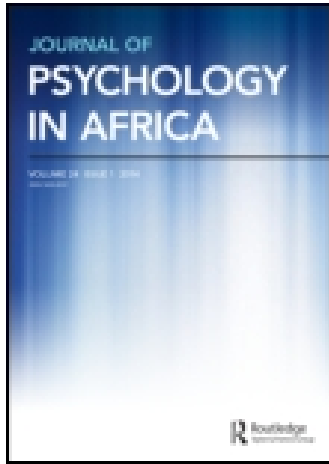


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A Psycho-Diagnostic Tool for Psychotherapy: Interactional Pattern Analysis (IPA)

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This article proposes a description of a psycho-diagnostic tool for psychotherapists, the Interactional Pattern Analysis (IPA). Sixteen interpersonal variables are proposed to describe the observable behaviour that constitutes a client's interpersonal style within the context of a particular relationship, such as client-therapist; husband-wife; mother-daughter; friends; context; definition of the relationship; clarity of self-presentation; emotional distance; accurate empathy; congruence and unconditional acceptance; confirmation; expression of needs; linear/circular approach; degree of interpersonal flexibility/rigidity; ability to meta-communicate; adequacy of problem-solving skills; control; potential for eliciting rejection or acceptance; and traumatic incidents. In the context of the psychotherapeutic relationship, trained psychotherapists observe clients' interpersonal styles based on a combination of these interpersonal variables with the intention of proposing a link between clients' patterns of behaviour and their presenting complaints. Based on this connection, appropriate psychotherapeutic interventions can be implemented.

Keywords: Interactional approach, interpersonal system, psychological well-being, psychotherapy, psychodiagnosis

Human beings are psychologically well when they have positive relations with others (Bloch, 1996; Ryff, 1995). Quality connections with other people are one of the key dimensions of psychological well-being (Rogers, 1957; Ryff & Singer, 1998). This means having warm, satisfying and trusting relationships with others; being concerned about the welfare of others and able to express strong empathy, affection and intimacy in relationships. A person without these qualities will probably be isolated and frustrated and may be unwilling to make compromises to sustain important ties with others (Ryff, 1995).

According to Hargie (2011), competence, relatedness and autonomy result in optimal well-being, which is achieved through an effective repertoire of interpersonal skills. Leary (1957) sees interpersonal behaviours as security operations employed by people to maintain relative comfort, security and freedom from anxiety in their interactions with others. Human beings' ability to nourish and protect relationships have a prophylactic effect because socially competent people, who are nurturing and protective, are able to cope with stress, make adjustments in their personal relationships and are less likely to suffer from psychological illnesses (Gergen, 2009; Hargie, 2011). It seems clear that optimally effective interpersonal relationships go hand-in-hand with high levels of psychological well-being, or mental health (Van den Bergh, 2008).

By contrast, those who do not have optimally effective interpersonal relationships experience emotional discomfort for which they seek psychotherapy. Psychotherapy is defined as "the use of absolutely any technique or procedure that has palliative or curative effects upon any mental, emotional or behavioural disorder" (Reber, Allen, & Reber, 2009, p. 639). There is general concern, however, that psychotherapy has become stagnant and largely isolated from the broader professional community (Gergen, 2001; Phipps, 2004). The aim of this article

is to describe a psycho-diagnostic tool for psychotherapy, the Interactional Pattern Analysis (IPA), which Vorster (first author) has conceptualised. The question guiding the article is: How can an interpersonal approach guide the design and implementation of appropriate psychotherapeutic interventions?

People have preferred styles of interacting with others, and, when they do interact, they involuntarily enter into a circular pattern of action and reaction. This enduring pattern is observed in an individual's relationships with other people (Jackson, 1965). In every interpersonal interaction, the subjective experience of the interaction elicits behavioural responses (Hill, Watson, Rivers, & Joyce, 2007). As the interaction continues, a 'pattern of interaction' between two people develops, setting in motion continuous manoeuvres and subsequent impacts between the parties (Vorster, 2003, 2011). Interpersonal manoeuvres are what Hargie (2011) refers to as goal-directed attempts to achieve a desired outcome. An interpersonal manoeuvre is always embedded in an interpersonal context (Hargie, 2011) and consists of varying styles of interacting and relating, such as manoeuvring for clarity, or for information, or for whatever is needed by the people who engage in the relationship (Vorster, 2011). Over a period of time, interactions typically become woven into a web of impacts, reactions and manoeuvres between people, based on the emotional effect of the impacts on their behaviour and the continuous mutually recursive manner in which they influence one another (Gergen, 2009; Sullivan, 1953).

