

An Exploratory Study on The Impact of Psychodynamics on Self, Relationship, Cognition, Love and Work

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ABSTRACT

Psychodynamics is an extremely relevant theory first propounded by Sigmund Freud, and later taken up by various eminent psychologists and psychiatrists. The theory emphasises the importance of the state of mind of an individual in reacting to various situations and thoughts. A happier state of mind elicits a completely different reaction than a not-so-happier state of mind. Environment and brain damage are important factors that impact reactions concerning relationships, cognition, love and work.

Keywords: Psychodynamics, cognition, Self, Relationship, Unconscious Processes, Psychodynamic Therapy, Freud, Personality Development, Decision-Making.

Research Question: The paper will analyse the impact of the psychodynamics branch of psychology on various aspects of life. Does this branch impact human behaviour, feelings and emotions? How do these relate to early experience? What is the impact of human awareness on internal and external stimuli? Are there any unconscious processes which may be manifest in an individual's present behaviour? What does the study of this branch indicate about the effect on work and play? These and many such questions will be attempted to be addressed in the course of this paper.

1. Introduction

Psychodynamics is defined as the study of forces, motives and energy generated by the deepest human needs. It studies the transformations and changes of 'psychic energy' within the personality. It emphasises the systematic study of the psychological forces that underlie human behaviour, feelings and emotions. This emotion is related to a human's earlier experiences. Consciousness is the awareness of oneself in space and time to both internal and external stimuli. It is also a theory that explains personality in terms of unconscious psychological processes.

Indicating that childhood experiences are crucial in shaping adult personality. This part of psychology helps in seeing what is behind the problems that one encounters. It gives them a better understanding of their unconscious feelings, thoughts and past experiences.

This discipline was established in the early 1890s by Sigmund Freud, whose work was considered the clinical work done by Josef Breuer and others. Freud was inspired by the theory of thermodynamics and used the term psychodynamics to describe the processes of the mind as flows of psychological energy.

Psychoanalysis is also called psychodynamic therapy as it incorporates concepts of mental functioning based on psychoanalytic theories.

Figure 1; Psychodynamic perspective



Source: <https://www.yourdictionary.com/articles/examples-psychodynamic-perspective>

2. Definition:

2.1) Psychodynamic theories focus on the psychological forces within individuals that explain human behaviour and personality. These theories have originated from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis which focuses on the unconscious mind as the source of psychological distress and dysfunction. It states that there are forces outside a person's awareness that explain their

behaviour. This theory cannot be defined as a unified one, instead, there are many related theories with respect to human development and personality.

Sigmund Freud the father of psychodynamic theory emphasises the unconscious psychological processes [for example, wishes and fears of which one is not fully aware], he states that childhood experiences are extremely relevant in shaping adult personality.

There are four theories or four schools of psychoanalytical theory which has influenced psychodynamics.

The four schools are;

- Freudian
- Ego Psychology
- Object Relations
- Self-Psychology

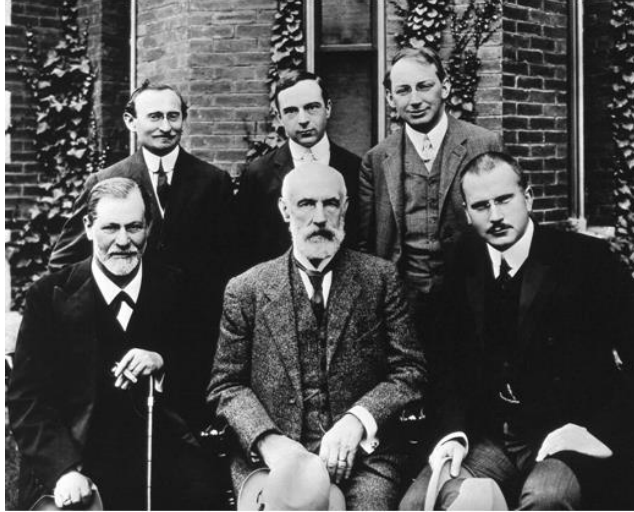
The psychodynamic approach to leadership study and development focuses on the dynamics of human behaviour which are often most difficult to understand. This theory acknowledges that people are complex, unique, and paradoxical with rich and myriad motivational drivers, different decision-making, and interaction paths.

