

Interpersonal Conceptualizations and Intra-Psychic Functions of Defense Mechanisms in Indigenous Perspective

Saba Walayat

Government College University
Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

The present study investigated the interpersonal and intra-psychic patterns of defense mechanisms in women of Pakistan. Qualitative study was based on focus group discussion. Data gathered through this interactive group session was recorded and transcribed. Grounded theory was used to assign codes and develop categories of the data and then to drive the important themes. The major themes emerged from the data were enhancing positive attitude, triggered resistance, inculcated religious and moral values, society as a guiding factor, interlink between different defense mechanisms and working mechanism of defense mechanisms. The study has wider implications for adapting the classical psychoanalytic theories while taking the indigenous perspective.

Keywords: defense mechanisms, psychoanalysis, grounded theory.

1. Introduction

When the desires are left to be unfulfilled by either confinement or disagreement, the individual struggles for various ways to prevent him/herself from the severe anxiety. Therefore, adopts the behaviors which can be seen as both as adaptive and maladaptive. These are termed as defense mechanisms or adaptations. The key functioning of the defense mechanisms is maintaining the normal functioning of an individual with respect to situation. Generally, defense mechanisms have meant to help ourselves. Defense mechanisms were initially worked out by the Sigmund Freud during the era of developing psychoanalytic theory. Defense mechanisms were introduced by Freud (1894/1962) as “unconscious processes which modified or distorted reality to protect individuals from an awareness of their own unacceptable thoughts, impulses, or wishes.”

According to this initial conceptualization, all defense mechanisms (e.g., isolation, splitting, repression) meant to regulate the individual's intra-psychic functions through the process of self-deception. Freud originally conceptualized the defenses as “intra-psychic” mechanisms that compromised the internal struggles between the instinctual drives of the id and internalized societal expectations of the superego (Brenner, 1991). Ego “mechanisms of defense” form formations of compromise (Busch, Milrod, & Singer, 1999), which work to satisfy the drives of the id significantly under the restrictions imposed by the superego (Brenner, 1991). If the internal struggle is completely controlled by defenses, then the formation of compromise will not result in pathology (Brenner, 1991). If, on the other hand, the anxiety is not totally resolved by defenses, then consequently some level of pathology might be produced (Brenner, 1991). According to the theory, the effectiveness of Defenses in dealing with the issues related to anxiety can be estimated by analyzing the presence or absence of psychopathology. Freud outlined the role defenses play in several areas throughout his writings, including judgment regarding reality testing, ego functioning, cognition, adaptation to conflict psychopathology (Cooper, 1998). While in his early writings, he synonymously used terms such as “repression” and “mechanisms of defense”, Freud's later writings outline other individual defenses such as displacement, denial, fantasy, dissociation, isolation, reaction formation, projection, splitting, regression, sublimation, undoing and turning against the self (Baumeister, Dale, & Sommer, 1998; Bond, Gardner, Christian, & Sigal, 1983; Cooper, 1998; Vaillant, 1992; White, 1948). Freud never tried to work out a comprehensive list or formulated a fully integrated theory of defense mechanisms, despite using these terms throughout his writing (Baumeister et al., 1998; Perry, 1996; Perry & Ianni, 1998).

As compared to the traditional psychoanalytic understanding of defense mechanisms (based on drive theory of psychoanalysis), more current research and theory has recommended that defense mechanisms uphold self-esteem and defend individuals from experiencing extreme levels of disturbance rather than protecting them from their objectionable wishes or impulses (e.g., Cooper, 1998; Fenichel, 1945; Giovacchini, 1984; Kohut, 1971; Stolorow & Lachman, 1980). The re-construction of the purpose of defense mechanisms is more reliable with current perspectives in social and personality psychology – such as Self-Evaluation Maintenance Theory – by Tesser's (1988) than was Freud's original ideas. As a matter of fact, personality and social psychologists have repeatedly resisted admitting defense mechanisms and they use different labels to address many of these defenses (Cramer, 2000; Paulhus, Fridhandler, & Hayes, 1997). For example, attribution or the false consensus effect is the names used by social psychologists to understand projection. Baumeister, et al (1998), in an analysis of the literature of personality and social psychology, found significant support for most of the defense mechanisms initially sketched out by Freud. As the greater proportion of the reviewed studies were not initially proposed to study defense mechanisms, their conclusion in support of these defenses was predominantly remarkable.

