



Review Of Selected Counselling Theories And Assumptions Of Human Nature

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ABSTRACT

The practice of modern day counselling is based on theories. Theories lead to practice and practice proves a theory as feasible or non-feasible. Each counselling theory derives its name from its theoretical base. Over the years the counselling practice has witnessed the emergence of different counselling theories each claiming to be differentially effective and uniquely applicable. However, counselling theories are like road maps that provides a guide as to the direction of the counselor. The complexity of human nature has been one of the most significant problems facing human beings from time memorial. Human beings come in diverse shapes and sizes and also behave in extremely complex ways. Throughout human race, no two individual are exactly alike. If human nature is fully understood, there would be no use for counselling theories. Counselling theories emerged in an attempt to give explanation to human nature. Theorists are concerned with how people think and behave the way they do. No doubt, different theorist came up with divergent views about human nature. It is the different basic assumption concerning human nature that differentiates one theorist from another. The foundation of each counselling theory is rooted in the theorist basic assumption about what humans are and these suppositions they make about human nature are equally rooted in their personal experiences; thus, influence the way individuals perceive and treat one another. Counsellors make use of theories to be able to find a base line for their counselling practice. These theories provide the base-board on which the counsellor can get a clue to client's problems. A theory acts as a map and gives direction and guidance to the counsellor in finding out, explaining and determining client's problems, differences and personality changes. Theories are utilized to simplify the complex problems of the counsellors and clients.

Keywords: Theory, counselling, human nature.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to review and compare some selected counselling theories in their basic assumptions of human nature. The following selected theories are: Psychoanalytic, Adlerian, Existential, Person centered, Gestalt Therapy, Transactional Analysis, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, Reality Therapy and Behaviour Therapy.

The paper commenced by answering the following questions: What is theory? What is counselling? What is human nature? Firstly, the term theory has several meanings. Scientifically, theory is seen as a set of statements used to explain and demonstrate certain phenomenon in a given area

In similar vein, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, defined theory as "a formal set of ideas that is intended to explain why something happens or exists". Therefore, theory provides a framework of ideas explaining phenomenon. Secondly, counselling is defined as the process whereby a person (counsee) enters a helping relationship with a professionally qualified counsellor to help the counsee in making choices and decisions leading to desirable development and growth throughout the lifespan (Eremie,

2006). Thirdly, human nature is seen through basic assumptions of various counselling approaches or theories in viewing human, the ways of behaving, thinking and feeling about self and others.

PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

Sigmund Freud created the original ideas pertaining to psychoanalytic theory. He interprets human nature as “determinist, “which are biological, steaming from unconscious drives and motives. These inborn impulses are viewed as influencing every aspect of the individual’s thinking and behaviour from the choices and decisions an individual makes in life. He contends that there are internal conflicts of an individual during the first six years of life. That, certain psychic energy (Libido) and aggressive impulses were repressed during the first six years of life. The psychic energy (Libido) and aggressive impulses if allowed to become conscious would produce extreme anxiety (Corey, 1991, Gladding, 2005; Eremie and Ubulom (2016).

Freud explained human nature in terms of a conscious mind, a preconscious mind, and an unconscious mind. The conscious mind enacts reality with the outside world, while the preconscious mind operates between the conscious and unconscious minds. According to Freud, within the preconscious are buried memories or forgotten life occurrences that can be recollected with the proper and adequate therapy. He further contends that the human personality is made of three distinct parts. They are the id, ego, and superego.

ADLERIAN THEORY

Afred Adler developed and founded the Adlerian counselling approach. In Adler’s view people are motivated by social interest rather than biological drive. He emphasized subjective feelings rather than classical biological drives as primary motivating force of life. He sees human behavior as purposeful and goal oriented. Adler indicated that human beings striving for perfection and coping with inferiority by working towards mastery are quite innate (Adler, 1979). The striving for significance and superiority is to attain a greater degree of the individual’s potential. He stresses that the goal of superiority enforces the development of human community. Individuals are unique in the way they strive for competence constitute their individuality (Corey, 1991)

EXISTENTIAL THEORY

Existentialism is a product of several eminent theorists, such as, Victor Frankl, Rollo May, Irvin Yalom, Soren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, to mention but few (Gladding, 2005). It uses six propositions as core component of basic assumptions of human nature. They are as follows:

