

Personality theory applied to academic performance

Personology, or in its simple terms Personality psychology, is the study of the entire individual human (Boeree.,2017). When people think of one's personality, they may think of what makes people different, within traits and likes (Boeree.,2017) however, according to Feldman (1994) "personality is the sum of the characteristics" or the outlook of a person's behaviour across different situations. Personality is studied based on different theories (Boeree.,2017). Personality is known to affect academic performance in several ways as it is what makes people different and builds an individual, creating various reactions in situations or ways in handling stress. Stated by Ballotpedia (n.d.) academic performance is "the measurement of student achievement across various academic subjects". The most well known theory that will be critically discussed and compared throughout is Psychoanalytic Theory of personality, studying how having an imbalance of the thought to be stages of development influence academic performance, created by one of the most well known psychoanalysts to date Sigmund Freud (Daminabo, W. H.,2008). Compared to the theory by Adlur (Adlerian theory) and Karen Horney's theory of neurotic needs and her contradicting views to Freud. Sigmund Freud, was the originator of this theory. Freud led the belief that man's everyday behaviour is triggered by unconscious hidden forces within one's personality, which are created from earlier childhood experiences (Rennison, N.,2015). These play an important role in navigating our behaviour (Eyong, E. I et al.,2014). To completely understand a personality a individual needs to release what is unconscious, much like what is done by psychoanalytic therapists (Kris, E. 1951). According to Freud's model of personality, there are three components that develop through a child's earlier life, which are the id, the ego and the superego. Even though they are separate, work together within an individual(Maltby, J., Day, L., & Macaskill, A. 2017). The ID, according to Freud, is the only part of the three components we have from birth and is also the most inherited, yet unorganised bit of our personality. If not tailored to an instant state of anxiety arises (Maltby, J., Day, L., & Macaskill, A. 2017). For example, If a baby wants food, its instant reaction is to cry until it gets what it wants. It is very impulsive and works for immediate satisfaction as it works upon the "pleasure principle" driven by subconscious urges (Chamorro-Premuzic, T. 2016).

Neither does it change over time or with experience or get affected by our reality or logic, yet can be controlled better by techniques such as delaying gratification,planning and requesting (Maltby, J., Day, L., & Macaskill, A. 2017). Freud also believed that these three components can become over-dominated and not equally work together as they should, which can lead to later struggles (MSEd, K. C.,2022, September 13). In an academic context, if the id gets over dominated our academic performance can get affected by an individual not being patient, being destructive to get attention immediately, they also have no concern for others or their actions, which can make education harder for others (Maltby, J., Day, L., & Macaskill, A. 2017). The Ego, which lies amongst the id and the superego, develops from the reality principle.

Working to balance both the needs of the id and the superego and regulates thoughts and behaviour, the superego on the other hand, which arises around age 5, is the most moralistic component and stores parental and societal rules (MSEd, K. C. 2023, September 28). It provides us with guidance on how we should behave and what the perfect behaviour is and to lower urges from the ID. However, if it becomes over dominant an individual can become judgemental, meaning individuals strive to be the best and often see people lower than themselves.

Children that often have an over-dominant superego can't take part in outgoing activities (MSEd, K. C.,2023, September 28) and (Maltby, J., Day, L., & Macaskill, A. 2017) making it harder in school to fit in and make strong peer relationships. An imbalance can result in maladaptive personality (Pietrangelo, A.,2020, March 18) and if there was too much conflict between the ID and superego within someone's personality in the unconscious, the ego develops defence mechanisms to prevent anxiety. According to the psychoanalytic theory, this happens if the mind is aware that you might be put at harm or may develop feelings of hurt, without you being aware the defense mechanism will

strike (Holland, K.,2022, June 21). These include, Repression, which is a defense in which Freud saw two parts named 'primary repression' and 'repression proper' even though he often found it hard to showcase the both. The first referred to the way unwanted messages are turned away before it reaches awareness rather than staying in the unconscious. The second was proposed that a person becomes aware of these unwanted material from the original repressed information and then deliberately tries to remove them (Brewin, R.C & Berice, A 2000). Denial, which is one of the most popular people may know or come across in conversations, occurring when an individual does not accept reality or may block out certain events from their mind so that they don't have to deal with the emotional damage (Holland, K.,2022, June 21) and others being Projection, Displacement, Reaction formation, Conversation reaction, Phobic avoidance and Regression (Maltby, J., Day, L., & Macaskill, A. 2017). Stated by Cramer, P. (2015) defense mechanisms within this theory made it possible for the mind to close away harsh material with the purpose of defending people against painful thoughts and feelings. Freud's initial thought about the defenses was focused upon the relation with the defenses and instinctual drives, but were now known to act against the drives once added to the psychoanalytic theory. Freud had a strong view on the formation and causes of anxiety, stating "anxiety arises out of libido by the process of repression" (GÖKDAG. R, April 2015). An imbalance of these components can impact academic performance by resulting in a varying state of anxiety causing a struggle to go to new places with new people, making it harder to gain peer relationships and start new classes (Freud Museum London.,2021, June 16). Freud stated three types of anxiety a person may have which was reality anxiety, neurotic anxiety and moral anxiety. Reality anxiety occurring due to real life situations which arise a lot in school influenced by peers or work pressures.

