

## **MODULE THREE**

### **THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSONALITY**

Personality theories provide a way of organizing the many facts you know about yourself and explain differences between individuals.

#### ***What is personality?***

**Personality** is defined as the enduring personal characteristics of individuals. It is the sum total of the typical ways of thinking, acting, and feeling that makes each person unique or different from all other individuals. In addition, personality arises from within the individual and remains fairly consistent throughout life. Personality is the some total of ways in which an individual reacts and interacts with others. Personalities is the sum total of individual's psychological traits, characteristics, motives, habits, attitudes, beliefs and outlooks.

#### **Goals of STUDYING personality THEORIES**

1. To organize the characteristic of personality
2. To explain the variations in personality
3. To describe normal / health and abnormal personalities

## **FREUD'S PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY OF PERSONALITY**

The theory regards human personality as significantly influenced by two basic forces i.e. sex and aggression constantly seeking expression in individuals.

He worked to discover how the unconscious mind and motives of sex and how aggression influence our behavior. Freud thought of personality as an ice bag with the tip showing above water.

1. The part of personality that we are aware of in every day life as the conscious mind and is the tip of the ice
2. Below this is the preconscious mind that contains information that we have learnt but not thinking about right now.
3. Beneath the pre-conscious lies the unconscious mind that contains materials not readily available to us e.g. our fears and unpleasant memories are repressed into the unconscious mind.

The theory consist of three major concepts i.e. **ID, EGO & SUPER EGO**

### **The ID**

All the in born biological urges are collectively known as **ID**. The individual various reflexes and two forces mentioned earlier.

- The sex impulses or the life instinct (eros) concerns survival. The need for food, water and sleep are paramount.
- The aggression impulse or the death instinct (Thanatos) is manifested in aggression behavior towards self as well as others.

The id therefore, allows the pleasure principles which require immediate satisfaction regardless of the circumstances.

### **The EGO**

As the growing infant learns to reach to the outer environment the expression of the id becomes the executive problem solving dimension of personality operating in the service of the id.

The ego follows the reality principle meaning it requires suspension of the pleasure according to the circumstances of the environment.

### **The Super-EGO**

This consists of societal and parental values that have been instilled in the person. Throughout life the ego is confronted with another force in a personality that develops through contact with other people especially teachers.

The child acquires values and standards of behaviors known as the super ego. The super ego has got two main dimensions of the conscience and the ego ideal.

1. **The conscience:** this discourages expression of behaviors regardless of whether it is undesirable by parents and elders or develops under the influence of threats and punishments.
2. **The ego ideal:** this arises from encouragement, praise and other rewards given to a child whether he/she behaves in a certain way

or striving to achieve certain goals that parent's desire. The super ego is idealistic rather than realistic.

According to Freud an individual's personality is the result of the interaction of these three forces.

### **Freud Psycho-Sexual Stages of Personality Development**

Freud theorized that from birth to adolescence children go through five stages of development called the psycho- sexual stages. He considered these stages crucial in the development of a healthy personality. The child's experiences during these stages form a foundation for the development of many personality traits that continue into adulthood.

Freud psycho- sexual stages include the oral stage, anal, phallic, latency and the genetical stage.

#### **The oral stage (0-1 year)**

The child's first concern is to obtain food and this initial period is called the oral stage. If food is really available the child develops trust and an optimistic outlook. If the child oral needs are not met, feelings of uncertainty and pessimism are likely to be the outcome and they persist throughout the adult personality.

It is the stage I which id gratification is focused on the mouth. If the infants' oral needs are over satisfied, he/she may be fixated and becomes an oral receptive personality characterized by excessive eating, smoking and chewing.

If the infant's oral pleasures are frustrated, he/she may grow up a fixated oral aggressive personality; i.e. being verbally hostile.

### **The anal stage (1-3 yrs)**

This occurs when parents are handling toilet training of their children. Pleasures at this stage are focused around the anus. Freud believed that the first part of the stage (1-2 yrs) is characterized by pleasures from expulsion of faeces but that may cause their parents to punish them.

If they delay gratification until they are on the toilet, children can gain approval of their parents and this second part is characterized by pleasure in retention.

Fixation in the first subset results in adult personality characterized by messiness, disorderly and fixation in the later subset results in excessive compulsiveness e.g. excessive neatness, cleanness over conformity and exaggerated self control i.e. anal retentive personality.

### **Phallic stage (3-6 yrs)**

During this stage genital becomes the primary source of pleasure. Freud believed that a shift to genital pleasure bring about the intense unconscious conflict that Freud called it the OEDIPUS COMPLEX in boys and ELECTRACOMPLEX in girls.

The young boy has sexual feelings for his mother and is jealousy of the father. He experiences castration anxiety because he is afraid his father may castrate him. To solve this conflict, the boy identifies with the

father and suppresses his sexual feelings towards the mother. The young girl in the phallic stage through the Electra complex in which she feels inferior to boys because she lacks a penis. She blames her mother for her condition and loves her father. The penis envy eventually is resolved by suppressing her feelings towards the father and identifying with the mother. According to Freud, if the Electra and Oedipus complex were not resolved, the person would have difficulty in relating to members of the opposite sex, have egocentric selfishness, homosexually, prostitution and gender identity problems may result.

### **Latency stage (6-11 yrs)**

This stage is characterized by apparent absence of sexual desires that has been strongly repressed during the resolution of the Oedipus and Electra- complex. Instead the energy is submitted and converted into interest in doing school work and participating in games. To pass successfully in this stage, the child must develop a certain degree of competence.

