Review of Psychoanalytic Approach to Counselling

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ABSTRACT
This paper reviewed the following concepts in psychoanalytic approach to counselling: view of human nature, structure of human personality, psychosexual development stages, and goals of psychoanalytic counselling, techniques of the counsellor, defense mechanisms, relationship between counsellor and clients, and criticism. The psychoanalytic view of human nature is basically deterministic. The structure of human personality is made of three distinct parts: id, ego, and superego. Psychosexual development stages are: oral stage, anal stage, phallic stage, and latency stages. The techniques of the counsellor include: free association, dream analysis, analysis of transference, analysis of resistance, and interpretation. Defense mechanisms include: repression, projection, reaction formation, displacement, rationalization, denial, and identification. Psychoanalytic counsellors experience transference and counter transference. The behaviourists criticized psychoanalysis as too subjective and unscientific in their methodologies.

Keywords: psychoanalysis, human behavior, Oedipus complex, counselling

INTRODUCTION
Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) is known as the father of psychoanalysis theory. Freud developed psychoanalytic theory over a hundred years ago. It should be noted that psychoanalysis was the first psychological theory to be widely accepted in Europe and North America (Erford, Hays, Crockett & Miller, 2011). His work influenced several therapists around the entire world of learning. Latter on eminent therapists, such as Alfred Carl Jung, Anna Freud, Erik Erickson, Harry Sullivan, Rollo May and Fritz Perls were interested in the theory and practice of psychoanalysis, and contributed to the advancement of the theory and practice.

Sigmund Freud was born at Freibury, Austria in 1856. He earned a medical degree from the University of Vienna. Freud spent most of his life to formulate and extend the basic tenets of his theory of psychoanalysis (Corey, 1991). Most of the other counselling theories are influenced by psychoanalytic theory.

View of Human Nature
The psychoanalytic view of human nature is basically deterministic. Freud advanced that human behaviour is determined by unconscious motivation, irrational forces, biological, instinctual drives and psychosexual activities during the first six years of life. 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. Also, Freud posited that, if the psychic energy (Libido) and aggressive impulses were allowed to become conscious, would produce extreme anxiety. Furthermore, Freud postulated that, although these memories and experience are buried unconscious, they still have powerful influence or effect on the individual’s personality and behaviour in later life. Unconscious experiences have a powerful influence on our everyday activities (Gladding, 2005). Freud explained human nature in terms of a conscious mind, 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 and has aspects of the two minds (conscious and unconscious). According to Freud, within the preconscious are buried memories of forgotten life occurrences that can be recollected with the proper and adequate therapy (Gladding, 2005 and Eremie, 2005).

**Structure of human personality**
According to Freud, the human personality is made of three distinct parts. They are the id, ego, and superego. The id and superego are within the unconscious; while the ego operates within the conscious as well as in the domains of preconscious and unconscious. The id is made up of basic inherited traits of the personality and is present from birth. It is impulsive and irrational and acts according to pleasure principle. It also acts on primitive aggressive and sexual drives. The ego moderates the wishes and desires of the id and superego. The ego keeps the id from getting out of control. It operates according to the reality principle. The superego serves as the moral aspect of the mind. It operates according to what is ideal. Also, it operates on the moral principle, and serves as the parent (Corey, 1991 and Monte, 1991).

**Psychosexual Developmental Stages**
The oral stage is the first of the five main stages. Anal stage is very significant in formation of human personality. Children under the age of one see the mouth as the center of pleasures. They derive gratification from sucking and biting. Infant needs to get basic nurturing, otherwise later feelings of greediness and acquisitive tendency may develop. Sucking produces erotic pleasure. Nevertheless, adults who exhibit excessive oral desires, such as, excessive eating, chewing, talking, smoking, and drinking may have an oral fixation, according to Freud. Later the infant could develop personality problems, such as, mistrust of others, rejecting others love, fear of forming intimate relationship (Corey, 1991). The second stage is the anal stage. Infants within the ages one to three have pleasure in either withholding or eliminating feces during toilet training. Main developmental task include: learning independence, accepting person power, and learning to control negative feelings such as, rage and aggression. The third stage is the phallic stage. Children within the ages of three to six, according to Freud center energies at the sex organs. Basic conflict centers on unconscious incestuous feeling that the infant developed for parent of opposite sex, but because of fear of threat, feelings are repressed. Oedipus complex affects both boys and girls. The Oedipus complex for girls is sometimes called Electra stage of “Penis envy” among girls. While, the boys demonstrate desire to possess the mother sexually. (Corey, 1991 and Eremie, 2005). After the phallic stage is the quite period for ages between 6 and 12, and it is called “latency”. Children show little interest in psychosexual activities, rather they channel their energies to peer activities and mastery in cognitive and physical skills development.