Training to Use Interactional Pattern Analysis

The use of IPA depends on training psychotherapists in 1) theories related to people's interactions and relations, namely the humanistic theory, general systems theory (GST) and interpersonal communications theory, and in 2) identifying variables in the clients' interactions with people, focusing on the here-and-now of the

psychotherapeutic relationship, and significant relationships outside the therapeutic context. The aim is to link clients' typical interactional styles with their presenting complaints. This connection can serve as to guide subsequent psychological intervention.

The training takes place in an experiential learning environment (Yalom, 2005). Typically trainees will be taken into a group facilitated by a trainer. Group members are enabled to interact with one another to form a cohesive group with high levels of trust. In this process the group proceeds through the typical phases of group formation that include a period of milling and norm formation (Yalom, 2005). It is important that certain norms be in place before the group can proceed to the feedback phase. These are: unconditional acceptance of one another, respecting of personal boundaries; focus on observable behaviour; feedback should focus on the impact and effects of behaviour (no prescriptive behaviour permitted); and should be honest and accurate. When these norms are in place and members feel safe and secure enough they proceed to give feedback on how they impact on one another. In this process the typical variables of the IPA become evident (visible) as members are made aware of how they impact on others. In addition to personal feedback on their own behaviour members are also in a position to observe repeatedly how the others in the group are impacting on one another. This increases their accuracy of observation and expands their frames of reference.

Theories Informing the Interpersonal/Interactional Approach

Humanistic theory focuses on people's subjective perspectives and their agency, namely the active role they play in their self-actualisation and in achieving their inherent potential (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1961). This agency is facilitated in relationships with psychotherapists who strive to create a 'growth-promoting' climate in their psychotherapy by displaying accurate empathy, unconditional positive regard for and congruence with the client (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2008; Rogers, 1957). The person/client-centred approach holds that the relationship between therapists and clients is the core element in the psychotherapeutic process (Rogers, 1957).

GST proposes that systems, including human systems, function circularly. Individuals thus typically function within recurring patterns of interaction with other individuals and may become entrapped in destructive or unhealthy circular patterns (Bateson, 2000; Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 2011). Communication between people, whether verbal or non-verbal, takes place on two logical levels, namely the first-order (or participant) level and the second-order (or observer) level. From the perspective of a participant, in other words from a first-order perspective, the participant can therefore not observe and gain awareness of the interactional process between him /her and another person. A second-order perspective (similar to that of a 'helicopter position'), however, allows for observation of what is happening in the process of the interaction (Van den Bergh, 2008; Vorster, 2011). From the perspective of this higher order logical level, it is possible for an observer to observe the process between people and see how two people co-determine their behaviour. The focus or punctuation is thus on the interpersonal context. A therapist accordingly functions on two logical levels simultaneously, namely on a first-order level as a participant and on a second-order level as the observer of the interaction (Vorster, 2003, 2011; Watzlawick et al., 2011).

According to interpersonal communication theory, the interaction between people takes place on two levels, namely the

conscious and the subconscious level. The 'conversation' on the subconscious level co-determines the participants' experiences of each other as well as their behaviour towards each other (Hill et al., 2007; Vorster, 2011). People do not always register or observe that they are active participants in the interpersonal relationship (either as receivers or senders of messages), but they always register the effect of the interaction, although sometimes on a subconscious level only. Every interpersonal interaction constitutes an experience, and the impact is felt on an emotional level and demonstrated on a behavioural level (Hill et al., 2007). As long as the interaction continues, a reciprocal process is created in which emotional and behavioural impacts are experienced as well as communicated (Jackson, 1965).

