

ADVANCED DIPLOMA IN GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING (DGC)

DGC 207: CONTEMPORARY THEORIES AND MODELS OF COUNSELLING

DGC 207: THEORIES OF COUNSELLING

UNIT 1: WHAT IS A COUNSELLING THEORY?

INTRODUCTION

Counselling is a profession in which the counsellor's main responsibility is to assist people to proffer solutions to life's problems. While carrying out his or her professional responsibility, the counsellor must operate, consciously or unconsciously, from a set of beliefs about human nature and behaviour change. The helping relationship demands that the counsellor, who is the help giver, should understand and conceptualize the clients' problems. Theories of counselling provide a framework that can help counselors to understand their client's behaviour and to describe and explain what they are doing in a helping relationship and why they are doing it. To be effective as help givers, therefore, it is necessary for counselors to have extensive background of the theoretical base of counselling in order to be able to make good and effective counselling decisions. This unit attempts to introduce you to theories which have helped practising counselors to develop a good understanding of the counselling process and the complex dynamics (personal and professional) involved in the counselling relationship.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i) define counselling theories;
- ii) give reasons why counselors need theories;
- iii) identify and classify theories of counselling.

HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

1. Read through this unit and understand what is meant by theories of counselling.
2. You should always bear in mind that there are different theories that have attempted to explain the process of counselling.
3. Make sure you understand the key concepts and terminologies used.

4. Attempt all the activities and assignments included in the unit without referring to the text.

MEANING OF COUNSELLING THEORIES

A counselling theory can be defined as a systematic set of assumptions made by knowledgeable scholars concerning the nature of counselling, what happens in a counselling relationship and how the counselors should respond to the needs of the client. It is also a group of ideas or concepts that allows counselors to make both generalizations and discriminations regarding the counselling relationship. A theory is an intellectual model, a framework or a cognitive map which attempts to explain or predict human behaviour that are not directly observable or which may be confounding to the ordinary observer.

Theories of counselling are developed and tested following series of consistent and scientific observations. A theory becomes acceptable to the counsellor if it can be consistently relied upon to provide plausible explanations of clients' behaviour.

In many textbooks, counselling theories are also called, "Counselling Models", "Counselling Techniques", "Approaches to Counselling" or "Counselling Points of View".

ACTIVITY I

1. In not more than twelve words, give an acceptable definition of a counselling theory.
2. Give three expressions that can be used synonymously with Counselling Theories.

PURPOSE OF COUNSELLING THEORIES

Theories of counselling help the counsellor to summarise and organise the vast and complex body of information and knowledge that is available on human nature. Theories are valuable in understanding clients' behaviour. They form a rationale for what the counsellor does, how he or she does it and under what conditions.

Theories enable the counsellor to predict the clients' personality, nature and dynamics, growth processes and environmental variables affecting clients' concerns. Theories can assist counselors to point out the periods, stages, developmental crisis and other problems of the client and to suggest what steps must be taken to ameliorate such problems.

Counselling theories can assist counselors to guide their own practice of counselling in order to practice their professions wisely and ethically. They help counselors to organise clients' data into a coherent and meaningful framework and to develop counselling strategies appropriate to any situation. Theories generate hypothesis about how certain behaviours occur and what the counsellor can do to be of help to the client.

Theories can stimulate further research and fact finding on clients' concerns. They can provide the counsellor some guides for research activities which can lead to the development of new theories.

ACTIVITY II

1. Do you really think that Nigerian counselors need an understanding of counselling theories?
2. Identify four uses of theories to the counsellor.

TYPES OF COUNSELLING THEORIES

In the process of becoming an academic or professional discipline, counselling has witnessed the formulation of several theories. While some of these theories are similar and agreeable in many respects, others are really conflicting and contrasting, but they all try to achieve the same purpose of changing behaviour and improving the quality of life of the client.

Several attempts have been made to classify the numerous theories available in counselling literature. The most popular of these attempts is to classify counselling theories according to the major schools of thought that gave birth to each theory. In this vein, counselling theories are often classified into five broad categories. These are Psychoanalytic, Cognitive, Behavioural and Humanistic approaches. In addition, within each of these four categories, one can further differentiate among theories in terms of the counsellor skills required to implement the theories and the level of change produced by them.

Psychoanalytic Theories

The psychoanalytic approach to counselling is the oldest system of explaining human behaviour within the context of a counselling relationship. Its major postulate is that all human behaviours are products of powerful inner forces. This school of thought in counselling psychology assumes that human actions are fuelled by inner conflicts, tensions, guilt and frustrations. The psychoanalytic approach involves analyzing the root causes of behaviour and feelings by exploring the unconscious mind of the client in relation to the conscious. Counsellors using this approach place emphasis on unconscious processes of man's mind. The original Freudian psychoanalysis utilizes free-association, dreams, and transference, as well as other strategies to help the client know the function of his or her own minds. Traditional analysts have their clients lie on a couch as the therapist takes notes and interprets the client's thoughts. Interestingly, many other theories of counselling started as "positive reactionary" attempts to modify or reconstruct the original concepts and techniques of the psychoanalytic approach.

Cognitive Theories

Cognitive theories are based on the belief that our thoughts are directly connected to how we feel. Cognitive theorists assume that mental processes control and direct human

behaviour. The cognitive therapies include Rational-Emotive, Cognitive-Behavioural, Reality, and Transactional Analysis. Therapists in the cognitive field work with clients to solve present day problems by helping them to identify distorted thinking that causes emotional discomfort. There's little emphasis on the historical root of a problem. Rather, the counsellor places emphasis on the clients' present thinking as the cause of his or her emotional disturbance.

Common traits among the cognitive approaches include a collaborative relationship between client and therapist, homework between sessions, and the tendency to be of short duration. These therapies are best known for treating mild depression, anxiety, and anger problems.

Behavioural Theories

Behavioural theories are based on the premise that primary learning comes from experience. The initial concern in therapy is to help the client analyze behaviour, define problems and select goals. Therapy often includes homework, behavioural experiments, role-playing, assertiveness training, and self-management training. Like the cognitive therapy, it utilizes collaboration between client and therapist, and is usually of short duration.

Humanistic Theory

Humanistic theory is an optimist school of thought in counselling psychology which emphasizes that man possesses the natural potentials towards self-actualisation. The humanistic theorist believes that man has all the biological potentials needed for self-realization and self-actualization and, therefore, can be assisted to realise his full potentials. The problems that man faces are not due to any inherent fault in his nature as man is intrinsically good. Rather, man's problems arise from faults in his environment or more precisely due to distortions between his self-concept and social experiences. Therefore, all behavioural problems, to the humanistic theorists, could be solved by assisting man to achieve congruence between his self-identity and social experience. The Client-centred Theory or Carl Rogers is perhaps the most prominent of all humanistic theories of counselling.

Trait-Factor Approach

The trait-factor theory is an attempt to apply a scientific approach to counselling by the use of measurement and prediction. The approach is essentially a vocational theory of career guidance and one of the earliest attempts at carving out a theoretical base for vocational guidance. This approach is also called Directive Counselling or the Minnesota point of view.

ACTIVITY III

1. Mention four major categories of counselling theories.
2. Which of the categories of theories do you think will be most appropriate to the problems of Nigerian school-going adolescents?

SUMMARY

A counselling theory is defined as:

- a systematic set of assumptions made by knowledgeable scholars concerning the nature of counselling;
- a group of ideas or concepts that allows counselors to make both generalizations and discriminations regarding the counselling relationship.
- an intellectual model, a framework or a cognitive map used to explain or predict human behaviour.

Counsellors need theories to be able to:

- summarise and organise the vast and complex body of information and knowledge that is available on human nature
- understand clients' behaviour
- predict the nature and dynamics of clients' personality, growth processes and environmental variables affecting clients' concerns
- point out the periods, stages, developmental crisis and other problems of clients
- guide the practice of counselling
- develop counselling strategies appropriate to any situation.

Counselling theories can be classified into the following four broad categories:

- (i) Psychoanalytic Theories
- (ii) Cognitive theories
- (iii) Behavioural Theories
- (iv) Humanistic Theories.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the view that theories of counselling are useful only when they can assist the counsellor to understand and proffer solution to clients' problems.
2. Write an essay of not more than one page on what you think should be the roles of Nigerian school counselors.

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UNIT TWO: PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY OF COUNSELLING

INTRODUCTION

The psychoanalytic theory of counselling is the oldest of all counselling theories. Indeed, there are no theories of counselling developed that have not been influenced by psychoanalytic principles and techniques. Theories of counselling developed after the psychoanalytic theory either extended the psychoanalytic model or modified it or emerged as a reaction against it. This unit presents basic psychoanalytic concepts and practices as originated by Sigmund Freud.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i) define psychoanalysis;
- ii) give a brief history of Sigmund Freud, the major proponent of psychoanalytic theory;
- iii) state basic assumptions of psychoanalytic theory;
- iv) list and explain basic concepts of psychoanalytic theory;
- v) discuss the application of psychoanalytic theory to counselling; and
- vi) identify the strengths and weaknesses of psychoanalytic theory.

HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

1. Read through this unit and understand the meaning of psychoanalysis.
2. Use your dictionary to check the meanings of new words.
3. Make sure you understand the key concepts and terminologies used.
4. Attempt all the activities and assignments included in the unit without referring to the text.

WHAT IS PSYCHOANALYSIS?

The term psychoanalysis is derived from two words “psycho” and “analysis”. By implication, psychoanalysis is a method of psychological analysis, i.e. a method of treating individuals by psychological rather than physical means. The method was originated by a psychologist called Sigmund Freud. In this method, rather than use physical means to treat individuals with problems, the psychoanalytic counsellor calls attention to psycho-dynamic factors which motivate human behaviour and dwells on the roles of the sub-conscious in explaining human behaviour. In psychoanalysis, the client is assisted to know the functions of his or her mind through the use of free-association, transference and dreams.

ACTIVITY I

1. The word psychoanalysis is derived from and
2. State in your own words the meaning of psychoanalysis.
3. Name the major proponent of psychoanalysis.

BRIEF HISTORY OF SIGMUND FREUD

Sigmund Freud was born in 1856 in Vienna. He was the firstborn in a family of three boys and five girls. Since the family was poor and had limited finances, Freud and other siblings were forced to live in crowded apartment. Freud’s parents were very authoritarian and they made efforts to foster his intellectual capacities. He started school very early in life and was very intelligent among his classmates.

Freud studied Medicine at the University of Vienna where he graduated with distinction at the age of 26. He later took up the position of a lecturer at the University of Vienna. In 1882, he began a private practice in medicine and specialized in nervous diseases. At this time in his career, Freud began to practice the “talking cure”. He believed that a client could be helped by simply talking about his problem. In his early 40’s, Freud developed numerous psychosomatic disorders as well as exaggerated phobia for many things including death. During this time, Freud was involved in the difficult task of self-analysis. By exploring the meaning of his own dreams, he gained insights into the dynamics of personality development. He first examined his childhood memories and came to realize the intense hostility he had felt for his father. He also recalled his childhood sexual feelings for his mother, who was attractive, loving and protective. Based on all these, he formulated his psychoanalytic theory as he observed his patients work through their own problems in analysis.

Freud was highly creative and productive. He authored many books and articles in reputable international journals. As the originator of psychoanalysis, he distinguished himself as an intellectual giant. He pioneered new techniques for understanding human behaviour, and his efforts resulted in the most comprehensive theory of personality and psychotherapy ever developed. He died in the year 1939.

ACTIVITY II

1. When and where was Sigmund Freud born?
2. What effect did Freud poor family background have on his early development?
3. Which personal experience helped Freud to develop his theory of psychoanalysis?

PSYCHOANALYTIC VIEWS OF HUMAN NATURE

The psychoanalytic view of human nature is basically deterministic. According to psychoanalytic theorists, human behaviour is determined by irrational forces, unconscious motivation and biological and instinctual drives as these evolve through key psycho-sexual stages in the first six years of life.

Psychoanalytic theorists view human personality as an energy system. The energy which the system uses is described as sexual energy. Although Freud originally used the term “libido” to refer to sexual energy, he later broadened it to include the energy of the life instincts. Life instincts are vital to the survival of the human race. They are oriented towards growth, development and creativity.

The psychoanalytic view of human personality is that personality develops in stages. In this respect Freud identified six stages and referred to them as psycho-sexual stages of personality development.

ACTIVITY III

1. Discuss two views of psychoanalytic theories about the human nature.

BASIC CONCEPT OF PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

The psychoanalytic theory is characterized by several basic concepts. Some of these are the structure of the personality, endpsychic conflicts, defense mechanisms, the conscious-unconscious continuum and psychosexual stages of development. These concepts, as described by Nystul (1999) and Corey (2001) are summarized below:

Structure of Personality

According to the psychoanalytic view, the personality consists of three systems: the *id*, the *ego*, and the *superego*. These systems are interdependent, yet they are autonomous. It should be noted that human 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.

The **Id** is the original system of personality from which the *ego* and *superego* emerge. At birth, a person is all *id*. The *id* is the primary source of energy and the seat of the instincts. It is the reservoir of psychic energy, supply energy to the other two systems. The *id* can be considered the “hedonistic” branch of the personality. It is driven by the pleasure principle, which attempts to reduce tension by gratification of sexual and aggressive impulses. The *id* avoids pains and attempts to gain pleasure all the time. It is illogical, amoral and never matures. It does not think but only wishes or acts. The *id* is largely unconscious, or out of awareness.

The **ego** is the mediator between the *id* and the constraints of reality. It controls the excesses of the *id*. The child, who is all *id* at birth, requires appropriate transaction with the objective world of reality. As the child grows, he realizes that he cannot certainly

become an effective and mature social being if he is unable to delay the immediate gratification of his biological impulses. The process of learning to delay the gratification of impulses and to take into consideration the immediate and future consequences of behaviour is known as the reality principle. The ego operates on the reality principle and temporarily suspends the pleasure principle of the id until an appropriate object for the satisfaction of the impulse has been found. The ego, unlike the id, does realistic and logical thinking and formulates plans of actions for satisfying needs.

The superego is the other extreme of human personality. It is described as the “judicial” branch of personality and is concerned with morals. It determines what is right or wrong, good or bad. It represents the traditional values of the society as taught by parents to their children through the imposition of a system of rewards and punishment. The superego has three purposes: to inhibit the impulses from the id, to alter the ego’s orientation from realistic to moralistic, and to encourage the personality to strive for perfection. Psychoanalytic theorists believe that the interaction of id, ego and superego to make for the behaviour of an individual takes place during the psycho-sexual stages of development.

ACTIVITY IV

1. Mention the three components of human personality according to psychoanalytic theory.
2. The id is the biological component of personality; the ego is the component, while the superego is the component.

DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY

An important contribution of the psychoanalytic theory is the delineation of the process of personality development into stages. According to the theory, personality develops through five stages in the life of an individual. These are: the oral stage, anal stage, phallic stage, latency stage and genital stage.

Oral Stage

This stage occurs during the first 12 months of a child’s life. It is called the oral stage because at this period, the child is pre-occupied with seeking and getting pleasure from the stimulation of the mucous membrane of the mouth. The child’s main pre-occupation is to derive pleasure from activities such as sucking the mother’s breast, putting objects in his or her mouth or sucking his or her own fingers. At this stage, the oral needs of the infant must be attended to otherwise the infant might develop an oral personality as an adult. Deprivation of oral gratification in infancy may eventually lead the child to develop feelings of greediness, mistrust others, reject others’ love and be unable to form intimate relationships later in life.

Anal Stage

The anal stage occurs from about 12 months to three years of the child's life. This stage is remarkable for its emphasis on the impact of toilet training on personality development. The type of values and character developed by the child would depend on the method of toilet training adopted by the parents. If toilet training is strict and repressive, the child may hold back his faeces and become constipated. Such a child may later in life develop a retentive character or become stubborn and stingy. A child who becomes angry at the mother's strict and repressive toilet training method may choose to defecate at inappropriate places and times. In later life, the child may develop all kinds of expulsive behaviour like cruelty to others, wanton destruction of public property, temper tantrums and messy disorderliness.

On the other hand, children whose mothers handled their toilet training very well and who were constantly rewarded for good toilet habits might develop an exaggerated view of the importance of this activity and consequently in adult life develop such behaviour as extreme orderliness.

Phallic Stage

The phallic stage starts from three years and ends at about the age of six years. During this stage, sexual and aggressive feelings associated with the functioning of the genital organs come into focus. The basic conflict of this stage is the unconscious incestuous desires that children develop for the parent of the opposite sex. According to orthodox psychoanalytic theory, male children during this stage become sexually interested in their mothers (the Oedipus complex) and female children become attracted to their fathers (the Electra complex). While the male child eventually resolves his Oedipus complex out of fear of castration from his father, the female child might not have a dramatic means of resolving her Electra complex. Children of both sexes may develop personality disorders in later life if the events that happen during the stage are not properly handled. In the male child, if the fear of castration is intensified, it could inhibit the child's potentials for future relationship with the opposite sex and promote homosexual tendencies. Likewise, a female child who feels emotionally rejected by her father might avoid serious relationships with men in the future.

Latency Stage

The latency stage, which occurs between the age of six and twelve, is a period of relative calm with regard to personality development. The child has now grown out of the crises of the earlier stages and the structure of the personality is largely formed. During this period, the child develops new interests to replace the sexual impulses which dominate his or her personality at earlier stages. The child relates with other children in the social environment as he or she attempts to develop the social skills needed for enduring interpersonal relationship in later life. Personality problems could occur at this stage if, for instance, the child is prevented from socializing with his or her mates. Such a child might withdraw to himself or herself and fail to acquire the interpersonal and social skills, which are needed to relate with others in the society.

Genital Stage

This stage begins at puberty (about the age of 12) and continues for the rest of life. The individual, who is now an adolescent, is now capable of mature sexual identity and expression. The old themes of the phallic stage are revived and recapitulated. The adolescent now develops interest in the opposite sex and begins to assume adult responsibilities. Sexual attractions, socialization, group and peer activities, career planning and preparation for raising a family are some of the activities which the adolescent is now pre-occupied with. By the end of the adolescent period, the individual must have become transformed from a pleasure seeking, selfish infant into a reality-oriented, socialized adult.