Over the period of the last 35 years, gender differences have importantly been investigated in the research of defense mechanism (Bogo, Winget, & Gleser, 1970; Cramer, 1987, 1991, 2003; Hibbard & Porcerelli, 1998; Mahalik, Cournoyer, DeEranc, Cherry, & Napolitano, 1998; Watson & Sinha, 1998; Watson, 2002). Cramer (1987) with the help of projective measures, mentioned that women scored significantly higher on internalizing defenses (e.g. identification and denial), while on the other hand men were more inclined in using the externalizing defenses (e.g. projection). With the help of similar projective measure, the results of this study had been replicated with students of university in a given controlled anger-provoking situation (Cramer, 1991). Mahalik and associates (1998) found comparable results for the use of projection within a sample of males, but were not able to find support for the increased use of identification and denial in women.

However, at least two studies had mentioned that as compared to men women use altruism which was conceptually an externalizing defense (Watson & Sinha, 1998), confounding the externalization-internalization hypothesis initially proposed by Cramer (1987, 1991, 1998). Other studies investigating the basic gender differences with respect to specific defense mechanisms found that men were likely to score higher on Suppression, Omnipotence, Isolation, Splitting, Denial and Devaluation (Watson & Sinha, 1998). In contrast, Munteanu (2002), using the original 88-item DSQ (Bond et al., 1983), found that males had lower overall scores on the Maladaptive Defense Style, as comparing to Watson and Sinha (1998), who found that men were more intended to endorse the maladaptive defensive style. The items that encompass the Maladaptive Style from the 88-item DSQ used by Munteanu (2002) and the DSQ-40 used by Watson and Sinha (1998) were not equal, and this could be responsible for the contrasting findings to some an extent. There are particularly two important clinical considerations in identifying gender variation in defensive patterns. First, clinicians who are attentive of defensive patterns showed by male and female clients may be better able to facilitate insight and change in their clients. Therapists may consequently have a better understanding of what defensive patterns are with respect to each gender. Second, observing the changes in defensive functioning might be quite helpful means for measuring advancement and outcome of treatment (Bond, 2004).

A central issue for future research in this area concerns whether defense mechanisms involve interpersonal behaviors, intra-psycho processes, or both as long as they are gaining attention in contemporary reaserch (e.g., Baumeister et al., 1998; Cooper, 1998; Westerman, 1998). Classic psychoanalytic conception of defense mechanisms focused mainly on their intra-psycho functions, but interpersonal conceptualizations of defense mechanisms have also existed for very long time (e.g., Horney, 1939; Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1984; Modell, 1975; Stolorow & Lachmann, 1980; Sullivan, 1953; Winnicott, 1965). The move toward an interpersonal conceptualization is significant because it implies that defenses are no longer exclusively measured to be used against specific range of wishes or impulses; relatively, defenses are also observed as emerging within the perspective of close associations with significant others (Cooper, 1998) and may provide as a way for gratifying interpersonal goals (Paulhus & John, 1998).

2. Rational of the study

Although as according to Anna Freud, the use of defense mechanisms is commonly associated with neurotic behavior, it should also be important to mention that this is not necessarily always the case. As a general principle, everyone makes a use of various defense mechanisms according to the requirements of the situation in their lives, especially they are of prime importance during a periods of increased stress.

They not only help individuals to reduce their anxiety which is significantly created as a result of different events but also to maintain a positive self-image. Unhealthy physiological activity can be importantly reduced by the use of certain defense mechanisms. For example, usage of projection has been found to be associated with lower blood pressure (Cramer, 2003). The previous literature on this issue is scarce with reference to indigenous perspectives, although a lot of work has been done in the west. It is to evaluate the application of different western theoretical perspectives in relation to a culture like Pakistan. It is also important to mention that most of the work has been done while using quantitative approach which mostly revolve around selecting different scales and then to evaluate the working of this psychoanalytic concept. Although in the context of indigenous culture such quantitative studies can also be quite helpful in setting a trend to investigate the “Freud” and to increase the cultural validity of his concepts. In general terms, qualitative studies are quite important in increasing the dimensions of contemporary psychoanalysis and all those concepts which could not be widely quantitatively investigated and validated. The issue of contemporary psychoanalysis needs the attention of the researchers. It is also important to analyze the practicality and applicability of psychoanalytic concepts. There is a need to develop insight that how any specific population is particularly making use of defense mechanisms in relation to their daily life experiences and that how do we can interpret the usage of classical psychoanalytic concepts with respect to collectivistic society. As it is mentioned in the introduction that there are particularly two important clinical considerations in identifying gender variation in defensive patterns. Firstly, clinicians who are attentive of defensive patterns showed by male and female clients may be better able to facilitate their clients in more appropriate way. Therapists may consequently have a better understanding of what defensive patterns are with respect to each gender. Secondly, observing the changes in defensive functioning might be quite helpful means for measuring advancement and outcome of treatment (Bond, 2004). So conducting such a study with women within the context of these considerations, might be useful for therapist in order to provide a gender appropriate treatment.

Methodology

3.1 Sample:

Sample consisted of five female participants who were the students of psychology. The age range of the participants were 18-22 years.

