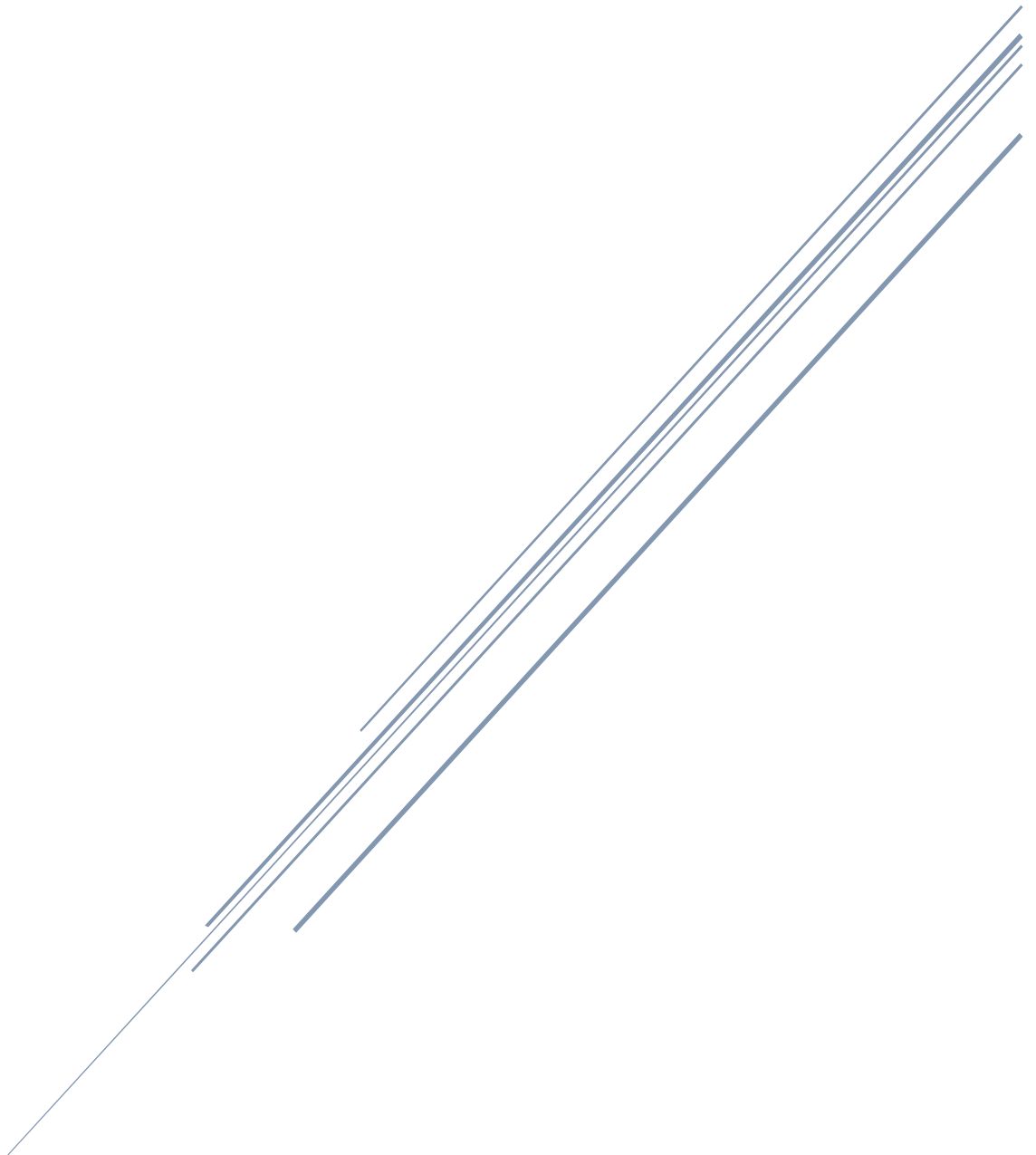


CASE STUDY REPORT

Psychology for Health and Social Care
Lecturer: Rebecca Kavanagh

BMHP4003_BIRM



Name: Stoyka Beleva
Number: 2017645

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Social identity theory and its application to the situation we have.....	3
The attribution theory and Fundamental attribution error	4
Frustration aggression hypothesis (FAH)	5
Conclusion. Proposing a solution.....	6
What could be done?	6
Future steps.....	6
Resources:	7

Introduction

The aim of this report is to support and provide more relevant information regarding the current complaint received against the member of the staff at the Reception desk in the Civil Counseling Center. The report will consider some of the main theories in the social and behavioral psychology, to explain and support the final recommendation. I am going to review shortly three main theories: The Social Identity theory, the Attribution theory and Fundamental attribution error (FAE) and some of the frustration- aggression hypothesis as a cause of antisocial behavior.

