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Introduction

This report aims to create a better understanding on how psychological factors can impact human behaviours throughout the lifespan and also evaluate how these factors apply to health and social care settings.

We will analyse the psychodynamic approach developed by Sigmund Freud and mainly will focus on how ego involves a person concept of self. People are highly influenced by many factors during their lives, and the psychological factor is very important in personality development but also in creating a professional identity.

According to Colarusso and Nemiroff (2013), intrapsychic events partly establish adult development and childhood experiences are highly important in forming the adult personality. The human life cycle is a very discussed subject among researchers and it has encountered many changes during the centuries, as many theories and approaches have been introduced, the most relevant being behaviourism, cognitivist, psychodynamic, humanistic, and biological.

Healthcare practitioners should have at least a basic understanding of these theories depending on the area they qualify in, as many circumstances can be justified by past experiences, skills learned, or even a gap in certain behaviours, and must be looked at from a psychological and sociological perspective as well.

Psychological Framework

From a Freudian perspective, the relationships and behaviours manifested later in life are connected with how a child has gone through different stages in life. For example, Freud (1940) described the relationship the child has to their mother is unique and is established unalterably for a whole lifetime as the first and strongest love object and the prototype for all later love relations.

Psychodynamic theory is a term used for a wide range of theories and techniques used to treat individuals. These theories include drive theory, ego psychology, object relations, self-psychology, inter-subjectivity, and interpersonal theory. Researchers are focused on the importance of development in order to understand individuals and the idea that there are unconscious mental processes that influence human behaviour and emotions (Rozas and Grady, 2011).

All stages in one's life in the psychodynamic approach are responsible for how people interact with others, see themselves in the adult life, and develop their personalities. Freud has introduced the repressing factor in his approach, which was analysing the ID, Ego, and Super-Ego, all three being parts of one's personality that work together in building more complex behaviours. The ID is driven by pleasure and seeks immediate gratification of all desires and needs, the Super-Ego is the moral side of our personality which provides guidelines in making judgements, and Ego is the closer component to reality, developed for ID, but responsible for satisfy desires in realistic and socially acceptable ways (Cherry, 2022).

Infants are born with an ID, where Ego and Super-Ego are developed later in life. A healthy personality will have a balance between the three components and should be able to manage the desires and needs and the demands of reality (Guntrip, 2018).

It is important to note how these personality components interact with one's development, as many people will repress needs and feelings, and this can have a negative impact on their wellbeing. Also, an imbalance between the three could cause personality issues, such as being too judgmental, manifesting criminal thoughts or even actions, or being very impulsive and incontrollable. This approach is mostly concerned with the unconscious mind of people and how certain elements from it affect people's day-to-day life. Another important element for healthcare professionals is to understand defence-mechanisms people can manifest in their adult life, as a result of ego coping with threats coming from the ID, the super-ego, and the reality itself. These mechanisms can be denial, repression, regression, projection, reaction-formation, or identification with the aggressor (Hayes, 1994).

Freudian Theory

Freud considered that conflict in one's personality is very important, and in order to go to the next stage, the person must resolve a particular conflict. This theory was based on the fact that people go through five main stages in their lives, the oral one, the anal one, the phallic one, the latent one, and finally the genital one. All stages were directed by the libido, which expands on different parts of the human body. The first stage lasts from birth until one year old, the anal one from one to three years, the phallic stage lasts from three to six years, the latent one from six years old to puberty, and the last one from puberty into adulthood (McLeod, 2019).

The phallic stage is when the child focuses on their genital areas and can make a difference between sexes. Children at this age experience erotic attraction, jealousy, and resentment as they go through a very important stage in their lives, where they identify with one of the parents. Freud has introduced the Oedipus Complex for boys, where they feel attracted by their mothers and fear castration from their father, and the Electra Complex for girls, where they develop an envy for the penis and wish to be a boy. Many researchers disagree with this theory, but recognise the need for sexual identification in an early stage of life, and also the conflict caused in children and later adults by not being able to find their identity.

Other adepts of the psychoanalytic approach were Jung and Fromm, and they developed their own theories about personality development without focusing on sexuality as the main element in the human cycle. Jung for example, classified life stages in three categories – the pre-sexual stage that lasted from birth until the child is about five, the pubertal phase, from age of five to puberty, and maturity, which lasts for the rest of the adult life. On the other hand, Fromm highlighted the importance society has on human development, where personality was impacted by both maturity and interactions with close family members and society. The psychoanalytic stated that one's views, attitudes, values, and ideas are shaped by the background of the family they grow up with (Hayes, 1994).

Conflicts created in early stages of life can further impact adults and their development, especially when the conflict is around their identity. Some people seem not to be able to overcome certain conflicts or even stages in life and can develop frustrations or fixations on certain factors, and the main reasons for this are even that their developmental needs were not met adequately or their needs were met too well and they did not want to leave that stage. For example, adult males can look for projections of their mothers in older women when forming romantic relationships (Kassel, 2020).

Reflection

By examining the psychoanalytic approach, healthcare professionals can have a clearer understanding of certain behaviours and feelings people manifest, but because the theory is not based on scientific results, it must be taken as a guidance mostly, not encompassed in the professional identity fully.

The approach has been developed more than a century ago, and it was a major discovery in psychology at that time, but many researchers that came after found gaps in it, as it is considered that human behaviour must be influenced by a spectrum of elements, not only their sexual gratification and libido. Psychoanalysis as a therapy itself cannot forecast any future behaviours or actions and cannot change one's personality. Its main role is to provide a deeper understanding into people's subconscious and unconscious, and this is where it stops. Healthcare professionals can learn new approaches in communication and adapt their personality in order to offer a comfortable environment for service users where they can discuss freely without fearing any judgement.

According to Gerard (2017), psychoanalysis encourages us to consider the structure of an organisation as a social defence system. This is because many healthcare professionals see their job as a calling to help others, which in the psychoanalytic view can be seen as a defence mechanism. We may think of the social defence system as the institutionalised equivalent of the neurotic symptom defined by Freud, where the neurotic symptoms are structures which are substitutes for certain achievements of repression people have to carry out in the course of their development from a child to a civilised human being. This perspective highlights that people are often drawn into specific types of work not only because of their interest and training, but also because of the match between their own unconscious defences and those reinforced by the culture of the organisation.

One of the main areas of interest in the health and social care field is how people manifest themselves in challenging situations, what defence mechanisms they use, and how they interact with others, based on their previous experiences, including their development in childhood. The role of a practitioner is to observe them and find a reasonable approach that will not cause any harm to them or anyone else.

Conclusion

While the Freudian approach is still widely used in therapy and clinical settings, there are many other theories that are used in addition to it, such as the cognitive or behavioural ones, as people are influenced by many other factors during their lives. Healthcare practitioners should possess various knowledge from all fields and know when to use certain information in the care they provide.

Qualified professionals accrue this information during studies, work experience, and self-development, as they understand the importance of psychological features in one's life, especially in their improvement in the field.

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