

The Impact Of Defense Mechanisms On Mental Health

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Annotation: This article examines the impact of defense mechanisms on mental health, based on psychological theories and research conducted in Uzbekistan. Defense mechanisms are considered essential tools for reducing stress and maintaining psychological stability. The article highlights the positive and negative effects of these mechanisms and their role in individual and social life.

Keywords: defense mechanisms, psychological defense, stress, mental stability, adaptation.

INTRODUCTION.

Mental health plays a crucial role in an individual's success and social activities. Defense mechanisms are tools that help individuals maintain internal balance. However, their effects can vary from beneficial to harmful, depending on their application. This article explores the various effects of defense mechanisms based on the works of Uzbek psychologists and international experts.

Main body: Defense mechanisms are vital psychological processes that help individuals cope with emotional stress, anxiety, and internal conflicts. These mechanisms can be adaptive or maladaptive, depending on how they are used. Psychologists have proposed various theoretical frameworks to understand these mechanisms and their effects on mental health.

In Freud's psychoanalytic theory, defense mechanisms are unconscious strategies used by the ego to protect the individual from anxiety caused by unresolved conflicts between the id, ego, and superego. Common defense mechanisms described by Freud include:

Repression: Pushing distressing thoughts or memories out of conscious awareness.

Denial: Refusing to accept reality or facts, thereby blocking external events from awareness.

Displacement: Redirecting emotions or impulses from the original source to a safer target.

Anna Freud, Sigmund Freud's daughter, expanded on her father's work and emphasized that defense mechanisms are particularly important in the development of children. She argued that these mechanisms are shaped by early childhood experiences and serve as adaptive responses to external and internal challenges.

From a cognitive-behavioral perspective, defense mechanisms are seen as mental strategies that help manage distressing thoughts. Cognitive psychologists believe that maladaptive defense mechanisms, such as rationalization (justifying problematic behaviors) or avoidance, may contribute to the development of anxiety disorders and depression if relied upon excessively. Humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers have also discussed defense mechanisms, viewing them as obstacles to self-actualization. In this view, individuals often use these mechanisms to protect their self-concept from perceived threats. The challenge is to overcome these defenses to achieve personal growth and greater emotional authenticity.

Furthermore, attachment theory has highlighted the role of defense mechanisms in early childhood attachment relationships. According to this theory, children with insecure attachment styles

may develop maladaptive defense mechanisms, such as dissociation or withdrawal, as a way to protect themselves from emotional distress in response to inconsistent caregiving.

Overall, while defense mechanisms are natural and essential for coping with stress, an over-reliance on them or using maladaptive ones may hinder personal growth and lead to long-term psychological problems. Psychotherapy, especially cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and psychodynamic therapy, plays a crucial role in helping individuals recognize and manage their defense mechanisms in a healthier way.

Nature and Types of Defense Mechanisms

In psychology, defense mechanisms are unconscious strategies used by individuals to resolve internal conflicts. Uzbek psychologists such as Q. Qurbonov and Sh. Shermuhamedova categorize these mechanisms into the following main types:

Repression: Suppressing stressful thoughts to maintain balance.

Rationalization: Justifying uncomfortable events through logical reasoning.

Denial: Avoiding problems by rejecting reality.

Stress and Mental Health

According to research by Uzbek scholars, mechanisms like repression may provide short-term relief but lead to deeper psychological issues over time. For instance, Sh. Shermuhamedova's studies on stress management show the long-term negative effects of repression.

Positive and Negative Effects

Defense mechanisms can be beneficial in certain situations:

Sublimation: Redirecting emotional energy into creative activities (e.g., art or sports).

Humor: Reducing stress and improving social interaction.

However, some mechanisms may have harmful consequences:

Projection: Attributing personal problems to others can disrupt social relationships.

Repression: Attempting to forget traumatic events can lead to symptoms reemerging in different forms.

Evidence and Research

Qurbonov Q. (2020): The role of rationalization in psychological adaptation processes.

Shermuhamedova Sh. (2018): The effects of denial mechanisms on mental health.

Abdullayeva N. (2019): Psychological methods for reducing stress among youth.

The Role of Defense Mechanisms in the National Context

In Uzbekistan, programs focusing on the correct application of defense mechanisms are being developed in family education and the education system. These efforts are widely discussed in the works of Sh. Ergasheva and B. Karimov.

Benefits and Risks of Defense Mechanisms

The effectiveness of defense mechanisms depends on how and when they are used by an individual.

Adaptive Mechanisms: These mechanisms help individuals cope with stressful situations. Examples include:

Sublimation: Channeling traumatic experiences into art, sports, or other creative outlets.

Altruism: Overcoming personal struggles by helping others.

Maladaptive Mechanisms: These can have long-term negative effects. Examples include:

Dissociation: Detaching from reality to avoid stress.

Over-idealization: Escaping by perceiving reality in an unrealistic way.

Scientific Significance of Defense Mechanisms

Research highlights the importance of proper use of defense mechanisms for improving mental health.

1. In Psychotherapy: Analyzing defense mechanisms helps identify and resolve internal conflicts.

2. In Education and Training: Introducing stress management training in schools can teach the healthy use of defense mechanisms.

National Experiences and Studies

Role in Families: In Uzbekistan, the improper use of defense mechanisms (e.g., repression or denial) within families can lead to significant psychological problems. Research in family psychology offers strategies to address these issues (Ergasheva, 2021).

Stress Management in Educational Institutions: Special programs for stress reduction among youth have been developed (Abdullayeva, 2019).

Defense mechanisms are a crucial part of the human psyche and play an important role in maintaining mental health. They are used to cope with stress, anxiety, and internal conflicts, but when misused or overused, they can have negative consequences. In Freud's psychoanalytic theory, defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, and projection are seen as tools for managing unconscious anxieties. However, prolonged or excessive use of these mechanisms can lead to mental health issues, as problems are only temporarily concealed rather than resolved.

Anna Freud's work focuses on the impact of defense mechanisms on children and adolescents, identifying their role in managing early trauma. Cognitive psychology views defense mechanisms as tools for managing stress, but over-reliance on them can diminish their positive effects. Humanistic psychology emphasizes the importance

of defense mechanisms in self-awareness and personal development.

Additionally, the healthy use of defense mechanisms can aid mental well-being, but improper management, such as excessive projection or denial, can lead to interpersonal difficulties and worsen psychological problems. Psychotherapy and other mental health practices are crucial in teaching individuals how to use defense mechanisms effectively and in a way that supports long-term mental health.

Connection to International Research

The studies of Uzbek psychologists align with international research:

Freud and Anna Freud's Theories serve as foundational concepts in psychoanalysis, widely utilized in Uzbekistan.

LeDoux (2015) analyzed the long-term consequences of repression, providing insights for application in the national context.

Martin (2007) emphasized the role of humor in stress management, especially relevant among youth.

Contemporary Relevance

In today's digital age, psychological defense mechanisms are taking on new forms:

Escape into Virtual Worlds: Overreliance on online games or social media as a coping mechanism.

Humor and Irony in Social Media: Utilizing humor as a stress relief tool online.

Proposed National Programs

Family Counseling Centers: Offering guidance on analyzing and managing defense mechanisms effectively.

Psychological Training: Introducing programs in schools and universities to teach stress management and adaptive mechanisms.

National Research Center: Establishing an institute dedicated to studying defense mechanisms.

Conclusion: Defense mechanisms are vital tools for maintaining mental health. However, their misuse or overuse can lead to negative consequences. Therefore, it is essential to seek professional help in addressing psychological issues. Research conducted by Uzbek psychologists provides valuable insights into addressing these challenges in the national context.

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