The following paragraph will provide you with some relevant information on the service user condition. Emery-Dreifuss muscular dystrophy (EDMD), named after two professors from UK and USA who first described the disorder (Dreifuss, 1961) and it is a muscle-wasting condition which usually begins in childhood. The condition causes muscle contracture at an early age and the heart, shoulders and upper limbs of the patient are affected in a specific way. There is no cure or treatment (a heart pacemaker can be attached when it is necessary).

There are concerns regarding the mental health in children and youth under 20s in England, as there is a possible rise of suicidal behavior in this age group. According to the study (Public Health NHS Trust, 2014) the ratio man-women within this age group is 4:1, suicide is usually a result of multiple factors among which are academic pressure, bullying, bereavement and long standing physical conditions which could lead to any forms of social exclusion.

Social identity theory and its application to the situation we have

The Social identity theory deals with the groups of people and what group you would say you belong to. These are groups we are interacting with on an everyday basis. We may identify ourselves as a member of a group of students in a particular school or college, or as a member of a family, or even as a Catholic. The idea behind this theory is that for every group with which you are possibly identifying yourself, there is another group of people who do not identify in the same way as you (Hogg, 2018). We are calling them “others”. People from other colleges, other families and practicing other religions. And during human history the conflicts between these groups are constantly presented and this impacted the peoples’ life everywhere around the globe. So, we are loyal to our group (Tajfel, 1979) and according to the Social identity theory during the process of being ‘us’ versus ‘them’ with the three stages of: categorization, identification and comparison.

If we think about the first step and the staff member and service user we will easily conclude that the staff member has categorized the world around her and she possibly belongs to a group of working people, groups of people without physical disability, group of women and she has a sense of belonging to adults as she is 58 years old. If we think about Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, once our basic needs are satisfied we are looking for love and belonging, so the staff receptionist is clearly being looking for professional belonging, social recognition, status and respect as well.

The service user from the other side is a young boy, with physical disability, mental health issues, who is unsure about his educational and future professional career development.

So, applying this theory it is clear that these two people are belonging to many different groups and the escalation of the situation during that day is a real fight of “us” versus “them”. And when we are talking about the last stage- comparison- this is where the us versus them starts into coming to play. The experiment of Tajfel’s with people giving more points to their group and less to the people from the other group shows that it is human nature to make this categorization and comparison.

The attribution theory and Fundamental attribution error

In the next paragraph I'm going to review another theory and will try to explain the behavior of the staff member and the service user from this point of view. The formal definition is provided by Fiske and Taylor (1991, p. 23) "Attribution theory deals with how the social perceiver uses information to arrive at causal explanations for events. It examines what information is gathered and how it is combined to form a causal judgment".

So this is all about how we are trying to find explanations for the behaviors around us. Normally we are breaking down their behavior into factors about them (internal, dispositional factors) and factors related to their environment and surroundings (external, situational). In the reality the behavior of other people is a combination of many factors and it is a combination of internal and external factors. So, how can we understand all this information? The covariation model is helping us to understand that if people behave in a certain way consistently for a long period of time, we are more likely to think that this behavior is caused by internal factors, factors related to that person internally. From other hand if the behavior is out of the character and if it is distinctive it is more likely for us to think that people's behavior is caused by a situation or environment.

The last factor I am going to talk about is the level of consensus. The idea behind this is that if more people from the group are behaving in a common way, there is a high level of consensus within the group, we are more likely to attribute the behavior to a situational cause (external factor), as opposite to an internal factor.

In the case study the staff member is considered to be generally punctual and polite, but behaved unprofessionally in one particular occasion with one particular user. So, if she normally is a nice colleague and tries to do her best, this unusual behavior is caused by external factors in this day. Future research might be needed in order to clarify which exactly are these factors. Maybe a conversation with the lady will give us more relevant information.

