

# PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH TO COUNSELLING

**CC-11 (Counselling Psychology) Unit 2; SEM III**

**by**

**Dr. Priyanka Kumari,**

**Assistant Professor**

**Institute of Psychological Research and Service**

**Patna University**

**Contact No-7654991023,**

**[E-mail-drpriyankakumari1483@gmail.com](mailto:drpriyankakumari1483@gmail.com)**

---



The Freudian view of human nature is basically deterministic. According to Freud, our behavior is determined by irrational forces, unconscious motivations, and biological and instinctual drives as these evolve through key psycho-sexual stages in the first 6 years of life. Instincts are central to the Freudian approach.

Freud originally used the term libido to refer to sexual energy, he later broadened it to include the energy of all the life instincts. These instincts serve the purpose of the survival of the individual and the human race; they are oriented toward growth, development, and creativity.

Freud also postulates death instincts, which account for the aggressive drive. At times, people manifest through their behavior an unconscious wish to die or to hurt themselves or others. Managing this aggressive drive is a major challenge to the human race.

In Freud's view, both sexual and aggressive drives are powerful determinants of why people act as they do.

---

# Structure of Personality

According to the psychoanalytic view, the personality consists of three systems:

The id,

The ego, and

The super-ego.

These are names for psychological structures and should not be thought of as manikins that separately operate the personality; one's personality functions as a whole rather than as three discrete segments.

The id is the biological component, the ego is the psychological component, and the superego is the social component. From the orthodox Freudian perspective, humans are viewed as energy systems.

The dynamics of personality consist of the ways in which psychic energy is distributed to the id, ego, and superego. Because the amount of energy is limited, one system gains control over the available energy at the expense of the other two systems. Behavior is determined by this psychic energy.

---



**THE ID** -The id is the original system of personality; at birth a person is all ID. The id is the primary source of psychic energy and the seat of the instincts. It lacks organization and is blind, demanding, and insistent.

**THE EGO**- The ego has contact with the external world of reality. It is the “executive” that governs, controls, and regulates the personality. The ego controls consciousness and exercises censorship. Ruled by the reality principle, the ego does realistic and logical thinking and formulates plans of action for satisfying needs.

**THE SUPEREGO**- The superego is the judicial branch of personality. It includes a person’s moral code, the main concern being whether an action is good or bad, right or wrong. It represents the ideal rather than the real and strives not for pleasure but for perfection. It functions to inhibit the id impulses, to persuade the ego to substitute moralistic goals for realistic ones, and to strive for perfection.

---

# Consciousness and the Unconscious

Clinical evidence for postulating the unconscious includes the following:

- (1) Dreams, which are symbolic representations of unconscious needs, wishes, and conflicts;
- (2) Slips of the tongue and forget-ting, for example, a familiar name;
- (3) Posthypnotic suggestions;
- (4) Material derived from free-association techniques;
- (5) Material derived from projective techniques; and
- (6) The symbolic content of psychotic symptoms.

For Freud, consciousness is a thin slice of the total mind. Like the greater part of the iceberg that lies below the surface of the water, the larger part of the mind exists below the surface of awareness.

The unconscious stores all experiences, memories, and repressed material. Needs and motivations that are inaccessible—that is, out of awareness—are also outside the sphere of conscious control.

---

# ANXIETY

Anxiety is a feeling of dread that results from repressed feelings, memories, desires, and experience that emerge to the surface of awareness.

It can be considered as a state of tension that motivates us to do something. It develops out of a conflict among the id, ego, and superego over control of the available psychic energy.

The function of anxiety is to warn of impending danger. There are three kinds of anxiety: reality, neurotic, and moral. Reality anxiety is the fear of danger from the external world, and the level of such anxiety is proportionate to the degree of real threat.

Neurotic anxiety is the fear that the instincts will get out of hand and cause one to do something for which one will be punished.

Moral anxiety is the fear of one's own conscience. People with a well-developed conscience tend to feel guilty when they do something contrary to their moral code.

---

# IMPORTANCE OF EARLY DEVELOPMENT

A significant contribution of the psychoanalytic model is delineation of the stages of psychosexual and psychosocial stages of development from birth through adulthood.

The psychosexual stages refer to the Freudian chronological phases of development, beginning in infancy. The psychosocial stages refer to Erickson's basic psychological and social tasks to be mastered from infancy through old age.

This stage perspective provides the counselor with the conceptual tools for understanding key developmental tasks characteristic of the various stages of life.

Freud postulated three early stages of development that often bring people to counseling when not appropriately resolved.

---

## **IMPORTANCE OF EARLY DEVELOPMENT**

The oral stage, which deals with the inability to trust oneself and others, resulting in the fear of loving and forming close relationships and low self-esteem.