A distinction needs to be made here between intention and effect. For example, verbal and the non-verbal messages from the sender may contradict each other, and leave the receiver confused and uncertain of what message to respond to. The person on the receiving end of a message will simply respond to the emotional impact of the sender's message, whether that response is in line with the sender's intention or not. The key notions are that the impact of the sender's message may firstly match or not match the initial intention of the sender, and secondly it is this very impact that elicits a reaction from the receiver that in turn impacts back on the initial sender (Hargie, 2011). Thus a series of mutual responses and impacts between the sender and the receiver evolve, and the interaction becomes a continuous, reciprocal process (Hill et al., 2007; Jackson, 1965). In this regard, two individuals in each other's presence are always communicating and interacting (Hargie, 2011; Hill et al., 2007; Watzlawick et al., 2011).

Identification of Relational Patterns

In the context of psychotherapy, a psychotherapist assumes the role of a participant-observer in an interaction with a client. This means that the psychotherapist participates on the first-order, or participant level, while observing the interactional behaviour from the second-order, or observer level. Psychotherapists therefore focus on 'observable behaviour' (variables) that emerges in relation to them in the context of psychotherapy as well as as with others in clients' interactions which are derived at by listening how clients communicate their presenting problem. While conducting a person-centred interview, psychotherapists assume different positions: 1) they become aware of their own biases, preferences and judgements and adopt a position in which they register the client's feedback on their own preferred interactional style and how this style might impact on the person seeking psychotherapeutic assistance; and 2) they focus on the interaction, that is, the client's observable behaviour. By observing how clients present their problem the psychotherapist can achieve the following:

1. Describe the client's interactional style (IPA) in relation to the therapist as well as to other significant relationships mentioned during the session.
2. Link a clients' IPA and the presenting complaint.
3. Establish goal(s) for therapy.

Observable behaviour. Sixteen relational variables have been identified by Vorster (2003, 2011), based on the theories discussed earlier, the impact of the client on the psychotherapist and on observations of how a person typically tends to relate to or interact with others. A visual representation of the process is illustrated in Figure 1.

The sixteen variables will be discussed and questions which are used to determine the variable will be included.

