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The role of mental counseling according to Albert Ellis in achieving mental health through treating Misconceptions

دور الإرشاد العقلي عند "ألبرت اليس" في تحقيق الصحة النفسية من خلال علاج الأفكار الخاطئة

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Abstract:

This study aimed to identify the role of counseling in achieving mental health and providing therapeutic services to help individuals exhibiting psychological, academic, social, or familial maladjustment. Children at school often face numerous problems that necessitate counselor intervention to help them resolve their issues. Counseling has offered various approaches to behavior modification and patient support, aiming to treat disorders and maladjustment. Among the most important counseling approaches for treating maladjustment is cognitive counseling, as developed by Albert Ellis. He proposed a therapeutic model based on restructuring the thoughts and behavioral patterns of individuals with maladjustment, recognizing them as reflections of erroneous feelings, beliefs, and perceptions stemming from various situations. The therapeutic process should be educational, with the specialist acting as a teacher who guides the client on how to confront and eliminate irrational thoughts, transforming them into logical and rational ones. This is achieved through conscious and logical dialogue that influences the client's feelings and behaviors. Ellis's ABC theory relies on a set of methods, including:

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- Cognitive methods: such as refuting irrational thoughts, cognitive tasks, changing vocabulary, and using humor.
- Affective techniques: These include rational emotional visualization, role
- playing, assertiveness, and skills training.
- How does mental counseling contribute to mental health? And how can distorted thinking patterns in individuals with mental disorders be modified?
Keywords: mental counseling, mental health, missconcepts

ملخص:

هدفت الدراسة إلى التعرف على دور الإرشاد في تحقيق الصحة النفسية وتقديم خدمات علاجية لمساعدة الفرد الذي يبدي سوء توافق نفسي أو دراسي أو اجتماعي أو أسري... إذ يواجه الطفل في المدرسة العديد من المشكلات تستدعي تدخل المرشد لمساعدة المسترشد على حل مشكلته. وقد قدم الإرشاد العديد من المقاربات لتعديل السلوك ومرافقة المريض، قصد علاج الاضطراب وسوء التكيف.

ومن أهم المداخل الإرشادية لعلاج مشكلات سوء التكيف؛ نجد الإرشاد العقلي عند "البرت اليس" الذي اقترح نموذجا علاجيا يقوم على إعادة بناء الأفكار وأنماط السلوك لدى المضطربين لأنها انعكاسا لمشاعر ومعتقدات وأفكار خاطئة لمواقف متعددة.

فالعملية العلاجية يجب أن تكون عملية تعلمية يقوم فيها الأخصائي بدور المعلم الذي يتولى تعليم العميل كيف يواجه أفكاره غير المنطقية والتخلص منها لتصبح منطقية وعقلانية؛ من خلال الحوار المنطقي الواعي الذي ينعكس على مشاعر العميل السلوكية. ويقدم نظريته A.B.C التي تعتمد على مجموعة من الأساليب:

- الأساليب الإدراكية: ومنها أسلوب دحض الأفكار غير العقلانية، أسلوب الواجبات الإدراكية، أسلوب تغيير مفردات اللغة، أسلوب استخدام المرح.
- الأساليب الوجدانية: منها أسلوب التخيل العاطفي العقلاني، أسلوب لعب الأدوار، أسلوب استخدام القوة والحزم، أسلوب التدريب على المهارة.
- فكيف يحقق الإرشاد العقلي الصحة النفسية؟ وكيف يمكن تعديل الأفكار الخاطئة لدى المضطربين؟

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإرشاد العقلي، الصحة النفسية، الأفكار الخاطئة

1- Introduction:

Theories provide a framework for understanding phenomena, explaining them, predicting their occurrence, and ultimately controlling them. Theories contain a set of assumptions and relationships that are validated within a systematic framework. From this framework, hypotheses can be derived to explain aspects of the phenomenon that are not yet fully understood, allowing for selection and judgment. Theories of counseling and psychotherapy aim to provide a framework for the work of the counselor and therapist. This framework is based on explaining aspects of behavior that concern the counselor, as well as the methods of counseling intervention that work to achieve the goals of counseling psychology. Among these theories is the rational theory, namely, the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) theory by Alice Albert. What is the theory of cognitive behavioral therapy? What are its therapeutic goals? And what are its therapeutic methods?

2- Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT): This theory is based on the following fundamental concepts:

The A-B-C Theory Where the letter (A) represents the event, whether it be a behavior, incident, or attitude exhibited by the individual. The letter (C) represents the accompanying behavior, feelings, or reaction to that event, whether the reaction is appropriate or inappropriate. Ellis argues that the event (A) is not the cause of the outcome (C), but rather (B), which represents the individual's false belief about the event (A), leads to the disturbance in feelings and behavior (C). For example, a student who becomes depressed as a result of failing their final high school exams and not achieving the required score for admission to medical school cannot be attributed to their exam performance alone, but rather to the student's false beliefs about their failure and not being able to enter medical school. Therefore, the event of failure (A) is not responsible for the depression (C) that (b) is experiencing (Ellis, 1979). Ellis adds that these false and irrational thoughts are reinforced by statements such as, "I am a failure," "Failure means the end for me," or "I am a useless person." Thus, Ellis believes that human feelings are determined by the way one thinks. For Ellis, therapy comes through refuting false and irrational thoughts (D), which refers to the scientific and therapeutic approach that social workers use to help clients confront and change these false beliefs. Ellis & Bernard (1986) identify three components to the process of refuting false beliefs:

1. The discovery process: Here, the client learns how to identify false and irrational thoughts.

2. The process of self-dialogue to refute these false beliefs and replace them with rational and logical ones.
3. The process of distinguishing between false and valid thoughts in order to avoid repeating them. Ellis indicates that the result can be The effect of this process can be observed in (E), which symbolizes the impact of the process of refuting false beliefs. This results in new behaviors or feelings (F) free from manifestations of behavioral and emotional disturbance. The essence of this theory, presented by Ellis in his explanation of the disorder and its treatment, can be summarized in the following steps:
1. Full acknowledgment of responsibility for the emergence of the problems experienced by individuals and groups.
2. Acceptance of the idea that individuals possess the abilities and potential to confront and change the behavioral and emotional disturbances they face.
3. Recognition that the problems we experience arise from the false beliefs we hold.
4. Identifying, discovering, and then refuting these false beliefs is the optimal method of treatment.
5. Using rational and logical thinking to refute false beliefs and replace them with rational ones.
6. Acceptance of the fact that clients, whenever they have the desire to change and work towards it, are capable of effectively confronting their problems.
7. Continuity in the process of refuting false beliefs; it does not end at a specific point. To guide the client towards the process of refuting false beliefs, therapy strives to... Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) aims to convince the client that most of their problems stem from faulty beliefs and philosophical perceptions not based on objective facts. Feelings of tension, anxiety, and depression are merely symptoms of the underlying problem: the ideas a person holds about the nature of the situations they face. Therefore, the goal of therapy should focus on these faulty attitudes and ideas, attempting to modify or eliminate them, rather than focusing on the symptoms resulting from those ideas.

3- The Role of the Psychologist: Although Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) is often viewed as an educational approach where the psychologist acts as the teacher, instructing the client in self-argumentation and refuting false beliefs (Wessler & Wessler, 1980), several key tasks can be gleaned from Ellis's writings on this therapeutic method. These can be summarized as follows:

- Helping clients recognize that they hold many false beliefs about the events they experience, often expressed as commands such as: "You must do…", "You must pass the test," "You must achieve high marks in high school," "You must be a perfect spouse," and so on.
- Helping clients understand that their problems are exacerbated by continuing to engage in illogical and irrational thinking.
- Helping clients shift their thinking from irrational to rational. In other words, the client attempts to modify the false thoughts and beliefs that have caused them distress and frustration. Here, the social worker must help the client understand the vicious cycle of thinking, meaning that faulty thoughts are not corrected by illogical reasoning, but rather by scientific thinking.

Finally, the social worker must help the client develop positive thoughts to replace the faulty ones. The task doesn't end with this replacement process; it extends to helping the client continue to challenge and refute the faulty thoughts so that they don't relapse and become a victim of those faulty ideas again.

4- Therapeutic Approaches Used: The following is a review of the therapeutic approaches presented by Ellis (Al-Khalidi, 2008):

4-1- Cognitive Approaches: The defining characteristic of this therapeutic approach is its strong reliance on cognitive techniques to refute erroneous ideas, which are considered the primary factor in the emergence of human problems and the main objective of therapy. Practitioners of this therapeutic approach aim to help the client discover these erroneous thought patterns and then confront them realistically. These techniques include:

- Refuting Irrational Beliefs: In this cognitive approach, the social worker seeks to engage the client in a dialogue about the irrational and flawed beliefs that have contributed to their problems. The social worker doesn't passively participate in this process; rather, they guide the client to engage independently by exploring their thought patterns, assumptions, and beliefs, which form the basis of their behavior and feelings. Some questions the social worker might pose include: "What evidence supports what you're saying or feeling?", "Why is life tragic if things don't go your way?", and "Is it the end of the world if your dreams don't come true?" These thought-provoking questions encourage the client to reconsider their preconceived notions and beliefs, prompting them to re-evaluate their validity and impact on their life.
- Cognitive Tasks: This method is a quick way to identify faulty thinking patterns, especially those characterized by absoluteness. Here, the social

worker asks the client to create a list of the human problems they are experiencing. Then, each problem is examined individually through self-reflection on its origins (why?) and the client's thinking patterns regarding it. This allows the social worker to develop an A-B-C theory of the problem and then help the client identify the faulty thinking patterns that contributed to its impact (Mansour Hammadi, Social Work). Example: A person who fears social situations and constantly tells themselves: "I am an unlikable person," "I look strange among people," "I feel like everyone is looking at me suspiciously." This person can be given positive messages such as: "It's wonderful to be liked by everyone, but pleasing everyone is impossible," or "People may look at me strangely, but not everyone sees me as odd." Such statements encourage clients to view events and situations holistically, broadening their perspective and moving beyond narrow, self-centered thinking. This also helps them develop logical thinking.