The anal stage, which deals with the inability to recognize and express anger, leading to the denial of one's own power as a person and the lack of a sense of autonomy.

The phallic stage, which deals with the inability to fully accept one's sexuality and sexual feelings, and also to difficulty in accepting oneself as a man or woman.

According to the Freudian psychoanalytic view, these three areas of personal and social development—love and trust, dealing with negative feelings, and developing a positive acceptance of sexuality—are all grounded in the first 6 years of life.

---



# COUNSELING IMPLICATIONS

By taking a combined psychosexual and psychosocial perspective, counselors have a helpful conceptual framework for understanding developmental issues as they appear in therapy.

The key needs and developmental tasks, along with the challenges inherent at each stage of life, provide a model for understanding some of the core conflicts clients explore to make appropriate interpretations.

A major function of interpretation is to accelerate the process of uncovering unconscious material.

The analyst listens for gaps and inconsistencies in the client's story, infers the meaning of reported dreams and free associations, and remains sensitive to clues concerning the client's feelings toward the analyst.

Organizing these therapeutic processes within the context of understanding personality structure and psychodynamics enables the analyst to formulate the nature of the client's problems.

---



## COUNSELING IMPLICATIONS

One of the central functions of the analyst is to teach clients the meaning of these processes (through interpretation).

Clients change depends considerably more on their readiness to change than on the accuracy of the therapist's interpretations.

If the therapist pushes the client too rapidly or offers ill-timed interpretations, therapy will not be effective.

Change occurs through the process of reworking old patterns so that clients might become freer to act in new ways (Luborsky et al., 2008).

---



## Client's Experience in Therapy

Clients interested in traditional (or classical) psychoanalysis must be willing to commit themselves to an intensive and long-term therapy process.

After some face-to-face sessions with the analyst, clients lie on a couch and engage in free association; that is, they say whatever comes to mind without self-censorship.

This process of free association is known as the “fundamental rule.” Clients report their feelings, experiences, associations, memories, and fantasies to the analyst.

Lying on the couch encourages deep, uncensored reflections and reduces the stimuli that might interfere with getting in touch with internal conflicts and productions.

Analyst is freed from having to carefully monitor facial clues.

---



## Client's Experience in Therapy

Psychodynamic therapists do remain alert to transference manifestations, explore the meaning of clients' dreams, explore both the past and the present, and are concerned with unconscious material.

Clients in psychoanalytic therapy make a commitment with the therapist to stick with the procedures of an intensive therapeutic process. They agree to talk because their verbal productions are the heart of psychoanalytic therapy. They are typically asked not to make any radical changes in their lifestyle during the period of analysis, such as getting a divorce or quitting their job.

Psychoanalytic clients are ready to terminate their sessions when they and their analyst mutually agree that they have resolved those symptoms and conflicts that were amenable to resolution, have clarified and accepted their remaining emotional problems, have understood the historical roots of their difficulties, have mastery of core themes, and can integrate their awareness of past problems with their present relationships.

---

# Relationship between Therapist and Client

There are some differences between how the therapeutic relationship is conceptualized by classical analysis and current relational analysis. The classical analyst stands outside the relationship, comments on it, and offers insight-producing interpretations.

The therapist does not strive for a detached and objective stance. Instead, the participation of the therapist is a given, and he or she has an impact on the client and on the here-and-now interaction that occurs in the therapy context (Alt-man, 2008).

Contemporary psychoanalytic theory and practice highlights the importance of the therapeutic relationship as a therapeutic factor in bringing about change (Ainslie, 2007).

Through the therapeutic relationship “clients are able to find new modes of functioning that are no longer encumbered by the neurotic conflicts that once interfered with their lives”.

According to Luborsky, O'Reilly-Landry, and Arlow (2008), current psychodynamic therapists view the emotional communication between themselves and their clients as a useful way to gain information and create connection.

---

## Relationship between Therapist and Client

Transference involves the unconscious repetition of the past in the present. “It reflects the deep patterning of old experiences in relationships as they emerge in current life” (Luborsky et al., 2008).

The relational model of psychoanalysis regards transference as being an interactive process between the client and the therapist. A client often has a variety of feelings and reactions to a therapist, including a mixture of positive and negative feelings. When these feelings become conscious, clients can understand and resolve “unfinished business” from these past relationships.

As therapy progresses, childhood feelings and conflicts begin to surface from the depths of the unconscious. Clients regress emotionally. Some of their feelings arise from conflicts such as trust versus mistrust, love versus hate, dependence versus independence, and autonomy versus shame and guilt.

