Review of Person Centered Counselling Theory

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Abstract
This paper reviewed person centered counselling theory in the following areas: view of human nature, goals of the person centered counselling, qualities of person centered counselor, the role of person centered counsellor, techniques of person centered counsellor, and criticism. Carl Rogers views human nature as having the potential to be good, positive, trustworthy, forward moving, realistic, and self-directed. Person centered approach focus its basic tenets towards achieving client’s independence, growth and integration. Qualities of person centered counsellor demonstrate the core conditions of counselling, which are genuiness/congruence, respect/unconditional positive regard, and empathy. The role of the person centered counsellor is to facilitate by providing warm and accepting relationship, listening to client’s verbal and nonverbal languages, and be able to reflect such feelings. Techniques of the counselor include: permissive and non-intervention atmosphere, acceptance and clarification, empathy, and positive regards. The approach is criticized to be too general, lacking clearly defined terms of techniques. That, person centered approach depends on clients who are bright, educated, insightful, and self-directed.

Keywords: Client centered counseling, psychoanalytic approach, self-actualization

INTRODUCTION
Person Centered Counselling is also known as self-theory, Rogerian counselling, client centered counselling, and non-directive counselling (Eremie, 2005). Carl Rogers, who is the most identified with person centered counselling was born in 1902 at Oak Park, Illinois, Chicago. He was the fourth child in the family constellation. He attended Teachers’ College, Columbia University, where he studied clinical and educational psychology, earned an M.A. degree in 1928 and a Ph.D. degree in 1931. He worked with the society for the prevention of cruelty to children in Rochester, New York. His twelve (12) years service at this agency tremendously influence his concept of counselling. He was dissatisfied with the psychoanalytic approach of working with troubled individual. He considered psychoanalytic approach time-consuming and appeared ineffective. It was revealed to him that insight alone produced little change to the clients he was working with; but when he introduced open and permissive relationship, clients seem to improve (Gladding, 1988).
Based on his self-discovery and conviction that diagnostic concepts and procedures of psychoanalytic approach were inadequate, prejudicial, and often misused, he deviated from psychoanalytic school of thought, and formed Nondirective counselling approach (Corey, 1991). This approach avoided placing the
counsellor at the center of the counselling relationship. Rogers basic beliefs were that humans are essentially trustworthy, self-directing, and having the potential for understanding themselves in resolving their own problems without counsellor’s direct intervention (Rogers, 1951 and Rogers, 1970).

**View of Human Nature**
Rogers views humans as having the potential to be good, positive, trustworthy, forward moving, realistic, and self-directed. He held that humans have the natural ability in perceiving quality and not overly controlled by outside contingencies. He believes that the self is an outgrowth of the individual’s total experiences. That is, no two individuals are exactly the same. Person centered approach extends accurate empathic understanding of clients’ feeling and desires. He emphasized that client’s success in counselling requires unconditional positive regard and acceptance.

It is the belief of person centered approach that each person is capable of maintaining a personal meaning and purpose in life. For Rogers, self-actualization is the most innate and motivating drive of existence. Rogers (1959) indicated that human infants possess the following traits:
1. Whatever an infant perceives is that infant’s reality. An infant’s perception is an internal process of which no one else can be aware.
2. All infants are born with a self-actualizing tendency that is satisfied through goal-directed behaviour.
3. An infant’s interaction with the environment is an organized whole, and everything an infant does is interrelated.
4. The experiences of an infant may be seen as positive or negative according to whether the experiences enhance the self-actualization tendency.
5. Infants maintain experiences that are actualizing and avoid those that are not.

Rogers also held that through the process of socialization the self-concept of the child formed by parental and societal values, by so doing, the potential to grow to be a fully functioning unique person is thwarted. The child learns to please others. That is, person centered counselling is also a self-theory in that people act in view to their self-concept. One’s self-concept is influenced in great extent by experiences with others (Capuzzi & Gross, 1991). For a healthy self to grow, a person needs positive regard, such as love, wrath, respect, acceptance, and unconditional regard by others.

**Goals of the Person Centered Counselling**
The goals of the Person Centred Counselling are quite different from those of traditional models (Corey, 1991). Person centered approach focus its basic tenets toward achieving client’s independence, growth and integration. Person centered counselling relationship does not focus on the presenting problems of the client, but rather on the person. That is, growth process of the person is the centered focus of the counselling relationship (Rogers, 1977). Eremie (2005) outlined the following goals of person centered counselling:
1. The goals of the client centered counselling are focus on the client and not the problems presented during counselling sessions.
2. Counsellors assist clients to become fully functioning individuals in self actualization.
3. Counsellor helps client to be more realistic in their self perceptions.
4. Counsellor helps clients to be more confident and self-directing.
5. Counsellor encourages client to be more positively valued by themselves.

