5.7 The Psychodynamic Approach: Tripartite Personality and Psychosexual Stages

AQA 7182 · about 60 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Outline denial and give a worked example.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Outline the oral stage of psychosexual development.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Outline the anal stage of psychosexual development.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 Outline the latency stage of psychosexual development.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

5 Explain the role of the unconscious mind in Freud's psychodynamic approach to personality and behaviour.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

6 Outline the genital stage of psychosexual development.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

7 Define fixation and give an example of its adult effects.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

8 Define repression and give a worked example.

(Total for Question 8 is 3 marks)

9 Define displacement and give a worked example.

(Total for Question 9 is 3 marks)

10 Discuss the psychodynamic approach's explanation of personality development.

(Total for Question 10 is 16 marks)

11 Describe the tripartite structure of personality in Freud's theory.

(Total for Question 11 is 6 marks)

12 Outline the phallic stage and the Oedipus/Electra complexes.

(Total for Question 12 is 3 marks)

Mark scheme · 5.7 The Psychodynamic Approach: Tripartite Personality and Psychosexual Stages

Question 1

defines denial as refusing to accept the reality of a painful fact, keeping it out of conscious awareness oe — **B1**

gives a short example, e.g. a smoker who refuses to accept that smoking harms their health despite medical evidence, and states this is refusal rather than forgetting oe — **B1**

Answer: Denial is refusing to accept a painful reality so it is kept out of conscious awareness. For example, a heavy smoker may insist smoking does not harm them despite medical evidence; this is denial because the person consciously rejects the reality rather than unconsciously forgetting it.

Question 2

gives the typical age range and focus, e.g. 0 to 1 year, mouth as the focus of pleasure (sucking, biting) oe — **B1**

states a consequence of fixation, e.g. oral traits such as dependency, smoking, overeating or pessimism/optimism oe — **B1**

Answer: Oral stage, about 0 to 1 year, with the mouth as the focus of pleasure through sucking and feeding. Fixation can lead to oral traits in adulthood such as dependency, smoking or overeating.

Question 3

gives the typical age range and focus, e.g. 1 to 3 years, pleasure from bowel and bladder control during toilet training oe — **B1**

states a fixation outcome, e.g. anal-retentive traits such as obsessiveness and tidiness, or anal-expulsive traits such as messiness and rebelliousness oe — **B1**

Answer: Anal stage, about 1 to 3 years, focused on bowel and bladder control and toilet training. Fixation can produce anal-retentive traits like obsessiveness and tidiness or anal-expulsive traits like disorganisation and rebelliousness.

Question 4

gives the typical age range and feature, e.g. about 6 years to puberty, sexual impulses are repressed and energy is focused on school, friendships and skill learning oe — **B1**

states that psychosexual development is relatively dormant and social and intellectual development predominates oe — **B1**

Answer: Latency stage, roughly from age 6 to puberty, when sexual impulses are repressed and psychosexual energy is directed towards school, hobbies and same-sex friendships; social and intellectual development predominates.

Question 5

states that the unconscious contains thoughts, wishes and memories not available to conscious awareness oe — **B1**

explains that these unconscious processes can motivate behaviour, for example slips of the tongue or irrational fears oe — **B1**

Answer: The unconscious contains hidden wishes, memories and instincts which are not consciously accessible, and these unconscious processes can influence behaviour, for example producing slips of the tongue, phobias or irrational actions.

Question 6

gives the typical age range and focus, e.g. puberty onwards, mature sexual interests in others and focus on genital relationships oe — **B1**

states expected outcome: well-developed adult sexuality and ability to form loving heterosexual relationships if earlier stages resolved appropriately oe — **B1**

Answer: Genital stage, from puberty onwards, with mature sexual interests in others and a focus on genital relationships. If earlier stages are resolved, the expected outcome is well-developed adult sexuality and the ability to form healthy relationships.

Question 7

defines fixation as the failure to resolve the conflicts of a psychosexual stage, causing libido to remain attached to that stage oe — **M1**

gives an example, e.g. fixation at the oral stage leading to adult oral behaviours such as smoking, dependency or overeating oe — **A1**

explains why this is called fixation: the individual remains psychologically tied to early needs and ways of seeking pleasure from that stage oe — **A1**

brief evaluation link, e.g. notes that the idea links early experience to adult personality but is hard to test empirically oe — **A1**

Answer: Fixation is a failure to resolve a psychosexual stage, leaving libido attached to that stage. For example, fixation at the oral stage may result in adult behaviours such as smoking, dependency or overeating because the person remains psychologically tied to oral gratification. This is called fixation because development is arrested and early needs continue to influence adult behaviour. The concept links childhood experience to adult personality but is difficult to test objectively.

Question 8

defines repression as an unconscious blocking of distressing memories or impulses from conscious awareness oe — **M1**

gives a worked example, e.g. a person who was abused in childhood cannot recall the events but later shows anxiety or relationship problems oe — **A1**

explains how the example illustrates repression, the memory is pushed out of consciousness yet continues to influence behaviour oe — **A1**

Answer: Repression is the unconscious blocking of distressing memories or impulses from conscious awareness. For example, a person who experienced childhood abuse may have no conscious recollection of the events yet later has unexplained anxiety or relationship difficulties; the repressed memory still affects behaviour without conscious recall.