The reason that this theory was called psychodynamic was because Freud was inspired by the theory of 'thermodynamics' and thus he used the term to describe the different processes of the mind as flows of psychological energy. These theories were clinically derived that is based on what his patients told him during therapy.

This theory focuses on helping patients work through the psychosexual stages of personality development :

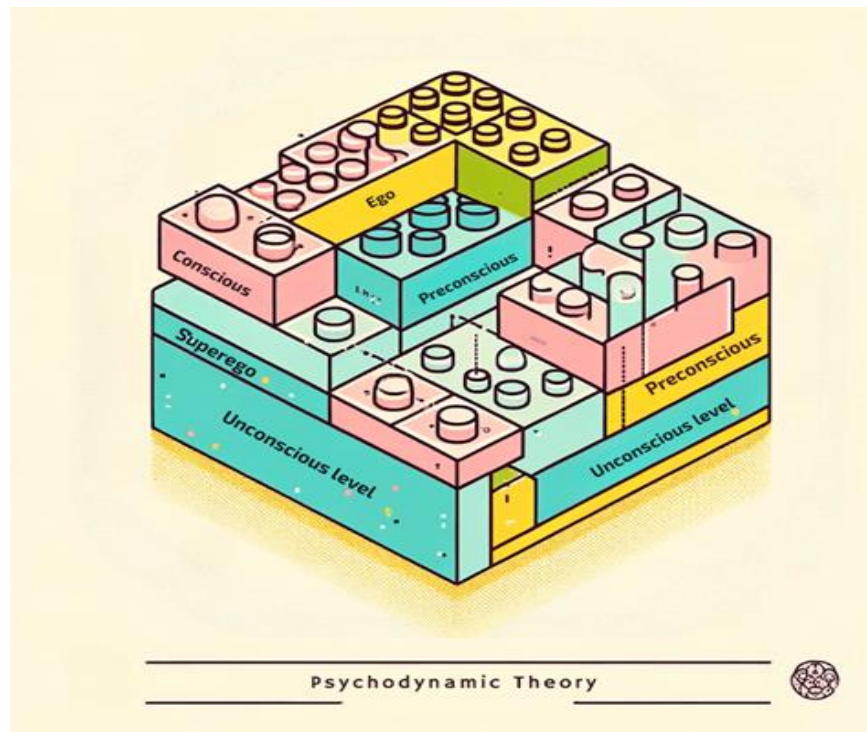
- Oral Stage
- Anal stage
- Phallic stage
- Latency stage
- Genital Stage

Figure 2 ; Sigmund Freud, father of psychodynamic theory



Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychodynamics>

Figure 3; Illustration of Psychodynamic Theory



Source: <https://www.structural-learning.com/post/psychodynamic-theory>

2.2) Cognition is defined as ‘the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience and the senses’. This could also be understood as the mental processes relating to the input and storage of information and how this information is then used to guide one's behaviour. This is also a term for thinking, attention, language, learning, memory and perception.

Neisser who is considered the father of cognition, illustrates a progressive concept of cognitive processes as “all processes by which the sensory input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered and used”. Piaget is known for studying the cognitive development in children.

