

Psychodynamic theory and psychodynamic therapy literature review sample

[Psychology](#), [Psychotherapy](#)



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Introduction

Psychology pertains to the study of human behavior, reactions, personalities, or even as specific and complicated as how the brain works and functions. It can be considered both as a form of academic discipline and a branch of applied science that deals with the study of different brain functions that are related to mental processes and individual human behaviors. Studying psychology, unlike other academic disciplines, often involves unique processes such as the establishment of generally accepted principles and theories, and verifying the validity of such through research that more often than not involves verification using individual and or group cases. Just like most other forms of academic disciplines and applied science, the field of psychology's fundamental goal is to contribute to the benefit of society, using its own means . A professional who gets paid to work in this field may be called a psychologist, or if he is given the authority to prescribe medications, treatments, and managements to patients with mental and or behavioral illnesses, psychiatrist. Cognitive, behavioral, and social scientists may also be considered as professionals working in the field of psychology

since the backbone of their job also involve relevant psychological theories and principles. The objective of this paper is to discuss a theory in the field of psychology. The theory chosen for this paper is the Psychodynamic Theory used in Psychodynamic Psychotherapy as popularized by one of the people with the largest and most significant contributions in the field of psychology, Sigmund Freud.

Literature Review

The field of psychology has, in fact, existed for so many years that a lot of people who dedicated most parts of the professional life in the field have already discovered numerous ways how to more effectively study how mental functions work and how human behaviors get affected by a host of complex factors, for example. It is these discoveries that have led to the discovery of different modalities used in the treatment and management of different psychological behaviors. Psychodynamic psychotherapy, for example, has long been used to learn more about and actually address different psychological problems. It has become so popular that professionals in the counseling world consider it to be one of the essentials in their field. Psychodynamics, as the name implies, incorporates the principles from the theories and or laws of dynamics in the study of how the brain works to create and regulate mental functions and behaviors, which both can be considered as precursors to a person's actions. Some of the most famous laws of dynamics include but may not be limited to the Zeroth law of thermodynamics, and the first, second, and third laws of thermodynamics. The laws of dynamics are primarily used in physics to quantify and describe

how temperature, entropy, and energy interact with one another and operate in a thermodynamic system. Now, most people would most often be bewildered what type of relationship exists between the theories and or laws of dynamics and psychology. Sigmund Freud implied in his works that energy is an important underlying factor in the study of feelings, emotions, human behaviors, and how other different factors relate to early experience.

Psychodynamics is the backbone or the main theory used in administering psychodynamic psychotherapy. It is a line of thinking or specifically, a psychoanalytic approach that has been developed, introduced, and then later on as more and more experts in the field during its author's prime time in the field accepted the validity and reliability of Freud's works in psychodynamics, popularized by Sigmund Freud. What inspired Sigmund Freud to devote a significant amount of his time to develop a new psychoanalytic approach despite the fact that there are a lot of other more established methods of psychologically analyzing human behaviors and other psychologically related problems that at the same time were seen to be yielding positive outcomes was the way how a thermodynamic system works. As mentioned earlier, psychodynamics may well be considered as the fusion of two fields, one from physics and the other one from psychology, specifically the study of thermodynamics and the study of human behavior and mental functions that is psychology. However, in psychodynamics, Freud only made use of the thermodynamic theories that explain how energy gets transferred and regulated in a thermodynamic system and left all the other theories untouched, mainly because he thought that the other theories—those that are related to temperature and entropy would not have anything

to do with the then ongoing development of his new psychoanalytic approach. Freud developed psychodynamics in a way that would make it focus on the different processes how the mind gets affected by flows and the disruption of flows of energy or what he often referred to as libido in most of his and other famous psychologists' work, in an enclosed system that is the brain. Freud argued in his works about psychodynamics that the way how the brain works, how mental functions become generated, and how an individual's personality and or behavior gets created, are all affected by the flow of energy inside the person's brain.