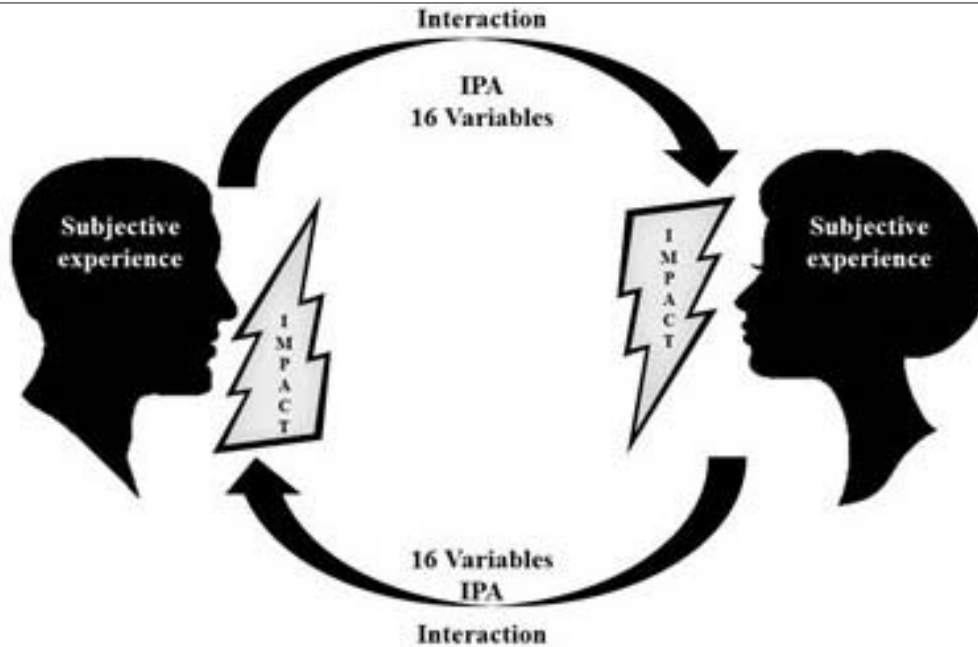


Figure 1. Visual representation of IPA affecting psychological wellbeing

Context. This refers to the setting, surrounding or frame in which the interaction and communication occur and serves a referential function (Hill et al., 2007). In observing interactions between people, the context within which the interactions occur is considered important, and the interactions can be explained only within that context (Hargie, 2011; Hill et al., 2007). Context thus determines the meaning of all communication and behaviour. The same word, phrase or behaviour in different contexts can have significantly different meanings, which can lead to a great deal of confusion, misunderstanding and frustration between interacting parties. For example, if someone says “When I get out I’m going to kill you!”, the message without context is not clear, but if the message is put into context the meaning immediately becomes clear. In this case, the context could be a courtroom where the speaker had just been sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment; or it could be a party, when the speaker had just been pushed into a swimming pool.

In order to be experienced by others as clear, effective and unambiguous, people need to create a context in which communication can be clear. People who typically do not adequately create context, or who mix contexts, can have a very confusing effect on people who are receiving communication. A client who typically communicates in a manner that leaves others confused will likely elicit rejection. This may lead to increasing isolation of the individual (Vorster, 2003, 2011). Questions to ask about this variable include: 1) In which context did the client describe the interaction with other people? 2) What was the aim of the interaction with other people? 3) What is the context in which the interactions between the client and the psychotherapist took place?

Definition of relationships. People constantly define or confirm the definition of relationships through communication (Jackson, 1965). Relationships can be defined in three ways: as parallel, complementary or symmetrical (Jackson, 1965; Haley, 1963). A parallel relationship is one between equals, a complementary relationship signifies a relationship between a leader and a follower, and a symmetrically defined relationship is a

constant power struggle for the leadership position (Jackson, 1965; Watzlawick et al., 2011).

Individuals in a parallel relationship are able to relate to one another in a way that sees them alternating between the leadership positions in a flexible manner. The complementary relational definition means that one person assumes the leadership role and the other the follower role—the person in the leadership role is in the one-up, superior or leadership position, and the other in the one-down, inferior or follower position. When the two people in the relationship do not agree on the definition of the relationship, both will likely manoeuvre for the leadership or control position, which will inevitably lead to a symmetrical struggle. This struggle can be very subtle or can escalate into physical violence.

None of the aforementioned relationship definitions is of itself “healthier” or more optimal than the other. What seems important is whether the participants in a particular relationship experience needs satisfaction and are in a process of self-actualisation. Some people may be happy and satisfied with their complimentary definition whereby one individual consistently takes the lead, while others are able to function optimally within a relationship that is defined as parallel, in which they take turns at taking the lead. Questions that could be asked to determine this variable are: How do clients relate to the psychotherapist in the context of psychotherapy as well as in other relational contexts? Do they always/generally/sometimes/never take the lead?

Clarity of self-presentation. Clear presentation of the self tends to be understood by people (Hill et al., 2007). A person can either present a clear picture of him- or herself or present an unclear or vague picture. For example, people who speak rapidly can be difficult to keep up with and follow; this will render them unclear or vague to others. Someone with poor pronunciation can also be difficult to hear and follow (Hill et al., 2007). The same applies to a person who speaks with incomplete articulation and uses inadequate or incomplete sentences. He or she may speak in an illogical and unsystematic manner or leap from

one context or logical level to another. A person may also communicate with vague and non-specific statements, or double or incongruent messages, which are open to misinterpretation and misunderstanding on the receiving end. The receiver of obscure communication will typically lose interest and probably avoid further contact with the speaker. The speaker's subjective experiences may be that others are not really interested in what they say and may consequently believe that they are worthless or unvalued. Rejection by others excludes empathy and support in interpersonal relationships, which will further promote isolation (Vorster, 2003, 2011).

Conversely, individuals may succeed in presenting a clear picture of themselves. Their pronunciation may be nearly perfect, their volume and tempo of speech adequate and their presentation logical and systematic. Contexts and logical levels may be respected and maintained leading to a high degree of clear self-presentation. These individuals will probably experience a high degree of acceptance and confirmation from others (Vorster, 2003, 2011). Questions that are asked to determine this variable include: What is the impact of clients' verbal and non-verbal communication? Totally/generally/sometimes/confusing or clear and easy to follow?