Figure 4; Cognitive perspective

Cognitive Perspective



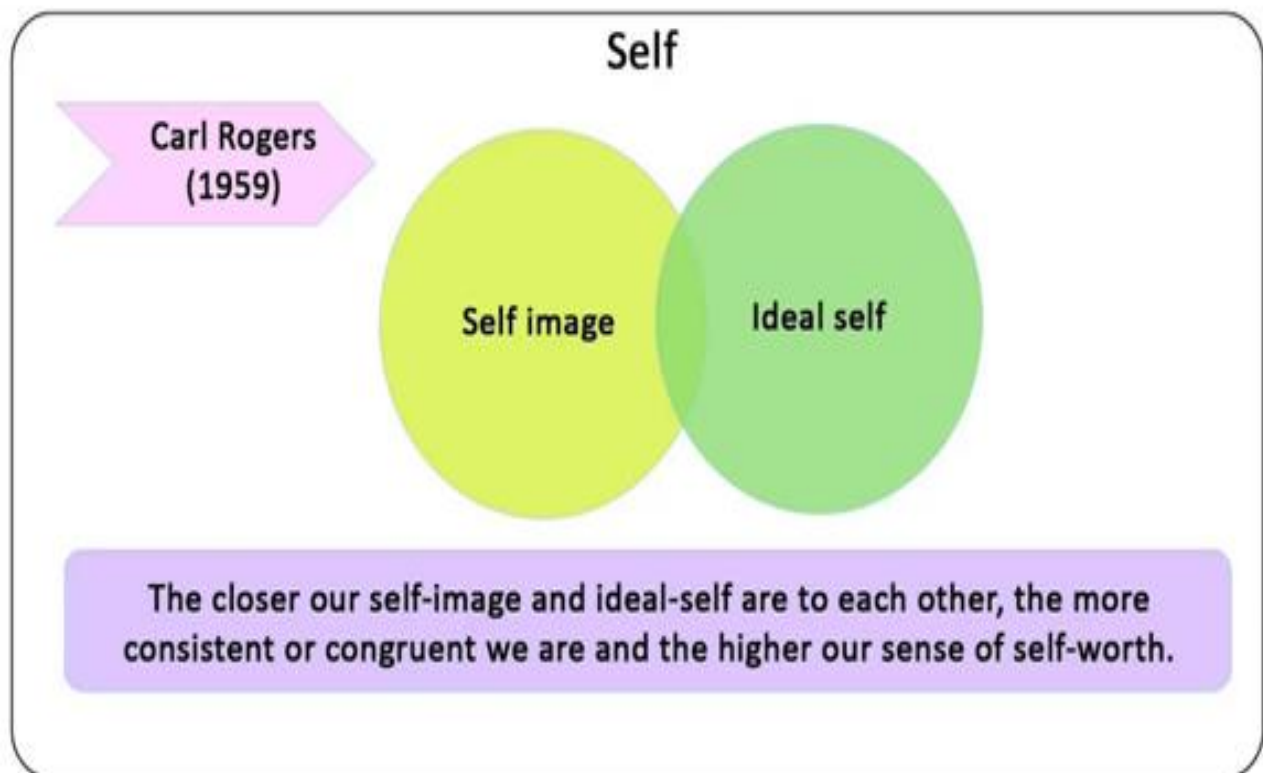
Source: <https://www.thebsa.org.uk/special-interest-groups/cognition-in-hearing-group/>

2.3) Self

The meaning of self-encompasses the individual as a whole that includes all characteristics, attributes, mentality and conscious and unconscious actions. It also means “having insight into one's behaviour, attitude, strength and weaknesses.” This involves an individual's ability to know what he or she is good at and what needs improvement.

There are various theories on the definition and understanding of ‘self’. Some psychologists who have researched this are Carl Rogers, Kohut, and Freud. Carl Rogers believed that ‘human nature is to improve or better oneself, to desire to become the person is capable of being. This process was called self-actualisation’. The more fulfilled and happier the person becomes that he or she is to reaching self-actualisation.