ACTIVITY V

1. List the five psycho-sexual stages of human development as postulated by Sigmund Freud.
2. Explain the terms “Oedipus complex” and the “Electra” complex.

TECHNIQUES OF COUNSELLING

Psychoanalytic theorists have a number of techniques developed for use in a counselling relationship. Some of the commonly used psychoanalytic techniques in counselling are free association, dream analysis, interpretation, resistance and transference.

Free Association

This is the major technique in psychoanalysis. The client is told to relax with eyes closed and say anything that comes to his or her mind, especially about early life experience, no matter how painful, silly, embarrassing, illogical or trivial it may be. Sometimes the psychoanalyst may stay out of sight to avoid distracting the client. In essence, clients flow with any feelings or thoughts by reporting them immediately they come to mind without censoring them. As the clients pours out his or her mind without any inhibition, long-repressed wishes and impulses begin to manifest. The psychoanalyst's duty is to look for possible connections between the formerly unconscious feelings and the client's problems as expressed during the therapy. The analyst formulates hypotheses about the possible connections and as these are discussed with the client, he or she begins the process of self-discovery which eventually leads to self-recovery.

Dream analysis

Dream analysis is a procedure that is closely related to free association. This procedure is used to uncover or explore unconscious processes. Psychoanalysts see dreams as symbolic representations of hidden conflicts that are re-awakened by the previous day's activities. Hence, in psychoanalysis, the symbols in the manifest content of the client's dreams are studied and their disguised meanings uncovered. This does not only serve as a

means of understanding the unconscious but also provides an understanding of the client's current problems.

Interpretation

Interpretation consists of the process in which the analyst points out, explains and even teaches the client the meaning of behaviour that is manifested in dreams, free association and the therapeutic relationship itself. Through interpretation, the analyst is able to assess the client's personality and determine which factors in the client's past experiences contribute to his or her present difficulties.

Resistance

During free association or dream analysis, a client may become aware that previously unconscious aspects of his or her personality are being discovered by the therapist. The client sometimes shows signs of resistance by remaining silent during free association or when asked to narrate his or her dreams. Resistance is therefore client's reluctance to bring to the surface of awareness unconscious materials that have been repressed. It is an unconscious dynamic that the client uses to defend against the intolerable anxiety and pain that would arise if he or she is to become aware of repressed impulses and feelings.

Transference

Transference occurs when the client under psychoanalysis begins to express intense and unrealistic feelings and expectations toward the therapist. It is a process through which the analyst becomes the focus of emotions once directed by the client to parents or other people during childhood. For instance, a client whose early ungratified strivings for love have been reactivated during free association or dream analysis may begin to act seductively towards the therapist. When this occurs, the therapist should point out to the client that his or her behaviour is inappropriate and actually a form of resistance to getting his or her problems solved.

ACTIVITY VI

1. Explain the terms "free association" and "dream analysis"
2. Discuss how free association and dream analysis can assist the therapist to discover the unconscious past of the client.

CRITICISMS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

Criticisms

The following are some of the major criticisms of the psychoanalytic approach to counselling.

1. The psychoanalyst views man as being ugly and driven by animalistic instincts, needs and wants.

2. The applications of many psychoanalytic methods such as free association, dream analysis, etc. may be practically difficult in terms of facilities, expenses and availability of trained psychoanalytic therapist.
3. The approach requires a relatively long time commitment from both clients and therapist in order to accomplish the goals of the therapy.
4. The acceptance of information from the client during free association of dream analysis without any attempt to corroborate such information by some form of external evidence might lead the counsellor/therapist into drawing wrong conclusions.
5. The approach places too much emphasis on the roles of childhood experiences and influences in determining the individual's personality. This tends to erode individual responsibility as it makes the individual's life seem totally determined and beyond his or her powers to change.
6. The approach does not adequately address the social, cultural and political factors that underlie the clients' problems.

Contributions

The following are some of the major contributions of psychoanalytic approach to counselling.

1. The approach provides counselors with a conceptual framework for looking at behaviours and understanding the underlying factors which prompt them.
2. The approach brings into focus the need for counselors to understand and work with clients' past as it pertains to the clients' current situation.
3. It provides a framework for a dynamic understanding of the role of early childhood experiences and their impacts on the contemporary problems of clients.
4. It provides counselling practitioners with a framework for understanding the major tasks and crises of each stage of human development.
5. The approach is particularly useful in helping counselors to understand and deal with clients' resistance during counselling sessions.
6. It enables counselors to understand the value and role of transference and how the overuse of ego defenses can prevent clients from functioning effectively.

ACTIVITY VII

1. List four major contributions and four limitations of the Psychoanalytic approach to counselling.

SUMMARY

Psychoanalysis is a method of treating individuals by psychological rather than physical means. Sigmund Freud, the leading proponent of psychoanalytic theory, was exposed to some early childhood experiences which motivated him to propound the psychoanalytic theory. According to the psychoanalytic view, the personality consists of three systems: the id, the ego, and the superego. The theory also states that personality develops through five stages in the life of an individual. These are: the oral stage, anal stage, phallic stage, latency stage and genital stage. Some of the commonly used psychoanalytic techniques in counselling are free association, dream analysis, interpretation, resistance and transference.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the view that a person cannot solve his or her present problems without recalling past events which gave rise to the problem.
2. To what extent does the psychoanalytic theory provide explanations for the problems of the average Nigerian school-going adolescent?

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UNIT 3: COGNITIVE THEORY OF COUNSELLING

INTRODUCTION

You have already learnt the postulates of the psychoanalytic counsellor about the nature of human behaviour and human personality development. There are however some other approaches to counselling you need to understand in order to have a comprehensive explanation of human behaviour and personality dynamics. In this unit, we shall discuss the cognitive approach, its proponents, major concepts and its application to counselling.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i) define the Cognitive Approach to counselling;
- ii) explain the basic concepts of Cognitive Approach;
- iii) explain the basic concepts of the Rational Emotive Therapy; and
- iv) Identify the limitations of the Cognitive Approach.

HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

1. Read through this unit to have a quick understanding of the Cognitive Approach to Counselling.
2. Study the new words and find their meanings in a word Dictionary.
3. Ensure that you understand the key concepts and terminologies used in the unit.
4. Attempt all the activities and assignments included in the unit.

Definition of the Cognitive Approach

Cognitive therapy can be defined as any intervention designed to change client's behaviour by altering or correcting errors in their thoughts, perceptions and beliefs. In other words, cognitive theory of counselling is an attempt to restructure human cognitive processes by challenging irrational, erroneous thoughts, perceptions and beliefs. The cognitive therapies include Rational Emotive, Cognitive Restructuring and Reality Therapies. The Rational Emotive Therapy of Albert Ellis (1962) is the most popular of cognitive therapies and the only one you are going to study in this unit.

Basic Assumptions of Cognitive Approach

Generally, cognitive theories of counselling are predicated on the following basic assumptions.

1. Man is both rational and irrational; when he is rational, he is happy, effective and competent, but when he is irrational, he is disturbed and ineffective.
2. Human beings have a tendency to misconstrue events in their social environment.

3. Psychological and emotional problems are caused by distorted thoughts, irrational or illogical thinking.
4. Man can change or restructure his cognition if he is taught to challenge his irrational thoughts and emotions.

ACTIVITY I

1. Define in your own words the concept of Cognitive Approach to Counselling.
2. Mention three examples of Cognitive Therapy.
3. Discuss three assumptions of Cognitive Therapies.

Albert Ellis Rational Emotive Theory

The Rational Emotive Theory propounded by Albert Ellis (1962) is perhaps the most prominent of cognitive theories of counselling. The theory is predicated on the belief that man's irrational thinking is the source of all his emotional or psychological problems. To Ellis, man can only be effective and productive if he eliminates all forms of irrational thinking. Ellis identified 12 common irrational ideas which constantly make people unhappy, disturbed and unproductive. They are:

- 1) Everyone must love me or approve of what I do.
- 2) One must be competent and adequate if one is to be respected.
- 3) Some human beings are wicked and so should be avoided.
- 4) Life is catastrophic if things do not go the way we would want them to.
- 5) Sadness and emotional misery comes from events outside one's control and so there is little one can do about it.
- 6) If an experience is dangerous or harmful or fearsome, it is a human being's responsibility to be concerned about it.
- 7) To avoid life's difficulties and self-responsibility, it is easier and more expedient than to face them.
- 8) To depend on someone stronger than oneself is preferable to mounting a personal struggle for self-realization.
- 9) A person's present behaviour is a factor of his past experiences and so cannot be modified.
- 10) A person ought to be bothered and upset by the problems of another person.
- 11) Every problem always has the exact solution and it is catastrophic if the answer is not placed.
- 12) To achieve happiness one should be passive because it is a way of ensuring continual enjoyment.

The Rational Emotive Theory stipulates that the aforementioned statements are universally false and they form the basis of emotional problems for millions of people. The most important aspect of Ellis's contribution is the ABC theory of personality which is incorporated into the Rational Emotive Theory.