Emotional distance. In all relationships individuals maintain a certain emotional distance (Vorster, 2011). When two people have recently been introduced, they typically and appropriately start off with more distance in relation to one another. This distance may become less over time within a developing relationship, or, alternatively, the distance may become greater leading to the break-up of the relationship (Jackson, 1965; Vorster, 2011). In relationships, one person may continuously manoeuvre for closeness while the other person may respond in a counteracting manner by manoeuvring for distance. This happens when people disagree on the distance between them. A pattern of behaviour such as this may escalate to the point where the more one person manoeuvres for closeness, the more the other responds with manoeuvres for distance.

Owing to the reciprocal or circular nature of relationships, which means that people mutually influence one another in any here-and-now moment, the speed with which they move towards one another needs to be similar from both sides. One person may suddenly move quite close to another, causing the person on the receiving end to feel threatened and to respond by backing off or even leaving the relationship. Often, more and desperate manoeuvres for closeness are met with an escalation of manoeuvres for distance. Such manoeuvres for distance are typically experienced as rejection and can be hurtful (Vorster, 2003, 2011).

Some people relate in a manner that sees them maintaining a considerable distance in their interpersonal relationships. When people maintain great interpersonal distance, others may find it difficult or impossible to get to know them. People who are experienced as emotionally unreachable may also receive little or no empathy and support from others, which may leave them with a subjective experience of isolation, loneliness, being unsupported and misunderstood, as well as with high levels of stress, anxiety and/or depression (Vorster, 2011).

A psychotherapist trained in using IPA will be able to describe the typical emotional distance with which clients define their relationships by observing the specific verbal and non-verbal behaviour in the first interview (Vorster, 2011). Criteria that are used to determine this variable are: extremely distant and completely inaccessible; very distant and inaccessible or un-touchable; distant or un-touchable to a certain extent; moder-

ately distant or un-touchable; extremely and uncomfortably close.

Accurate empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard. Rogers (1957) demonstrated that high levels of accurate empathy, congruence and unconditional acceptance constituted an effective therapeutic relationship that would facilitate a client's growth and actualisation. Any relationship in which these three variables are present should be beneficial to the participants and should contribute to their healthy mental development and growth and consequently their psychological well-being (Vorster 2003, 2011). Empathy means having an accurate, empathic understanding of other people's experiences – as if they were your own (Rogers, 1957). The questions that can guide the identification of this variable are: Does this person communicate and receive empathy? Do the psychotherapist and others misunderstand him or her? Totally, often, sometimes? Or does the person communicate understanding of the position of other people.

Congruence refers to a genuine, integrated person who is freely him- or herself in the relationship, "with his actual experience accurately represented by his awareness of himself" (Rogers, 1957, p. 97). Congruence is determined by observing the person in relation to most other people. Does he or she play a role? Maintain a facade? Is the person superficial? Mainly her- or himself? Quite commonly him -or herself?

Unconditional positive regard refers to the warm acceptance of every aspect of people's experiences without any pre-conditions for acceptance (Rogers, 1957). Unconditional positive regard thus means caring for people without being possessive. Owing to the circular and mutual nature of relationships, a psychotherapist asks the following question: Is the client giving or receiving unconditional positive regard or does the person display a judgement on the following continuum: serious judgemental/strong judgemental/ judgemental/unconditional/unconditional accepting?

Confirmation. Obtaining confirmation from others and the social environment means receiving the message that one has a valid, special or exceptional place as an individual and is appreciated for one's place in society (Vorster, 2011; Watzlawick et al., 2011). People are constantly searching for confirmation (Gergen, 2009). Excellence or achievement in some way can elicit such a message of confirmation from the social environment. The confirmation does not have to be a major global achievement. Confirmation may come to someone in the form of subtle or indirect messages that he/she offers valued advice or opinions and is acceptable to others.

On the other hand, there may also be consequences for someone who either gives confirmation to others or fails to do so, often typically in response to what he or she elicits from others (Hill et al., 2007; Vorster, 2011). Confirmation is a typical reciprocal process – those who give confirmation are also more inclined to elicit confirmation. Confirmation is determined by observing how confirmation and recognition manifest in people's daily lives in relation to other people. Never/rarely/sometimes/often/very often? How does the person receive confirmation and recognition from other people? No confirmation or recognition/to a certain extent/often/very often?