Here I will open brackets, just to add that if we apply the Fundamental attribution error (Jones and Harris, 1967) according to which there is a tendency for overemphasizing personal characteristics and ignore situation factors. In this case study the member of the staff is absolutely clear that she is working in a Civil Counseling Centre, so it is highly likely for people who are going there to look for any sort of help and support.

As for the service users' behavior we can apply the theory in its last part- the consensus level. The group of service users has behaved appropriately in the waiting room, and all of

them comply with the COVID rules. So, the young boy obviously has his personal reasons in order to behave differently. We can conclude that the cause for his behavior is internal.

Frustration aggression hypothesis (FAH)

- This is the last theory which I am going to apply to this case study and it is a part of the social psychological explanations of human aggression. The key concepts of the theory are that if someone behave aggressively, which has been called an aggressive drive, the aggression would act as an emotional release (cathartic). So, the key concept is that frustration always lead to aggression, aggression is always caused by frustration and being aggressive is cathartic, it releases the pent up emotion. (Green, 1968). In additional to this we have to take into account some facts:
- the fact that the cause of the frustration might be abstract – the economy, or something similar and we cannot be directly aggressive against the source, because it is abstract.
- sometimes, the cause of our frustration could be too powerful and we risk punishment by being aggressive against it.
- The cause might be unavailable at this moment, so we would express our aggression into an alternative resource- soft toy or young sibling, slamming the door etc.

Individual differences are also important when we are looking into this theory so, everyone can be frustrated sometimes. But not everyone is aggressive. People are developing different coping strategies to avoid being aggressive, some people are sad, some are crying. It is important to remember that individual difference really affect this theory.

In the case study the member of the staff acted aggressively and the causes of her frustration are unknown. Future conversations might help to clarify if it is something external, or abstract.

Conclusion. Proposing a solution.

I am concerned that the staff receptionist's behavior can affect the level of the service provided by the Civil Counseling Centre if the service users are unsatisfied. Her behavior also affecting the previously positive working environment and generates additional discomfort to other service users.

What could be done?

It will be helpful if the manager find opportunity to speak with the staff receptionist about her behavior and to discuss in normal conversation and in details the possible causes for the behavior, how she is doing recently, if there any major changes in her life etc.

There is a need to ensure the manager that the staff member understands and appreciates the seriousness of the situation.

Future steps

I would suggest the behavior of the staff member to be upheld and a special leave to be given to the staff receptionist. She can use this time to deal with any family or personal circumstances (if any) and to speak with the Staff Support Line about getting help in developing another coping mechanism in managing stress.

The Manager should send a letter of apology to the service user reassuring him that his concerns are taken into account and steps are being taken to ensure better service in the future.

Resources:

1. Boyes, Alice. "The Self-Serving Bias - Definition, Research, and Antidotes." Psychology Today Blog (2013, Jan 9). <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-practice/201301/the-self-serving-bias-definition-research-and-antidotes>
2. Dreifuss FE, Hogan GR. Survival in X-chromosomal muscular dystrophy. Neurology (Minneap) 1961;11:734-7.
3. Fiske, Susan T., and Shelley E. Taylor. Social Cognition: From Brains to Culture. McGraw-Hill, 2008.
<https://books.google.com/books?id=7qPUDAAAQBAJ&dq=fiske+taylor+social+cognition&lr>
4. McLeod, S. A. (2019, October 24). Social identity theory. Simply Psychology. www.simplypsychology.org/social-identity-theory.html
5. Miller, N. E. (1941). I. The frustration-aggression hypothesis. Psychological Review, 48(4), 337–342. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0055861>
6. ONS, Statistical bulletin: suicide in the United Kingdom, 2014 registrations. Registered deaths from suicide analysed by sex, age, area of usual residence of the deceased and suicide method, Office for National Statistics, Newport (2016)
7. Rogoff, B. (2003). The cultural nature of human development. Oxford [UK]: Oxford University Press.
8. Sherman, Mark. "Why We Don't Give Each Other a Break." Psychology Today Blog (2014, Jun 20). <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/real-men-dont-write-blogs/201406/why-we-dont-give-each-other-break>