- A** - represents the "objective" facts, events, behaviour that a person encounters.
- B** - the person's belief about A or the label/interpretation given to A.
- C** - emotional consequences or problems

According to the theory, **A** does not cause **C**, but **B** does. In other words, an individual does not have emotional disturbance simply by being exposed to a particular event. What causes emotional problems is the individual's self analysis, interpretation of definition of the event. For instance, if a student fails a course and is upset and depressed, it is not the failure that is responsible for the emotional disturbance but the student's illogical and self-defeating belief about the failure: that it is a terrible thing for him to have failed and that he or she is a worthless person for failing the course.

ACTIVITY II

1. Highlight ten common irrational ideas identified by Albert Ellis which constantly make people unhappy.
2. Discuss the propositions that bad news in themselves do not make people unhappy but people's attitudes to the news do.

Application of Rational Emotive Theory to Counselling

The major task of counselors is to show the client that the way he or she perceives the events of life is the source of his or her emotional problems.

Counsellors are to bring into focus the illogical and irrational ideas of the client and help him or her to readjust the thinking processes to rational and logical one.

In the counselling process, the counsellor using the rational emotive approach does the following:

1. Shows the client that he or she is illogical and also points out the relationship between his or her illogical ideas and emotional disturbance.
2. Helps the client to realize that as long as he maintains his/her irrational ideas, his emotional problems will also persist.
3. Helps the client to change his thinking and ideas and to accept more rational philosophies of living so that he may not become a victim of irrational ideas and beliefs.

Limitations of the Cognitive Approach

The Cognitive Approach has been criticized for the following reasons:

1. Cognitive therapy tends to ignore the importance of past experiences in solving the client's present problem. Counsellors using the cognitive approach make little or no use of unconscious dynamics, free association, dream work, and the transference relationship.
2. Cognitive therapies such as the Rational Emotive Therapy does not emphasize the development of rapport and the building of collaborative relationship between counselors and clients. Effective therapy is more than simply challenging and modifying a client's faulty thinking. Effective therapy can take place only when counselors show empathy, understanding and care for the client.
3. Cognitive therapy demands that the counsellor should confront the client with facts concerning the illogicality and unreasonableness of his or her thoughts in order to be able to change his irrational thinking. Some clients might initially have trouble with a counsellor who starts with confrontation before they eventually gain the counsellor's respect and trust.
4. Cognitive counselors can misuse their power by imposing on their clients their ideas of what constitutes irrational thinking.
5. Cognitive counselling appears to rely too much on the power of positive thinking to the extent that clients' emotions are played down during treatment.

ACTIVITY III

1. Identify three major tasks of a counsellor using the Rational Emotive Theory.
2. Discuss three limitations of the Cognitive Approach to counselling.

SUMMARY

Cognitive therapy is any intervention designed to change clients' behaviour by altering or correcting errors in their thoughts, perceptions and beliefs. The Rational Emotive Therapy of Albert Ellis (1962) is the most popular of cognitive therapies. Like other cognitive therapies, the therapy is predicated on the assumption that man's psychological and emotional problems are caused by distorted thoughts, irrational or illogical thinking and that man can become happy and productive if he is taught to challenge and consequently change his irrational thoughts. Ellis identified 12 common irrational thoughts which must be changed if man is to become happy and productive.

The main task of cognitive counselors is to show the client that the way he or she perceives the events of life is the source of his or her emotional problems. Also, cognitive counselors are expected to teach their clients to challenge and consequently

change their self-defeating thoughts. The major limitation of cognitive therapy is that it tends to ignore the importance of past experiences in solving the client's present problem.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Write an essay of about three pages in which you show that Albert Ellis's 12 irrational ideas are true of the Nigerian cultural environment.
2. Discuss the Cognitive Approach to Counselling pointing out what you consider to be its strengths and weaknesses.

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UNIT FOUR: BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH TO COUNSELLING

INTRODUCTION

Human beings can be identified not only by their physical appearances but also by their unique patterns of behaviour. You are probably aware that there are some behaviour patterns which set you apart from other members of your family and social groups. If you are asked to explain why you behave in a particular way, your explanations which may not contain any scientific evidence can be described as your own personal theory of behaviour. Over the years, the attempts by psychologists to give universal scientific explanations of human behaviour have developed into a field of study known as behaviourism. In this unit, you will be introduced to the behavioural approach as applicable to the work of the counsellor.

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i) give an acceptable definition of behavioural approach;
- ii) mention at least three proponents of behavioural approach;
- iii) discuss the basic assumptions of the behavioural approach;
- iv) discuss practical application of behavioural theory to counselling; and
- v) highlight the contributions and limitations of the behavioural approach.

HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

- 1) Read through this unit and understand the meaning of behaviourism.
- 2) Use your dictionary to study the new words..
- 3) Make sure you understand the key concepts and terminologies used in the unit.
- 4) Attempt all the activities and assignments included in the unit without referring to the text.

Meaning of Behavioural Approach

The behavioural approach in counselling can be described as a process in which the counsellor adopts a variety of learning techniques to help clients learn the behaviour necessary to solve their problems. Thus, the counselling process using the behavioural approach can be seen as the judicious and expert arrangement of learning and re-learning experiences to help individuals change their behaviour in order to solve whatever problems confronting them. The development of the behavioural approach can be traced to John Watson (1913). Other proponents of this approach include Thorndike, B.F. Skinner and A. Krumboltz (1966).

ACTIVITY I

1. What is behaviourism?
2. Mention three proponents of the behavioural theory.

Basic Assumptions of Behavioural Approach

- 1) Behavioural theory assumes that human behaviour is learned and is therefore subject to change.
- 2) Human behaviour can be altered by making specific changes in the social environment.
- 3) Social learning principles such as reinforcement and social modeling can be used to change behaviour.
- 4) Individuals react in a predictable way to any given situation or stimulus depending on what has been learnt in the past.

Characteristics of Behavioural Approach

- 1) Behavioural theory assumes that human behaviour is learned and is therefore subject to change.
- 2) Human behaviour can be altered by making specific changes in the social environment.
- 3) Social learning principles such as reinforcement and social modeling can be used to change behaviour.
- 4) Individuals react in a predictable way to any given situation or stimulus depending on what has been learnt in the past.

Characteristics of Behavioural Approach

- 1) The approach utilizes the principles and procedures of the scientific method in which conclusions are made based on what has been empirically observed rather than on personal beliefs.
- 2) The outcome of counselling or therapy is measured by change in the specific behaviour of the client.
- 3) The focus of therapy is the clients' current problems and the factors influencing them as opposed to historical determinants of behaviour.
- 4) Clients actively engage in specific actions designed to deal with their problems.
- 5) Observations and therapy are generally carried out in the clients' natural environment.
- 6) Behaviour therapists are distinguished from other therapists by their systematic adherence to specification and measurement.

ACTIVITY II

1. List four basic assumptions of the behavioural approach.
2. Discuss four characteristics of behavioural therapy.

MAJOR CONCEPTS OF BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH

The behavioural approach has its roots in three learning theories. These are the classical conditioning, operant conditioning and social learning theories.

Classical Conditioning

Classical conditioning was developed by Pavlov from experiments conducted with dogs. The theory explains the process by which a conditioned stimulus gains the ability to elicit a conditioned response through pairing with an unconditioned stimulus which naturally elicits that response. The classical conditioning theory shows that behaviour can be elicited not only by the biological state of the organism but also by environmental stimuli associated with the behaviour. The principles of classical conditioning have been used extensively in counselling and behaviour therapy to treat behavioural problems such as anxiety and phobia.

Operant Conditioning

The operant conditioning theory was propounded by Skinner. The theory stipulates that human behaviours depend on the principles of reinforcement. Behaviours which are reinforced tend to be repeated, and those that are not tend to be extinguished. For Skinner, reinforcement is the strengthening of behaviour by a given reward or by a pleasant condition following the manifestation of the behaviour. In counselling and behaviour therapy, the principles of operant conditioning are constantly being used to treat a variety of behavioural problems.

Social Learning

The social learning principle represents a more recent dimension to the behavioural approach. The major proponent of this theory is Albert Bandura. The theory stipulates that learning occurs through observation, modeling and imitation. The idea that learning could occur entirely as a result of imitation and modeling was a direct challenge to the traditional stimulus-response model. The social-learning model is widely used in behavioural therapy to assist clients to acquire new behaviours or to strengthen old ones.

ACTIVITY III

1. Discuss two basic differences between classical conditioning and operant conditioning.
2. Mention two ways in which learning occurs according to the social learning model.

APPLICATION OF BEHAVIOURAL THEORY TO COUNSELLING

The counsellor using a behavioural approach begins with a comprehensive assessment of the clients' problems. At the outset of the counselling relationship, specific goals of the therapy are identified. The counsellor provides a rationale for any established goal ensuring that the goal is realistic and achievable.

After the establishment of goals, the client and the counsellor discuss the behaviours associated with the goals, the circumstances required for change, the nature of sub-goals and a plan of action to work toward the goals.