3.2 Research Questions:

- What do you think that the use of defense mechanisms increases the positivity or negativity in your daily attitude and behaviour?
- What do you think that working of defense mechanisms is dependent on intrapersonal factors or that there are also some interpersonal reasons involved in it?
- Does the working of defense mechanisms is dependent or independent of each other?
- What is the working mechanism of different defense mechanisms?

3.3 Assessment Tools:

3.3.1 Focus group discussion: Focus group discussion was conducted with psychology students having a general knowledge about the use of defense mechanisms and their role in daily life.

3.4 Procedure:

The purposive sampling technique was used for the focus group discussion. It was held in the library of the psychology department of the government college university, Lahore. Students participated in the discussion proceeded by the moderator. The focus group discussion lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes. The whole discussion was audio recorded, transcribed and analyzed.

3. Data Analysis:

Data was analyzed by using grounded theory method. It is systematic analysis tool, which is frequently used in social sciences. Grounded theory method (GT) actually operates in reverse order as compared to conventional method. It initiates with collection of data with few questions which are under consideration, then hypothesis. Codes are given to the collected data, categories are made from these codes to make the data more effective, and then hypothesis are generated from these categories that eventually leads to the development of theory (Smith, 2003).

4. Discussion

The aim of the present study is to develop an understanding about the indigenous perspective of defense mechanisms in women of Pakistan. The research is based on open ended question schedule to develop an indigenous theory of Interpersonal conceptualizations and Intra-psychic functions of defense mechanisms in women. Results revealed themes such as enhancing positive attitude, triggered resistance, inculcated religious and moral values, society as a guiding factor, interlink between different defense mechanisms and working mechanism of defense mechanisms. All these themes emerged on the basis of different similar codes which come across during the analysis of data. The first theme emerged from the focus group discussion is that defense mechanisms are meant to “enhance positive attitude”. Defense mechanisms make the person positive and increase the adjustability within the given circumstances. Negative impulses can more be dealt in a positive way with the help of using appropriate mechanism. In case of reaction formation, one participant reported, “through the use of reaction formation preferences can change with time, emotions also change accordingly and so negativity can be changed into positivity”.

Undoing helps the woman in avoiding the guilt feelings. Behavioral compensation is appeared to be as the most suitable way to avoid the guilt feelings and also to safe one’s self-esteem from apologizing the concerned individual. One participant reported, “Behavioral compensation provides a way to avoid the bad behavior in future and also I realized the fact that most of the time mistakes are due to displacement of feelings on wrong person but at that moment we are unable to actually accept it consciously.” In case of regression, one participant reported, “Regression provides a mean to feel good and to lesser down the tension”. Regression actually increases the adjustability within a given situation. One participant also reported, “I survived the bad era of financial issues only keeping in focus of early years of my life when I was happy and satisfied”. It generally helps in maintaining the positive attitude and even encourages a person to ignore the hardships. In case of repression, participant reported, “Repression is a strategy to make future happy, necessary to forget past and to avoid the undesirable and painful realities of present”. One participant reported for rationalization, “Failures and hardships always have some good reasons behind them. So first of all, it’s important to accept them completely. Secondly, to analyze the situation thoroughly that how much a person is responsible for them and how much others. It’s not a solution to target oneself even for things for which a person can’t blame himself”. One participant also reported that “It’s better to face the reality. So not to cheat oneself. Facing reality also gives the experience to a person. Unconditional acceptance of a reality is important. This thing develops ability of a person in dealing with the situation, also realization of the fact that avoidance is not a solution or a good strategy. It’s important to keep on expecting for good or to keep on waiting for good. Avoidance can also take to dissatisfaction and that fantasy is not the solution.” One participant also reported, “It’s better to learn from the mistakes and it is only possible when a person doesn’t try to show the resistance against the existence of mistakes but to show the acceptance. Without the acknowledgment of mistakes and their consequences, even distracting one’s attention or to overcome the impact of those mistakes is not entirely possible.” Rationalization is also the appropriate strategy used to overcome negative impulses. Rationalization actually increases the comfort level within a given situation. It generally helps out in maintaining the positive attitude and even encourages a woman to ignore the hardships. If a woman tries to face the situation, then it increases the adjustability of her in a given situation and also increases the chances to resolve the problem under consideration.

