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Module: Psychology in Health and Social Care

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Assignment Title: Assessment 2: Bibliography & Report

Part A: Annotated Bibliography

1. Reference

Burke, E., Danquah, A. and Berry, K. (2016) 'A Qualitative Exploration of the Use of Attachment Theory in Adult Psychological Therapy', *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 23(2), pp. 142–154. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.1943>.

Summary:

This is a qualitative study which focuses on the application of attachment theory in adult psychotherapy by psychologists. 12 psychologists have been interviewed in semi structured manner which resulted 6 ways in which attachment theory informs clinical practice. These ways are:

- Complementing other therapeutic models
- Describing mental health development
- Addressing attachment styles
- Characterizing the therapist-client relationship as an attachment bond
- Driving therapeutic stages
- Influencing service design

Results suggest that attachment theory is a versatile theory to explain relational and emotional challenges in adults, irrespective of the main modality of the therapist.

Critical Comment:

Highly relevant. According to Darvishpour and Fashtami (2026), the mental health of older adults who have faced social isolation and loss can improve if they have awareness about patterns of behaviours and attachment styles. The incorporation of attachment-informed solutions enables therapists and other care personnel to develop secure attachment and promote emotional health, which is essential within social care and community health contexts.

2. Reference

Harlow, E. (2021) 'Attachment theory: Developments, debates and recent applications in social work, social care and education', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 35(1), pp. 79–91. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650533.2019.1700493>.

Summary:

Harlow surveys research and discussions in attachment theory and applying it to social work, education, and care. Although the foundations of attachment theory have been criticized, it persists in influencing professional practice, especially in child development and adult care. The article emphasizes how it can be used in foster carer training, support of adoptive parents, and educational settings, and shows how the theory can be applied to preventive and therapeutic interventions.

Critical Comment:

Relevant. Even though the scope is more comprehensive than in older adults, the same concepts of attachment theory, including the importance of comprehending relational relationships and enhancing secure relationships can be applied to elder care. Social workers and health professionals may use these ideas to enhance well-being, social integration, and emotional support of older adults, particularly when they have caregiving requirements or disrupted relationships (Burke, Danquah and Berry, 2016).

3. Reference

Ranzijn, R. (2002) 'Towards a Positive Psychology of Ageing: Potentials and Barriers', *Australian Psychologist*, 37(2), pp. 79–85. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00050060210001706716>.

Summary:

Ranzijn explains that a strengths-based ageing approach can be influenced using positive psychology, challenging the traditional focus on decline. The article is dedicated to the identification of the potential and skills of older adults and their integration in clinical and community interventions. The author also highlights the importance of taking social and environmental contexts and personal capabilities into consideration, facilitating proactive coping and targeted interventions with the scope of maximizing well-being.

Critical Comment:

Highly relevant. The study has direct implications on health and social care practice with older adults because it advocates interventions that enable better autonomy, purpose, and socialization. The strength-based approach instead of weaknesses can contribute to healthier aging and enhance the quality of life and psychological well-being among the elderly (Sukenova *et al.*, 2026).

4. Reference:

Bar-Tur, L. (2021) 'Fostering Well-Being in the Elderly: Translating Theories on Positive Aging to Practical Approaches', *Frontiers in Medicine*, 8(1), pp. 1–9. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmed.2021.517226>.

Summary:

This article applies positive aging theories to practice and emphasizes the Mental Fitness Program for Positive Aging (MFPPA). The program, based on positive psychology, will contribute to the improvement of engagement, resilience, and well-being in seniors by the means of health, cognition, activity, affect, and physical fitness. Such interventions are shown to positively impact mental health, loneliness, cognitive ability, and personal development, and it is clear that theory can be practically applied to both community and clinical settings.

Critical Comment:

Highly relevant. Bar-Tur makes practical and factual interventions to improve the well-being of older people. The research can give practical recommendations to health and social care professionals by bringing together evaluation, social interactions and interventions to improve mental, physical and social well-being. It is particularly useful in community centers, residential care and primary health care settings due to its practical applicability.