Figure 5; Carl Rogers theory of self

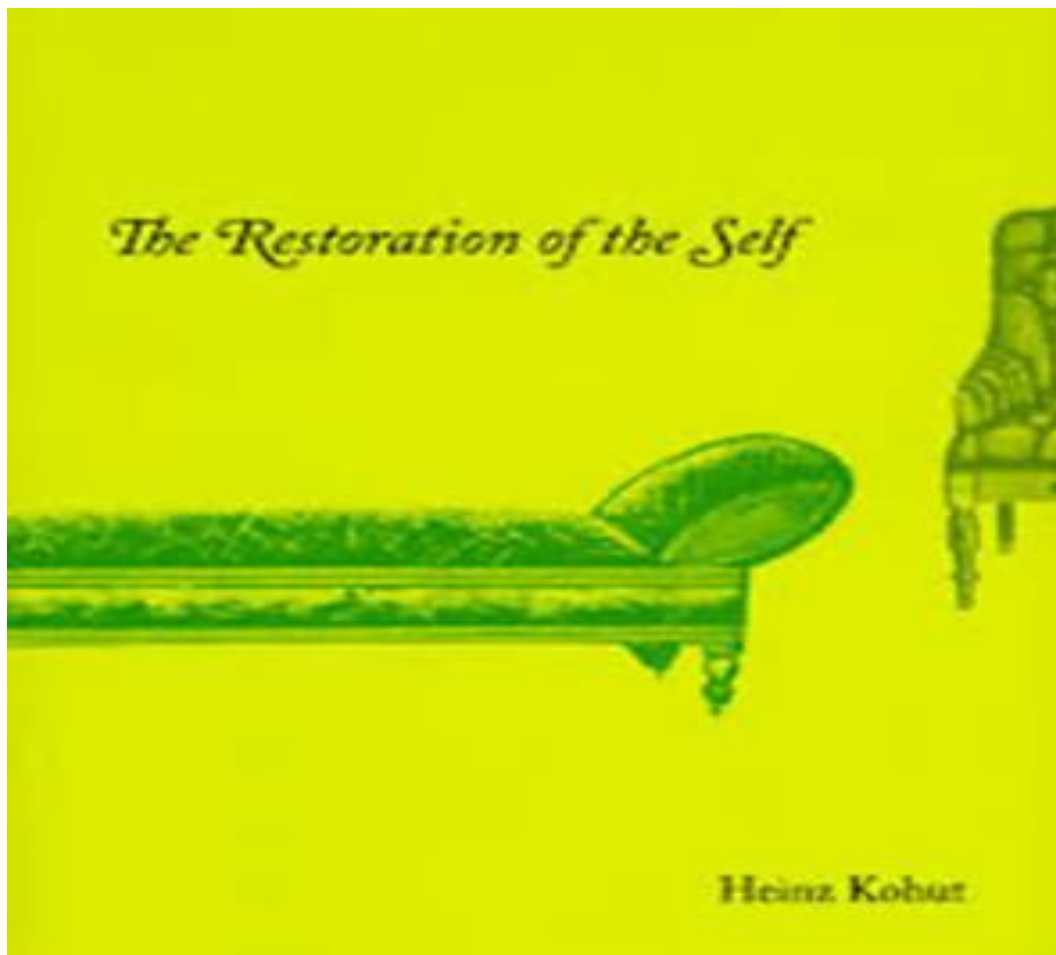


Source : Pathshala

Kohut defined self as ‘the essence of a person's psychological being and consists of sensations, feelings, thoughts, and attitudes towards oneself and the world. His theory consists of a

developmental model as well as a model for clinical consultation and therapy. For him 'self' is conceptualised as a mental system that organises a person's subjective experience in relation to a set of development needs (Wolf 1988). Kohut calls these needs 'self-object needs' as they are associated with sustaining the self and may be satisfied or may not be satisfied by external figures in a person's life.

Figure 6; Kohut's 'Restoration of the Self'



Source: Amazon

Freud used the word ego to mean the sense of self but later expanded it to include psychic functions such as judgement, tolerance, reality testing, control, planning, defence, synthesis of information, intellectual function and memory. His most popular and influential theory on self was his model of the 'psyche', which he divided into three parts; The Id, Ego, and Superego. The Id represents the primitive, instinctual desires and drives that operate at an unconscious level.