In designing a treatment plan, the counsellor employs techniques which are based on learning principles but does not have to restrict himself/herself to methods derived from learning theories. Behavioural counselors play a more directive role than other counselors in initiating and executing treatment strategies. Counselling sessions tend to be structured and action oriented. However, the behavioural counsellor does not view himself or herself as the expert who is expected to develop and impose behaviour-modifying processes on the client. Rather, he involves the client in the analysis, planning, and execution of his or her behaviour management programmes. The counsellor collaborates with the client and is expected to serve as consultant, teacher, adviser, reinforcer and facilitator.

Assessment is a continuous process in behavioural counselling. The principles of the scientific method are used to evaluate techniques and procedures.

Criticisms of Behavioural Approach

The behavioural approach to counselling has been criticized for the following reasons:

1. Clients are not encouraged to experience their emotions. By concentrating on behaviour, behavioural counselors tend to play down the influence of emotional issues in determining the current behaviour of clients.
2. Counselling goals are heavily influenced by the counsellor. Though behavioural counselors claim that they give their clients the freedom to select counselling goals, in reality, counselling goals are often pre-determined by the counsellor.
3. Behavioural counselling tends to be manipulative. The approach demands that counselors should manipulate environment factors to produce desirable changes in clients' behaviour.
4. Constructs of learning which behavioural counselors use to explain behaviour are not sufficiently comprehensive and can be viewed only as hypotheses to be tested.

ACTIVITY IV

1. Mention four major components of the counselling relationship under the behavioural approach.
2. Discuss three limitations of the behavioural approach.

SUMMARY

The behavioural approach is described as the judicious and expert arrangement of learning and re-learning experiences to help individuals change their behaviour and solve the problems confronting them. The approach, developed by John Watson and others such as Thorndike, B.F. Skinner and A. Krumboltz, assumes that human behaviour is learned and is therefore subject to change through the application of the three basic learning principles of classical conditioning, operant conditioning and social learning theories.

The work of the counsellor using the behavioural approach can be divided into four basic components. These are: assessment, goal setting, treatment and assessment.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Compare and contrast the Pavlovian and Skinnerian theories of conditioning.
2. Identify a behavioural problem of the average Nigerian school-going adolescent and discuss the relevance of a learning theory in solving the problem.

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UNIT FIVE: CLIENT-CENTRED THEORY OF COUNSELLING

INTRODUCTION

The client-centred approach, also known as non-directive approach to counselling or Rogerian Approach to counselling, is derived from the ideas of Carl Rogers, a prominent American Psychotherapist. The approach, which is based on concepts from humanistic psychology, sees man as being naturally good, cooperative, constructive, essentially trustworthy and as having a natural potential for understanding himself and resolving his own problems if he is exposed to the right kind of counselling relationship. In this unit, you will learn the nature of the counselling relationship which provides the appropriate and necessary conditions for clients' self-actualization and personal growth.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i) give a brief biography of Carl Rogers;
- ii) state the basic assumptions and the major concepts of the client-centred theory;
- iii) discuss the counselling process under the client-centred approach; and
- iv) identify common criticisms of the client-centred approach.

HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

- 1) Read through this unit and understand the meaning of client-centred therapy.
- 2) Use your dictionary to study the new words.
- 3) Make sure you understand the key concepts and terminologies used in the unit.

Brief Biography of Carl Rogers

Carl Rogers was born on January 8, 1902 in Illinois, U.S.A. He was the fourth of six children born to a family which was characterized by devotion and religious fundamentalism. Rogers and his siblings were brought up in a close-knit home with strict and uncompromising religious and ethical views, a background that influenced Rogers' initial decisions on career development.

Like some other children of the middle class, Rogers attended a public elementary school. In 1919, he was admitted to the Agricultural College of the University of Wisconsin where he spent five years. During this period, he became actively involved in religious activities. During this period, he became actively involved in religious activities. He later decided to go into Ministry work. In 1924, he entered the Union Theological Seminary in New York in pursuance of his interest in becoming a clergyman. He later decided to study Clinical Psychology at Columbia University's Teachers' College where he obtained his M.A. in 1928 and Ph.D in 1931.

Rogers worked as a psychologist in the Child Study Department of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in Rochester, New York. In 1930, he had risen to the position of the Director of the Department. The period of his stay at Rochester was very crucial to the development of his client-centred theory. In 1939, he published his book titled “The Clinical Treatment of the Problem Child”.

In 1940, he became a Professor of Psychology at Ohio State University where he taught courses in counselling theory and practice. Between 1957 and 1963, he was Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry at Wisconsin. At Ohio and Wisconsin, Rogers and his colleagues embarked on research projects in the process of testing the client-centred theory. The research projects yielded a book titled, “The Therapeutic Relationship and its impact: A Study of Psychotherapy with Schizophrenics. In 1961, Rogers published another book titled “On Becoming a Person: A Therapist’s View of Psychotherapy”.

Rogers traveled extensively to many parts of the world including Asia, Europe, South America and Australia to disseminate his ideas. He was an outstanding scholar, teacher and prolific writer. In 1947, he became the President of the American Psychological Association and in 1956, the American Academy of Psychotherapists elected him as their first President. Before he died in 1987, Rogers applied the client-centred approach to politics by training policy-makers, leaders and groups in conflicts.

ACTIVITY I

1. Identify aspects of the early life of Rogers which influenced his client-centred theory of counselling.

Basic Assumptions of Client-Centred Approach

The client-centred approach is built upon the following assumptions about the nature of man:

- 1) Man is naturally good, rational and worthy of respect and dignity.
- 2) Every individual has a natural tendency and capacity for self-actualization.
- 3) Man has a natural motivation to interact with his environment in ways that would facilitate the achievement of his goals.
- 4) Man is capable of initiating self-directed behaviours that could culminate in the satisfaction of his needs and the achievement of his goals.
- 5) Given some psychological conditions, individuals could be left alone to determine how to live their lives.

Major Concepts of Client-Centred Approach

Nystul (1999) noted that trust is the most fundamental concept in client-centred approach. The approach contends that clients can be trusted to establish their own goals and monitor their progress towards achieving these goals. In addition, the counsellor must trust that all individuals have inherent self-actualizing tendencies.

Many other major concepts of the client-centred approach can be derived from Rogers' theory of personality which is described in 19 propositions. These propositions as summarized into four major themes by Nystul (1999) consist of the following:

- 1) *People react to the phenomenal field as they experience and perceive it.* A person's phenomena field is the internal frame of reference for perceiving the world. This proposition suggests that what a person perceives will be influenced according to past experiences.
- 2) *The best point to understanding behaviour is the internal frame of reference of the person.* This proposition is logically related to the first proposition. Since each person's perception is unique, it can only be understood from the person's internal frame of reference. Rogers therefore advocated developing a phenomenological perspective when working with clients, which involves understanding things from the client's perspective.
- 3) *People tend to behave in a manner consistent with their concept of self.* The self is the centre of the organism and consists of how a person sees the self in relation to others. The self attempts to foster consistency within the organism by promoting behaviour that is compatible to one's view of the self.
- 4) *The more people perceive and accept experiences, the more they will tend to be accepting and understanding of others.* Self-acceptance and understanding are viewed as contributing factors in understanding and accepting others as unique individuals.

ACTIVITY II

1. State five major assumptions which underlie the client-centred approach to counselling.
2. What are the essential features of Rogers' theory of personality?"

Application of Client-Centred theory to Counselling

The Client-Centred Approach is applicable in a counselling relationship if certain conditions are fulfilled. Rogers identified the major conditions that are necessary for personal growth to occur in a counselling relationship. These are:

- 1) Two persons are in psychological contact.
- 2) One of the two persons in psychological contact – the client – is in a state of incongruence, being vulnerable or anxious.
- 3) The second person – the counsellor – is congruent or integrated in the relationship. Congruence in this sense means that the counsellor is genuine or authentic, plain free from defenses and relates naturally with the client as person-to-person. For example, when counselors feel threatened by a client, it would be inappropriate

for them to pretend that all is well. This would communicate a confusing message and the counsellor would not be genuine or authentic.

- 4) The counsellor experiences unconditional positive regard and acceptance for the client. Unconditional positive regard implies a deep and genuine caring for the client as a person. The caring is unconditional. It is a non-evaluative acceptance of the client giving due recognition to his or her worth as a person irrespective of his or her shortcomings.
- 5) The counsellor experiences an emphatic understanding of the client's internal frame of reference and endeavours to communicate this experience to the client. Emphatic understanding implies that the counsellor will sense the client's feelings as if they were his or her own without becoming lost in those feelings.
- 6) The client must perceive or register the counsellor's emphatic understanding of his or her internal frame of reference. It is important that the display of the required attitude by the counsellor be made obvious to the client.