One participant reported, “When there are feelings of disappointment than actually I work them out by rationalizing the fact that if there is bad time then there was the good time and there will be certainly good time gain as well. Good things help me to overcome the negativity created due to absence of some things.” One other participant reported, “It’s important not let the tension to overwhelm yourself, to understand the fact that time will pass and that there must be good things. The way you think about certain situation matters a lot in a way that how you will deal with it”. One participant also reported, “it’s not important for me to just focus on the positive events of my life. When I am under some sort of crisis, rather I preferred to remember some worst situations in my past and try to linkup myself with it. Negative events in my past help out in tolerating the negative events in my present”. The second theme emerged from the data is “triggered resistance”. Defense mechanisms somehow also make the person resistant to a given situation in order to handle the issues. In this way they created the comfort zone for the individual to self-guard ego and self-image and by not surrendering in the given situation. Sometimes the person becomes resistant enough by not to accept mistakes verbally, by not to acknowledge it completely and by not to accept the responsibility. One participant reported, “It is difficult to say sorry.

Somehow I don't feel it easy to accept my mistakes. Self-realization is usually not easy to show to others that I am sorry for what I did, so I usually expected from others to get normal and to stop focusing to what I have done." Women usually expected that once the situation gets normal then they will try to undo their mistakes. People don't feel themselves to be courageous enough to handle the situation when it is serious. It's quite difficult for most of the women to accept their mistakes. In such situations they usually confined their self only to realization of mistake and by preplanning to not do that mistake in future. One participant reported, "It is not easy for me to accept my mistakes. I analyzed the whole situation that what I did and what others did. This analysis of the situation takes place when it becomes difficult for me to avoid the mistake. But again this realization is highly dependent on the intensity of mistake." It's actually quite difficult for a woman to take the first step. Therefore, women usually become resistant to accept their mistakes. Usually such behavior is also linked with feelings which make it difficult for them to realize their mistake openly in front of others. One participant reported, "I perceived it to be as a threat against ego to accept my mistake therefore, my attempted behavior always is to avoid it or ignore it. I actually feel that I can only safeguard my ego by not realizing my mistake, by not excusing and by not expressing it". Ignorance and avoidance are the most suitable behaviors adopted by all such individuals.

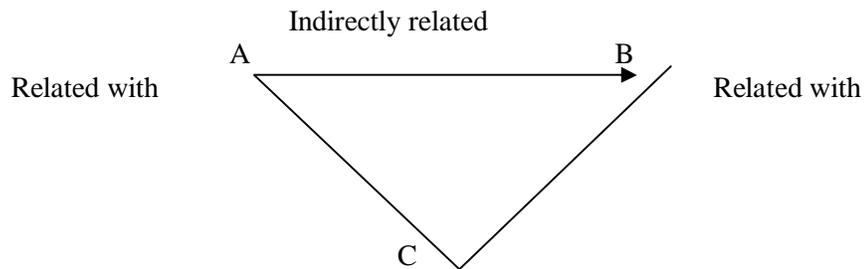
The third theme emerged from the data is "inculcated religious and moral values" which explains the use of the defense mechanisms as supported by religious and moral values. It is believed that for rationalizing the situation, it should be usually directed towards God. One other participant reported, "Belief in God increases the element of hopefulness and that there is goodness in everything and that everything is for experience". While the other participant reported, "Everything should be directed to God. If everything is directed to God, then in this way it takes to satisfaction. A person should have a belief that "particular thing" must be harming for him or to rationalize by taking into account the negative aspects of that thing." It is usually important to have such a positive approach that it isn't appropriate for a person to get that thing. It has been believed that it wasn't in luck. The element of luck is therefore important to consider. As one participant reported, "More than luck and before the time nothing can be achieved". One other participant reported, "Luck is all dominating and so it is important to distract yourself by not seriously thinking about that issue. Moreover, intensity of the issue is also crucial to consider, where high intensity of issue is related with more need to rationalize.

It is also to be believed that some other good option must be present for a person or that it is a better option for a person to stay away from that thing. It can also be used as a strategy to retain self-confidence. Besides rationalization, using the mechanism of sublimation is also contingent to so many reasons as one participant reported, "Morality and religion are important reasons for me to maintain my standard behavior for others". When it comes to anticipating about unseeing events, again participants reported that it's better to leave everything on God and start believing the fact that there must be positivity in every action of God. However, through reaction formation, negative impulses can more be dealt in a positive way. As one participant reported; "When I feel negative towards someone, I try my level best to remain positive towards that person. I don't feel it better to do backbiting as it's not religiously appropriate".

The fourth theme emerged from the data is "society as a guiding factor". This theme is related to the working of defenses in which society is majorly responsible for providing the framework for working of defense mechanism of an individual. Simply it can be defined as a collectivist pattern of dealing with intrapersonal issues. Women when get hurt in a relationship, unintentionally move to the state of regression, where they remember the good times and mostly keep on focusing them in order to deal with the negative impulses of present. One participant reported; "When someone hurts me then I stop thinking about that individual instead I start thinking about those with whom I have positive relationships. This thing helps me out in bringing the positive changes in my attitude and to divert my feelings from the negativity towards the positivity." In case of Reaction formation, women are inclined to do it for maintaining relationships, so socially defined values are important in defining the use of this defense mechanism. As in collectivist cultures women are more inclined to develop their relationships on the basis of a compromise. In such context, reaction formation actually works as a facilitator. One participant reported, "Such reactions usually take place because of the restrictions a person has to face regarding relationships in collectivist culture. Fear associated with reaction of important people in our life confined our reaction range and force us to adopt the strategy of reaction formation to work out our undesired behavior towards the targeted individual." Sometimes the situation becomes even more complicated and undesirable.