Figure 7; Freud's Theory of self

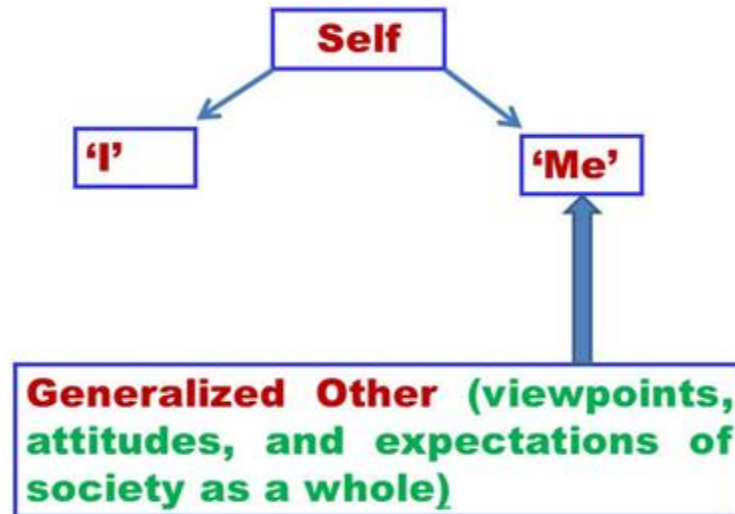


Source: <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-id-ego-and-superego-2795951>

Mead's theory of self involves development. It is not initially there at birth but arises in the process of social experience and activity that develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process. He explained that self is a social process with communication between the 'I', the pure form of self, and the 'Me', the social form of self. 'I' becomes a response to the 'Me' and vice versa.

Figure 8: Mead's Theory of 'self'

II) George Herbert Mead's Theory of Generalized Other



Source: <https://triumphias.com/blog/theories-of-socialisation/>

2.4) Relationship

An interpersonal relationship refers to the association, connection, interaction and bond between two or more people. It could also be defined as a connection, association or involvement. The connection could be between persons by blood or marriage, it could also be an emotional or some type of connection between people. It is manifested in the way people behave towards each other.

It could be in the form of *kinship* (blood-consanguinity), *marriage*(affinity), *adoption* and *fictive*.

According to Confucian philosophy, The fundamental relationships are;

- Between Ruler and Subject
- Father and Son
- Elder brother and younger brother
- Elder brother and younger sister
- Elder sister and younger brother
- Elder sister and younger sister

- Husband and Wife
- Boyfriend and Girlfriend
- Boyfriend and Boyfriend
- Girlfriend and Girlfriend

Social relationships are the connections that exist between people, who have recurring interactions that are perceived by the participants to have personal feelings.

Figure 9; The power of social connections



Source- <https://acs.dypvp.edu.in/blogs/the-power-of-connection-explore-the-power-of-social-interaction>

The concept of a relationship provides the analytical and operational framework, through which the relationship paradigm reveals itself, and may be studied and put into practice. It also gives hands and voice to the process of continuous interaction in political, social and economic life. It exists amongst people in conflict, citizens building democratic societies, communities engaged in economic development, and policymakers and negotiators at the highest level of government. It can also be defined as the expectation that two people have for each other based on their previous pattern of interaction (Littlejohn and Foss 2008).

There are a variety of relationships, that range from superficial to intimate. Intimate relationships involve physical and or emotional intimacy, characterised by friendship, trust and love (platonic or romantic) (Verderber and Verderber, 2013).

Relationships can be further divided into;

- Impersonal (for example- interacting with a cashier at a grocery store) and personal (for example- where people care for each other)

- Voluntary and involuntary (for example- when one is paired with a stranger in class to complete a project)
- Platonic(for example- A friendly relationship and an absence of romance and sex) and romantic (for example- Sexual attraction and also mutual emotion etc)

It is important to understand that relationships are dynamic and they can and do change.

3. Understanding of psychodynamic forces on

3.1) Cognition

A large amount of empirical evidence emphasises the link between cognition and social relationship but most of the evidence is correlational. It does not indicate the causal directional relationship between sociality and cognition. It is the ‘relationship intelligence’ that suggests that cognitive abilities play an important role in maintaining pair -bonds. Cognition can also influence the social relationship that exists beyond pair bonds. Socially bonded individuals support each other in agnostic encounters, for example, they cooperate to acquire rank positions, cooperate in infant care protect the young as well as share resources.

Individual variation in cognition is one of the main drivers of individual differences in social relationships. Cognitive experiential self-theory integrates cognitive and psychodynamic unconscious by assuming the existence of two parallel interacting modes of information processing. One is a rational system and the second is an emotionally driven experiential system.