Stages in the Counselling Process

There is a trend of development in the counselling relationship characteristic of the client-centred approach to counselling. The approach is applied through a number of stages which show the sequence of events in the counselling process. According to Ekiyor (1989), the events are:

- 1) The individual comes for help.
- 2) The helping situation is usually defined.
- 3) The counsellor encourages free expression of feelings in regard to the problem.
- 4) The counsellor accepts, recognizes and clarifies these negative feelings.
- 5) When the individual's negative feelings have been quite fully expressed, they are followed by the faint and tentative expressions of the positive impulses which make for growth.
- 6) The counsellor accepts and recognizes the positive feelings which are expressed, in the same manner in which he has accepted and recognized the negative feelings.
- 7) This insight, this understanding of the self and acceptance of the self, is the next important aspect of the whole process.
- 8) Intermingled with this process of insight is a process of clarification of possible decisions, possible courses of actions.
- 9) Then comes one of the fascinating aspects of such therapy, the initiation of minute, but highly significant, positive actions.
- 10) There is, first of all, a development of further insight – more complete and accurate self-understanding as the individual gains courage to see more deeply in his or her own actions.

- 11) There is increasingly integrative positive action on the part of the client. There is less fear about making choices and more confidence in self-directed action.
- 12) There is a feeling of decreasing need for help, and a recognition on the part of the client that the relationship must end.

ACTIVITY III

1. Identify five major conditions that are necessary for personal growth to occur in client-centred approach to counselling.
2. Discuss the sequence of events in the counselling process under a client-centred approach.

Criticisms of Client-Centred Approach

The following are some of the limitation of the Client-Centred Approach:

- 1) The approach is capable of making counselors to be very supportive of clients all the time without being challenging. There is the danger of counselors using this approach limiting the range of their responses and counselling styles to reflections and emphatic listening.
- 2) Counsellors might become “client-centred” to the extent of diminishing the value of their own power as a person and thus lose the impact of the personality on the client.
- 3) Counsellors may not be powerfully affecting clients if they submerge their unique identity and style in a passive and non-directive way.
- 4) More emphasis is placed on systematic acquisition of counselling skills and less on counsellors’ attitude.

ACTIVITY IV

1. Discuss three major weaknesses of the client-centred approach.

SUMMARY

The client-centred approach to counselling is predicated on the assumption that man is capable of self-actualization if he is given the appropriate and necessary conditions for clients’ self-actualization and personal growth. In other words, every individual has a natural tendency and capacity for self-actualization.

The approach assumes that man is naturally good, rational and worthy of respect and dignity. Based on this assumption, Rogers developed a theory of personality which contains the following basic concepts:

- 1) People react to the phenomenal field as they experience and perceive it.

- 2) The best point to understanding behaviour is the internal frame of reference of the person.
- 3) People tend to behave in a manner consistent with their concept of self.
- 4) The more people perceive and accept experiences, the more they will tend to be accepting and understanding of others.

The client-centred approach, which has been criticized for various reasons, is nevertheless relevant to the Nigeria cultural setting.

ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Discuss the view that the counsellor's attitudes rather than his techniques are the most essential thing in a counselling relationship.
- 2) Explain the view that counselling under the client centred theory is educative rather than curative.

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UNIT SIX: EXISTENTIAL APPROACH TO COUNSELLING

INTRODUCTION

The search for meaning in life has always been a major concern of human beings. Many philosophers and psychologists have tried to explain the meaning of human existence. It is believed that once the individual finds a meaning for his or her existence, he or she will be able to understand and bear the suffering, problems and difficulties peculiar to human existence. This unit introduces you to existentialism, a counselling approach which aims at assisting clients to find a value and meaning to their existence.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. define the concept of existentialism;
2. discuss major concepts of existential approach;
3. highlights the procedures for applying existentialism in counselling;

HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

1. Read through this unit and understand what is meant by existential approach to counselling.
2. Make sure you understand the key concepts and terminologies used.
3. Attempt all the activities and assignments included in the unit without referring to the text.

Meaning of existential approach can be described as a philosophical theory which influences a counsellor's therapeutic practice. The approach rejects the deterministic view of human nature as canvassed by psychoanalysts and radical behaviourists. While psychoanalysis regards man as being controlled by unconscious forces, irrational drives and past events, existential theorists acknowledge some of these facts about the human nature but emphasizes our freedom to choose what to make of our circumstances.

Existentialism is premised on the assumption that man is free and therefore responsible for his choices and actions. Man is the author of his life and not a victim of circumstances. Man is what he chooses to be. The major aim of therapy therefore is to encourage clients to reflect on life, recognize their range of alternatives and decide on which to choose.

The existential approach cannot be traced to a single individual. As Shertzer and Stone (1966) indicate, the existential movement sprang up spontaneously in different parts of Europe among different schools of thought and cannot be credited to any single person. The theoretical origins of existentialism can, at best, be traced to existentially oriented philosophy. In this regard, various scholars such as Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Victor Frankl and Roilo Mary have played influential roles.

ACTIVITY I

1. Define existentialism.
2. Distinguish between existentialism and psychoanalysis.

MAJOR CONCEPTS OF EXISTENTIALISM

The existential approach regards each person as a unique individual who is struggling to derive meaning in life. The key concepts of existential theory as summarized by Nystul (1999) include the following:

1) Uniqueness of the Individual

Existentialism suggests that no two persons are alike. Each one is unique. To become aware of one's uniqueness, it is necessary to encounter oneself as a separate and distinct individual. An important part of this process is to have the experience of existential aloneness. This can be a painful experience as a person attempts to encounter the meaning of one's existence.

2) The Search for Meaning

Existential theory assumes that the most-prominent psychological problem facing people is lack of meaning in life. This is termed the existential vacuum. The theory stipulates that a person can experience meaning by feeling valued or needed, which in turn can create a purposeful existence.

3) Role of Anxiety

Existential theory differentiates between two types of anxiety. The first is normal or healthy anxiety called existential anxiety and the second is unhealthy anxiety referred to as neurotic anxiety. Neurotic anxiety is not healthy because it is an anxiety reaction that is not in proportion to the situation and can overwhelm the person. Some degree of anxiety can be positive since it can motivate a person to make the necessary changes in life. A person who flees from existential anxiety will not be able to learn from the challenges of life. From this perspective, existentialists believe that one can draw meaning from pains and suffering.

4) Freedom and Responsibility

Existential therapy contends that freedom and responsibility are interrelated. Although people are free to choose their own destiny, they must take responsibility for their actions. Existentialists help clients become aware of their choices and the control they can exert over their own destiny.

5) **Being and Nonbeing**

Being and nonbeing are interrelated. The reality of death brings meaning to life. Being and nonbeing are also related to freedom and responsibility. People are free to be or not to be. If individuals choose to be, they must assume responsibility for their existence.

ACTIVITY II

1. Identify and discuss the major concepts of the existential approach.
2. How can an individual find meanings to his or her life?

COUNSELLING APPLICATION OF EXISTENTIAL APPROACH

The basic goal of existential counselling is to help clients discover their own uniqueness. The client's world is unique and must be understood by the counsellor if he or she is to be assisted. Existential counselors believe that the major problems of clients are when the individual's being and uniqueness are being threatened. Counsellors should therefore encourage their clients to disclose their being, their personal uniqueness and the totality of their experiential world.

The existential approach emphasizes the role of the counselling relationship over the use of specific techniques. As the counsellor obtains a phenomenological understanding of the client, he or she also encourages the client to become aware of inner choices. Counselling from an existential point of view is therefore a shared responsibility with the counsellor and client taking an active role in the counselling process.

In the counselling relationship, honesty is an essential characteristic. The counsellor using the existential approach must expose himself or herself and cannot view the client as an object to be manipulated or exploited. As the counsellor tries to be human, the client becomes aware of similar qualities of humanness in himself or herself. Through this process, the client realizes his or her potentialities and achieves self-growth.

The existential approach is not technique-oriented. The interventions employed are based on philosophical views about the nature of human existence. Existential counselors draw from techniques from many other counselling approaches. Techniques employed are flexible and their application is based upon what is believed will enable the clients reveal their existence.

To the existential counsellor, counselling is a creative, evolving process of discovery which is divided into three phases according to Corey (2001).

First is the initial phase. In this phase, counselors assist clients in identifying and clarifying their assumptions about the world. They are invited to define and question the ways in which they perceive and make sense of their existence. The counsellor's role at this phase is to teach clients to reflect on their own existence and examine their roles in creating their problems in living.

During the second phase, clients are encouraged to fully examine the source and authority of their present value system. This is a process of self-exploration, which typically leads to new insights and restructuring of values and attitudes. At the end of this phase, clients get a better idea of what kind of life they consider worthy to live and develop a clearer sense of their internal valuing process.

The third phase in the existential counselling process involves helping clients to put into practice the new things they are learning about themselves. When clients discover their strengths and channel them to live a purposeful life, then the goal of existential counselling has been accomplished.

ACTIVITY III

1. Discuss the basic goal of existential counselling.
2. Mention one characteristic of the existential counselling relationship.
3. List the three phases of the existential counselling process.

CRITICISM OF EXISTENTIAL APPROACH

Some of the major limitations of existential approach are presented below:

- 1) The approach is devoid of a systematic statement of the principles and practice of counselling and psychotherapy.
- 2) There is lack of precision in some of the major terms used in the existential orientation. Terms such as self-actualization, authenticity, being in the world, etc. have vague meanings.
- 3) The approach does not have specified techniques. Parishioners are left to develop their own proceedings or to borrow from other counselling approaches.
- 4) The approach may not be effective when applied to seriously disturbed clients. To such clients, the philosophical insights essential to the approach may not be appropriate.