Before clients are able to work toward the above stated goals, they must first get behind the previous stereotyped constructs in the process of socialization (Corey, 1991). Boy & Pine (1963) said ultimately, a client is helped to identify, use, and integrate his or her own resources and potential. For clients to achieve the above goals, the counsellor as a facilitator must have admirable qualities.
Qualities of Person Centered Counselling
Rogers believed that counsellors must demonstrate the core conditions of counselling, which are: genuineness/congruence, respect/unconditional positive regard, and empathy to enhance client’s change, growth and self-actualization. In the same vein, clients must also regard counsellors as genuine, respectful, and empathic (Erford, Hays, Crockett & Miller, 2011). The core conditions are hereby further explained by Erford, et al (2011), as follows:
Genuine counsellors are authentic. They are honest with their clients and ensure that counsellor verbal and nonverbal communications is congruent. Being genuine helps to build trust in the counselor – client relationship.
Client centered counsellors strive to show respect, acceptance and unconditional positive regard for their clients. Counsellor may not agree with everything that a client does, but they must continue to communicate their acceptance of the client as a person. The importance of this condition is paramount... to develop integrated identity. Empathic counsellors successfully enter the client’s worldview and are able to convey their understanding of a client’s thoughts, feelings, and actions.

The Role of Person Centered Counsellor
The role of person centered counsellor is guided and directed by the basic tenets of person centered approach; which provides a warm and accepting relationship. Counsellor is to listen attentively to all verbal and nonverbal languages of the client, and be able to reflect to the client unconditionally (Eremie, 2005).
Person centered counsellor is real in the relationship with clients in facilitating the counselling process rather than directing so that clients experience freedom to explore areas of self defeating or distorted feelings. The counsellor creates enabling interpersonal climate of trust, respect and genuine care, so that client will explore areas that are denied to awareness.
Person centered counsellors do not recommend psychological assessment, except requested by the client. Counsellor only focuses on the meaning of the test, not the test scores to avoid labeling clients with results. In additions, counsellors do not make diagnosis of the client’s behaviour, because diagnosis is incompatible with the philosophical framework of the approach.

Techniques of Person Centered Counsellor
Person centered counsellor creates a permissive and non-intervention atmosphere, which encourages client’s self-direction with a sense of independence. Similarly, acceptance and clarification are both techniques frequently utilized by person centered counselors. Counselors focus their greatest emphasis on creating a nonthreatening relationship. Also, counselors respond to clients’ feelings with unconditional regard, and reflecting back to clients underlying affect. Empathy, positive regard, and genuineness are techniques frequently utilized in counselling relationship (Corey, 1986).
Rogers (1967:73) listed six necessary and sufficient conditions for a counselling relationship:
1. Two persons are in psychological contact.
2. The first person, the client, is in a state of incongruence and is vulnerable or anxious.
3. The second person, the counsellor, is congruent, or integrated in the relationship.
4. The counsellor experiences unconditional positive regard for the client.
5. The counsellor experiences an empathic understanding of the client’s internal frame of reference and attempts to communicate this experience to the client.
6. There is at least a minimal degree of communication to the client of the counsellor’s understanding and unconditional positive regard.

Criticisms of the Person Centered Approach
Nye (1981) opined that person centered approach is seen as an approach too general, as such lacking clearly defined terms of techniques. On the part of Thomson & Rudolph (1983), they viewed person centered as an approach that depend on clients that are bright, educated, insightful, self directed for
its best counselling results. Critic, such as, Hergenhahn (1984) opined that the approach ignores diagnosis of client. That is, the approach is considered diagnosis inhumane; by so doing, the approach overly optimistic. Gladding (1988) opined that the approach "deals only surface issues and does not challenge the client to explore deeper areas" (p.83).
Corey (1991) viewed the approach as overly supportive of the client, without being challenging some irrational belief systems of the client in the counselling relationship. Similarly, Combs (1988) opined that person centered counsellors opposed teaching clients, since counsellors do not actually know what is best for the client. He contends that person centered counsellors should recognize and accept the responsibility of teaching clients in achieving their counselling goals in making desirable changes.
Prochaska & Norcross (2007:160) pointed out some of the criticisms levied against person centered approach:
1. Control subjects who are not candidates for therapy.
2. Omitting an untreated control group
3. Failing to control for place to effects
4. Relying one self-report measures which are so open to demands to please the therapist or experiments
5. Neglecting the actual behaviour and functioning of clients in favour of ratings of their subjective experiences.

CONCLUSION
Carl Rogers’s basic beliefs were that humans are essentially trustworthy, self-directing, having the potential for understanding themselves and others; without direct intervention (Rogers, 1951; Rogers, 1970). Rogers views human as having natural ability in perceiving reality and not controlled by outside forces.
The goals of the person centered counselling are quite different from those of the traditional models. Person centered approach focus its basic tenets toward achieving clients’ independence, growth, and integration. The role of the person centered counsellor is guided and directed by the basic tenets of providing warm and accepting counselling relationship. Counsellors do not recommend psychological assessment, except requested by the client.
The techniques of person centered counsellor are mainly creating permissive and non-permissive atmosphere, acceptance and clarification, reflection of feelings, empathy, positive regard and genuineness. Counsellors focus their greatest emphasis on creating a non-threatening relationship.
The approach was criticized to be too general, as such lacking clearly defined terms of techniques. That, the approach only deals with surface problem, but not deeply noted in deeper issues of the client.

References


