

Two approaches to counselling psychology essay



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In this essay, I will attempt in brief to compare the chosen approaches, psychodynamic and the personal centred in terms of the basic concepts, goals, element of relationship in therapy, techniques and application. The greater part will be left to the examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches. Finally a conclusion will be given at the end summarising the whole discussion. As stated, the psychodynamic and the person- centred approaches are the topics of this essay.

The main figure in the psychodynamic approach is Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) whilst in the person- centred approach is Carl Rogers (1902-1987). The psychodynamic approach is a personality concept that studies human development, psychodynamic approach assumes that experiences in our earliest years can affect our emotions, attitudes and behaviour in later years without us being aware that it is happening. Person-centred concept on the other hand is based on the human experience putting much emphasis on helping the human being to become self aware. They are both useful for therapy though approach differs . With the person- centred approach it is the client who brings change other than the therapist. In psychodynamic effort is made to build the ego and work on the unconscious mind. The goals, in psychodynamic, it is to bring the unconscious to conscious so that the client finds direction. In the person centred the development of encouraging atmosphere in terms of safety and trust is the emphasis. The techniques used in the psychodynamic. Psychodynamic employs the free association, interpretation, dream analysis and analysis of resistance, transference and also countertransference. Person centred employs mainly client therapist relationship like in the existential approach. Every technique that may be

used, with the person-centred is to the minimal as great listening is emphasised. The three key conditions of Person centred is that therapists need to employ: Congruence, Unconditional Positive Regard, and Empathy. Last but not least is a short briefing in application. Under the psychodynamic one needs to be quite dedicated and there should be plans for further training as therapist. It is recommended that such candidates also go through intensive therapy themselves. It is expensive and time consuming. On the other hand, the person centred approach is in various forms. It can be employed for group counselling, person centred expressive arts for those with speech difficulties, student centred teaching and learning, etc (Corey 2009).

The analysis of limitations and strengths of the two approaches is as followed. Starting with the psychodynamic approach. According to (Szasz, 1978 in Dryden 2007), although the theory tried in the psychosexual presentation to discuss human development, it does not attempt it in a coherent manner. He also attacks the theory in application that the ways changes come are also not clearly laid down. (Boeree 2009) presents a discussion on the Oedipal on the psychosexual context. There are strong argument on the attachment children have with the opposite sex parents. But most researchers do not respect this view. It is only when we metaphorically approach the idea that it may make meaning. Szasz, as quoted above, is sure Freud did not treat his concept metaphorically. Another viewpoint that attracted criticism is the way Freud concentrated too much on sexuality. Boeree somehow defended Freud and give an example of how much most things do not forget the sex element in everything, say

advertises. This same author does not argue the unconscious, but the question is to what degree, in what manner and do we want to say that is the only way that brings about behaviour. Today researchers in other sections like humanity believe that what Freud thought the unconscious can do is much less. After all they simply see the unconscious to have what we do not want and what we have already seen. Boeree was very strong to say some theorists do not even respect the unconscious concept. There is no way of demonstrating if the Unconscious actually exists.

(Corey 2009) points out that the classical psychoanalysis therapy is expensive, takes a long time to yield results for the client. The expense is related to the client. The therapist also has to go under intensive training in order to cope with the therapy process. Insight is stressed with the therapy and it ignores what can be harvested through other methods like art, drama, etc. Social, interpersonal and cultural aspects are not included in this approach as it concentrates on instinctual cases is another of a weakness for the theory. The humanistic approach would include all these because it is holistic. Also psychodynamic approaches cannot take on board issues of crisis counselling, social work and those issues from many cultures.

The work of Freud has also been criticized for its subjectivity for example when interpretation occurs on dreams and transference. The dream is expressed and the analyst helps the client interpret the dream. Transference takes place and again the counsellor or therapist concludes. The results of these methods depend on the assumption and interpretation by the therapist. This means two therapists could interpret the same material and come up with different conclusions. Psychodynamic cannot present

predictable assumptions which can be experimented on like in the behavioural approaches.

This is why it shall be argued that when we deal with the person-centred when the therapist is required to be congruent – who measures the congruency and who says this is the correct level and way. The same with dreams and analysing transference – who judges that the interpretation is correct and that this analysis is correct. Another criticism is the lack of case studies carried out by Freud. There are only a few case studies carried out, Little Hans being the famous of all or the well known. The free association concept was and is still getting criticism. There is just no way we can scientifically test the methods of free association or even dream analysis. Although it is still in use, it is so involving that it calls for intensive training for one to be able to draw meaning from the slips of tongue which have been brought forward in any order (Glassman and Hadad 2004).

