

# Psychodynamic approach in psychology



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Psychodynamic approaches are those that assume that the human personality development and disturbances is rooted in the interplay or dynamics of psychosocial energies that is the drives, needs and instincts within the individual or between the individual and society.

Greenberg, J et al (1983: 12) postulates that the ways in which the individual expresses these drives in childhood determines or patterns his personality.

The psychodynamic approach was developed from Freud's psycho analysis.

The main proponents of Psychodynamic approaches Freud's instinct theory, Carl Gustav Jung analytic theory, Klein, Winnicott and Fairbairn with Object relations theory and Arther Javor with Primal Theory.

Freud proposed an approach on human development and change based on the unfolding of a biologically grounded construct the instinct. He regarded on instinct as a psychosomatic source of stimulation which biologically was experienced as a need and psychologically was experienced as a wish. The I. D, ego and superego comprise the building blocks of personality. The id is the reservoir of instinctual energy and operates according to the pleasure principle. The ego seeks to enable instinctual gratification by modulating the demands of the id according to the reality principle.

The super ego is the moral arm of society and regulates the gratification of instinctual needs according to social convention. The id, ego and superego functioned at conscious, preconscious and unconscious levels, cognominal Freud also states that the individual's personality was formed during the first five years of life. The expression of instinctual energy caused anxiety in individuals. Individuals handle anxiety by using defense mechanisms to

handle anxiety arising from the need to meet instinctual needs characterized the level of psychosocial adjustment. The goal of therapy therefore would be to help individuals have insight into their neurotic anxiety. Techniques for helping individuals achieve insight include resistance, transference; counter transference and ego defense mechanisms.

According to McLeod (1993: 23) psychologists who believe in the psychodynamic approach agree in the following assumptions that;

- The client's difficulties have their ultimate origin in the childhood experiences
- The client may not be consciously aware of the true motives or impulses behind his or her actions.
- They use in counseling and therapy techniques such as dream analysis, interpretation and transference.

One of the most important ideas of Freud was the idea that the emotional problems of a child would continue to haunt the individual in adulthood unless they were resolved. According to Freud the "sexual energy" of a child, known as "libido" would be responsible for the conflicts of the child through adulthood. An individual would go through certain psychosexual stages of development which related to later interpersonal relationships in adulthood. Also early parenting methods were also implicated in how the individual would finally adjust in personal relationships and development of the self. Therefore psychodynamic models of early childhood experiences are important. The counselor is therefore interested in knowing what kind of a relationship the individual had with parents, particularly with the mother. The counselor

haste establishes that the client did not have a negative relationship with her/her family and parents. In conclusion, the assumption was that the clients difficulties have their origins in the childhood experiences. McLeod, 1993 however supports that the counselor must elicit information about a clients relationship through free association. In free association the client gives a vivid description of his or her earlier life on the couch without fear of reprisals. (Burton and Davey 1996, in wolfed et al) cited that all psychodynamic appropriate and theorist agreed on the importance of early childhood experiences in dealing with the individuals current adult “neuroses”.

The other key features of psychodynamic approach in psychology are the importance of the unconscious. According to Freud the “unconscious” was that part of mental life which the client was not aware. McLeod (1993: 25) summed it up unconscious structure of the mind when he stated that the ID (it) is a reservoir of primitive instincts and impulses which are the ultimate motives for human behaviour-life, love, sex, Eros (against) death, hate aggression, than antes..... Memories tripped (there) ..... governed by the “pleasure principle”) and is irrational. The ego (I), the conscious, rational part of the mind, which makes decisions and deals with external reality.

