

Historical perspectives of Psychology

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Source:Books

References:

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Learning objective:

Students would get a historical perspective about the development of psychology as an independent body of knowledge. The emphasis is on understanding human behaviour from each school's perspective in respect of human motivation, development and functioning of human personality and the application of principles of each school to the development of mankind as well as its therapeutic value.

This not only helps the students in understanding concepts, principles, techniques developed in various approaches but also very much helpful in application of these in counselling and psychotherapy that must be thoroughly studied and applied under the supervision of mental health professionals guidance.

Personality:

“The sum total of characteristics that differentiate people or stability in a person’s behaviour across different situations”.

The most intensive topic in the world of philosophy and psychology is personality and self. Psychology rests on measuring and shaping personality.

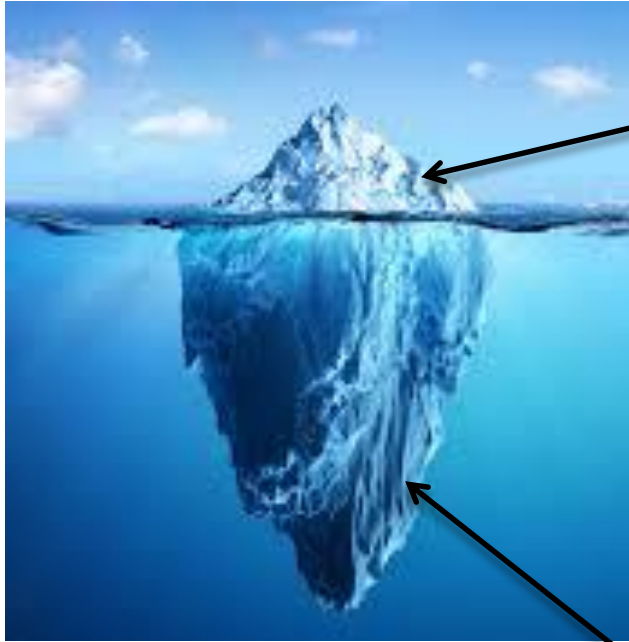
Psychologically there are different approaches they differ markedly in the constructs they propose as structure of personality and the way they relate these constructs to behaviour; methods they use to assess or measure personality.

Sigmund Freud's approach on Personality

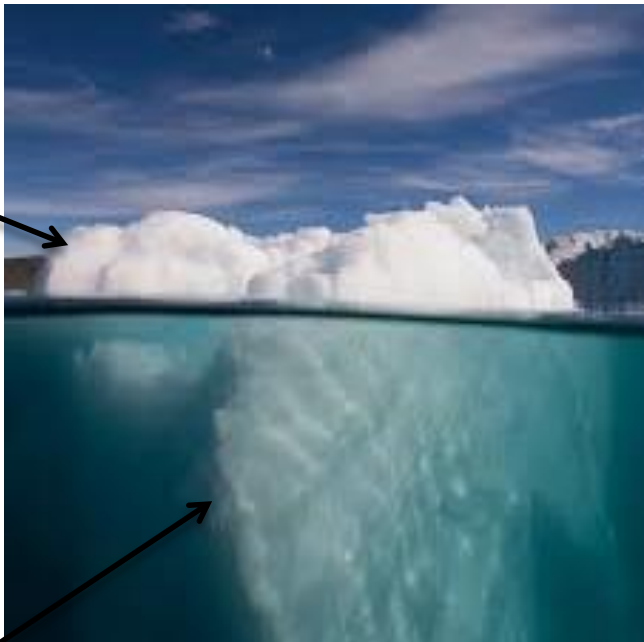
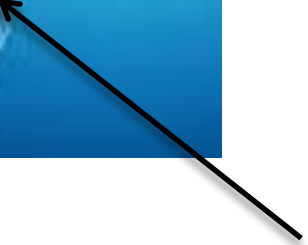
Freud's Psychoanalytic approach:

According to psychoanalysts our behaviour is triggered largely by powerful forces within our personality of which we are not aware. These hidden forces shaped by our childhood experiences, play important role in energizing and directing our everyday behaviour. The most important theorist to hold such a view is best known figures of psychology is ,**Sigmund Freud**. He was an **Austrian** physician he originated psychoanalytic theory or approach in early 1900s.