Part B: Short Report

Introduction

Attachment theory, first developed by John Bowlby, describes the effects of early-life attachments to caregivers on later emotional development, interpersonal relationships and coping strategies over the lifespan. Although traditionally used in the context of child development, recent studies have shown its applicability to adult groups, even older adults placed in residential care groups. Being knowledgeable about attachment styles such as secure, anxious, avoidant and disorganized may help health and social care professionals to build meaningful relationships, assist with alleviating anxiety and improving the psychological wellbeing of older residents (Widom et al., 2018).

Application of Attachment Theory in Residential Care

Major life changes experienced by older adults in residential care pertain to loss of independence, social isolation, bereavement and health deterioration. Such experiences may provoke attachment-related distress especially in individuals with insecure attachment patterns. Using attachment theory, care staffs can recognize the relational needs of residents, become sensitive, and provide a safe and protective environment that facilitates trust and emotional safety (Widom et al., 2018).

Practically, this involves:

1. **Assessment of Attachment Styles** – It is possible to observe behaviors and patterns of communication and determine whether residents are more secure, anxious, or avoidant in relationships. Those residents that often need reassurances or express anxiety might be soothed through regular predictable communications (Evraire, Dozois and Wilde, 2022).
2. **Developing Secure Relationships** – The employees can build trust through empathetic listening, regular routine, and meaningful interactions. The higher the level of emotional safety, the more residents will be engaged in social activities, express needs, and apply therapeutic interventions.
3. **Integrating Attachment Principles into Care Planning** – Strategies to meet attachment needs may be included in individualized care plans; they may involve

frequent interactions with one caregiver, group activities in order to develop peer connections and the opportunity to maintain family relationships (Diamond, Diamond and Levy, 2021).

Case Scenario

Mrs. L, who is a 82-year-old patient in a care facility, displays social withdrawal and anxiety. She tends to miss group activities and always questions employees on whether her family will visit. History of worry and inconsistent caregiving and loss of intimate relationships are also observed, which characterizes an anxious attachment.

Using attachment-informed approaches, the care team implements the following strategies:

- Assigning a primary caregiver to provide consistent support and reassurance.
- Scheduling daily social check-ins and encouraging participation in small-group activities tailored to her interests, such as gardening and reminiscence sessions.
- Facilitating regular video calls with family members to maintain external attachment connections.

Throughout the course of a few weeks, Mrs. L begins to become more active, less anxious and develops trusting relationships with staff and other patients. The fact that she has better social involvement and emotional stability shows how the theory of attachment can be put into application to promote psychological wellbeing in residential care facilities.

Challenges in Applying Attachment Theory

One of the typical issues with the implementation of the attachment theory in care facilities is the turnover and inconsistency of the caregivers, which may compromise the feeling of security among the residents. Staff turnover can interrupt the formation of stable relationships, especially in residents with insecure attachment, and may worsen anxiety or withdrawal (Doyle and Cicchetti, 2017).

Strategy to Overcome the Challenge

To address this issue, care facilities may introduce a primary caregiver model, where every client is assigned a steady key worker who facilitates daily emotional assistance and wellbeing monitoring (Diamond, Diamond and Levy, 2021). Other tactics are:

- Providing every staff member with knowledge about attachment theory, relational cues, and how to react in a sensitive way to the needs of the residents.
- In case of staff changes, comprehensive handovers may help preserve relational stability and meet attachment needs of residents.
- When multiple staff members are encouraged to establish meaningful relationships with every resident, the dependency on one person is minimized, and the relational security is preserved (Widom et al., 2018).

Care homes can also maintain the beneficial effects of attachment-informed interventions, alleviating anxiety, loneliness, and behavioral difficulties and enhancing emotional resilience and wellbeing through proactive measures to mitigate staffing issues..

Conclusion

Attachment theory can be an effective tool in the advancement of psychological wellbeing of the elderly in residential care. Through assessment of attachment styles, the fostering of secure relationships and the application of attachment principles to the care plans, professionals can help residents to develop trust, ensure social engagement and to manage emotional difficulties. Practical examples, including regular caregiver rotation and systematic family engagement, show quantitative changes in emotional and social functioning of residents. Although there are issues like staff turnover, through organized caregiving systems and personnel training, it is possible to maintain relational security, as well as to maximize the benefits of attachment-informed care. Finally, the integration of attachment theory into residential care practice facilitates a person-centered practice with the appreciation of emotional safety, autonomy, and meaningful relationships among older adults.

References

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