ACTIVITY IV

1. Distinguish between the techniques of psychoanalytic and existential approach to counselling.
2. Discuss the view that the existential approach to counselling is unsuitable for most clients in the Nigerian cultural system.

SUMMARY

The existential counselling approach aims at assisting clients to find a value and meaning to their existence. The approach is premised on the assumption that man is free and

therefore responsible for his choices and actions. The existentialist sees man as the author of his life and not a victim of circumstances.

The key concepts of existential theory include:

- 1) Uniqueness of the Individual
- 2) The Search for Meaning
- 3) Role of Anxiety
- 4) Freedom and Responsibility
- 5) Being and Nonbeing

The existential approach emphasizes the role of the counselling relationship over the use of specific techniques. One of its major criticisms is that it lacks precision in some of the major terms used in the existential orientation. Terms such as self-actualization, authenticity, being in the world, etc have vague meanings. In spite of its criticism, the approach is applicable to clients from diverse fields of human experience.

ASSIGNMENT

Write an essay of about two pages showing how the existential approach to counselling can be used in the Nigerian cultural setting.

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UNIT SEVEN: TRAIT-FACTOR THEORY OF COUNSELLING

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important functions of Nigerian school counselors is the provision of career guidance to students. In carrying out this function effectively, counselors need a theory of counselling that is specifically tailored towards career guidance. The trait-factor approach to counselling is essentially a vocational theory of career guidance. The approach involves a counsellor helping his clients to understand themselves by assessing their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the requirements of progressively changing life goals and their vocational career. It is one of the earliest attempts at carving out a theoretical base for vocational guidance. Frank Parson (1909) is acknowledged as the major proponent of trait-factor approach in guidance and counselling.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- (i) state the major assumptions of the trait-factor approach;
- (ii) explain the counselling process involved in the trait-factor approach; and
- (iii) identify the weaknesses of the trait-factor approach.

HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

1. Read through this unit and ensure that you understand the basic concepts of the trait-factor-approach.
2. Use your dictionary to check the meanings of new words that you come across in the unit.
3. Attempt all the activities and assignments included in the unit without referring to the text.

Major Assumptions of Trait-Factor Approach

The major assumptions of the trait-factor approach as paraphrased by Adejumo and Alao (1989) include the following:

1. Every individual is essentially an organised and unique configuration of capabilities, potentialities and weaknesses which are relatively stable after adolescence. Objective measurement devices can thus be used to identify these characteristics.
2. Personality and interest patterns correlate with certain work behaviour. Just as it is possible to identify an individual's ability components, it is equally possible to identify the ability requirements of occupations. Thus identification of characteristics of vocationally well-adjusted and successful workers can be useful information for those seeking placement on similar vocations.

3. Different school subjects require different abilities and interest which can be objectively determined through the use of appropriate test-batteries. Students learn more comfortably and effectively when their own abilities suit the ability requirement of the school curriculum.
4. Determination of students' potentials and weaknesses should precede any kind of placement, be it in a school programme or work-setting.
5. Each individual possesses the desire to identify cognitively his abilities. He should thus be helped to use the knowledge of his abilities to choose appropriate and satisfying vocational and a vocational aspirations

ACTIVITY I

1. State five major assumptions of the trait-factor approach to counselling.
2. Identify another counselling approach which shares some of the assumptions of the trait-factor approach.

The Counselling Process in the Trait-Factor Approach

Having learnt the major assumptions of the trait-factor approach, it is necessary to understand the process of counselling when the trait-factor approach is applied to counselling. The work of a trait-factor counsellor can be divided into six stages:

Analysis: This involves collecting data from a wide variety of sources to obtain an understanding of the client. Sources of data used by the counsellor may include data from the administration of test-batteries, inventories, biographies, cumulative record folder, etc.

Synthesis: This involves summarizing and organizing the data collected on the client with the aim of determining the recurring themes pervading them. The recurring themes constitute the clients' strengths and weaknesses.

Diagnosis: This is the counsellor's conclusion about the clients' problem. During diagnosis, the counsellor is able to understand the characteristics and causes of the problem. In diagnosis, the counsellor identifies the problem of the client as well as the characteristics and causes of the problem.

Prognosis: At this stage, the counsellor tries to predict the client's future development or the implications of the diagnosis.

Counselling: This is the step taken by the counsellor and client to solve the identified problem. Such a step usually aims at bringing about adjustment and re-adjustment.

Follow-up: This is the stage at which the effectiveness of counselling is evaluated. Anything the counsellor does to assist the client to solve the identified problem is evaluated.

ACTIVITY III

1. Discuss the major goal of counselling under the trait-factor approach.
2. Explain the six stages of the counselling process under the trait-factor approach to counselling.

Limitations of the Trait-Factor Approach

The following are common criticisms of the approach:

- The trait-factor approach places emphasis on the expertise of the counsellor and makes the client dependent on this expertise for direction and definition. Since counselling involves making choices, clients should actively participate in taking decisions concerning their problems so that they will be able to accept responsibility for any decision taken.
- Counsellor's affective concern is limited. The counselling relationship involves the interaction of two persons – the client and the counsellor. During the interaction, feelings and emotions of the two parties are shared. This process of sharing feelings and emotions is not emphasized in the trait-factor approach to counselling.
- Counselling outcome is heavily influenced by the counsellor's interests and values. Any counselling approach which does not take into cognizance the interests and values of clients may not yield an enduring counselling relationship.
- The approach relies too much on the collection and use of objective data. Data collection ought not to be the ultimate in a counselling relationship. The collection and use of objective data should not be an end in itself but a means towards achieving the desired goal of counselling.
- It may be difficult for the counsellor to ensure that the client actualizes his or her potentialities without undue exhortation and persuasion.

ACTIVITY IV

1. Discuss three major limitations of the trait-factor approach to counselling.
2. Identify an alternative counselling approach which takes care of the limitations identified in (1) above.

SUMMARY

The trait-factor approach to counselling is essentially a vocational theory of career guidance. The approach involves a counsellor helping his clients to understand themselves by assessing their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the requirements of progressively changing life goals and their vocational career.

The major assumption of this approach is that individuals have unique configuration of capabilities, potentials and weaknesses which must be measured and matched with the ability requirements of different occupations to be able to achieve satisfying vocational and avocational aspirations. The work of the counsellor using this approach can be divided into six stages. These are: Analysis, Synthesis, Diagnosis, Prognosis, Counselling, and Follow-up.

The major criticism of the approach includes the fact that it places emphasis on the expertise of the counsellor and makes the client dependent on this expertise for direction and definition.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Make a list of some occupations in your locality and suggest the personality traits that are ordinarily associated with people in these occupations.
2. Write an essay of about one page on what you consider to be your own personality traits and identify the occupations you think will agree with the identified personality traits.

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UNIT EIGHT: ECLECTIC APPROACH TO COUNSELLING

INTRODUCTION

In the preceding units of this module, we have introduced you to various approaches or theories of counselling. You would have observed that though the approaches differ in various ways, each of them has something of value to contribute to the practice of counselling. In this unit, you will learn about eclecticism, an approach which allows counselors to construct their own personal theories of counselling by selecting and integrating what they consider valuable in each of the established theories of counselling. The leading proponent of this approach is Frederick C. Thorne.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) explain the concept of eclectic counselling;
- (ii) identify the steps involved in developing an eclectic approach;
- (iii) explain the counselling process involved in eclectic approach; and
- (iv) discuss common criticisms of the eclectic approach.

HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

1. Read through this unit and ensure that you understand the basic concepts of eclectic approach.
2. Use your dictionary to check the meanings of new words that you come across in the unit.
3. Attempt all the activities and assignments included in the unit without referring to the text.

Concept of Eclectic Counselling

The word eclectic means to select, reconcile, pick or choose appropriate methods or principles from various sources. The eclectic counsellor is one who understands various approaches to counselling but does not limit his or her choice of method or techniques to a particular counselling approach. Rather he or she believes that a particular method or single orientation is limiting and that procedures, techniques and concepts from many counselling approaches should be used to meet the needs of the client.

Eclecticism is an approach which allows each counsellor to develop his or her own theory of counselling by drawing from established theories. The eclectic counsellor is able to choose the best of all counselling worlds to meet the particular needs of the client. The counsellor has a consistent philosophy and purpose in his or her work and he or she employs techniques for reasons that are well verified as possible rather than completely by trial and error. The counsellor develops a repertoire of methods and selects the most appropriate for a particular problem and specific client. The goal of eclectic counselling

is to maximize the individual's intellectual resources to develop problem-solving behaviour.

ACTIVITY I

1. Define in your own words the eclectic theory of counselling.
2. Explain the characteristics of an eclectic counsellor.

Development of Eclectic Approach

The following steps adapted from Shertzer and Stone (1966) are to be followed in developing an eclectic approach to counsellor:

- 1) Compilation of all known counselling approaches or psychotherapeutic techniques.
- 2) Provision of operational definitions for what goes on with each identified approach.
- 3) Analysis or evaluation of what occurs in each counselling approach.
- 4) Establishing the strengths of each approach i.e. what it can be expected to do in order to establish rational indications for its use.
- 5) Establishing rigorous criteria concerning what constitutes a reliable index of the therapeutic efficiency for each approach.
- 6) Statistical analysis of data collected on the postulates of the approach.

