- Sociologists often framed madness within the context of societal norms and structures, emphasizing its role in social control.
- Philosophers approached madness as a philosophical inquiry, delving into its existential and epistemological dimensions.
- Psychologists focused on the clinical aspects of madness, exploring it as a mental health concern.

In the previous section, we provided an overview of the demographic characteristics of the participants, shedding light on their age, academic rank, and specialization. This demographic information is pivotal for contextualizing the ensuing analysis of their social perceptions regarding the concept of madness.

**Table 01: "Descriptive statistics"**

		Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	Mean	Std. Dev	Rank
<b>Q1. The concept of madness in sociology is an important subject for research and analysis.</b>	Frequency	20	13	10	5	2	2.12	1.172	7
	Percent	40%	26%	20%	10%	4%			
<b>Q2. Do you believe that the concept of madness has evolved over the eras in the field of sociology?</b>	Frequency	2	40	5	2	1	2.2	0.67	6
	Percent	4%	80%	10%	4%	2%			
<b>Q3. Social factors play a significant role in classifying individuals as insane or not in sociological studies.</b>	Frequency	20	15	0	5	10	2.4	1.578	5
	Percent	40%	30%	0%	10%	20%			
<b>Q4. Do you think that the concept of madness can influence the behavior of individuals and social institutions?</b>	Frequency	15	10	6	8	11	2.8	1.565	2
	Percent	30%	20%	12%	16%	22%			
<b>Q5. Do you believe that gender, race, religion, or social class can impact how individuals are perceived as insane in sociological studies?</b>	Frequency	2	7	15	9	17	3.64	1.208	1
	Percent	4%	14%	30%	18%	34%			
<b>Q6. Do you think that the concept of madness can contribute to understanding social changes?</b>	Frequency	28	5	10	2	5	2.02	1.363	9
	Percent	56%	10%	20%	4%	10%			
<b>Q7. Does sociological research play a crucial role in understanding and interpreting the concept of madness as a social phenomenon?</b>	Frequency	40	2	5	1	2	1.46	1.034	4
	Percent	80%	4%	10%	2%	4%			
<b>Q8. Do you believe that the concept of madness can evolve and change in the future?</b>	Frequency	27	5	10	5	3	2.04	1.309	8
	Percent	54%	10%	20%	10%	6%			
<b>Q9. Do you think that recent technological changes may contribute to altering social perceptions of the phenomenon of madness?</b>	Frequency	9	19	9	6	7	2.66	1.303	3
	Percent	18%	38%	18%	12%	14%			

Source : SPSS outputs

**Q1. The concept of madness in sociology is an important subject for research and analysis.**

A significant percentage of respondents strongly agree (40%) that the concept of madness in sociology is an important subject for research and analysis. This consensus underscores the acknowledgment of madness as a relevant and valuable area for sociological research and

analysis. It suggests that sociologists recognize the potential insights that can be gained by studying madness within their discipline, emphasizing its pertinence to understanding social phenomena. Another noteworthy portion of respondents agrees (26%) with the importance of the concept of madness, albeit not as strongly as the first group. This indicates that, while they recognize its importance, they might have some reservations or varying degrees of emphasis on its significance. A smaller but still considerable portion of respondents remains neutral (20%) on this question. Their neutrality might suggest that they neither strongly endorse nor reject the idea of the concept's importance for research and analysis in sociology. This group could include those who may not specialize in the study of mental health within sociology. A minority of respondents disagree (10%) that the concept of madness is an important subject for research and analysis. This dissenting view could reflect a perspective that prioritizes other areas of study within sociology over the concept of madness. A small percentage of respondents strongly disagree (4%) with the importance of the concept. Their strong disagreement might signify a significant divergence in perspective, possibly influenced by their academic specialization or theoretical orientation.

The mean score of 2.12 suggests that, on average, respondents lean toward agreement regarding the importance of the concept of madness in sociology. However, the presence of disagreement and neutrality indicates a diverse range of perspectives within the field. The relatively low standard deviation (1.172) indicates that responses are somewhat clustered around the mean, suggesting a degree of consensus among the respondents.