The super ego (above I), the conscious, the store house of rules and taboos about what you should and should not do. The attitudes a person has in the super ego are mainly an internalizations of his parents attitudes. Since the id, ego and superego are always in conflict, and the id and superego were repressed in the unconscious, the psychodynamic counselor needs to go into

the unconscious of the client in order to get to the button heart of the story. It is however the responsibility of the counselor to delve deeper and bring out into the conscious of the client memories that would otherwise be repressed or hidden. The repression of the inner turmoil was one define mechanism of the mind to protect itself from being torn apart, finally psychodynamic approaches in psychology aims to reveal the true nature of one's problems. It is believed that the individual was ill and therefore needed treatment in order to gain insight into whatever was repressed which prevented the individual to live a full life, the second goal of therapy is to reallies the tension through a process of (catharsis" so that the client is free and can make rational decisions that are not dependent on the moralistic superego. The reality principle of the ego should then be an ascendant and free of the conflicts between the id and the superego which saps the individuals life force.

Techniques used when resolving client's problems include free accusation transference and interpretation of dreams, thus making it a key nature of the psydynamic approach. Psychodynamic approaches to psychology require that the client shares all his/ her miner most thoughts feelings, ideas, memories, dreams and associations during counseling. Nelson Jones (1997) states that free association demands that the client not use any defense mechanisms to repress anything back into the unconscious. When there is no free association, resistance occurs because the client refuses to reproduce their repressed emotions. The client can resist allowing transference. Transference is when the client tries to bring out of the unconsciousness those feelings toward earlier relationships and to reduce the power of the

defence mechanism by viewing the counselor as if he/she is the object of hate or love in his early childhood for example, if client hated the mother, the counselor because that mother and therefore the target of hate during the counseling relationship. The client will transfer these feelings into the counselor without any defences that would otherwise force those feelings underground into the unconscious.

Another technique used by psychodynamic theorists in resolving client problems is the use of interpretation of dreams interpretations are constructions or explanations of what may have happened or is happening to the client. The helper interprets so that the client can understand, through transformation where the counselor changes what is in the unconsciousness and make it accessible to the client in the consciousness. It is important at the most opportune moment, and the client understands the interpretation.

Psychodynamic approaches are useful in individual, group, couples and organizational counseling and analysis. The major contribution of psychodynamic approaches was in the area of child development and its relationship to later adult development.

The analytic theory of Carl Gustav Jung is also psychodynamic approach which developed a psychoanalytic therapy that borrowed from Freud. The main thrust was in that it sought to explain religious sentiments in terms of psychic residues from man's ancestral past. Jung proposed the self rather than the instincts as the centre of human experiencing. Jung regarded man as working to realize an ideal selfhood rather than to master animalistic instinctual and sexual drives as compared to by Freud object relation therapy

by Klein, Winnicott and Fairbairn is group of theories that place much emphasis in the study of attachment behaviours. Good mothering and a safe holding environment are care to the development of a healthy personality. Individuals who are bogged down by unresolved issues cannot function at their optimum for example children can not be expected to be productive or be emotionally available to allow measure development of attachment in their children as pertained by Bowlby's attachment theory at the moment the evidence of inadequate attachment is in our midst in the form of street children increasing rates of delinquency divorce marital conflict and child abuse as counselors have the opportunity to advance the psychological understanding of unresolved attachment and utilize psychological knowledge to improve on the well-being of the affected individuals.

Janov's primal theory falls within the rational structure psychodynamic theory. Its main aim was to sought to explain development and behavior from internal dynamics involving parents and children from prenatal stage to maturity. Janov emphasized a development of the neurosis. The approach is applicable to studying and understanding human development and growth in general. Janov is of the view that the origins of a neurosis lie in the minds of neurotic parents who regret neurotic children and its onset include from process of birth and child's early years. According to Janov (1980) children born of convenience marriages can not ascribe to non-neurotic lives as they are morally tools by which a parent or other seeks self gratification.

On the whole the psychodynamic approach assume that there are enduring characterizes patterns and functions that typify the individuals personality

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and such patterns and functions organize experience, mediate between experience and subsequent behavioural responses. The psychodynamic approaches in psychology are useful with clients presenting wide range problems.

### **References**

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