The Counselling Process in Eclectic Approach

The goal of counselling, to the eclectic counsellor, is to safeguard the client's mental health by preventing or modifying causative factors producing maladjustment or mental disorder. This is done by assisting the client to learn to adapt more efficiently. The learning process involves the following:

- 1) the diagnosis of the causes of personality maladjustment
- 2) the making of a plan for modifying etiologic factors
- 3) securing proper conditions for efficient learning
- 4) stimulating the client to develop his own resources and assume responsibility for practicing new modes of adjustment, and
- 5) the proper handling of related problems which may contribute to adjustment (Makinde, 1984).

The counselling process using eclectic approach involves choosing from available techniques the one that will meet the specific needs of the client. The choice of techniques as adopted from Shertzer and Stone (1976) are as paraphrased below.

- 1) *Specificity of action needed.* Direct curative action on the causes of disorder is preferred.
- 2) *Economy of action.* Briefer methods are considered before expensive, lengthy methods.
- 3) *Natural history of the disorder.* Behaviour disorders follow definite patterns of development.
- 4) *The distributive principle.* The counsellor directs treatment in a plastic, adaptive manner along directions which offer most promise of results.
- 5) *The total push.* Every possible influence is brought to bear upon the individual.
- 6) *Failure of progress.* Blind experimentation using any and all methods available.

ACTIVITY II

1. Highlight the steps involved in developing an eclectic theory of counselling.
2. Identify the counsellor process involved in the eclectic approach to counselling.

Criticisms of Eclectic Approach

The common criticisms of eclectic counselling are the following:

- 1) The present state of scientific progress does not permit detailing differential treatments for various diagnostic conditions.
- 2) Achieving facility in one counselling method alone is difficult, let alone achieving skills in a multiplicity of methods.
- 3) Counselees will be uneasy with changes in methods, and change may only be a counsellor's rationalization because the selected method fails and he is uneasy or uncomfortable.
- 4) It is doubtful if the counsellor can determine the correct or most appropriate method upon the basis of immediate client reaction (Makinde, 1984).

SUMMARY

The eclectic approach enables the counsellor to develop his or her own theory of counselling by drawing from established theories. The development of an eclectic theory of counselling involves the following procedures:

- ♦ Computation of all known counselling approaches.
- ♦ Provision of operational definitions for each identified approach.
- ♦ Analysis or evaluation of what occurs in each counselling approach.
- ♦ Establishing the strengths of each approach.

- ♦ Establishing rigorous criteria concerning what constitutes a reliable index of therapeutic efficiency for each approach.
- ♦ Statistical analysis of data collected on the postulates of the approach.

The counselling process under the eclectic counsellor involves the following:

- ♦ the diagnosis of the causes of personality maladjustment
- ♦ the making of a plan for modifying etiologic factors
- ♦ securing proper conditions for efficient learning
- ♦ stimulating the client to develop his own resources and assume responsibility for practicing new modes of adjustment, and
- ♦ the proper handling of related problems which may contribute to adjustment.

In choosing the appropriate counselling approach to address the problem of clients, the counsellor considers the specificity of action needed, economy of action, natural history of the disorder, the distributive principle, the total push and failure of progress.

The major criticism of the eclectic approach is that the approach might require that the counsellor be versed in a variety of techniques associated with different counselling approaches. The mastery of skills needed in one counselling approach alone is difficult, let alone achieving skills in a multiplicity of methods.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Identify a common behavioural problem of Nigerian school-going adolescents and suggest a counselling theory that addresses this problem.
2. Discuss the postulates of at least two different counselling approaches that can be combined to address the problems identified in (1) above.

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UNIT NINE: CONSOLIDATION

INTRODUCTION

We have so far covered eight units in this module. We started by giving various definitions of theories in counselling. We identified the need for theories in the practice of counselling and later attempted a classification of different approaches in counselling. The counselling theories discussed in the unit were classified into each of psychoanalytic, cognitive, behavioural, humanistic and trait-factor theories of counselling. While recognizing that there are a variety of theories under each approach, attempts were made to provide the basic assumptions and principles that are shared by all the theories that come under each approach. This unit is meant to refresh your memories on the categories of theories covered in units 1 to 8 as well as provide a summary of the basic concepts of each of the five counselling approaches.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) define counselling theories;
- (ii) state the need for theories in the practice of counselling;
- (iii) identify different categories of counselling approaches;
- (iv) list and explain the basic concepts of each of psychoanalytic, cognitive, behavioural, humanistic and trait-factor approaches to counselling; and
- (v) identify the strengths and weaknesses of each theory of counselling.

HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

1. Identify the counselling approaches studied in units 1 to 8.
2. Go back to the summaries of each unit and read them to refresh your memory again.
3. Write down the important points you can remember in each unit and discuss them with your friends.
4. Do the activities and assignment as they are presented.

Definition and Purpose of Counselling Theories

A counselling theory is defined as a systematic set of assumptions made by knowledgeable scholars concerning the nature of counselling, what happens in a counselling relationship and how the counselors should respond to the needs of the client.

The purpose of theories in counselling include:

- Assisting counselors to guide their practice of counselling in order to practice their professions wisely and ethically.

- Stimulating further research and fact finding on clients' concerns.
- Helping the counsellor to summarise and organise the vast and complex body of information and knowledge that is available on human nature.

ACTIVITY I

1. State as much as possible in your own words the definition of counselling theories which you have learnt in this module.
2. List three reasons the counsellor has for using theories and discuss which reason you consider most important..

CATEGORIES OF COUNSELLING APPROACHES

There are numerous approaches/theories of counselling. These can be categorized as follows:

Psychoanalytic

There are theories which are founded on the assumption that human actions are fuelled by inner conflicts, tensions, guilt and frustrations. To assist the client therefore, the root causes of behaviour and feelings must be investigated by exploring the unconscious mind of the client in relation to the conscious. Counsellors using this approach make use of free-association, dreams, and transference, as well as other strategies to help the client know the function of his or her own minds.

Cognitive

The cognitive approach consists of theories which emphasise the importance of clients' cognitive abilities in the understanding and resolution of all behavioural problems. Therapists in the cognitive field work with clients to solve present day problems by helping them to identify distorted thinking that causes emotional discomfort.

Behavioural

Behavioural theories are based on the premise that primary learning comes from experience. The initial concern in therapy is to help the client analyze behaviour, define problems, and select goals.

Humanistic

The humanistic approach is an optimistic school of thought in counselling psychology which emphasizes that man possesses the natural potentials towards self-actualisation. The humanistic theorist believes that man has all the biological potentials needed for self-realization and self-actualization and therefore can be assisted to realize his full potentials.

Trait-factor

The trait-factor approach consists of theories which attempt to apply a scientific approach to counselling by the use of measurement and prediction. The approach is essentially a vocational theory of career guidance and one of the earliest attempts at carving out a theoretical base for vocational guidance.

ACTIVITY II

1. Mention at least two major proponents of each of the five counselling approaches studied in this module.

COUNSELLING APPROACHES AND THEIR BASIC CONCEPTS

The major concepts of each of the counselling approaches are presented below:

Psychoanalytic Theories

The psychoanalytic theory is characterized by several basic concepts. Some of these are the structure of the personality, endpsychic conflicts, defense mechanisms, the conscious-unconscious continuum and psychosexual stages of development.

According to the psychoanalytic view, the personality consists of three systems: id, the ego, and the superego. These systems are interdependent, yet they are autonomous. The id is the biological component, the ego is the psychological component, and the superego is the social component.

An important contribution of the psychoanalytic theory is the delineation of the process of personality development into stages. According to the theory, personality develops through five stages in the life of an individual. These are: the oral stage, anal stage, phallic stage, latency stage and genital stage.

Cognitive Theories

Cognitive theories of counselling are predicated on the assumptions that man is both rational and irrational and that when he is rational, he is happy, effective and competent, but when he is irrational, he is disturbed and ineffective. The approach states that man can change or restructure his cognition if he is taught to challenge his irrational thoughts and emotions.

Behavioural Theories

The behavioural approach has its roots in three learning theories. These are the classical conditioning, operant conditioning and social learning theories.

Humanistic Theories

The humanistic approach states that trust is the most fundamental concept in client-counsellor relationship. The approach contents that clients can be trusted to establish their own goals and monitor their progress towards achieving these goals. In addition, the counsellor must trust that all individuals have inherent self-actualizing tendencies.

Trait-Factor Approach

The trait-factor approach states that man is essentially an organized and unique configuration of capabilities, potentialities and weaknesses which are relatively stable after adolescence. Objective measurement devices can thus be used to identify these characteristics, which are thereafter matched with the ability requirement of different occupations with a view to helping the individual select the right vocation.

ASSIGNMENT

In a tabular form, compare and contrast the different counselling approaches studied in this module showing their major assumptions, counselling goals and techniques of counselling.

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