Where a person has to adopt the reaction formation towards the undesirable individual because both the persons are linked in a significant relationship with another mutual person and therefore as both the persons A and B are

connected to C, so A has to make a use of reaction formation in order to deal with B and to get the things work out in an appropriate manner.



Regarding Repression, one participant reported, “In collectivist cultures like ours, repression actually helps me out in maintaining the compromise and to sustain the relationships with others. So repression sometimes used as a conscious choice against the hardships of life and to make life more desirable”. To maintain the compromise in relationships, women prefer in denial of reality, therefore sometimes it appears to be an important social strategy for maintaining the relations. Rationalization can take place by means of an attempt to figure out the things and by sharing with any other significant relationship (etc. mother). Women showed an awareness of the fact that in their achievement and failures, significant others (family, friends) can play a very crucial role. An effort of undoing by means of saying sorry, sometimes become very conditional where women can do it only for whom they like and not to everyone whom they hurt. Biasness sometimes accompanied when women are trying to undo their mistakes. Even there are differences on the basis of age of that particular individual in relation to courage of accepting the mistakes. One participant reported, “With children it is difficult to say sorry directly and also appeared to be as quite unimportant and therefore try to compensate it by becoming intentionally kind and considerate towards them. With elders it is quite easy to accept the mistakes directly and rapidly.” While Displacement, situation played an important role that whose anger is going to be expressed on whom. If it is self-directing, then in some situation can also be expressed on friends. As the unwanted impulses can be shifted from one target to other like

- Of family to friends
- If parents than on siblings (usually sisters)

One participant reported, “As I see it in case of my elder sister, if the unwanted impulses are due to her husband then the most expected target will be some issue related to children like their homework”. If anger is related to parents, then it usually displayed on siblings and others.

The fifth theme emerged from the data is “interlink between different defense mechanisms”. This themes focuses the working alliance of different defense mechanisms. Defense mechanisms are usually not worked alone but in a relation and in context to other defense mechanisms in order to completely resolve the issue which is appeared as a threat to ego. Regarding the substantial connection between undoing and displacement, one participant reported, “Behavioral apology provides a way to avoid that particular behavior in future. I also realized the fact that most of the time mistakes are due to displacement of feelings on wrong person but at that moment we are unable to actually feel it consciously”. On the other hand, if things are not getting rationalize, then it potentially takes to regression, where people are keep on regressing in good memories of their life and therefore avoiding the unpleasant situation. Projection emerged when there is already a problem with rationalization. One participant reported, “I belief that people are not understanding me. There must be some problem with their judgment skills”. Projection can also take to the displacement, where unwanted feelings are displaced on some easy targets.

The sixth theme comes out of the focus group discussion is “working mechanism of defense mechanism”. The methodology for the working of different defense mechanisms and the strategies being used are the major focus here. In case of Rationalization, Participants responded that it should be based on reality. Identification of mistakes is an important aspect of rationalization of reality, where it provided the chance to individuals to learn from their past experiences. Another way to deal with those issues which can’t be handle in rationalize way is that to leave it and move away. Generalizability factor is another important thing. It wasn’t for a person or that it wasn’t in luck. Through patience and through courage the rationalization can be take place gradually.

It is also a way to rationalize against the unwanted situation by taking into consideration the negative points related to that thing. As one participant reported, “Focusing on the negative aspects and believe that it wasn’t

suitable for me”. Cognitive reinterpretation of events played an important role. Creating the negative image of that thing is an important aspect for dealing with concerned situation. Even in this case “negative interpretation of events or situation” is also an important factor. As reported by one, “Negative interpretation of luck and of others who rejected me helps me in dealing or avoiding the concerned situation”. One participant also reported, “There are various ways to rationalize the given problem, like by finding out the negative points, if it’s due to others then directing the feelings towards the right individual, by means of aggression, through showing the patience, and by figuring out the possibilities that how much the feelings can be directed to the right source”.

