

Meseron Therapy As A Motivation Theory

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Abstract

Reference is often made to Meseron as an African originated form of cognitive therapy. This classification arises from Meseron's use of concepts such as thinking perceptive capacity, appraisal mechanism, operational facilities and choice. This is factual, but little is said about Meseron as a motivation theory. This paper intends to fill the gap by pointing out Meseron's definition of man as a striving creature, its emphasis on resilience and the principle of "I can".

Key words: *Meseron Therapy and Motivation Theory*

Introduction

According to Maehr and Meyer (1997), "motivation is a word that is part of the popular culture as few other psychological concepts are". Motivation is an internal state or condition (sometimes described as a need, desire, or want) that serves to activate or energize behaviour and give it direction (Huitt, 2001). Motivation is the study of why people think and behave as they do. Desire or want that energised and directs goal-oriented behaviour; influence of needs and desires on the intensity and direction of behaviour. Three things are important in these definitions; (1) What activated behaviour (2) What directs behaviour (3) How the behaviour is sustained.

Contemporary motivation research corroborates the impact of self-perception of low ability and self-statement such as "I can" on achievement striving. Each of the following three contemporary constructs offers a particular perceptive on self-

perceive ability. For instance, Convington (1992), held that **self-worth** in its simple term is to be able. To be able or "I can" in the contest of meseron therapy is not an unrealistic optimism or flight from reality. Rather, it is an encouragement to acknowledge reality but more so to believe in one's competence, resilience and adaptability.

Empirical findings show that people use excuses, self-handicapping, and false effort to protect the self-perception of their own high ability thus, Bandura (1991) theorizes that self-efficacy which is the perception that one "Can" is among the main determinants of motivation and performance. On the other hand, Seligman (1975) proposes learned helplessness, a perception that one "cannot" which leads to motivational, cognitive and affective deficits. The belief that "I cannot" is associated with giving up in the face of failure and depression as such, the need for

Meseron's constructs of "striving", "resilience" and "I can" in the face of adversity.

Motivation theories can be classified on a number of parameter. For instance, natural and rational, that is whether the underlying theory of human cognition is based on natural forces (drives, needs, desires) or some kind of rationality (instrumentality, meaningfulness, and self-identity). And secondly, content and process that is, whether the focus is on the content ("what") motivates vs process ("how") motivation takes place. Motivation can also be conceived of as a cycle in which thought influences behaviours, behaviours drive performance, performance affects thoughts, and the cycle begins again.

Each stage of the cycle is composed of many dimensions including attitudes, beliefs, intentions, effort, and withdrawal which can all affect the motivation that an individual experiences. Most psychological theories hold that motivation exist purely within the individual, but socio-cultural theories express motivation as an outcome of participation in actions and activities within the culture context of social groups. Motivation can be divided into two different theories known as intrinsic (internal or inherent) motivation and extrinsic (external) motivation.

Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation has been studied since the early 1970s. Intrinsic motivation is the self-desire to seek out new things and new challenges, to analyse one's capacity, to observe and to gain knowledge. It is driven by an interest or enjoyment in the task itself, and exists within the individual rather than relying on external pressures or a desire for considerations.

The phenomenon of intrinsic motivation was first acknowledged with experimental studies of animal behaviour. In

these studies, it was evident that the organism would engage in playful and curiosity driven behaviours in the absence of reward. Intrinsic motivation is a natural motivational tendency and is a critical element in cognitive, social, and physical development (Rayan and Deci, 2000). For instance, students who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to engage in the task willingly as well as work to improve their skills, which will increase their capabilities. Students are likely to be intrinsically motivated if they: attribute their education results to factors under their own control, also known as autonomy or locus of control. In other words, these students believe they have the skills to be effective agents in reaching their desired goals, which is also known as self-efficacy beliefs and such students would be interested in mastering a topic, not just in achieving good grades. Advantages of intrinsic motivations can be long-lasting and self-sustaining. Efforts to build this kind of motivation are also typically efforts at promoting student learning. Such efforts often focus on the subject rather than rewards or punishment.

Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity in order to attain a desired outcome and it is the opposite of intrinsic motivation (Rayan and Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation comes from influences outside of the individual. In extrinsic motivation, the harder question to answer is where do people get the motivation to carry out and continue to push with persistence. Usually extrinsic motivation is used to attain outcomes that a person wouldn't get from intrinsic motivation, Common extrinsic motivation are rewards (for example money or grade) for showing the desired behaviour, and the threat of punishment following misbehaviour. Competition is an extrinsic motivator because it encourages the

performer to win and beat others, not simply to enjoy the intrinsic reward of the activity. A cheering crowd and the desire to win a trophy are also extrinsic incentives.

