

# Major approaches to clinical psychology research paper

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Clinical psychology is a field of psychology that involves integration of science, clinical knowledge and theory with an aim of preventing, relieving, and understanding distress that is psychologically based. This area of psychology mainly involves psychological treatment and assessment although research, consultation, and teaching may be practiced by clinical psychologists. There are several approaches to this area of psychology; but four are the ones mainly used. These approaches are cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic, family systems and humanistic perspective. The effectiveness of treatment while using these approaches is based on understanding their goals.

The approach of cognitive-behavioral was developed from a combination of behaviorism and cognitive psychology. This approach is therefore based on how a person behaves, thinks and feels; the approach studies the interaction of these three aspects (Pomerantz, 2010). One of the objectives of this approach is to discover the biased, dysfunctional aspects of how clients react and relate. The integration of behaviorism in the approach means it also has the objective of predicting how clients feel and think.

The psychodynamic approach developed from Freud's psychoanalysis theory. According to Pomerantz (2010), the main objective of the approach is making conscious what is unconscious; to make the patient aware of what drives them in relation to aggression and sex, and the defenses applied by the patient to keep these drives in check (307). This approach uses free association and the patient's ability to transfer their unconscious thoughts to the therapist.

The family systems approach is mainly concerned with families and couples; it emphasizes relationships in the family as having significant influence in psychological health. The approach focuses on the dynamics of how one person's change affects the whole system. Its main objectives include dealing with problematic behaviors, establishment of healthy roles, and improvement of communication (Pomerantz, 2010).

The humanistic approach was developed in reaction to the psychodynamic and cognitive-behavioral approaches. This approach in clinical psychology involves understanding of the patient as whole and not fragmented segments of their personality (Pomerantz, 2010). Hence the main objective of the approach is to integrate self-actualization into clinical psychology. The approach aims at helping the patient build and apply their unique potentials through the therapy given.

Clinical psychologists are trying to integrate the four approaches in their practice by emphasizing on the strength of each approach. This integration helps in ensuring that though each approach has a weakness, this is covered for by another approach (Pomerantz, 2010). This is what makes clinical psychologist view the approaches integration as advantageous.

## **References**

Pomerantz, A. (2010). *Clinical Psychology: Science, Practice and Culture*. New York, NY: Sage Publications.