### **The genital stage (11 yrs onwards)**

At puberty, the child's heterosexual interests appear. The person begins to focus on others instead of self, seeking to combine self concerns with other people especially the opposite sex.

Freud's theory was however criticized because of his pessimistic view of human kind and string emphasis on sexuality.

## **JUNG'S ANALYTICAL THEORY OF PERSONALITY**

Carl Jung called his theory analytical psychology. This is because he thought that to an individual, personal unconscious consist of repressed thought and memories, there was also a collective an-conscious shared by all human kind.

Stored in the collective unconscious are universal human experiences repeated over centuries. The collective unconscious shapes our experience. Jung called these unconscious universal ideas arch types. The psyche type includes all thoughts and feelings conscious and unconscious of an individual.

According to Jung the ego is the conscious mind, the part of the mind that is concerned with thinking, emotions, memory and perception. Jung urged that libido energy can be directed externally to become **extraversion** or it can be directed inward which will become **introversion**.

Introverted person tends to be shy and withdrawn where as the extravert is sociable and outgoing. For each person one of these attitudes becomes dominant and controls the ego and the other non dominant becomes included in the personal unconsciousness.

## ***Determinants of Personality***

1. **Heredity:** this refers to those factors that were determined at conception. Physical structure, facial attractiveness, gender, temperament, muscle composition and reflexes, energy level, and biological rhythms are characteristics that are generally considered to be either completely or substantially influenced by who your parents were, that is by their biological, physiological and inherent psychological makeup.
2. **Environment:** the environmental factors that exert pressures on our personality formation are the culture in which we are raised, our early conditioning, the norms among our family, friends and social groups, and other influences that we experience. The environment to which we are exposed plays a substantial role in shaping our personalities.
3. **Situation:** this influences the effects of heredity and environment on personality. An individual's personality although generally stable and consistent, does change in different situations. The varying demand of different situation calls forth different aspects of one's personality.

## **Other related theories, READ MORE ABOUT PERSONALITY**

1. Alfred Adler's individual psychology
2. Honey's cultural psychology
3. Trait theories



4. Humanistic theories

5. Social learning theories

## **MENTAL DEFENCES (DEFENCE MECHANISM)**

Defence mechanisms are techniques used to remain psychologically stable or in balance.

We use defence mechanisms to reduce threat to ourselves and to feel like a decent person.

Usually, defence mechanisms are not fully conscious because when we are threatened, it makes us anxious. Anxiety brings desire to get back to balance. Thus we use defence mechanisms to establish and once in balance the problem seems to be “one”. This is often the illusion. But the real world is still there, and eventually we must cope with our problems. The more we use; we are losing control of the situation. Use them to protect ourselves.

### **Repression**

Repression is the process of pushing a painful event or thought out of the consciousness. E.g. if we hate a relative and do not want to think about him or her, we force these feelings and impulses to remain out of consciousness (repress them) OR if someone cheated you and there is nothing that can be done about it, you repress the feelings and instead you focus something else and repress the incident as if it did not happen.

“I hate my aunt”

“What was I thinking about?”

### **Projection; (to point figures)**

Projection is the process of attributing our thoughts to some one else. A person's real feelings are thrown at another person.

It is the process of mentally giving to someone else our thoughts or feelings e.g. if a person is fired from a job for poor performance, he might claim that it is the supervisor who is incompetent.

In this way, the responsibility is shifted to someone else.

“What do you mean, I am upset”

I am not upset, you are upset.

### **Rationalization**

Rationalization refers to the process of explaining a way problem, that we do not have accept the blame.

Rationalization can be used to our benefit to get rid of something we can't do anything about any way e.g. if someone you loved very much chucks you, you could rationalize by thinking of a defect that he/she has. You tick yourself into believing that you did not want the other person any way.

“I did not a promotion”

“Well, I didn't the job any way”.

## **Regression (to go backwards)**

Regression is the process of going backward in behavior and thought to a period when we were taken care of as a child (childish behavior).

With regression, we defend ourselves by moving backward and behaving like children.

This defense is a reaction to the extreme frustration of having been an adult and take responsibility.

Regression is sometimes seen in sports events when the player lies down on the ground and a temper tantrum, just as a child would ... is expressed in a childish way (Crying) I should have gotten a promotion.

## **Denial (to not admit)**

Denial is a process of refusing to admit that there is a problem. The real problem becomes cancelled.

Faced with a major decision, we simply deny that the problem exists.

With denial, we do not let the problem come into consciousness anytime.

NB: With repression, we are at least partly aware of the problem and then push it out of the consciousness to the unconsciousness.

See more in the blue book pamphlet

1. Displacement
2. Sublimation

3. Reaction formation
4. Projection
5. Withdraw

It involves removing oneself from events, stimuli, interactions under the fear of being reminded of painful thoughts and feelings

1. Identification
2. Introjections

Withdraw is a more severe form of defence

NB: Sigmund Freud's emphasis on unconscious motivations and ego defence mechanisms has been particularly valuable for psychotherapists in gaining insight into the mental health or illnesses of their clients.

Kaluger No. 155 KAR = Human development – the span of life

## **ACTIVITY**

- 1 (a) Explain the relationship between the Id, ego and super ego clearly showing the role of each concept to our personality.
2. With reference to Sigmund Freud theory, clearly explain the stages of human growth and development.
3. State and explain any five defense mechanisms and show their relevance to our personality.
4. Using relevant examples, explain the levels of consciousness.