

UNIVERSITY OF PESHAWAR

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WOK

PhD SCHOLARS IN SOCIAL WORK – SPRING SEMESTER 2020

SW 902 “PSYCHOANALYSIS THEORY AND PRACTICE”

TUTOR: PROF.DR. SARAH SAFDAR

LECTUER # 4

DEFENSE MECHANISM: ITS DEFINITION, EXPLANATION AND ITS TYPES

23rd APRIL- 2020

1. In this lesson, we will focus on Defense Mechanismin Psychoanalytic Theory
 2. When you get to the end of the lesson, you can test your knowledge by writing two pages on what you have learnt (in your own words)
-

DEFINITION OF DEFENSE MECHANISM

Defense mechanisms are simply ways of coping with difficult feelings; your mind's way of dealing with stress. These little mental tricks, distortions of reality, help you meet your needs in socially acceptable ways.

EXPLANATION OF DEFENSE MECHANISM:

- **Defense mechanism** in psychoanalytic theory, any of a group of mental processes that enables the mind to reach compromise solutions to conflicts that it is unable to resolve.
- The process is usually **unconscious**, and the compromise generally involves concealing from oneself internal drives or feelings that threaten to lower self-esteem or provoke **anxiety**.
- The concept derives from the psychoanalytic **hypothesis** that there are forces in the mind that oppose and battle against each other. The term was first used in **Sigmund Freud's** paper "**The Neuro-Psychoses of Defense**" (1894)
- The concept arose from the work of Sigmund Freud and his daughter Anna.
- Defense mechanisms are unconscious strategies whereby people protect themselves from anxious thoughts or feelings.
- Defense Mechanisms are psychological strategies used by the unconscious mind to manipulate, deny, or distort reality to protect the mind/self/ego defend against feelings of anxiety and personally unacceptable impulses or stimuli.
- Defense mechanisms aren't inherently bad—they can allow people to navigate painful experiences or channel their energy more productively.
- These become problematic, however, when applied too frequently or for too long.
- Defense mechanisms are rooted in Freud's theory of personality. According to his model, the mind has three dueling forces:
 1. The id (unconscious and primitive urges for food, comfort, and sex)
 2. The superego (a partly conscious drive toward moral and social values)
 3. The ego (a partly conscious force that moderates the id and superego)

- a) Anxiety, in this paradigm, emerges when the needs of the id clash with the needs of the superego.
- b) To mitigate the tension, the ego deploys strategies of self-deception to avoid the discomfort.
- c) The unacceptable thought or emotion may be denied, for example, or rationalized or projected onto someone else.

Most Common Defense Mechanisms:

- a) **Denial:** Refusing to believe something that you find too upsetting. Example: you just got a phone call letting you know that your favorite uncle died unexpectedly. You think to yourself, 'No way, that's ridiculous, of course he didn't die,' and you go back to the show you were watching.
- b) **Projection:** Putting an unpleasant thought onto somebody else. Example: accusing your friend of being interested in his co-worker, when in reality it's you who have an eye on someone at work.
- c) **Somatization:** Shifting an emotional problem into a physical complaint. Example: you got yelled at by your boss, and for the rest of the day you have a pounding headache.
- d) **Regression:** Reverting to earlier, younger ways of coping with your problems. Example: you are overwhelmed with all the studying you have to do for finals, and you throw your books across the room in a little tantrum.
- e) **Intellectualization:** Keeping very aloof and logical about painful topics. Example: while planning your uncle's funeral, you focus on all the little details that need to be planned (the type of funeral ceremony and the food for those who come to attend the funeral) so you being busy in planning you have to come out of this shock of loss.
- f) **Repression:** Pushing very upsetting memories deep down, away from conscious thought. Example: if a friend or a neighbor lost life in COVID-19

that might not be good to remember as a specific situation where a friend or a neighbor lost his/ her life

It's very important to note that "All mentally healthy individuals use defense mechanisms regularly". These become pathological only when their persistent use leads to maladaptive behavior such that the physical or mental health of the individual is adversely affected

POINT TO PONDER

1. Each and every individual does use Defense Mechanisms in their life
2. Different Defense Mechanisms are taken as part of practice in daily life

NOTE:

SCHOLARS ARE ADVISED TO WRITE TWO PAGES ON OBSERVING BEHAVIOR OF ANYONE IN YOUR FAMILY USING DEFENSE MECHANISMS YOU HAVE STUDIED.

PROF. DR. SARAH SAFDAR