---

## Application: Therapeutic Techniques and Procedures

Psychoanalytic therapy, or psychodynamic therapy (as opposed to traditional psychoanalysis), includes these features:

- The therapy is geared more to limited objectives than to restructuring one's personality.
  - The therapist is less likely to use the couch.
  - There are fewer sessions each week.
  - There is more frequent use of supportive interventions—such as reassurance, expressions of empathy and support, and suggestions—and more self-disclosure by the therapist.
  - The focus is more on pressing practical concerns than on working with fantasy material.
-



The techniques of psychoanalytic therapy are aimed at increasing awareness, fostering insights into the client's behavior, and understanding the meanings of symptoms. The therapy proceeds from the client's talk to catharsis (or expression of emotion) to insight to working through unconscious material.

The six basic techniques of psychoanalytic therapy are

- (1) Maintaining the analytic frame-work,
  - (2) Free association,
  - (3) Interpretation,
  - (4) Dream analysis,
  - (5) Analysis of resistance, and
  - (6) Analysis of transference.
-

## Free Association

In free association, clients are encouraged to say whatever comes to mind, regardless of how painful, silly, trivial, illogical, or irrelevant it may be.

## Interpretation

Interpretation consists of the analyst's pointing out, explaining, and even teaching the client the meanings of behavior that is manifested in dreams, free association, resistances, and the therapeutic relationship itself.

The functions of interpretations are to enable the ego to assimilate new material and to speed up the process of uncovering further unconscious material.

Interpretation includes identifying, clarifying, and translating the client's material. In making an appropriate interpretation, the therapist must be guided by a sense of the client's readiness to consider it (Saretsky, 1978).

---

# Dream Analysis

Dream analysis is an important procedure for uncovering unconscious material and giving the client insight into some areas of unresolved problems. During sleep, defenses are lowered and repressed feelings surface.

Dreams have two levels of content: latent content and manifest content. Latent content consists of hidden, symbolic, and unconscious motives, wishes, and fears. Because they are so painful and threatening, the unconscious sexual and aggressive impulses that make up latent content are transformed into the more acceptable manifest content, which is the dream as it appears to the dreamer.

The process by which the latent content of a dream is transformed into the less threatening manifest content is called dream work. The therapist's task is to uncover disguised meanings by studying the symbols in the manifest content of the dream.

During the session, therapists may ask clients to free associate to some aspect of the manifest content of a dream for the purpose of uncovering the latent meanings.

---

## Analysis and Interpretation of Resistance

Resistance, a concept fundamental to the practice of psychoanalysis, is any-thing that works against the progress of therapy and prevents the client from producing previously unconscious material.

Resistance is the client's reluctance to bring to the surface of awareness unconscious material that has been repressed.

Resistance refers to any idea, attitude, feeling, or action (conscious or unconscious) that fosters the status quo and gets in the way of change. During free association or association to dreams, the client may evidence an unwillingness to relate certain thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Resistance operates specifically in psychoanalytic therapy to prevent clients and therapists from succeeding in their joint effort to gain insights into the dynamics of the unconscious.

---



## Analysis and Interpretation of Transference

Transference manifests itself in the therapeutic process when clients' earlier relationships contribute to their distorting the present with the therapist.

The transference situation is considered valuable because its manifestations provide clients with the opportunity to re-experience a variety of feelings that would otherwise be inaccessible. Through the relationship with the therapist, clients express feelings, beliefs, and desires that they have buried in their unconscious.

The analysis of transference is a central technique in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically oriented therapy, for it allows clients to achieve here-and-now insight into the influence of the past on their present functioning.

Interpretation of the transference relationship enables clients to work through old conflicts that are keeping them fixated and retarding their emotional growth.

---

# Application to Group Counseling

It offers a unique perspective on understanding problems and working through them therapeutically.

Group leaders can think psychoanalytically, even if they do not use many psychoanalytical techniques.

Regardless of their theoretical orientation, it is well for group therapists to understand such psychoanalytic phenomena as transference, countertransference, resistance, and the use of ego-defense mechanisms as reactions to anxiety.

Transference and countertransference have significant implications for the practice of group counseling and therapy.

Group work may re-create early life situations that continue to affect the client. In most groups, individuals elicit a range of feelings such as attraction, anger, competition, and avoidance.

---

# Limitations and Criticisms of the Psychoanalytic Approach

Time, expense, and availability of trained psychoanalytic therapists, the practical applications of many psychoanalytic techniques are limited.

Many severely disturbed clients lack the level of ego strength needed for this treatment.

A major limitation of traditional psychoanalytic therapy is the relatively long time commitment required to accomplish analytic goals.

Psychodynamic psychotherapy evolved from traditional analysis to address the need for treatment that was not so lengthy and involved (Luborsky et al., 2008).

A potential limitation of the psychoanalytic approach is the anonymous role assumed by the therapist. The classical technique of nondisclosure can be misused in short-term individual therapy and assessment.

---