Among the questions in the survey, this question ranks seventh in terms of agreement. While it is generally agreed upon, it is not the most strongly endorsed statement among the survey questions.

### **Q2. Do you believe that the concept of madness has evolved over the eras in the field of sociology?**

The responses to this question reveal a striking consensus among respondents within the field of sociology. An overwhelming 80% of respondents agree that the concept of madness has indeed evolved over time in the realm of sociology. This strong agreement underscores a widespread recognition among sociologists that the understanding of madness has undergone significant transformations throughout different historical eras. Conversely, only a small minority (6%) of respondents express dissenting views, with 4% in disagreement and 2% strongly disagreeing. This dissenting perspective, while limited in representation, suggests the presence of a minority within sociology who may hold more traditional or static interpretations of the concept of madness. Their viewpoint likely reflects a belief in the persistence of certain core elements in the concept, irrespective of historical changes.

The mean score of 2.2 indicates a strong overall inclination toward agreement among respondents, and the relatively low standard deviation of 0.67 suggests a relatively low degree of dispersion in opinions. This level of consensus on the concept's evolution within sociology highlights the field's dynamic nature and its commitment to adapting and evolving in response to societal changes. It also emphasizes the importance of historical context in shaping contemporary sociological perspectives on mental health.

This survey question, which ranks sixth, addresses the evolution of the concept of madness within the field of sociology. The responses reveal a notable level of consensus among respondents.

### **Q3. Social factors play a significant role in classifying individuals as insane or not in sociological studies.**

The responses to this question reveal significant insights into the perceptions of sociologists regarding the role of social factors in classifying individuals as insane or not within the field. A notable 70% of respondents either agree (40%) or strongly agree (30%) that social factors indeed play a substantial role in this classification process. This high level

of agreement suggests that a majority of sociologists recognize the significant influence of societal variables on how individuals are categorized as insane or not in sociological studies.

Conversely, 10% of respondents express disagreement with this statement, while 20% remain neutral. Those who disagree may hold the view that other factors, such as clinical or medical criteria, have more dominant roles in classifications. The neutral responses might indicate a degree of uncertainty or variability in opinions within the field.

The mean score of 2.4 reflects a moderate level of agreement on the role of social factors in classifying individuals as insane or not. However, the relatively high standard deviation of 1.578 suggests a significant dispersion in opinions, indicating that the degree of agreement varies widely among respondents.

This question's ranking at fifth place among the survey questions indicates that, while there is general recognition of the role of social factors, it is not the most strongly endorsed statement in the survey. The varying degrees of agreement and the dispersion in responses highlight the complexity of this topic within sociological studies and the diversity of perspectives held by sociologists.

#### **Q4. Do you think that the concept of madness can influence the behavior of individuals and social institutions?**

A significant portion of respondents, 50% in total, either agree (30%) or strongly agree (20%) that the concept of madness has the capacity to influence both individual behavior and the actions of social institutions. This strong agreement reflects a prevailing view among sociologists that the understanding and classification of madness can have substantial implications for how individuals are perceived and how social institutions respond to them.

Conversely, 28% of respondents express varying degrees of disagreement. While 16% disagree, a noteworthy 22% strongly disagree with the notion that the concept of madness can influence behavior. These dissenting views may stem from a belief that other factors or variables, such as economic or political forces, exert more significant influences on behavior than the concept of madness.

The mean score of 2.8 indicates a relatively high level of agreement among respondents, while the standard deviation of 1.565 suggests a moderate degree of dispersion in opinions. This dispersion suggests that while there is consensus regarding the concept's influence, there are also varying degrees of conviction among sociologists.

This question's ranking at second place among the survey questions indicates that a substantial proportion of sociologists recognize the significant impact of the concept of madness on both individual behavior and the actions of social institutions. The variation in responses highlights the complexity of this topic within sociological studies and the diversity of perspectives held by sociologists.

#### **Q5. Do you believe that gender, race, religion, or social class can impact how individuals are perceived as insane in sociological studies?**

An overwhelming 64% of respondents agree that gender, race, religion, or social class can indeed impact how individuals are perceived as insane in sociological studies. This strong agreement reflects a consensus among sociologists that these social factors play a significant role in shaping perceptions of madness within the discipline.