Psychodynamics does not only focus on the way how the brain, an individual's personality, or his psyche gets affected by the flow of energy inside it (the brain), it also focuses on the type of relationship that exists between them—the different areas of the mind, an individual's personality, and at an unconscious level, the different forces that act on it (e. g. motivational, emotional, and mental forces, among others) . If a conceptual framework is to be created about the psychodynamic theory of psychology, what may be considered as the independent variables would most likely be the different mental forces that influence the different areas of the mind, an individual's personality, and more importantly, the flow of energy inside the brain, as how Sigmund Freud would like to put it. The dependent variables, on the other hand, would be the person's reaction to external stimuli, his behavior, and personality, among other things that may get influenced by the different acting mental forces.

The mental forces that are being frequently described in Freud and other famous psychologists' work about psychodynamics can, in fact, be divided

into two parts: the first part deals primarily with the interaction of motivational and emotional forces that affect, on a subconscious level, the different mental states, personality that an individual may have or exhibit, given the right conditions; the second part deals primarily with the inner or internal forces that affect an individual's behavior or the different facets of it—it may also include the different mental emotional and motivational forces, and states of mind that affect behavior, just like the way how these two forces, among other factors, affect personality in the first part. To summarize the key differences between the two parts of mental forces that are often described in works about psychodynamics, the first part deals with the study of factors that influence personality while the second one deals with the study of factors that influence behaviors .

One major premise in Sigmund Freud's psychodynamic psychotherapy or simply psychodynamics explains that any individual's psychological energy is constant . However, it is the flow of this constant level or amount of energy that can be changed or displaced. In the presence of emotional changes, for example, it can be presumed that the total amount of psychological energy remains constant but because of the emotional stressor or any noxious stimuli that sparked the emotional change, a scenario wherein the flow of energy is displaced would be created. Another example would be in the presence of a point attractor, a discharge, or a catharsis. The same principle regarding the change in the flow of psychological energy applies in a scenario wherein there is a discharge or a catharsis.

So, contrary to what most psychologists believe, psychodynamics does not entirely embody theories, principles, and or laws of physics to be used in the

field of psychology. It merely derives a practical principle that suggests that even though the amount or level of psychological energy remains constant, the flow of such energy can still be subject to changes and or displacements .

In an article published in the International Journal of Group Psychology, authors Callahan, Price, and Hilsenroth (2014) described how an interpersonal type of psychodynamic psychotherapy can help improve outcomes of a small group of adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Psychodynamic psychotherapy is basically the use of psychodynamic theories in the more sophisticated field of clinical psychology or in the process of treating patients with distinct behavioral, psychological, and or personality disorders. In this case, the three authors who worked on the paper attempted to reinforce the evidences that suggest the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of using psychodynamic psychotherapy in psychological patients who are adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. There is a small variation or change introduced with the use of psychodynamic psychotherapy in this academic journal, however. Specifically, the authors introduced the use of psychodynamic psychotherapy in a group setting. It is worth noting that during the early years of development of psychodynamics as a modality in the field of clinical psychology, it has been administered mainly on a one on one basis, that between a clinical psychologist and his or her patient. Evidently, that is not the case in this academic journal because the psychodynamic psychotherapy was administered to a group instead to just a single person. The research design used in the paper was more like a systematic review since what the authors did was they collected a set of

empirically studies about the use of interpersonal psychodynamic group therapy using efficacy and effectiveness models as their main research indicators. The authors interpreted the results of each of the studies they collected and sorted them according to what their results suggest their effect size, and other sortable descriptive information. This enabled them to be in a position where they can monitor clinically significant changes in the studies they collected. The authors' analysis suggested that the overall results and or perceptions of academicians about the effectiveness of using an interpersonal psychodynamic group approach in psychotherapy is mixed; specifically, there were studies that they reviewed that suggested that the traditional one on one approach of administering the psychodynamic psychoanalysis and psychotherapy remains to be the more preferred one to be used in most clinical psychological setting compared to the more contemporary interpersonal or group-based approach. The authors stated that the mixed perceptions may be due to the fact that the more conventional approaches in administering psychodynamic psychotherapy have been more generally accepted and established because the use of the conventional psychodynamic psychotherapy approach have been more carefully tested compared to the contemporary group or interpersonal-based one; and there is a larger number of recorded successful cases featuring the use of the one on one approach in psychodynamic psychotherapy. " Across the group interventions reviewed, the accumulation of data suggests that interpersonal psychodynamic group psychotherapy interventions for treating the sequelae of childhood sexual abuse are effective, both in reducing overall psychiatric symptomatology and increasing aspects of social