- Changing the vocabulary of language: Practitioners of this therapeutic approach emphasize that imprecise and vague language contributes to the fragmentation of thought processes. This refers to the vocabulary of spoken language. A single word may have more than one meaning, and the context of the speech may convey a meaning different from what the speaker intends. Therefore, practitioners of this therapeutic approach place great importance on the meanings of words, as these meanings shape the way of responding (thinking). Example: There is a difference between: "It's very bad that I might fail the exam" and "I don't like the idea of failing the exam." Undoubtedly, the first sentence conveys a negative, pessimistic view of the potential event, while the second conveys a positive, optimistic view of the event should it occur. - Using humor: This therapeutic approach is one of the most frequent users of humor during therapy sessions. The goal is to help clients move away from excessive seriousness, which can amplify and exacerbate the problem and its impact on the client. Fun also helps customers get rid of the psychological stress associated with the problems they suffer from, and thus they are more able to think logically and consciously.

4-2- Affective Techniques: These therapeutic approaches focus on changing the negative emotions associated with the problems clients present, rather than dwelling on those emotions. The emphasis is on helping clients transform these emotions into positive ones that serve the therapeutic process and accelerate change. Ellis introduced some of the affective techniques in his therapy.

- Rational Emotional Imagery: This therapeutic technique is a mental process that helps clients establish patterns of emotions by helping them visualize logical thinking, behavior, and feelings, and then attempt to apply this to real-life situations. For example, a client might imagine the worst-case scenario that could happen to them, how they would react, and how they would feel if it occurred. Ellis claims that the more a person practices rational emotional imagery a few times a week, the more they will achieve a state of psychological and social adjustment that enables them to overcome uncomfortable events and situations they may encounter.
- Role-Playing: This therapeutic approach is not limited to the behavioral and affective therapy (BET) introduced by Ellis. Role-playing is found in many other therapeutic methods used in psychotherapy. However, in this therapeutic approach, role-playing primarily focuses on helping clients change the irrational and distorted thoughts that cause their problems.
Example: A woman who wants to continue her education after she has had children and fears failure and university rejection can use this technique (role-playing) by conducting a self-interview, imagining herself in front of the committee. Through this, she can identify her feelings of anxiety and the irrational thoughts associated with them, and then try to change them. - Using Force and Assertiveness: The goal of using force, firmness, and authority with clients during therapy is to help them develop mental and emotional insight. It also helps clients create self-dialogues that will help them explore and change distorted thoughts (Rashwan, 2004).
- Skill Training: Among the skills that Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) focuses on are self-management skills such as assertiveness and social skills. The therapist's premise is that acquiring such skills will boost clients' self-confidence and enable them to practice the changes that have occurred in their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This is achieved not only through skill training but also by helping clients recognize their true abilities in relation to their newly acquired competencies. As Alice explains, "Skill training enables clients to change their perceptions of their abilities in a way that helps them realize they are different than before, and this, in turn, encourages them to acquire even better skills."

5. Case Studies: The father of a high school student filed a complaint with the school's social worker against one of his son's friends at the same school. The complaint stated: The son's friend stays up late every Thursday to teach his son to play the oud, which causes the son to waste time and neglect his

schoolwork. Reviewing this problematic situation from the perspective of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), the following becomes clear:

- (A) The triggering event is the son staying up late with his friend every Thursday; this is the day that prompted the father's complaint.
- (B) The underlying belief that leads to the problematic situation is that high school students should not stay up late.
- (C) The consequences begin when the son's friend leaves the house after the late-night gathering and playing the oud, leading to disagreements and arguments between the father and son.
- (D) As for refutation and counter-argumentation, the father believes that a high school student should not stay up late at all and should not engage in any hobbies other than studying. The son, on the contrary, believes that staying up late to indulge his identity on a Thursday, which is followed by an official school holiday, is normal, simple, and acceptable on a rational and logical level.
- (E) The impact varies according to prevailing beliefs, and the social worker must clarify the illogical and irrational aspects of the thinking, feelings, and behavior of both the son and the father.
- (F) The negative feedback will become evident in the son's academic performance (Mansour, 2008).

Conclusion: The concern for mental health and psychological adjustment remains a problem that troubles those working in the field of psychotherapy. Psychotherapy encourages the troubled individual to engage in self-dialogue and self-conviction by accepting logical ideas and rejecting illogical ones. In this way, they correct their own errors through internal dialogue. Here, Ellis agrees with Remy, Beck, and Meikenbaum in cognitive therapy, which begins with correcting thoughts, which is reflected in behavior. Therefore, theories of mental therapy take a person to safety as quickly as possible, and make him compatible with himself; he feels mentally healthy.

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