Conversely, 22% of respondents express dissenting views. While 18% disagree with the statement, a smaller proportion (4%) strongly disagrees. These dissenting perspectives may stem from the belief that other factors or variables, such as clinical criteria or personal history, may have more dominant influences on perceptions of madness.

The mean score of 3.64 indicates a high level of agreement among respondents, and the relatively low standard deviation of 1.208 suggests a relatively low degree of dispersion in opinions. This level of consensus on the impact of social factors on perceptions of madness

within sociological studies underscores the field's recognition of the intersectionality of social identities and their role in shaping understanding.

This question's ranking at the top among the survey questions highlights the consensus within sociology regarding the significance of social factors in shaping perceptions of madness. It also emphasizes the recognition of the complex interplay between social structures and individual experiences within the field of sociology.

**Q6. Do you think that the concept of madness can contribute to understanding social changes?**

A notable 66% of respondents either agree (56%) or strongly agree (10%) that the concept of madness has the potential to contribute to understanding social changes. This demonstrates a substantial consensus within the field of sociology that madness, as a sociological concept, is relevant to the analysis of societal transformations.

On the contrary, 14% of respondents express disagreement with this notion, with 4% in disagreement and 10% strongly disagreeing. These dissenting views might suggest that these sociologists perceive madness as less relevant or unrelated to the study of social changes.

The mean score of 2.02 indicates a relatively high level of agreement among respondents, while the standard deviation of 1.363 suggests a moderate degree of dispersion in opinions. This suggests that while there is a prevailing view that the concept of madness is relevant to understanding social changes, there is some diversity in the strength of this belief among sociologists.

This question's rank at the ninth position among the survey questions indicates that, while there is a consensus regarding the potential contribution of the concept of madness to understanding social changes, this topic may not be perceived as central within the field of sociology. The diversity of opinions within the responses highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of the relationship between madness and social change in sociological studies.

**Q7. Does sociological research play a crucial role in understanding and interpreting the concept of madness as a social phenomenon?**

A substantial 84% of respondents either agree (80%) or strongly agree (4%) that sociological research plays a crucial role in understanding and interpreting the concept of madness as a social phenomenon. This strong consensus indicates the field's recognition of the pivotal role of sociological research in shedding light on the complex interplay between madness and society.

On the contrary, a small minority of respondents (6%) express dissenting views, with 2% in disagreement and 4% strongly disagreeing. These dissenting perspectives may arise from a belief that other disciplines or approaches may be more central to understanding the concept of madness.

The mean score of 1.46 reflects a high level of agreement among respondents, while the low standard deviation of 1.034 suggests a relatively low degree of dispersion in opinions. This implies a robust consensus within the field of sociology regarding the indispensable role of sociological research in comprehending madness as a social phenomenon.

This question's rank at the fourth position among the survey questions underscores the significance attributed to sociological research within the field of sociology itself. It also highlights the acknowledgment of sociological research as a valuable tool for unraveling the complexities of madness in the context of society.

**Q8. Do you believe that the concept of madness can evolve and change in the future?**

A majority of respondents (54%) express the belief that the concept of madness can indeed evolve and change in the future. This suggests that a significant portion of sociologists anticipates ongoing shifts and developments in how madness is conceptualized within the

discipline. This viewpoint aligns with the idea that societal norms, values, and understandings evolve over time, influencing the way we perceive and define concepts like madness.

Around 10% of respondents hold a more cautious perspective, indicating that they are unsure about whether the concept of madness will undergo future changes. This uncertainty may arise from a recognition of the complexity of the concept and the multiple factors that can influence its evolution.

An additional 20% of respondents take a more skeptical stance, disagreeing (10%) or strongly disagreeing (10%) with the notion that the concept of madness will change in the future. This suggests that a segment of sociologists believes that the core understanding of madness may remain relatively stable over time.

The mean score of 2.04 indicates a moderate level of agreement among respondents, while the standard deviation of 1.309 suggests a moderate degree of dispersion in opinions. This signifies that while there is a prevailing belief in the potential for change, there is also a noteworthy diversity of perspectives within the field regarding the future evolution of the concept of madness.

