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Research Article

Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytical Theory of Personality: A Psychological and Educational Perspective

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Abstract
This paper explores Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytical Theory of Personality, highlighting its foundational concepts, structural components, and educational implications. Freud's model of the human psyche—comprising the id, ego, and superego—offers a dynamic framework to understand the complexity of human behaviour and personality development. The theory situates personality development within the context of psychosexual stages and topographical levels of consciousness: conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. Each level significantly influences cognitive and behavioural responses. The paper examines how the interaction among the id, ego, and superego shapes behaviour, and how imbalance can lead to psychological conflict. It also addresses the criticisms of Freud's approach, particularly its lack of scientific rigor, overemphasis on sexuality, and deterministic view of childhood experiences. Despite these critiques, the theory has contributed significantly to educational psychology by expanding the understanding of student behaviour, learning motivations, and emotional development. The psychoanalytical approach emphasizes a holistic view of the learner, advocating for emotionally supportive learning environments and underlining the importance of play, mental health awareness, and individualized guidance in education. This comprehensive analysis underscores the enduring relevance of Freud's work in both psychology and pedagogy.

KEYWORDS: Freud, Id, Ego, Superego, Conscious, Subconscious, Unconscious and Personality

1. INTRODUCTION

Personality is a trait or quality inherent in all individuals, defining their qualities. The psychological construct of personality extends beyond superficial appearances or external behaviours. The issue of how to accurately understand or describe personality has long engaged psychologists' attention. John B. Watson (1930), the father of behaviourism, concluded from behavioural studies that "personality" is " the aggregate of activities that can be discerned through actual observations over a sufficiently extended period to yield reliable information."

"According to Allport (1948), personality is the evolving structure within a person, made up of both psychological and physical components, that shapes their unique ways of adapting to the surrounding environment."

Example- Personality is the aggregate of an individual's diverse characteristics. Like if I say a person is an extrovert, then

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Extrovert is a Personality type, whereas the characteristics or traits will be that they love communication with others, are sociable, outgoing, and talkative. When we find all such traits in a person, we tend to call that person an "Extrovert". So, we can say that the personality of a person cannot be judged in a short period because a trait can be shown by a person at the spur of the moment and not otherwise. When the traits are repeated, then it is termed as a personality.

1.1 Factors affecting personality
a) Biological Factors
i. Heredity- Traits transmitted through the genes. Clearly explained by Mendel. For example, the child inherits complexion, physique, intelligence, etc from his parents.
ii. Physique- Krestchmer and seldom are credited for their contribution in predicting general personality and behaviour patterns based on mere physique**.**
iii. Nervous System- Mental abilities and sensory-motor skills. CNS (Central Nervous System and ANS (Autonomic Nervous System) are responsible for personality development.

b) Environmental Factors
i.   Home
ii. School
iii. Maturation and personality
iv. Early experiences

1.2 Theories of Personality
1) Theories adopting the Type Approach- Ayurveda, Hippocrates, Kretschmer, Sheldon, and Jung belong to this category.

a. Ayurveda
i.   **Vata**- Air & ether (space)- restless with an active mind
ii. **Pitta**- Fire & Water- Intense, argumentative with sharp intelligence
iii. **Kapha**- Water & Earth- Calm, loyal, need a lot of sleep, emotionally secure.

b. Hippocrates
i.   **Blood -** Light-hearted, happy
ii. **Yellow bile**- Irritable and angry
iii. **Phlegm (mucus)-** Cold, calm, slow
iv. **Black bile-** Bad tempered, sad, depressed.

c. Kretschmer
i.   **Phknic (Fat bodies)-** Sociable, jolly
ii. **Athletic (Balanced body)-** Energetic, optimistic
iii. **Leptosomatic (lean & thin)-** Unsociable, reserved, shy.

2) Theories Adopting the Trait Approach-
a.   Allport's trait theory
3) Theories adopting type-cum-trait approach-
a.   Eysenck's theory of personality
4) Theories adopting the Psycho-analytical approach-
a.   Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory

5) Theories adopting the humanistic approach-
a.   Carl Rogers's Self theory
b.   Maslow's Self-actualisation theory
6) Theories adopting the learning approach-
a.   Dollard and Miller's learning theory
b.   Bandura and Walter's theory of social learning
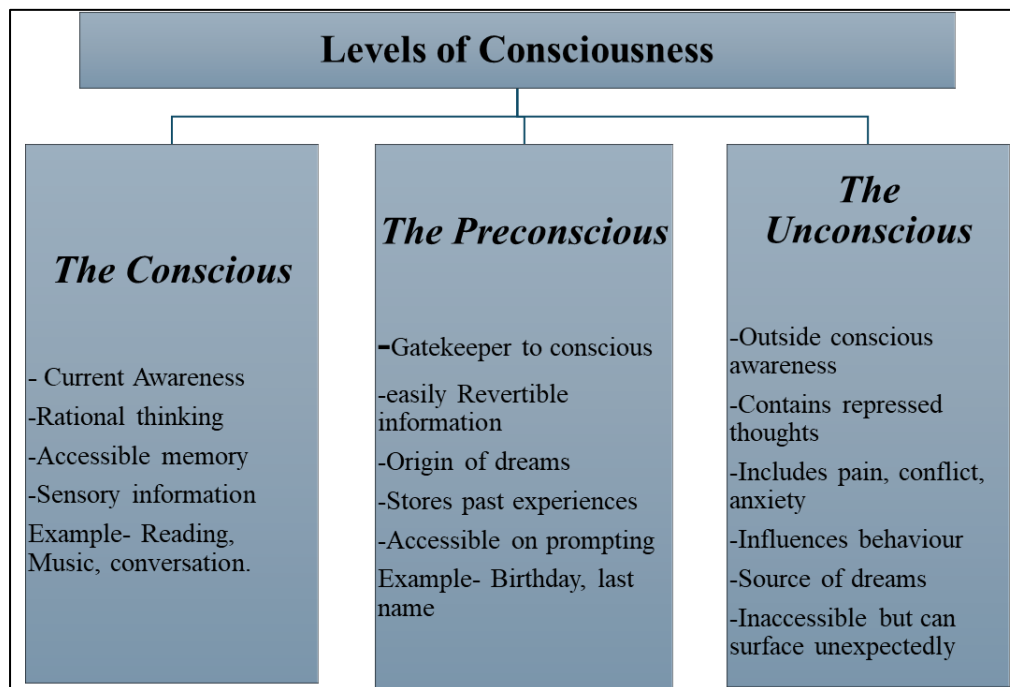
1.3 Sigmund Freud
Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was born in Vienna, Austria, Neurologist. He is known as the "Father of Modern Psychology". He was influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of Evolution (Origin of Species) and by Gustav Fechner's founding of the Science of Psychology- The Study of the mind. He believed that all behaviour is motivated, either consciously or unconsciously. He also believed that psychological principles could be applied to raising children. According to him, the personality changes and develops, especially during Infancy, Childhood, and Adolescence. He divided man's mind into- Id, Ego, and SuperEgo —Each with functions and impact on others.
He believed that children move from stage-to-stage Psycho-sexual development —– Oral, Anal, Phallic, Latency and genital. Sigmund Freud proposed that human personality is multifaceted and consists of multiple elements. His theory of psychosexual development outlines various stages through which personality evolves. In his influential psychoanalytic framework, he identified three key components of personality—the id, the ego, and the superego—which interact to shape complex human behavior.

2. Topographical Aspects of Mind
2.1 Freud's Three Levels of Mind
Every level of consciousness influences the formation of human conduct and cognition. Freud suggested that behaviour and personality stem from the continuous and unique interaction of opposing mental forces operating across three distinct levels of awareness: the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. He asserted that each part of the mind plays a vital role in shaping human behaviour. To understand Freud's theory, one must first grasp the purpose and function of each component of personality, as well as the interactions among these three elements that shape human experience. Although an iceberg floats on the surface, most of its mass remains beneath the waterline. A little fraction of the entirety is observable above the surface; however, the predominant and most significant segment lies concealed below the waterline. Likewise, everyone often discloses a fraction of their identity to others while obscuring a more substantial part that remains unseen.

Figure 1: Flowchart of Levels of Consciousness

3. Psychoanalytical Theory
3.1 Components of Personality
Sigmund Freud believes that human personality is intricate and has multiple components. Freud's well-known psychoanalytic theory suggests that personality is made up of three key elements: the id, the ego, and the superego. These factors combine to produce intricate human behaviours. Each component uniquely contributes to personality, and their interactions significantly influence the individual. Different aspects of personality emerge at distinct stages throughout an individual's life. This provides an in-depth examination of each essential component of personality, its respective functions, and its interactions.

**Figure 2:** Comparison of Id, Ego, and Superego

Component	Description	Operating Principle	Level of Consciousness	Development Stage	Example
Id	Source of all psychological energy; instinctive and primitive behaviors.	Pleasure Principle – seeks immediate gratification.	Entirely unconscious.	Present from birth.	A baby crying until fed, acting impulsively to satisfy desires without concern for consequences
Ego	Develops from the id; manages the id's impulses in socially acceptable ways.	Reality Principle – balances desires with real-world constraints	Operates in conscious, preconscious, and unconscious levels.	Develops soon after birth.	Delaying hunger during a meeting until it's appropriate to eat.
Superego	Internalized moral standards from parents and society; govern judgment.	Idealistic Principle – strives for perfection and morality	Operates in all levels of consciousness	Begins forming around age five.	Feeling guilt for stealing; feeling virtuous for resisting temptation.