1. Human beings have the capacity for self awareness: The greater our awareness, the greater our chances for freedom.
2. Freedom and responsibility: Human beings are free to choose, and are responsible for their choices.
3. Human beings are striving for identity and relationship to others: That is, human beings have the propensity to find or create their personal identity; and at the same time be able to give themselves to others harmoniously.
4. The search for meaning is distinctly human characteristics: That is, “why am I here? What do I want from life? What gives my life purpose? Where is the source of meaning for me in life?
5. Anxiety as a condition of living: They see anxiety as part and parcel of life. Human experience anxiety for growth. That is, normal anxiety contributes to growth in human lives (Frankl, 1978; May and Yalom, 1989; Corey 1991).

PERSON – CENTERED COUNSELLING

Carl Rogers originated the person centered counselling theory. Other proponents of person centered counselling are: C.H.Patterson, Nicholas Hobbs, and E.T. Genlin. Rogers views human as essentially good, positive, trustworthy, forward moving, realistic, and self-directed (Rogers, 1961). He believes that humans have the natural ability to perceive reality and not controlled by outside events. Similarly, he believed that the individual has innate capacity to stay away from maladjustment to psychologically balanced healthy living (Eremie and Ubulom 2016). Also, Rogers contends that clients have capacity for

self awareness and others. Corey, (1991) opined that “people never arrive at a static state of being self-actualized; rather, at best they are involved in the process of actualizing themselves” (p.208).

GESTALT THERAPY

Frederick Perls founded gestalt therapy. Gestalt theory stresses the importance of the “whole person”, that is how people function as a total units, other than individual parts (Perls, 1969). Gestalt’s view of human nature is antideterministic – meaning that each person is able to change and become responsible in dealing with self and other (Gladding, 2005). Perl contends that people form their life patterns by the choices they make in life; and that people must accept personal responsibility, if they hope to achieve maturity. Also, it is of his view that each individual strives for self-actualization, which is “here and now”. People who are healthy are those most aware of themselves. That, people face problems in life because of inability to identify and resolve “unfinished business”.

TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

Eric Berne originated Transactional Analysis (TA). It is an optimistic approach to counseling, regarding human nature. According to Gladding (1988, p.114). TA focuses on four core areas of understanding and predicting human behavior

- **Structural Analysis:** Understanding what is happening within the individual. In structural analysis, each person is considered to have three functional ego states – child, parent, and Adult.
- **Transactional analysis:** Describing what happens between two or more people. This is done through diagramming of ego state transactions.
- **Game analysis:** Understanding transactions between individuals that lead to bad feelings.
- **Script analysis:** understanding the life span that an individual is following.

TA views humans as having the capacity to develop new positive goals and behaviors. That, humans have made early life decisions when they were highly dependent on the influences of others, but they can review and challenge these early decisions and make changes (Berne, 1964). The individual has three distinct patterns of behavior or ego states. This are: Parent, Adult, and Child (P.A.C). The parent ego state contains “should” and “ought”. Each individual has a “nurturing parent” and a “critical parent”. The parent ego state incorporates the attitudes and behaviors of parental figures. That is, the adult ego state is the processor of data/information. This part of the individual is neither emotional nor judgmental, but rather works with facts and innact external reality. While, the child ego part of the individual consists of feelings, impulses, and uncontrollable acts.

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy

Rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT), formally known as rational-emotive therapy was founded by Abert Ellis. Ellis proposed that “events, in and of themselves, are neither good nor bad; therefore, a person’s feelings are not a direct result of an event” (Erford, et.al, 2011,p.132). He developed the ABCs of RET. “A” stands for the activating experience; “B” represents how the individual thinks and feels about the experience; and “C” is the consequences of reaction to “B” “B” is also the totality of the individual’s belief system about self and environment (Ellis, 1962; Eremie and Ubulom (2006). He later expanded the concept including “D” representing disputing intervention; and “E” effective new philosophy, which is as result of disputing. “E” is an effective rational philosophy replacing irrational thoughts to new appropriate feelings. The followings are core assumptions of human nature:

- That human beings are born with mental characteristics of both rational and irrational thinking.
- People can think positively or negatively. Positive thinking creates self-preservation, happiness, while negative thinking creates propensities for self-destruction.
- People have the capacity to change their negative or faulty thinking patterns for productive and self-development thoughts.
- REBT contends that blame is the cause of most emotional disturbances and illnesses (Ellis and Dryden, 1987).