Expression of needs. The ability to express one's needs effectively in relation to others is of paramount importance for subjective experience of well-being as this correlates with the process of self-actualisation. The effective expression of needs refers to how people respond to the need itself and whether it is satisfied in the relationship. Not bringing needs to a relationship

will typically render such a person insignificant and invisible to others. In a relationship, the person who is approached for the satisfaction of the needs may be unaware of what the other wants and be ignorant of that person's unexpressed needs. On the other hand, a person who typically expresses needs in an over-demanding and prescriptive manner will in all likelihood elicit defence, rejection or withdrawal from others (Vorster, 2002, 2011). Questions that guide the identification of this variable are: How effectively does the person express his or her needs to other people? How effective is the person in eliciting the appropriate reaction to have these needs addressed?

Linear/circular approach. People typically have either a linear or a circular approach to the environment (Vorster, 2011). Someone who generally sees a situation only from his or her own perspective understands behaviour one-sidedly. People who operate from the premise that in any interaction there are perspectives other than their own have a circular and more interactive view of behaviour. People with a linear approach typically do not recognise their share in the outcome of interactions with others and may tend to blame others and/or see themselves as a victim. Continuous blaming from a linear perspective will in all likelihood elicit hostility, defence and/or rejection and spark continued ineffective and sometimes destructive interactional patterns of behaviour between two parties. Questions that could be used to determine this variable can include: Does the person typically blame other people and see the world only from their perspective? Or do they see themselves as victims? Do they typically indicate their contribution to an interaction? Never/sometimes/always?

Degree of interpersonal flexibility/rigidity. Leary (1957) studied interpersonal acts and found a link between rigid, inflexible behaviour and degree of psychopathology. The more rigid the individual's interactional patterns, the more likely it is to indicate psychopathology, while the more flexible the individual's interactional patterns, the less likely it is to indicate psychopathology (Watzlawick et al., 2011). Vorster (2011) points out that an optimally functioning individual typically shows appropriate behaviour according to particular contexts. Such a person needs to be reasonably flexible in his or her interactional style. People typically function in different contexts daily, which necessitate different behaviour in those contexts. In a clinical context, this can be seen, for example, if a husband who is a senior military officer, exhibits a rigid role definition in relation to his wife. He typically relates to his wife in a manner that is similar to his military role and sees him manoeuvring for control and communicating his needs in a prescriptive and demanding manner while showing little empathy for his wife's needs and experiences. He typically has an objective approach to the environment and relates rigidly purely from his own frame of reference. The effect of his style of interaction on his wife is that she responds to him by distancing herself and withdrawing from him (Vorster, 2011).

Guidelines to identify this variable could be questions such as: Is this individual absolutely sticking to his point without any compromise? Does this individual show a willingness to listen to another view and possibly amend his own position? Does the individual immediately give up his own standpoint and accept an opposing viewpoint without any resistance?

Skill to meta-communicate. Meta-communication refers to the ability to communicate on a higher-order level, thus communicating about communication (Watzlawick et al., 2011). This skill is crucial in the process of maintaining harmony in relationships because conflict in a relationship can be resolved only

if the participants can effectively communicate about their communication, i.e., meta-communicate. In order to master the skill of meta-communicating, the participants need to observe their own behaviour and communication in relation to each other from a logical position that is higher than the one on which they operate during ordinary communication and interaction. This is particularly useful for couples if they are to gain an understanding of the process between them and how the pattern of interaction between came about (Vorster, 2011). In order to meta-communicate, people need first to validate the perspective of the person with whom they are interacting, while exercising their own perspective in a way that does not threaten the perspective of the other. Once the two people in interaction are able to observe their own interaction, they will be part of a meta-perspective, and this will assist them to abandon their individual linear approaches for a circular approach (Vorster, 2011). Some questions that could guide the identification and description of this variable could include: Is this individual so engrossed in the argument that he or she never stops to stand back and review just how it happened that the argument deteriorated into a verbal fight? Do the interacting people from time to time take a helicopter view of their own communication – how they formulate and how they conduct themselves in their interaction with each other?