3.2 The Interaction of the Id, Ego, and Superego
When discussing the id, ego, and superego, it's important to understand that these are not separate, rigid entities. Instead, they are dynamic components that continuously interact, influencing an individual's overall personality and behaviour. Given the presence of conflicting forces, the id, ego, and superego often come into conflict. Freud introduced the concept of "ego strength" to describe the ego's capacity to manage these opposing impulses. A person with strong ego strength can effectively navigate these internal conflicts, while someone with too much or too little ego strength may display inflexibility or disruptive behaviour. Freud's theory provides a framework for understanding how personalities are structured and how the different components function together. Freud says that a healthy personality needs the id, ego, and superego to work together in harmony. Although the ego bears a significant burden, it need not operate in isolation. When the ego must balance the needs of primal urges, morals, and reality, anxiety helps. When people feel different kinds of anxiety, their defence mechanisms may kick in to protect their ego and ease their anxiety.

Figure 3: Interaction between Id, Ego, and Superego
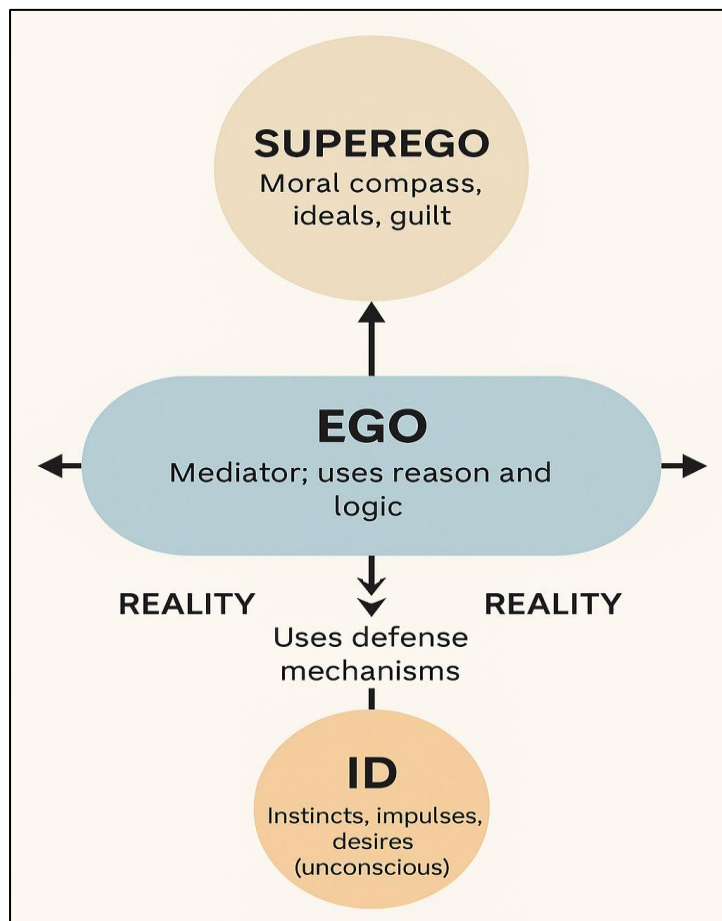
4. Criticism Of Psychoanalytic Theory

Freud's impact on the study of human behavior is often compared to Copernicus's discovery that the Earth is not the center of the universe and Darwin's theory of evolution. However, like these groundbreaking ideas, Freud's work faced considerable criticism both during his lifetime and after his death.

Here are some problems with his theory:

▪ His system is affected by his training as a doctor, which makes him focus on people as biological beings instead of cultural ones.

▪ Freud's examination of human behaviour lacks adequate scientific rigour and objectivity. He often concluded and made broad statements based on a single study or a mental illness. As a result, many of his points of view and findings don't have wide application. For example, not everyone agrees with his idea of the Oedipus and Electra complexes, which says that kids hate their same-sex parent and love their opposite-sex parent.

▪ The most significant critique directed at Freud's theory pertains to his excessive emphasis on the significance of sexuality in human existence. Freud appears to excessively generalise all phenomena in sexual terms, asserting that "the world revolves around the sexes, not around an axis." His

perspectives on infantile sexuality are seen to deprive the child of his inherent divinity and distinctive innocence.