Neurotic anxiety means to subconscious fears that happen when subconscious desires take control over the ego. A number of these defense mechanisms are applied into education as a defense to stress (GÖKDAG. R., April 2015). Freud saw direct coping as a change in behaviour due to a situation (Sahu, A.,2022, June 7), an individual may try to remove the obstacle between the goal and ourselves or give up. The ways for defensive coping are sub-conscious efforts to protect the self and to avoid damage to the ego and to decrease anxiety, defensive coping includes internal and subconscious conflicts that happen when we can't tolerate bringing a threatening problem to the level of consciousness or dealing directly with that situation (Fehr,2000). Freud also led the theory of psychosexual development. This theory was based upon 5 stages named Oral from birth to 1 year, Anal 18 months to 3 years, Phallic 3-5, Latency 5 to 12 and Genital 12-18 years or older (Elkatawneh, H.,2013). Thought to develop within a child's early development when the libido is collected in an erogenous zone. Erogenous zones are the parts of the child that is most pleasurable at that stage for a good development.

Throughout the oral stage a child needs good oral stimulation through food from their caregiver. If not given that gratification they may develop mistrust issues for others in the future. Or in other cases a child can become fixated. Freud describes fixation as an internal resistance to moving the libidinal energy elsewhere and saw a fixation as an indication of failure to progress through that given stage (Maltby, J., Day, L., & Macaskill, A. 2017). The adult that has failed this stage may be overly dependent on others for gratification and under indulgence may result in an adult having an oral aggressive personality.

An individual with this personality has an exploitative attitude to others. However, if successful they can move on to the next stage and so on, creating new erogenous zones along the way. Fixation can occur within every stage. Failure of completing the anal stage can result in an anal-retentive personality, making an individual stubborn and stingy. and tend to hoard things and delay gratification (Benveniste, D. 2015) If a fixation of this stage was to occur, an individual in school would be someone with the need of extreme control of their environment and have particular attention to detail even those that are not essential, to the extent of annoyance to others. An example of an individual with this sort of personality would be researching endlessly a piece of work before completing it. Further traits being rigid and being obsessed with being organised and on time and being clean all the time. This individual may be keen to always be organising and collect objects. Freud saw his thought

of anal retentive personality much like a person with OCPD (Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder) Cuncic, A., MA. (2023, May 30).

The phallic stage is based on the genital region, and is apparent harder for girls as they develop something called penis envy of boys. These developments are conjoined with parental relationships, boys are thought to see their parents as sexual objects and see their father as a rival, In time the boy will idolise the father, Freud left less importance for girls but showcased girls going through the same process but seeing mother as a rival named the electra complex and oedipal complex for boys. Through conflict girls result in a weaker ego functioning which makes it more difficult for them to balance the needs of the id and reality. Fixation at this stage will be apparent in adulthood, thought that the child will develop characteristics of the opposite sex, developing homosexuality (Maltby, J., Day, L., & Macaskill, A. 2017). Comparing Freud's proposal of this stage to Karen Horney, Horney who followed a lot of Freud's theory but disagreed varseely with his views on female psychology, she rejected his concept of penis envy for it to be inaccurate lowering to women. Horney instead proposed the concept of womb envy, as men cannot give birth (MSEd, K. C.,2023, November 13). Freud followed with the Latency and Genital stage, known to be the resting stage in the child's development and the other being the most challenging. The child's energies are taken up in socialisation (Rucks, E.,2015). During the genital stage, basic anxiety is developed by the conflicts between the id,ego and superego, and may have other conflicts from the previous stages, if they did not go successsfully, meaning they do not cope well with arise of sexual energies in adolescence caused by puberty. As a child goes through these stages the ego may struggle to balance out the needs of both the id and superego, if this is the case in an academic setting it could affect children by making it difficult to make friends, take part in activities and make it difficult to negotiate the reality principle. Other people on the other hand maybe have not achived a good oral stage resulting for them to not have the critical foundations of the main aspects of trust and love, this can affect academic performance by finding it hard to trust and be open, leading an individual to be very closed and find it hard to express themselves (Maltby, J., Day, L., & Macaskill, A. 2017).