In case of Repression, one participant reported, “I would like to share the issues with others, but sharing depends on the level of maturity and age of a person”. Repression is not a permanent solution. Self-talk can also be used as a mean to work out the unwanted impulses as opposite to repression. Different mechanisms for repression can be used like silence and loneliness. Apart from that, drawing can also be used as a way to deal with the repressed impulses. Women used it as the most desirable way to handle their issues where they are inclined to repress all the things. Women mentioned that they don’t like to stay in imagination. It’s actually not possible to deny the realities of life. One participant reported, “I want to avoid the reality but I can’t”. Reaction formation can take a form of passive attitude where an individual creates a distance from a targeted person. The spontaneous judgments about people should not be passed because ones the judgments are passed then it become difficult for a person to change those perceptions and to use reaction formation as a strategy.

Sublimation becomes the source of working out the unwanted impulses in relation to or provided social context. According to one participant, “When I am so much infuriated and it becomes difficult for me to control my aggressive impulses then I actually start to cook for others.”Regarding Undoing, if there are high degree of guilt feelings and if a woman required an instant satisfaction or relief of self, then asking for verbal apology is the most significant reaction towards the situation. Women reported that by accepting the mistake and by asking for apology, resistance to behavior that is the cause of mistake can be avoided and it can be help full not only in the present but also in the future. One participant reported, “Mistakes can be actually worked out and avoided next time but it depends on their type and intensity. Realization of mistake and to undo it properly facilitates to avoid the element of harshness and misunderstanding in future.” One participant also reported, “Mistakes should be compensated in a consistent way with everyone involved regardless of gender and age.”Displacement actually works in the form of verbal expression where aggression minimizes the ability to rationalize, so verbal aggression is mostly expressed on available targets. In case of a teacher, one participant reported that she used to write inappropriate language on paper because no other expression can be employed. Scolding others or insulting others is majorly the way of displacement. Talking and sharing can also be used. So these different mechanisms can be used as a way to displace the unwanted impulses. In case of anticipation, one participant reported that a person should expect both the positive and negative aspects of expected things in life. Preplanning helps out in tackling the situation. With the help of using prudence and wisdom the situation can be dealt in more appropriate way.

Conclusion and implication

As evidenced by studies discussed earlier, scientific interest in the defense mechanisms appears to be on the upswing among psychologists in various subfields, including cognitive, developmental, personality, and social psychology (Cramer, 2000). Possibly the most frequently cited criticism of all of Freud’s work is that it is quite difficult to test it scientifically. Many studies have tried their best to exhibit the existence of many Freudian concepts. Most of the time, the results of such studies have been mixed. While some of his ideas have received the scientific support (Cramer, 2000), on the other hand, others have not been proven, and still there are others which simply cannot be studied (Fisher & Greenberg, 1977). One fascinating study may have revealed scientific evidence that homophobia, which is actually an irrational avoidance, fear, and prejudice toward gay and lesbian individuals, may be a reaction formation used to handle the extreme anxiety caused by their own homosexual tendencies which are repressed (Adams, Wright, & Lohr, 1996). In this perspective, the study attempted to re-conceptualize the use of defense mechanisms within the context of indigenous perspective specifically with respect to women. The research attempted to gain an understanding of how defense mechanisms are working in a given social, cultural and religious value system of a collectivistic society like ours.

In light of the Freud work and afterwards the work of neo-Freudians and contemporary psychologists, it has been showed that the working of defense mechanisms is not only taking place in the intrapersonal context but it has been equally facilitated by interpersonal aspects as well. Moreover, some factors exist mutually between both

interpersonal and intrapersonal domains. The study is trying to help clinicians and therapist to understand the working of different defense mechanisms and that how they are operationally been defined by the women. It has been a step towards the contemporary psychoanalysis within a society where basic concepts of psychoanalysis are not as such investigated and explored. This qualitative research has wider implications in understanding the classical psychoanalytic concepts importantly in relation to indigenous perspective. As Freud usually perceived as some stranger in respect to cultural, religious and social value system of collectivistic society, so this study actually develops a pathway for future studies where more and more sensitive and controversial theories of psychology can be studied which are previously believed to be majorly dominated by western perspectives.

Limitation

Although it was an underlying belief regarding the working of defense mechanisms and as supported by the literature that they act at unconscious level, but what had been observed during the collection of data and while asking questions to the subjects that this process was not completely unconscious. Conscious efforts were also taking place while compromising the internal struggles between the instinctual derives of the id and the internalized societal expectations of the super ego while providing the details as answers. Simply it is not possible as the researcher to evaluate that how much working is conscious and how much they are working unconsciously. It is the issue of subjective concern and can only be understood providing situational context and biasness free judgment.

Hypotheses

1. Majorly the intrapersonal factors are responsible for the working of defense mechanisms, where they are important to safeguard a person by all means.
2. The defense mechanisms and their working at individualistic level are also dependent on interpersonal elements, where social bonding and social dimension of the issue provide a guiding frame work.
3. All defense mechanisms are interrelated and there working is dependent in nature, where one mechanism takes to the other.
4. The working of defense mechanisms is sometimes become the matter of personal choice, where it's not completely an unconscious process but to some extent an awareness (regarding taking the best decision in the given situation) plays its role side by side.
5. The working of defense mechanism is a complex process, influenced by so many factors and aspects at individualistic and collectivistic levels simultaneously.