Question 9

defines displacement as redirecting an impulse or emotion from its original source to a substitute target considered less threatening oe	**M1**
gives a worked example, e.g. an employee angry with their manager goes home and shouts at their partner or kicks a door oe	**A1**
explains that this illustrates displacement because the emotion is shifted from the real source to a safer target to avoid direct conflict oe	**A1**

Answer: Displacement is redirecting an impulse or emotion from its original source to a substitute target considered less threatening. For example, an employee angry with their manager may go home and shout at their partner; the anger is displaced onto a safer target to avoid confronting the manager.

Question 10

Level 4 Knowledge of Freud's psychodynamic theory is accurate and detailed, covering the unconscious, id/ego/superego, defence mechanisms and psychosexual stages. Evaluation is thorough and balanced, integrating strengths and weaknesses with clear reasoning. Application and examples are used appropriately to support points. The answer is coherent and uses specialist terminology effectively.	**13-16**
Level 3 Knowledge is mostly accurate with some detail on key features of the psychodynamic approach. Evaluation is present and relevant but may be less developed or one-sided. There is some use of examples and application, and the answer is generally clear and organised.	**9-12**
Level 2 Knowledge of the psychodynamic approach is limited or partial. Evaluation is superficial or undeveloped, with limited integration of strengths and weaknesses. Examples or application may be brief or only partly relevant. Structure and use of terminology may be inconsistent.	**5-8**
Level 1 Very limited knowledge and little or no evaluation. Answers may be descriptive lists with little coherence. Specialist terminology is sparse or used incorrectly.	**1-4**
Level 0 No creditable content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- AO1: Key features to describe include the role of the unconscious in motivating behaviour, the tripartite personality (id, ego, superego) and their conflicts, ego defence mechanisms such as repression, denial and displacement, and the five psychosexual stages with the concepts of fixation, Oedipus and Electra complexes.
- AO1: Explain how the ego uses defence mechanisms to manage anxiety caused by conflicts between id impulses and the superego's demands, with brief examples of each mechanism to show application.
- AO1: Outline psychosexual stages in sequence: oral, anal, phallic (including Oedipus and Electra complexes), latency and genital, and how unresolved conflicts cause fixation affecting adult personality.
- AO3: Strength - explanatory power: the theory links early experience to adult personality and provides a comprehensive framework for understanding a range of behaviours and mental difficulties, which has influenced psychotherapy, especially psychoanalysis and techniques like dream interpretation and free association.
- AO3: Strength - clinical application: psychoanalytic ideas inspired therapeutic approaches that aim to make the unconscious conscious, which some patients find helpful and which influenced later therapeutic developments.
- AO3: Limitation - scientific status: many concepts are unfalsifiable and rely on interpretations that cannot be empirically tested, reducing the approach's scientific credibility.
- AO3: Limitation - reliance on case studies: Freud's evidence came largely from individual clinical case studies such as Little Hans and Dora, which offer rich detail but are unrepresentative and open to researcher bias.
- AO3: Limitation - overemphasis on sexuality and childhood determinism: critics argue Freud overstates the role of sexual drives and early childhood in determining adult personality, neglecting social and cultural influences and later experiences.
- AO3: Limitation - cultural and gender bias: Freud's theories reflect Victorian-era patriarchy and may be culturally specific; concepts like penis envy have been criticised as sexist and not generalisable.
- AO3: Balance/alternative explanations: other approaches, such as behaviourism and cognitive theories, offer more testable mechanisms and emphasise learning and cognition; however, they may lack Freud's depth in explaining internal conflict and unconscious motives.
- AO3: Overall judgement might weigh the theory's historical importance and clinical utility against its methodological and scientific weaknesses, concluding that it remains influential but limited as a scientific account of personality development.

Question 11

names the id, ego and superego oe	**M1**
explains the id as the instinctive, pleasure-seeking part operating on the pleasure principle, present from birth oe	**A1**
explains the ego as the rational mediator operating on the reality principle, balancing id demands with the external world oe	**A1**
explains the superego as the moral conscience, internalising parental and societal rules oe	**A1**
explains typical conflict, for example id urges for immediate gratification conflicting with the superego's moral demands, with the ego resolving via defence mechanisms oe	**A1**
explains that the ego uses realistic strategies, including defence mechanisms, to reduce anxiety caused by such conflicts oe	**A1**

Answer: The personality comprises the id, ego and superego. The id is instinctive and seeks immediate pleasure, the ego is the rational mediator that negotiates reality, and the superego is the internalised moral conscience. Conflicts arise when id impulses clash with superego morals, and the ego manages these tensions using realistic problem solving and defence mechanisms to reduce anxiety.

Question 12

gives the typical age range and focus, e.g. 3 to 5 years, genital region as the focus of pleasure oe	**M1**
explains the Oedipus complex for boys: unconscious sexual desire for the mother and rivalry with the father, leading to castration anxiety and identification with the father oe	**A1**
explains the Electra complex for girls: unconscious attraction to the father, penis envy and eventual identification with the mother, leading to internalisation of parental values oe	**A1**

Answer: Phallic stage, about 3 to 5 years, with the genital region as the focus. Boys experience the Oedipus complex, an unconscious desire for the mother and rivalry with the father that is resolved by identifying with the father; girls experience the Electra complex, involving an unconscious preference for the father and eventual identification with the mother.