adjustment and healthy interpersonal functioning; more specifically, weighted and un-weighted effect size averages across several treatment groups from multiple studies showed a medium to large effect in reducing global symptomatic distress and depression". In essence, this study did not only focus on the population they described in the title of their story but also in other population such as those with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other anxiety related conditions.

In another academic journal published by the International Journal Group on Psychotherapy, Rivera and Darke (2012) described the different theoretical foundations and components of psychodynamic psychotherapy group treatment program designed for individuals who have been diagnosed with personality disorders. Notice that it has been mentioned earlier that psychodynamic psychotherapy is not only used to treat just a single psychological disorder. It can, in fact, be used to treat a wide spectrum of psychological disorders, including those that are caused by anxiety, depression, and in the case of this study, personality disorders. This can be evidenced by the wide array of studies using the more conventional one on one approach and the more contemporary group or interpersonal approach of psychodynamic psychotherapy in previous studies. One unique characteristic of this study, however, is the fact that there were actually not just one but three empirically supported therapies being used in the field of clinical psychology used and these were: the Transference-Focused Psychotherapy and Mentalization-based Therapy, Psychodynamic Psychotherapies, and Dialectical Behavior Therapy. The specific type of psychological disorders that have been diagnosed among the subjects

recruited for the study include those who are suffering from symptoms and also those who have been officially diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. To elicit the changes that the researchers theorized in their conceptual framework on the patients, they subjected them to a numerous sets of expressive, psycho-educational, and skills training groups that were conducted on a three days per week basis. The entire length of the program lasted for 15 weeks for a total of 45 sessions. To evaluate the changes that each of the clinical modalities may have made (one group for each clinical modality) on the patients, regardless of the group where they belong, the authors required the participants to attend preliminary evaluations wherein they will be assessed based on their tendency to injure themselves, commit suicide, psychiatric hospitalizations, and the manifestations of other psychiatric symptoms. The evaluation was done for a total of 12 months. By the end of the evaluation program, the authors concluded that the evaluation looked promising and patients from the psychodynamic psychotherapy group showed the largest improvements in terms of the outcomes used, as evidenced by the “ decreases in self-injurious behavior, suicide attempts, psychiatric hospitalizations, and psychiatric symptoms”, even after a one year follow up .

Conclusions

In summary, all the literatures supported in this literature review paper supported the idea that the group and or interpersonal approach in psychodynamic psychotherapy is not only a promising but an effective, as evidenced by the numerous empirical studies supporting it, counseling or

clinical psychology tool or modality that professionals (e. g. clinical and behavioral psychologists) can use to manage a wide array of psychiatric disorders such as those that abnormally alter an individual's perception, behavior, personality, and or mental functions. However, this is not to say that there are no empirical studies that suggest that the use of the group based approach in psychodynamic psychotherapy does not yield any effect, which is contrary to what majority of the empirical studies reviewed in the systematic review paper by Callahan, Price, and Hilsenroth (2014) suggested. There were, in fact, a significant number of studies that did not support the idea that a group-based approach in psychodynamic psychotherapy can be an effective tool or modality in treating patients with psychiatric disorders. However, it is just that there were a lot more studies that support the idea that it is indeed an effective tool in the field, leading to the positive affirmation on its use in the conclusions and discussions of most authors or researchers of most systematic reviews and meta analyses that published their own papers about the topic.

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