Motivation and Psychotherapy

Motivation lies at the core of many behaviourist approaches to psychological treatment. A person with autism-spectrum disorder is seen as lacking motivation to perform socially relevant behaviours that is, social stimuli are not reinforcing for people with autism compared to other people. Depression on the other hand, is understood as a lack of reinforcement (especially positive reinforcement) leading to extinction of behaviour in the depressed individual. Similarly, a patient with specific phobia is not motivated to seek out the phobic stimulus because it acts as a punisher, and is over-motivated to avoid it (negative reinforcement). In accordance, therapies have been designed to address these problems, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Meseron Therapy (MT) for major depression and specific phobia.

Meseron is an African approach to psychological treatment whose tenet is based on the African cultural perspectives and religious belief of rejecting the negative and accepting the positive. This belief originated from the fact that locus of control in Africa is external. The word "Meseron" comes from the Urhobo language (that belongs to a linguistic group in Delta State of Nigeria) and it means "I reject it". The traditional core on which meseron therapy is based: "what one says of himself is what happens to him". According to Meseron viewpoint, man is a striving creature, in other words, a motivated being and so he has the characteristic essential to strive and the goal of striving is ennoblement.

Furthermore, to Meseron, Striving takes place at three levels; thought, word and deed and man is endowed with

psychological instruments for striving prominent among which are: perceptive capacity, appraisal mechanism and operational facilities. In his strivings, at every turns, man stands at crossroads and must make choices (Awaritefe, 2002; Awaritefe & Aroyewun, 2008; Ofovwe & Awaritefe, 2008).

Cognitive theories define motivation in terms of how people think about situations and cognitive theories of motivation include goal-setting theory and expectancy theory. Meseron therapy also believes and posits that psychological difficulties arise as a result of distortion in the appraisal mechanism, or making inappropriate choice or resignation in the face of difficulties (Awaritefe, 2002). However, meseron posits that man is not helpless, he is endowed with the potential for change and indeed he can change himself and his environment (Awaritefe & Aroyewun, 2008).

Consequently, psychological difficulties could be treated by stimulating in the client the realization which enables the client to mobilize the resources to dissociate from the undesirable situation and become constructive (Ofovwe & Awaritefe, 2008). This assert the fact that Meseron is a way of life and it advocates positive thinking, and 'I can do it' attitude. Hence, when an individual faces negative life situations which threaten his adaptive capacity, the Meseron therapist helps the person to recognize that the problem does not have to be a permanent fixture of his life.

In the bid to fill the gap of meseron as motivation theory, we affirmed Meseron's definition of man as a striving creature, the principle of "I can" and on the final note its emphasis on resilience. Studies on family resilience have provided a framework that contains three domains of family functions; the belief systems, organizational patterns

and communications processes (Walsh, 2003). Beliefs assist families to create meaning in times of crisis and promote optimism and reinforcement. Families rely on each other, motivate and encourage each other. Resilient families remain hopeful, focus on their strengths, adopt a “can do” attitude (which is the principle of Meseron) and accept the aspects of the situations that are out of control (Knowles, Garrison, & Betsy, 2010). The communications processes in the family include the ability to maintain clarity in crises situations. The family does this by communicating clear messages about crisis and also sharing and empathizing their feeling towards each other. They also work together, brainstorm and identify the required resources to make decisions that can help them recover from the adversity. The family members provide each other with love, care, comfort and emotional support which are important aspects in building resilience during and after adversity.

Since words are powerful and can impact a person, then it logically follows that thoughts, which precede words and can be described as subtle positive language, are also powerful and indispensable in family resilience. Thus, Meseron therapy presupposes that the interaction of thoughts, words and actions determine a person’s facility to achieve ennoblement, that is the desire to achieve one’s fullest potential on an individual level and as a member of society. More specifically, I think about it, confess it with my mouth, and act in such a way that it happens in my life.

These three, thoughts, words and actions, are described as operational facilities. Any negative alteration to any of these facilities (particularly thoughts) as a result of difficult life circumstances or stressors can hinder the attainment of ennoblement and produce psychopathology. The goal of the Meseron therapist in such

circumstances would be to assist the client to develop positive and constructive thought, word and behavior patterns. This is in line with the Meseron approach which does not encourage a self-defeatist status quo. Rather, the client is motivated to challenge and overcome any difficulties and re-ignite the desire for ennoblement.

Conclusion

We therefore conclude that the underlying principle of the Meseron approach is that the individual has the capacity to overcome difficulties and in fact transform them into positive and successful endeavours. Thus, rather than accept self-defeat, an individual can adopt constructive action and the use of positive, motivational words is critical to the Meseron approach and distinguishes it from other psychotherapeutic interventions.

The Meseron therapist motivates the client not only to think positively, but also to speak and affirm it. Rather than say, ‘*life is enough, I cannot succeed at school, work or in marriage*’, the client is encouraged to say, ‘yes, I can!’ there is power in the word; therefore, the spoken word becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy which produces a healthy and well balanced life. Its emphasis on clients’ striving and resilience reveals the essential feature of Meseron as a motivation theory.

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