Adequacy of problem-solving skills. Coping daily with the demands and challenges of life can be difficult and requires a degree of skill to solve problems that can be diverse in nature (Vorster, 2011). People typically vary in the degree and efficacy of their problem-solving abilities. In some instances, the difficulties and problems facing people may be so overwhelming that they may not have the necessary problem-solving skills or may not be able to acquire them. In the context of psychotherapy, a psychotherapist will need to assess this potential in a client. The necessary skills may be of an interpersonal nature that can be coached, for example conflict management or fair fighting techniques. In monitoring this variable possible relevant questions would be: Does this individual fold under the demands of the environment or does he or she at times/usually/always come up with a solution to difficult situation or problems? Are there certain areas in this individual's life that are characterised by coping well with problematic situations? Is this individual overwhelmed only by the demands related to his presenting complaint?

Control. This points to the traditional understanding of internal versus external locus of control. In the assessment of this quality in a clinical context, a psychotherapist typically checks the following: Is the person typically in control of his or her environment or circumstances, and, consequently, does he or she operate from an internal locus of control? Or is the environment typically in control of the client, and, consequently, does the client operate from an external locus of control? The latter scenario typically renders the person a victim of the environment. Most people tend to place themselves somewhere between these opposing poles (Vorster, 2011). People who typically position themselves as helpless will experience significant consequences with regard to their mental health such as subjective feelings of depression and/or anxiety (Vorster, 2003, 2011). Questions related to this variable are: Is this individual typically controlling all others around him or her? Is he or she an absolute victim in the situation – totally overwhelmed? Is he or she effectively in control in some relationships but assumes a follower role in others?

Potential for eliciting rejection or acceptance. All people, as a consequence of their interpersonal style, have the potential to either elicit rejection or acceptance from others. People thus either create a caring, loving environment for them or a hostile, rejecting environment (Vorster, 2011). A typical example is a person who tends to manoeuvre excessively for acceptance or to impress others, which often has the opposite effect. A person's ineffective manoeuvres for acceptance or to impress are more likely to elicit rejection from others. People on the receiving end tend to get tired of someone who constantly communicate the message "Look at what I can do" or "Look at how important I am" and will most likely avoid him or her (Vorster, 2011).

People with an interactional style that shows little empathy and/or who typically speak in a blaming, judgemental or accusatory manner will also probably elicit rejection or hostility from others because of the unpleasant impact of this style. Although it is often fairly easy to observe and hear when someone blames, accuses and judges, this can also happen so subtly that listeners may realise it only at a later stage. What may sound like a compliment may thus be a subtle judgement or blame and can take the listener a while to realise it (Vorster, 2011).

People who typically relate to others in a way that indicates accurate empathy and unconditional acceptance in a congruent thus genuine manner are more likely to elicit acceptance from the social environment. People who show and communicate a healthy degree of vulnerability and humility as well as flexibility and care for others are also likely to elicit acceptance from others (Vorster, 2011). Related questions regarding this variable are: Would people tend to be attracted to this person and typically want to become friends? Would people most likely tend to avoid this person if possible? Can this person be described as likeable or not? Will he or she typically elicit a defensive or hostile reaction?

Traumatic incidents. An otherwise effectively functioning person may be so affected by a traumatic event that he or she can no longer cope with daily living and this may be the only variable in IPA that seems significantly affected. On the other hand, the traumatic impact on an individual may be exacerbated by certain variables in IPA that blocks the particular individual in his or her attempt at dealing with the traumatic impact. The question relevant to determine this variable would be: Did this individual suffer the impact of one or more traumatic episodes?

Conclusion

The article proposed the Interactional Pattern Analysis, consisting of sixteen interpersonal variables, as a psycho-diagnostic procedure for psychotherapists to enable them to locate the nodal point for optimal psychotherapeutic intervention. In order to use IPA a trained psychotherapist should function as a participant-observer, observing the here-and-now interactional pattern of the client and linking the presenting complaint to one or more of the sixteen interpersonal variables described.

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