The strengths of the system are few but very outstanding. (Boeree 2009) supports that a strong therapy was introduced by Freud. The approach involves a relaxed atmosphere – both socially and physically. He goes to commend the transference element which other theorists do not buy. The good personal attribute of the therapeutic arrangement has generally been supported. A lot of criticisms are still made towards Freud's approach, but let's keep in mind that it was Freud who taught us the importance of childhood, he reminded us that experiences in childhood can affect us throughout our lives without us being aware that it is happening. He also gave us knowledge on repression, denial, projection, and other defence mechanisms to protect our egos. Even if today criticism may be forthcoming

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on the defence concept, experience on most of the examples he gave on the defences continue to manifest. What is more, going as far back as Breuer when he attached neurotic symptoms to be as a result of mental disorders, most researchers still ground an understanding that a child full of neglect, tragedy and abuse will most likely have trauma problems in the adulthood. This was propounded by Freud in his concepts. Also the psychodynamic approach proved that behaviour was related to biology. When humanists believe of people being responsible for their actions, Freud wrote that society also influenced these actions. It was thought the male and female concept was by nature and God, but the psychodynamics argued the involvement of the family dynamics in the process. All these psychic revelations of biology and society shall be with us in one way or the other.

(Barker 2003) brings a very important factor for the psychodynamic approach. Had it not been the work of Freud, the drive to go further by people like Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, Melanie Klein and Erik Erikson would perhaps have been affected, who knows. Rogers (humanist therapist) and Perls (Gestalt therapist) both trained as psychoanalysts. No doubt the world feels the impact of psychodynamic through the works employed by various specialists in different fields. The ideas of the psychodynamic theory influences a lot of people around the world. We still hear of the unconscious, repressed, ego, etc as we go about with our daily lives.

According to (Michael 1998), the humanistic approach upon which the person-centred concept is based, are a number of strengths with it. A more detailed explanation is given about human motivation. Most research concentrated on physiological aspirations and not on attributes such as self-

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esteem and self-actualization. Whether one has got several mansions and millions and millions of money, they still require some satisfaction of some sort. Hence some sort of motivation is required to balance it. Instead of concentrating on important issues like self-concept, esteem, realizing our potential in life, etc in the humanism approach, various theorists with their different approaches concentrated on less important causes. Hence the person-centred movement took the centre stage. It is very important to have an approach to therapy that endeavours to incorporate congruency, empathy, immediacy and presence. These core conditions calls for particular attention in the therapeutic process for the therapist. For the client to be afforded such attention is special and hence this is quite a strength of the approach. The other strength which flows from the concept is that there is choice – where it is being recognised that there is free will then things are not approached in a sense of duty. Also the strength of the therapy is that it deals with milder cases, people who are not motivated and those clients who cannot express themselves well.

(Barker 2003) supports the humanism movement from which the person-centred concept is derived from. He says what a wonderful approach the ideas of core conditions can be employed even in business, social work and education. Q sort is a method developed by Rogers to measure progress in therapy. The Q-sort was used as the dependent variable to measure whether people's concepts of themselves or others changed as a result of treatment. It is important to know where results are going. This is another strength attached to the method. Again to emphasise the importance of measuring success, (Rogers and Dymond 1954 in Glassman and Hadad 2004) referred

to Rogers as keeping records of transcripts of therapy sessions to help with measurement of progress.

The approach has got its weaknesses. First is the position of the therapist who is not allowed to interfere with the content of what the client brings in with their story or case. They are supposed to work from information which they do not question or judge. No one, but the client alone, can tell for sure if the story he or she presented is factual or not. The client might just decide to stress a biased case to suit what they want. Secondly the great core conditions which the therapist uses his or her attitude and values and not the techniques he or she might want to use. Thirdly, the core conditions – congruency, empathy, presence and immediacy. These are conditions the therapist has to use. But just like we experience these conditions in our own lives, they are very difficult to practice.

The word Congruence/ Genuineness implies that therapists are real that is, they are open, sincere, genuine, integrated and authentic during the therapy hours. ' In order to be congruent with clients, counsellors need to be themselves, without any pretence.(Roger, 1996)'. They are w

By being congruent, we mean to be honest and real, which means, being open, sincere, genuine, integrated and authentic during the therapy hours. There are two aspects to this. The therapist in the first place really questions themselves whether they will be practicing this honesty aspect. Secondly it rests with the client to judge the therapist to be honest or they see them as being dishonesty. Imagine continuing to be non judgemental in a situation. Where the client behaves in a strange way, whatever the behave, the

therapist should remain none judgemental. Those who cannot express themselves to give vivid accounts of their problems are not likely to benefit enough from the this approach . Past experiences like in the psychodynamic are not very important with this type of therapy. This is yet another disadvantage of the approach. This account is according to (Cardwell et al., 2000).

The leading figures in the two chosen theories of psychodynamic and person-centred have been identified as Sigmund Freud and Carl Rogers respectively. The psychodynamic bases its views on the past whilst the person-centred is based on the here and now. Person-centred approach is drawn from the humanism approach. It has also been brought in the open that the goal for the psychodynamic is to bring to unconscious the conscious as in the person centred, the goal is in a holistic manner and it is meant to bring awareness or meaning to the clients. Some features of the therapies have been briefly touched as the greater part of the essay concentrated on strength and weaknesses.