Freud saw the young child's personality developing because of these developmental stages and that the basic adult personality is completed by age 5. Most important ones being the earliest which are as previously stated oral ,anal and phallic. Between these stages is also when the process of controlling the id begins, beginning with the development of the ego as the young individual learns about the surroundings and frustrated with parental discipline to challenge id drives. Between ages of 3-5 could be a possible hard time for the ego to balance out the demands of the id as it is believed to be fully developed at age 3 and the superego nor ego hasn't developed until the ages of 5 plus, which leaves a particularly difficult 2 year gap. Within this time is typically when a child interacts with more children during nursery and starts in an educational basis. which explains why children may be more aggressive or impulsive younger as the superego ego isn't there to tell them what is good to do and what is bad, it is a time you are truly dependent on the id. This could influence academic performance in younger years by the child being very impulsive in their actions and not listening to guidance from teachers or parents but compared by when they reach adolescence, they may be careless and develop a narcissistic personality (Johal. K.S, 2020).Freud is one of the most well known psychoanalytic theorists to date. However, he did not use empirical research or study during researching. Freud only used a case by case basis with his patients as a psychoanalyst and focused a lot on sex and pictured women as the lesser sex which gained him a lot of criticism (Maltby, J., Day, L., & Macaskill, A. 2017). Freud also believed that biological factors were the main influence in development and paid little attention to social factors. Another theory that studied personality development was by Alfred Adler (Adlerian theory) which showcased that humans are social beings and therefore all behaviour is socially created and has social meaning (Eife, G.,2019).

Adler was a medicine student from Vienna, and met Freud through defending the latters work in 1902 though was short lived, splitting from Freud in 1911 (Maltby, J., Day, L., & Macaskill, A. 2017). Adler set his own organisation, The Society For Free Psychoanalytic Research and claims that feelings of lowliness are the powerless of an infant. Adler stated that the feeling of leadership or

advantage and secondary status are very important for our personality as well as work, friendship and love and that parents should give the child with exact ideas of all three. Adler emphasised uniqueness of birth order and how it significantly affected style of life and if not successful can lead to a neurotic maladaptive personality (Siedlecki, V., 2013) (Pietrangelo, A. (2020, March 18). In education, neurotic individuals either over or under evaluate themselves, are tense and fearful, find hard making decisions and testing and find situations in which failure can happen hard and tend to avoid any failure or gain dominance of other people using their symptoms to empower guilt or fear into other people as a type of emotional blackmail and adapt defensive strategies to cover themselves (Maltby, J., Day, L., & Macaskill, A. 2017). Furthermore, a healthy development results in what Adler stated as social interest, the belief that as social people we are born with the need to collaborate with others. Adler, much like Freud, felt that the knowing of a person's personality was to come from an in-depth investigation of an individual's younger experiences (Sweeney, T. J., 2009). Adler was different to Freud by believing that society was another crucial aspect of personal development as well as emphasising social interest. Horney on the other hand, was in disbelief with the theory put forward by Freud of psychoanalysis, even though facing a lot of challenges being a woman in a career dominated by men. Horney made sure that women were the key to her research and became a secure thinker. Her research sparked from her questioning the reasoning of neurosis, as Freud placed this as a person's inability to cope with their sexual impulses but Horney saw it more from disturbed human relationships.

Suggesting that poor parenting had a huge impact on a child experiencing issues in adolescence and adulthood and strongly believed that Freud's theory of personality resulted to be too sparse showcase overall psychological human issues, portraying that culture and social relationship factors played a major role. However, Horney agreed with Freud's thought of anxiety, that it was created by conflicts within an individual between their internal drives and that particularly hard childhood experiences could result in maladjustment within their personality (Boeree, C. G., 1997).

Horney suggested that fears are dependent on culture and that the individual with a healthy development can adjust to these fears and make the most of it by using defence mechanisms much like what Freud described while Horney added to. However, the child that has been unfortunate and developed a neurotic personality can't adjust to those fears as the mechanisms can't be adapted to (Maltby, J., Day, L., & Macaskill, A. 2017) making it hard for them in academic settings to adjust new surroundings and make new friends, and taking on criticism. Horney placed the emphasis on the abnormal personality development and that individuals have neurotic needs and the fact that a child's energies are focused on the fulfilment of their neurotic needs as a defence against their basic anxiety. In education, neurotic individuals may be more anxious if not had their catered needs. She saw these needs to be need for affection and approval and things such as social recognition. Horney did not focus on the normal personality development as she found abnormality more leading and very little research has been done to test her theory but has gained supportive evidence.

To conclude, Freud gave us a verse basis for how personality develops and if not developed correctly, how it can go wrong, how one stage of development can affect the next and how individuals may gain a maladaptive personality applying this can impact academic performance.

However, Freud did not have much importance for women throughout his studies and did not conduct much research when creating it, sexualising a lot of his work towards the importance of men and sex. His theory of personality gained a lot of criticism from these points, allowing further theorists to contradict his views. Adler, on the other hand, focused a lot more on social interaction and social factors, although contributing to some aspects of Freud's theory. Horney had a great belief that Freud's theory had faults, and through her struggles of being a woman in a career of psychoanalysis being very male dominated. She had clear views that Freud's theory of penis envy and his view of women not being important was very false and saw male and female as equals and contributed to the research within abnormal personality development and further defence mechanisms she found through her studies. Evidence that personality theory can contribute to academic performance has been shown by all previously mentioned theorists. With Freud, if an imbalance of the components are not developed

properly, a maladaptive personality could be created, causing potential academic difficulties. Adler proposed that social influences could contribute to academic success or failure and if individuals do not have love, friendship or work, these could greatly affect their personality. Furthermore, Horney showcased a clear view of how an abnormal personality can affect academic performance through examining Freud's faults of neurosis.

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