**Techniques of the Counsellor**
Freudian techniques are as follows:

1. **Free Association:** repressed thoughts and feeling in the unconscious are always seeking release. The client may express them in the form of sexual jokes, an aggressive nature, or “Freudian Slips”.
2. **Dream Analysis:** Clients report dreams to the counsellor, and he or she assists in interpreting the dreams (Capuzzi & Black, 1986)
3. **Analysis of Transference:** Through transference, a client is able to express or work through repressed emotional experiences toward self and others (Singer, 1970).
4. **Analysis of Resistance:** The counsellor assists the client dealing with resistance. Client may show resistance in form of – missing appointment, being late to counselling sessions, refusing to recall dreams, and blocking thoughts during free associations.
5. **Interpretation**: Interpretation is a technique used by psychoanalytic counsellors in pointing out, explaining, and to a greater extent, teaching the client the forms and meaning of presenting behaviour in dreams, free association, resistances and the counselling relationship in any given sessions. Interpretation is crucial and grounded in the counsellor’s assessment of the client’s personality and behaviour.

**Defense Mechanisms**
Anna Freud (1966) concluded that ego defense mechanisms are what shield or protect the individual from being overpowered by anxiety, through denial of events. The following are some defense mechanisms commonly used by clients during counselling sessions (Anna Freud, 1966).

**Repression**: This is the mechanism whereby the ego in voluntarily keeps out any unwanted or painful thoughts, feeling, memories, or impulses from consciousness.

**Projection**: The mechanism by which a client disguises the source of conflict in oneself by attributing motives to someone else. For example, a woman may say that her friend is annoyed with her instead of her to say she is annoyed with her friend.

**Reaction Formation**: The mechanism whereby anxiety producing thought, feelings, or impulses are repressed and their opposites expressed. For example, when a person pretends liking a disliked person by showing attention.

**Displacement**: The mechanism whereby a person’s energy is channeled away from one object/person to another, which is considered safe to the person doing the displacement. For example, John had a bad day with his boss at work, when he returned home; he kicked his poor dog at the door welcoming him.

**Regression**: The mechanism whereby an individual returns to an earlier stage of development. For example, a child when put under pressure may result in wetting the bed.

**Rationalization**: The mechanism whereby a person finds a reasonable explanation for unreasonable act in order to make the act sound logical and acceptable. For example, a student who parties every day and fails an English test, would rationalize the failing grades as being from the unfair nature of the teacher.

**Denial**: The mechanism whereby an unpleasant or traumatic reality is not acknowledged consciously as reality. For example, a man whose left leg was amputated after a soccer match sees his leg as not being amputated. Denial may help the individual cope with the situation initially.

**Identification**: The mechanism whereby a person incorporates the qualities of another person. Example, a younger one may identify with his feared older brother. It helps because the younger brother may remove the fear he has of his older brother (Arlow, 1984).

**Relationship between Counsellor and Client**
Psychoanalytic counsellors experience transference in the counselling process. That is, the client shifting unconscious feelings and fantasies, which could be positive or negative that are displacements from reactions rooted in client’s past. If the client will benefit from counselling, he or she must be worked through. Counsellor will assist client working through core conflicts and core defenses in his or her daily life events. In reverse, counselors do demonstrate counter transference during counselling process – that is, irrational reactions counsellors have toward their clients that may interfere with their objectivity during the sessions (Searles, 1979).

**Criticism of Psychoanalysis**
The behaviourists criticized psychoanalysis as too subjective and unscientific in their methodologies. Psychoanalytic motions of conscious mind, preconscious mind, unconscious mind, ego, and defenses are entirely mentalistic, as such, cannot be linked to observable behaviours; therefore, cannot be objectively measured. That, there are no empirical data to demonstrate that psychoanalysis works.

Existentialists consider psychoanalytic approach to counselling too deterministic for their linking. That, psychoanalysis lacks human freedom and choice, whereby, dehumanization creeps in the counselling process. (Prochaska & Norcross, 2007).

Despite the strengths of psychoanalysis, most counselors do not often use the approach as a result of the following:

1. The approach is time consuming and expensive. Clients are seen weekly, about three to five times; and take many years to complete the sessions (Arlow, 1984).
2. The approach appears to be working with younger clients than older clients, ranging age 50 and above.
3. The approach is mostly practiced by medical practitioners, and leave little room for non-medical practitioners, making the practice closed system (Gladding 1988). That, the approach is deterministic.

CONCLUSION
Sigmund Freud developed psychoanalytic theory over a hundred years ago. His theoretical perspective influenced several therapists around the entire world of learning. The psychoanalytic view of human nature is basically deterministic. Freud advanced that people’s behaviour is determined by unconscious motivation, irrational forces, biological, instinctual drives, and psychosexual activities during the first six years of life.

According to Freud, the human personality is made of three distinct parts; namely – id, ego and superego. There are five stage of psychosexual development. They are oral stage, anal stage, phallic stage, latency stage, and genital stage. The goals of psychoanalysis cover personal adjustment of client’s internal forces, unconscious aspects of personality, gaining insight and growth and development. The counsellor functions in the role of expert in fostering a transference relationship.

The Freudian techniques are as follows: Free association, dream analysis, analysis of resistance, and interpretations: Anna Freud identified the following defense mechanisms: repression, projection, reaction formation, displacement, regression, rationalization, denial, and identification. The counsellor and client experience transference and counter transference. Several criticisms were levied against psychoanalytic approach.

References