References

- Adams, H., Wright, L., &Lohr, B. (1996). Is homophobia associated with homosexual arousal?*Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 105*(3), 440-445.
- Baumeister, R. F., Dale, K., &Sommer, K. L. (1998). Freudian defense mechanisms and empirical findings in modern social psychology: Reaction formation, projection, displacement, undoing, isolation, sublimation, and denial. *Journal of Personality, 66*, 1081-1124.
- Bogo, N., Winget, C, &Gleser, G.C. (1970). Ego defenses and perceptual styles. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 30*, 599-605.
- Bond, M. P. (2004). Empirical studies of defense style: Relationships with psychopathology and change. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry, 12*, 263-278.
- Bond, M. P., Gardner, S. T., Christian, J., &Sigal, J. J. (1983). Empirical study of self-rated defense styles. *Archives of General Psychiatry, 40*,333-338.
- Brenner, C. (1991). A psychoanalytic perspective on depression. *Journal of the AmericanPsychoanalytic Association, 39*,25-44.
- Busch, F. N., Milrod, B. L., & Singer, M. B. (1999). Theory and technique in psychodynamic treatment of Panic Disorder. *Journal of Psychotherapy Practice and Research, 8*, 234- 242.
- Cooper, S. H. (1998). Changing notions of defense within psychoanalytic theory. *Journal ofPersonality, 66*, 947-964.
- Cramer, P. (1987). The development of Defense Mechanisms. *Journal of Personality, 55*, 597-614.
- Cramer, P. (1991). Anger and the use of defense mechanisms in college students. *Journal of Personality, 59*, 39-55.

- Cramer, P. (1991). *The development of defense mechanisms: Theory, research and assessment*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Cramer, P. (1998). Defensiveness and defense mechanisms. *Journal of Personality*, 66, 879-894.
- Cramer, P. (2000). Defense mechanisms in psychology today: Further processes for adaptation. *American Psychologist*, 55(6), 637-646.
- Cramer, P. (2003). Defense mechanisms and physiological reactivity to stress. *Journal of Personality*, 71, 221-244.
- Fenichel, O. (1945). *The psychoanalytic theory of neurosis*. New York: Norton.
- Fisher, S., & Greenberg, R. (1977). *The scientific credibility of Freud's theories and therapy*. New York: Basic Books.
- Freud, S. (1962). The neuro-psychoses of defense. In J. Strachey (Ed. And Trans.), *the standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 3, pp. 43-68). London: Hogarth Press. (Original work published 1894)
- Giovacchini, P. L. (1984). *Character disorders and adaptive mechanisms*. New York: Jason Aronson.
- Hibbard, S. & Porcerelli, J. (1998). Further validation for the Cramer defense mechanism manual. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 70, 460-483.
- Horney, K. (1939). *New ways in psychoanalysis*. New York: Norton.
- Kernberg, O. (1975). *Borderline conditions and pathological narcissism*. New York: Jason Aronson.
- Kohut, H. (1971). *The analysis of the self*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Kohut, H. (1984). *How does analysis cure?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mahalik, J.R., Cournoyer, R.J., DeFranc, W., Cherry, M., & Napolitano, J.M. (1998). Men's gender role conflict and use of psychological defenses. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 45, 247-255.
- Modell, A. (1975). A narcissistic defense against affects and the illusion of self-sufficiency. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 56, 275-282.
- Munteanu, M. A. (2002). The relationship between psychological types and ego defense mechanisms: A correlational study. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences*, 63, 12-A.
- Paulhus, D. L., Fridhandler, B., & Hayes, S. (1997). Psychological defense: Contemporary theory and research. In R. Hogan, J. Johnson, & S. Briggs (Eds.), *Handbook of personality psychology* (pp. 543-579). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Paulhus, D. L., & John, O. P. (1998). Egoistic and moralistic biases in self-perception: The interplay of self-deceptive styles with basic traits and motives. *Journal of Personality*, 66, 1025-1060.
- Perry, J. C. (1996). Defense mechanisms in impulsive versus Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders. In J. M., Oldam, E. Hollander, & A. E. Skodol (Eds.), *Impulsivity and compulsivity* (pp. 195-230). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- Perry, J. C., & Ianni, F. F. (1998). Observer-rated measures of defense mechanisms. *Journal of Personality*, 66, 993-1024.
- Smith, A.J. (2003). *Qualitative psychology, a practical guide to research methods*. Sage publications: London.
- Stolorow, R., & Lachmann, F. (1980). *Psychoanalysis of developmental arrests*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Sullivan, H. (1953). *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. New York: Norton.
- Tesser, A. (1988). Toward a self-evaluation maintenance model of social behavior. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 21, 181-227.
- Vaillant, G. E. (1992). The historical origins of Sigmund Freud's concept of the mechanisms of defense. In G. E. Vaillant (Ed.), *Ego mechanisms of defense: A guide for clinicians and researchers* (pp. 3-28). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press.
- Watson, D.C & Sinha, B.K. (1998). Gender, age, and cultural differences in the defense style questionnaire-40. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 54, 67-75.
- Watson, D.C. (2002). Predicting psychiatric symptomatology with the Defense Style O'Jestionnaire-40. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 9, 275-287.
- Westerman, M. A. (1998). Reconceptualizing defense as a special type of problematic interpersonal behavior pattern: A fundamental breach by an agent-in-a-situation. *Journal of Mind and Behavior*, 19, 257-302.
- White, R. W. (1948). Anxiety and defense. In R. W. White (Ed.), *the abnormal personality* (pp.215-245). New York: Ronald Press.