▪ Freud regarded the unconscious as a repository for all repressed desires and a secure harbour for humanity's faults and vices, which are responsible for generating numerous conflicts, tensions, and mental disorders. Nevertheless, this is not the entirety of what can be articulated regarding the unconscious. The unconscious can contribute positively to creation, sacrifice, and the pursuit of higher values. Freud put too much weight on how events in a person's early childhood can shape their life and personality as a whole. While the significance of early childhood experiences is undeniable, the subsequent events should not be underestimated either.

If we accept Freud's ideas without question, they reduce us to puppets controlled by the traumatic events we experienced as children and stored in our unconscious mind. Still, evidence from the real world suggests that our personalities and behaviours are affected by both the things we did and saw as kids and also by the things that happen to us as adults.

5. Educational Implications

Despite being criticised by proponents of Freud's paradigm, this new worldview possesses numerous merits. Their contribution to education might be encapsulated as follows:

o   Before Freud, behaviour was viewed exclusively as conscious actions. With the introduction of unconscious and preconscious behaviours, the definition and scope of "behaviour" were significantly broadened. As a result, psychoanalysis contributed to the expansion of psychology as a whole, particularly in the field of educational psychology.

o   Psychoanalysis has transformed the understanding of education and expanded its objectives. Education is no longer viewed as a constraint to be attained through external regulatory measures such as punishment and rewards. The objective of education has shifted away from the formal cultivation of the mind. Psychoanalysis has expanded this objective to encompass the development of the entire personality.

o   Psychoanalysis has emphasised specific psychological motivators or methods in education that have been acknowledged by progressive educators globally. The means are:

•   Affection or love
•   The employment of instincts and their application in diverse activities.
•   Leniency and permissiveness are important.
•   The child's intrinsic motivation or interest serves as the educator's most formidable ally.
•   Utilise positive incentives rather than negative ones; favour rewards over punishments.

o   Freud's psychoanalysis has substantially advanced mental health education. It's easier to spot mental illness now that we know more about the unconscious, psychosexual development, early childhood experiences, conflict psychology, anxiety, and defensive mechanisms.

o   Psychoanalysis helps us understand why some kids don't want to go to school, even though they naturally want to learn. In the worst cases, this resistance shows up as disobedience and not wanting to work with the teacher. The youngster resists because the act of teaching is perceived, either consciously or unconsciously, as a form of criticism. Teaching implies that the adult is aware of the child's lack of knowledge and wants to rectify or improve it. This lowers the child's self-esteem and makes them more hostile, leading to conflict.

o   Psychoanalysis underscores the need for an appropriate environment for children's education. The environment at school and home should be designed to minimise repression and enhance sublimation opportunities.

o   Psychoanalysis has highlighted the importance of play in children's education. Play exteriorises the inside. This helps kids stay mentally stable in the early years by giving them a chance to talk about their thoughts, feelings, fears, and ideas.

o   Psychoanalysis has catalysed movements such as "Child Guidance", "Mental Hygiene", and the "Freedom of the Child" movement. The child guidance movement has resulted in the creation of child guidance clinics that provide valuable services to society. These movements have underscored the significance of the child as a person.

o   The contributions of psychoanalysis to the comprehension of "maladjustments" in children's conduct are indisputable. Psychoanalysis assists in comprehending the unconscious motivations underlying theft, deceit, absenteeism, and sexual misconduct. The young delinquent predominantly experiences disputes. The struggle arises from the unconscious desires and the imperatives of reality.

o   Psychoanalysis has demonstrated that environmental factors, such as dysfunctional family structures, adverse economic conditions, substandard neighbourhoods, insufficient educational programs, and inadequate recreational facilities are not inherently significant, although they do play a crucial role in individual adjustment. They are significant insofar as they influence the individual's emotional dynamics. They undermine the foundation of emotional security, which serves as a safeguard against maladjustment.

o   Psychoanalysis not only showed how important emotions are in kids' lives and education, but it also shed light on the problems that come up as kids grow up and their emotions change. This understanding empowers parents and educators to cultivate an appropriate demeanour towards children in both domestic and educational settings. In light of this, it is clear that a teacher who knows about psychoanalytic theory can greatly benefit both the school and the students.

o   An understanding of psychoanalysis allows the educator to comprehend the child more effectively. The unconscious content is a fundamental aspect of the learner's nature and must be generally understood for effective management of the pupil. (Adams, Modern Development in Educational Practice).

o   Psychoanalytical expertise, a teacher can identify atypical behaviours and anomalies, thereafter referring the case to specialists for appropriate therapy. As a result, teachers who understand this method and its basic ideas will have the knowledge and skills they need to provide the best education possible.

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