Freud compared human mind to ice berg, the small part that shows on surface of water represents conscious experience, while the much larger mass below water level represents unconscious-a storehouse of impulses, passions, primitive instincts that affect our thought. It was this portion he tried to explore by the method **of free association**.



Conscious Mind



Unconscious Mind



Structure of personality:

According to this approach personality composed of three major factors

1. **ID**
2. **EGO**
3. **SUPER EGO**

These three have their own functions but they interact to govern behaviour.

The ID:

Id is original source of personality. It is raw, unorganised, inherited part of personality, present from the time of birth. It is closely linked to biological processes related to hunger, sex, aggression and irrational impulses and fueled by psychic energy source (libido).

It operates to pleasure principle, in which the goal is the immediate reduction of tension and maximization of satisfaction.

In simple terms, Id wants what it wants and when it wants it. It is demanding.

EGO:

It works on reality principle. It works as a mediator and organizer.

The Ego is aware of both the pressures of the Id and the constraints of superego. It uses logic, intelligence, objectivity and awareness of external reality to integrate all the sources into choices and behaviours that promote self-preservation.

A healthy ego can consider the internal and external demands and pressures on a person, modify and integrate those demands, decide when and how it is for the person to respond to those demands and formulates plans that will lead to wise choices and behaviours.

It is the executive of personality. It makes decisions, control actions, allows thinking and problem solving of higher order than Id can achieve.

SUPER EGO:

It is the final personality structure- to develop, represents the rights and wrongs (morality) of society. It is oposite to ID. It actually has two components

- a. Conscience(it prevents us from doing morally bad things)
- b. ego- ideal(motivates us to do what is morally proper).

It is a sort of rigid conscience that internalizes the rules and guidelines of person's world. Messages from parents, teachers and society as well as racial ,culture and national traditions are important contributors to the development of an individual's superego.

When people follow the idealistic dictates of their superego, they typically feel proud and righteous but may sacrifice experiences of pleasure and gratification.

On the other hand, when they fail to listen to the superego, feelings of shame, guilt and anxiety may result.

The Id impels the person towards full gratification of all instinctual needs while the superego seeks to block fulfillment of those same needs.

Personality Development:

According to him individual differences in adult personality reflect the manner in which the person coped with conflicts that might have arisen during the stages of psychosexual development. He believed that people developed according to predictable stages i.e. five stages .

1. Oral stage (birth to first year)
2. Anal stage (One to three years age)
3. Phallic stage (three to five years of age)
4. Latency period(five to eleven yrs of age)
5. Genital stage (after latency period continues throughout the life.)

Oral stage

Stage ,in which infant's center of pleasure is the mouth;with sucking and eating providing the nurturance that will sustain the child's life.

Issues of dependency and trust are particularly important during this initial stage. Freud believed that developmental problems at this point could later manifest themselves in forms through symptoms such as gullibility(swallowing anything) , overeating and argumentativeness(oral aggressiveness)

Anal stage

This stage ,in which child's pleasure is centered on anus, its important because of toilet training and process of elimination/emptying bowels. Pleasure in this stage is from impressing the parents and physical pleasure of emptying the bowels.

Issues of autonomy vs shame and doubt typically arise during this period.(as children make mistakes, trying out new behaviours while learning skills that give them more independence and control over their lives).

Several important character traits develop in this period- parents who encourage bowel and bladder control by using punitive/ restrictive styles are promoting stingy, compulsive controlling and withholding characteristics in their children.

Those who reward and praise their children lavishly for appropriate elimination are likely to foster creativity in their children.

Phallic stage

A period during which child's interest focuses on genitals. Many aspects of emotional development evolve during these years-

Self-esteem and self image, need for love and approval, feelings toward authority figures and a sense of initiative.