Winnicott, D. (1965). *Maturational processes and the facilitating environment*. New York: International Universities Press.

Results

Table 1: Showing the Codes and Categories Emerged from The Data. Indigenous Theory of Defense Mechanisms

<p>Category 1; Increase Positivity</p> <p>Reaction formation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change in preferences • change in emotions • negativity turned into positivity <p>Undoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoiding guilt feelings • behavioral compensation • use to avoid guilt feelings • use to safe self-esteem • avoiding bad behavior in future • displacement of feelings • unable to conscious acceptance <p>Regression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mean to feel good • means to lesser down tension • increases the level of adjustability • way of survival in bad times • maintain positive attitude • way to ignore hardships <p>Repression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • way to make future happy • way to forget past • way to avoid painful realities <p>Rationalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finding good reason • complete acceptance • analyzing the situation • avoid unjustified self-blaming • analyzing the person responsibility factor • facing the reality <p>Category 2: Resistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps in handing the situation • formation of comfort zone • involved in self-guarding ego • it's hard to say sorry • try to avoid mistakes in future • only the realization of mistakes • taking first step is difficult • ignorance & avoidance can be used as strategy <p>Category 3: following the value system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • try to accept the mistakes • increases the level of comfort • helps in maintain positive attitude • provide courage to ignore hardships • increases the adjustability • Increases the problem resolution • Focusing good times for motivation in bad circumstances • Increases the strength by overcoming negativity • Expecting good time ahead • A significant Thought process for finding a way out • Negative events increase the level of tolerance <p>Sublimation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Element of morality • Element of religion <p>Anticipation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better to belief in God • Expecting the element of positivity <p>Reaction Formation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negativity turned into positivity due to religion • Adopting religiously appropriate behavior <p>Category 4; Societal framework</p> <p>Regression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remembering good time • To deal with negative factors • When gets hurt in relationships • Considering the positive aspects of relations • Helps in having positive changing's in attitude • Differences on the basis of age • With children, it's difficult • An effort of compensation of behavior • By becoming kind and considerate • With elders, direct acceptance of mistakes <p>Category 5; Relation between different defense mechanisms</p> <p>Undoing & Displacement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displacement of feelings on wrong person • Behavioral compensation <p>Rationalization & Regression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If not getting rationalize
--	---

<p>Rationalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • belief in God • element of hopefulness • element of goodness • element of experience • increases satisfaction • considering the negative aspects • luck factor • distraction is important • severity of issue matters • Expecting other good option • Strategy to retain self confidence <p>Reaction formation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For maintaining relationships • Helps in making compromise • Pattern of society is important • Relation is more important than individual's feeling • Complicated and undesirable situation • Two people are linked with third one • Presence of third effects both <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experience to a person • unconditional acceptance to reality • ability to handle situation • avoidance is not a strategy • expecting good • fantasy is no solution • learning from mistakes • resistant is not good regarding mistakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regressing in good memories <p>Projection, Rationalization & Displacement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believing others are not rightly judging • Shifting feelings on easy targets <p>Category 6; Working of different defense mechanisms</p> <p>Rationalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on reality • Identification of mistakes <p>Undoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepting mistakes • Apology is a good way • Type and intensity of mistake is important • Realization of mistake • Keeping away the elements of harshness & misunderstanding • An effort should have been done regardless of age & gender <p>Displacement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal expression on available targets • Writing inappropriate language • Scolding or insulting used as away • Talking & sharing <p>Anticipation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expecting positive & negative things • Preplanning • Use of prudence & wisdom • Making situation appropriate
--	--

Figure 1: The figure indicates the major themes of defense mechanisms, emerged through grounded theory approach.

