

Overview of personality theories

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Personality theories are developed from the study of human personalities and individual differences. These theories are put forward to explain factors that influence an individual's psychological processes how similar or different they are to those of other individuals.

They are useful in helping to understand why some individuals show undesirable behavior in certain circumstances and how they can be helped. This paper analyzes two theories Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis and Carl Rogers' humanistic theory. The analysis is done with regard to their underlying assumptions, deterministic against free will and awareness of self. Introduction The theory of psychoanalysis is based on the understanding that human beings are mostly unaware of the mental processes that determine their thought, feelings and behavior. On the other hand, the humanistic theory is based on the assumption that humans are driven by the need to achieve their full potential as individuals. Theory of Psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud According to Nye (1981), Freud believed that the human personality is made up of three states of mind: the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious mind.

The conscious mind is aware of the affairs currently taking place. The preconscious mind has data from both the conscious and the unconscious mind. The unconscious mind has hidden information or forgotten remembrances. Freud stated that the human personality is made up of three parts: the id, ego and superego (Nye, 1981). The id works in the unconscious mind and has the basic human instincts.

It is driven by the pleasure principle which tends to guide it from painful experiences. The id does not have regard for right or wrong; in other words, it does not consider morality but is rather impulsive. This part is already presented at a birth. The ego develops after the id, and it works in the conscious and preconscious minds. It is guided by the pleasure principle, and it works in order to satisfy an organism's present needs realistically. Mostly, the superego is fully developed at around 7 years of age.

The superego works on the morality principle; furthermore, it guides the organisms to act according to societal ethics. Below are some of the theory's strengths and weaknesses. Strengths Psychoanalysis has opened avenues to understanding human differences with regard to what causes them; The concept of the 'unconscious self' has helped to explain behavior that is familiar to individuals; The concept of 'self psychology' has brought about the understanding of psychotherapy which has been confirmed by neurobiological studies. Weaknesses This theory lacks empirical evidence and heavily relies on therapeutic achievements; It cannot be classified as a science because it lacks predictions and interpretive rules or regulations; Freud based majority of his ideas on a small number of demographically restricted individuals. Humanistic Theory by Carl Rogers In his theory, Carl Rogers postulates that human behavior can only be understood in terms of the individual's underlying perceptions of oneself and others, after which he or she can achieve personal fulfillment. Rogers, together with his fellow psychologist Abraham Maslow, explain that as a person grows from infancy to adulthood, what eventually emerges is the self (Nye, 1981).

Self is composed with all things that one can relate to themselves as well as the relationship with their immediate environment; including the people in that environment. One basic assumption of this theory is that human beings have an inborn or inherited need to achieve self-actualization. This means that whatever activities individual engages in, they are directed towards the achievement of their personal goal(s). Furthermore, as the individual progresses in life, whatever activity they will participate in will be judged on the basis of its relationship with the personal goals. Activities that lean towards the achievement of personal goals are assigned a positive value whilst those that hamper this endeavor are assigned a negative value. Another important assumption in this theory is what Rogers termed as unconditional positive regard (Nye, 1981).

This refers to the acceptance that one seeks from people they value in their life. This means that if there is no acceptance, the person will feel they are not progressing towards self-actualization; thus, the reverse is true. The theory has the following strengths and weaknesses. Strengths It emphasizes on individual choice of responsibility; It gives psychologists a good ground to make observations since it considers an individual in the context of his or her environment. Weaknesses Its concepts are too vague in the sense that some ideas such as real experiences are difficult to objectify Conclusions drawn from subjective experiences are difficult to verify.

Determinism vs. Free Will Determinism is the philosophical belief that events take place as a result of causation. In other words, determinism refers to the belief of inevitability that events occur because they are meant to and that nothing which did not happen could have happened (Dennett, 1985).

Everything happens for a reason and humans have no control over such occurrences. For instance, behavior is motivated by patterns deeply ingrained in individual genes. When the two personality theories are viewed with regard to determinism, it is evident that the psychoanalytic approach is pro-deterministic.

This is because it postulates that an individual's behavior is majorly shaped by past experiences as opposed to deliberate choice(s). Free will, on the other hand, is the ability to make conscious choices only. Conscious choices are those that can be influenced and controlled by the agent in question. However, free will is mostly limited to human beings as rational animals. They have the ability to exercise their power of choice depending on the environment and prevailing circumstances (Dennett, 1985).

A close observation of both personality theories reveals that the humanistic approach embraces free will in the sense that an individual makes choices consciously that will enable them to achieve self-actualization. Conclusion Freud's theory of psychoanalysis is based on the assumption that human behavior is determined by mental processes that they are largely unaware of. These mental processes are guided by past experiences stored in the unconscious mind. The humanistic theory spearheaded by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow is based on the idea that human actions are motivated by the need to achieve their full potential as individuals. This shows that psychoanalysts believe in determinism while the humanists believe in free will.