Figure 10 ; Psychodynamic, Humanistic, Cognitive and Behavioural therapy



Source- Daniel's Store

3.2) Self

Psychodynamic approaches give importance to insights as a particular kind of self-realisation or self-knowledge, this is especially true with respect to the connection of experiences and conflicts in the past with present perceptions and behaviour and the recognition of feelings and motivations that have been repressed.

As adults our personality or self consists of three main parts;

- The Id – This is the part of self with which we are born, it consists of the biologically driven self and includes our instincts and drives and is a part of us that wants immediate gratification.
- The Ego - This is that portion of the human personality, which is experienced as the ‘self’ or ‘I’, and is in contact with the external world through perception.
- The Superego – This is a severe or harsh judge or critic of the ego’s attempts to meet instinctual demands or the ‘Id’, forbidding or condemning certain actions causing the feeling of guilt.

Freud described the Superego as one core element of the tripartite psychic structure in its relation to the Ego and the Id. The function is understood as expressing an individual’s longing, highest values and role model, it also has the role of a critical observer.

3.3) Relationship

Though Sigmund Freud’s earlier theories were concerned with the internal world of the mind, psychodynamic theories have evolved to ask how relationships shape people’s internal world, especially how *interpersonal experiences come to be internalised as aspects of personality*. Psychodynamic theories question how the internal world affects relationships. These describe three central principles which are;

- Formation of personality as the beginning in context of the earliest relationships between caregiver and child.
- These early relationships are thought to come internalised as representations of ‘The self in relation to others’, which guide subsequent interpersonal experiences and these representations are elaborated by subsequent interpersonal interactions.
- Changes in thoughts and feelings are often achieved in the context of relationships.

Childhood relationships with caregivers play a central role in shaping later relationships. The child's motivation to establish an attachment bond with the caregiver is basically a system of survival, protection and to have his/her needs met. Once this has been provided the child will internalise a sense of security.

Not all children are able to internalise representations of secure relationships due to;

- The child's temperament
- Early experiences that disrupt a feeling of safety for the child
- The stage of development in which the disruption occurs

Many aspects of one's sense of self, (for example thoughts and feelings), are understood in a relational context (for example, the feeling of guilt implies the presence of another person who has failed, and as a result of this developmental experience it becomes internalised, then becomes a dynamic template in understanding the self in relation to others.)

Though the change in how one thinks and feels can occur through several processes, such as internal reflection, behavioural change, and individual life experiences, many relationship experiences may alter representation (relationships with parents are redefined as one develops into adulthood, which in fact may correspond with the change in the representation of these relationships).

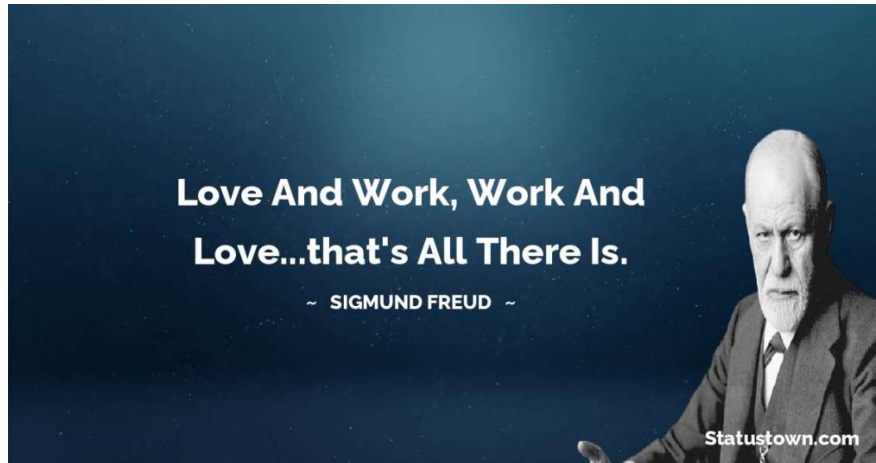
3.4) Love and Work

It is a paradox that if at a conscious level, one might deny the presence of unconscious processes at the level of behaviour and action, one lives out such processes every day.