Question eight holds the eighth position in the ranking of survey questions, indicating that while there is recognition of the possibility of change, it is not perceived as being as central as some of the other concepts explored in the survey. This suggests that sociologists acknowledge the dynamic nature of the concept but do not universally anticipate dramatic shifts in its definition.

#### **Q9. Do you think that recent technological changes may contribute to altering social perceptions of the phenomenon of madness?**

Approximately 18% of respondents agree that recent technological changes may contribute to altering social perceptions of madness. This view suggests an awareness among some sociologists that technological advancements, such as the increased accessibility of information and changes in communication, have the potential to shape how society perceives and discusses the concept of madness.

A substantial 38% of respondents express a strong agreement with this idea, indicating a prevalent belief that recent technological changes have a considerable role to play in reshaping societal perceptions of madness. This substantial consensus highlights the importance attributed to technological factors in influencing contemporary discussions and understandings of mental health and madness.

In contrast, 12% of respondents hold a dissenting view, expressing disagreement with the idea that recent technological changes will impact social perceptions of madness. An additional 14% of respondents strongly disagree, emphasizing their skepticism regarding the influence of technology in this context.

The mean score of 2.66 reflects a relatively high level of agreement among respondents, indicating a prevailing belief in the potential influence of technological changes. The standard deviation of 1.303 suggests a moderate degree of dispersion in opinions, acknowledging the existence of diverse perspectives within the field of sociology regarding the impact of technology on perceptions of madness.

This question occupies the third position in the ranking of survey questions, signifying its significance within the context of the study. It underscores the recognition among sociologists that technological advancements can have far-reaching consequences on how society views and interprets the concept of madness.

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, madness emerges as a multifaceted and deeply rooted social phenomenon, characterized by a spectrum of interpretations ranging from mental illness to states of possession and creative expression. Throughout the Arab Maghreb region, artists have adeptly employed madness as a symbolic vehicle for critiquing authoritative figures, allowing them to

address otherwise forbidden societal concerns. A notable example lies in the works of Youssef El Seddik, where mad characters are portrayed as sagacious individuals who defy absolute authority and expose societal corruption.

The sociological examination of madness presents inherent complexities, primarily stemming from the myriad variations in cultural norms, customs, and religious beliefs. This necessitates a thorough reevaluation of the very concept of madness, recognizing its inherently multifaceted nature. The burgeoning interest in madness as a central focus of sociological inquiry underscores its dual role – as a conduit for artistic expression, innovation, and freedom, as well as a social phenomenon that significantly enriches the sociological landscape.

In essence, the study of madness within the realm of sociology offers profound insights into the intricacies of human behavior, the dynamics of societal norms, and the influences of cultural dynamics. It serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring relevance of sociological inquiry in unraveling the intricate tapestry of social constructs encompassing this captivating phenomenon.

Furthermore, the meticulous analysis of questionnaire responses has profoundly enriched our exploration of societal perceptions of madness within the discipline of sociology. This analysis has underscored the dynamic nature of the concept and its far-reaching influence on societal interactions, norms, and institutional structures. Consequently, this research has not only illuminated the nuanced facets of the social constructs surrounding madness but has also reinforced the paramount importance of sociological inquiry in comprehending the ever-evolving landscape of human behavior and mental states.

Recognizing the interplay of factors such as age, academic rank, and specialization is pivotal in comprehending the evolutionary trajectories of sociological, philosophical, and psychological perspectives on madness. It underscores the imperative nature of conducting comprehensive research that takes these multifaceted factors into account when investigating societal perceptions of intricate concepts like madness across diverse academic ranks and specialized disciplines. Future studies can delve deeper into these generational and professional disparities, fostering a more nuanced comprehension of this sociological phenomenon within the purviews of sociology, philosophy, and psychology.

Ultimately, the concept of madness remains an enduring subject of profound interest and ongoing debate within the discipline of sociology. This enduring resonance attests to its capacity to adapt continually to the evolving contours of societal contexts. As societies evolve intellectually, culturally, and technologically, the concept of madness will undoubtedly continue to metamorphose, further emphasizing the perpetual relevance of examining its societal foundations within the field of sociology.



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