Those who do not resolve this stage successfully may be troubled by guilt, difficulty in intimate relationship .

Latency period

During this , child's sexual concerns are temporarily put aside. Sexual drives become less important, while social interests increase.

Children turn outward, form relationships, progress through school and develop rewarding hobbies and activities.

Emotional development focuses on their ability to take on success and succeed in new challenges and to achieve realistic goals.

Children negotiate this stage successfully develop feelings of empowerment and have initiative, while

Those cannot deal with demands of this stage may develop feelings of low self esteem

Genital stage

A period marked by mature sexual behaviour.

During this stage, adolescents and adults identify their personal identities, develop caring and altruistic feelings toward others, establish positive loving and sexual relationships and progress in successful careers, this ideally results in development of emotionally healthy adult.

Contradictory to this is developing neurotic tendencies.

Defense Mechanisms:

His efforts to describe and theories about underlying dynamics of personality and its development were motivated by very practical problems that his patients faced in dealing with anxiety. He believed that people develop a range of defense mechanisms to deal with it.

Defense mechanisms are unconscious strategies people use to reduce anxiety by concealing the source from themselves and others

Freud's Defense Mechanisms

Defense mechanism	Explanation	Example
1. Repression	Unpleasant impulses pushed back into unconscious	A woman was unable to recall that she was raped
2. Regression	People behave as if they were at earlier stage of development	A boss has temper tantrums when employee makes mistake
3. Displacement	Expression of unwanted feeling or thought is redirected from more powerful person to weaker one	Brother yells at younger sister after teacher gives him bad grade
4. Rationalization	A person justifies what happens	Justifying

Freud's Defense Mechanisms

Defense mechanism	Explanation	Example
5. Denial	Refusal to accept	Student refuses to believe that he has flunked the course
6. Projection	Attributing unwanted feelings to someone else	Man angry with his father acts lovingly to his father but complains that his father is angry with him
7. Sublimation	Diversion of unwanted impulses into socially approved thoughts feelings or behaviours	Person with strong feelings of aggression becomes soldier

Freud's Defense Mechanisms –can be categorized into four groups-

Narcissistic/psychotic defenses: these are evident in children and people with psychotic disorder.

Ex: denial, projection etc.

Immature defenses: common in adolescence as well as in people with , personality disorders.

Ex: Regression, acting out/ temper tantrums

Neurotic Defenses: Common in most of people but can lead to problems

Ex: Displacements, rationalization

Prominent defenses: found in healthy adults include humor, sublimation, conscious suppression etc.

Objectives of psychoanalysis

- Improving ego's conscious and mature control irrational impulses and instincts.
- Enriching ego defense mechanisms to be more effective, mature and adaptable.
- Developing capacity for healthy and rewarding intimate relationships along with the ability to express on self in rewarding/appropriate ways.
- Reducing perfectionism and rigidity of superego.

Therapeutic (Theory and application)

- Therapeutic alliance

Therapeutic alliance (benefit)

Psychoanalysis as performed by Freud and other modern therapists is a long term and intensive process. Freud used 55minute sessions with 5 minute break between sessions.

In his session, patients lie down on the **couch** while therapist sat in chair behind the patients head(so that therapists could not be observed during the session);this couch was designed to relax and reduce distractions for the patient.

Though the patients do most in the talking in psychoanalysis, therapists are active in guiding the sessions in meaningful directions and promoting to uncover the repressed material i.e. unlocking the unconscious mind.

Some of the **common methods/interventions** in psychoanalysis are-

- Transference and counter transference
- Free association
- Abreaction
- Interpretation and analysis

- **Application to diagnostic groups**
- **Application to other groups**

Evaluation of Freudian theory

- His approach of personality presents elaborate and complicated set of propositions.
- Among the most compelling criticisms is the lack of scientific data to support the theory
- His conception of personality is built on unobservable abstract conceptions,
- Freud made his observations- derived his theory from limited population almost entirely on upper class Austrian.