One of the most famous quotes of Freud is that when he asked what a psychologically healthy person should be able to do he said 'To love and to work'. These are two cornerstones of humanness. This means that an individual has two innate needs, one to do something productive with one's life and the second to connect with others. According to him if one can hold down a job and maintain a healthy relationship with people, then they are psychologically healthy. It means that humans explore to find both professional success and personal fulfilment.

Love is a friendship, that is quiet, understanding, mutual confidence, sharing and forgiving, it is loyalty through good and bad times.

Figure 11; Love and Work



Source- <https://statustown.com/quote/6251/>

4. Ways in which conscious decisions could be adopted in obtaining a better and a harmonious awareness of the relationships.

The best way ahead is the integration of conscious and unconscious thought in solving complex decisions. According to scientists Dijksterhuis and Nordgren in 2006 said that “conscious thought could follow strict rules whereas unconscious thought is better suited for integrating numerous decision attributes”. Most conscious decisions require adherence to precious rules and also the aggregation of information. The synergy between conscious and unconscious thoughts is the perfect match to generate better judgement, decisions, and choices and enhance creativity.

Being aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the conscious and unconscious world allows a conscious integration into real life and activation of them in an appropriate manner. Unconscious thought is more intuitive without being led by rules-based processing. A combination of the two solves complex problems better than using either one.

Research has indicated that emotions constitute potent, pervasive, predictable, sometimes harmful, and sometimes beneficial drivers of decision-making. Psychological scientists assume that emotions are for better or worse, the dominant driver of most meaningful decisions in life. Decisions serve as the conduit for increasing a negative emotion and decreasing a positive emotion which are tendencies associated with mental illness. Once the outcome of the decision, individuals typically feel new emotions, for example, elation, surprise and regret.

The impact of unconscious emotions impact a conscious decision, for example, the potential outcome of a risky choice may lead to a safer option being adopted rather than a potentially more lucrative one.

There could be neurological impairments, for example, those sustained injuries through the ventromedial prefrontal cortex system (a key area of the brain for integrating cognition and emotion), reduce both the patient's ability to feel emotion as well as the optimality of their decisions, for example, participants with this injury, repeatedly select a riskier financial option over a safer one, even to the point of the possibility of bankruptcy. Some of the reasons why they continue on this path are that they do not experience emotional signals, that lead normal decision-makers to have a reasonable fear of high risks.

There are models that hypothesise that people in a good mood would make optimistic judgments and people in a bad mood would make pessimistic judgments. It has also been researched that individuals have a greater sense of happiness and satisfaction on sunny days economists like Hirshleifer and Shumway (2003) found a positive correlation between the amount of sunshine on a given day and stock market performance.

In theory, the simplest strategy for minimising emotional magnitude is to let time pass before making a decision. This is because full-blown emotions are short-lived (Levenson 1994). Extensive literature has documented the surprising power of 'adaptation' and 'rationalisation' to bring the emotional state back towards baseline, even after traumatic events. It cannot be said universally that time heals all wounds but research in this area has revealed that humans revert to baseline states over time. The immediate effect of an emotional state can render an individual 'out of control' and incapable of waiting for a neural state to return.

Emotions may influence decisions through multiple mechanisms. Considerable evidence reveals that effects occur via changes in ;

- Content of thought
- Depth of thought
- Content of implicit goals

At times emotions are initially elicited rapidly and can trigger swift action. But once activated some emotion, for example, like sadness can trigger further systematic thought. Strategies for reducing such influences can be clustered into three broad categories;

- Reducing the intensity of emotion
- Reducing the use of emotion as an input to decisions
- Counteracting an emotion based bias with a bias in the opposite direction

5. Conclusion

Psychodynamics a theory propounded originally by Freud and subsequently expanded by other psychologists and psychiatrists has indicated the emotional state of mind as an overriding factor that determines one's cognitive thought process with respect to both love and work. It is important to note that a person's emotional state of mind determines the way an individual reacts to an event or an action or even a reaction to an incident. If the individual is in a happy state of mind then his or her state of mind is going to differ from those who are not. Freud emphasised on the Superego being the form of a 'guard' to an individual's reaction. The environment as well as any damage or disease of the brain also impacts the reaction to various incidents or thoughts.

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