Reality Therapy

William Glasser originated the reality therapy. The approach is active, directive, practical, didactic, and behavioral in application. It focusses on behavior, not attitude, feelings, past or unconscious motivation (Glasser and Zuin, 1979).

Assumptions of human nature

Glasser believed that people are self-determining and have control over their actions. That is, human behavior is purposeful and arises from within the individual rather than being motivated by outside forces. Glasser indicated that our behavior is directed to fulfilling our basic human needs (Glasser, 1985). He further identifies the basic needs as belonging, power, freedom, and fun (Glasser, 1989). Therefore, reality therapy assumes that individuals have the motivation to shape their own destiny by what they choose to do. It's focus is on helping clients to learn behaviors that will lead to a productive and successful life (Glasser, 1981). That, people have problems in life when they are not taught to take responsibility for their own behaviors or refuse to accept responsibility.

Behavior Therapy

John Krumboltz, Carl. Thoresen, Joseph Wolpe, Ivan Pavlov, B.F. Skinner, Arnold Lazarus, Albert Bandura, Jack Michael, Lee Meyerson, R.E. Hosford and Santa Barbara are some of the frontliners of behavior therapy, even though, there are several others. According to Corey (1991,p.293), he stated that "modern behavior therapy is grounded on a scientific view of human behavior that implies a systematic and structured approach to counselling".

Assumption of human Nature

There is no single characteristic that can comprehensively explain the assumptions of human nature as practiced by various behavioral theorists. Even though, there are differences in their approaches, they all have fundamental understanding in most areas regarding the fact that human behavior is learned and is therefore subject to change. That is, behaviorists studying humans through their overt behaviors here and now. There is a common belief among behaviorists that humans have the capacity to unlearn unproductive behaviors by specifically changing or altering the individual's environment. Behaviorists view man as a product of conditioning. They believe that man is not born good or bad but a blank slate interaction with his environment and heredity produces his behavior and subsequently his personality. Man's personality is made up of positive and negative habits, both of which are learned. An individual's behavior is determined by the type of reinforcement given to him in his life's time. Behaviorists do not believe that behavior is caused by internal unobservable conditions, but by observable states. (Uzoeshi, 2005).

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

The complexity of human nature has been one of the most significant problems facing human beings from time memorial. Uwe (2016) noted that human beings come in diverse shapes and sizes and also behave in extremely complex ways. Throughout human race, no two individuals are exactly alike. If human nature is fully understood, there would be no use for counselling theories. Counselling theories emerged in an attempt to give explanation to human nature. Theorists are concerned with how people think and behave the way they do. No doubt, different theorists came up with divergent views about human nature. It is the different basic assumption concerning human nature that differentiates one theorist from another.

The foundation of each counselling theory is rooted in the theorist's basic assumption about what humans are and these suppositions they make about human nature are equally rooted in their personal experiences; thus, influence the way individuals perceive and treat one another. Anasbogu (1992) stated that counsellors make use of theories to be able to find a base line for their counselling practice. These theories provide the base-board on which the counsellor can get a clue to client's problems. A theory acts as a map and gives direction and guidance to the counsellor in finding out, explaining and determining client's problems, differences and personality changes. Theories are utilized to simplify the complex problems of the counsellors and clients.

From the foregoing the study recommends that:

1. Every practicing counsellor must have a basic knowledge of the existing counselling theories upon which he/she can hinge his/her practice on otherwise he groups in the dark.
2. Every theory has a set of stated assumptions about human nature, these assumptions must be known as a creed because they will form the basis upon which the counselling relationship can be built upon.
3. Counsellor should consider the clients problems and match them along with the most appropriate approach based on an objective assessment of the behavior/problem in question.
4. Most of these counselling theories available have not been adapted and so must be used with a lot of caution within the Nigerian environment.

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