

DISPLAYS OF THE SENSE OF THE HUMOUR IN PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENCE SYSTEM

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Abstract

The paper studies the specific features of humour, its displays, as well as a psychological protection as functioning of a defined psychohygienic factor for improvement of self-feeling, as a personality's stabilization system. Adaptive human behaviour is described. Four humour styles – affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive and disparaging, self-defeating style of humour – are updated.

Keywords: Sense of the humour, types of the humour, psychological defence mechanisms.

Introduction

In the public's mind there is a perception of humour as a sign psychological health condition. There is a perception that people with a good sense of humour withstand difficulties and keep a lively spirit, even when faced with insurmountable obstacles.

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Aim of the research

1. To study socially psychological aspects of humour with regard to the personality's psychological defence mechanisms.
2. To study the factors and aspects creating the phenomenon of humour.

Research methods: Analysis of theoretical literature and sources, survey.

In order to survive and enjoy the life the person needs not only the physical, but also the psychic conditions. He must keep some mental balance, in order to maintain the ability to carry out his functions. Everything that contributes to a psychological comfort, is just as important as all what is serving to a physical comfort. The very first vital interest is to maintain the own coordinate system and values orientation. It determines the ability to act, and to be aware about yourself as a personality (Fromm, 1994).

In psychological studies the humour is evaluated as a guarding mechanism or in modern terms - as a stress management strategy, which is similar to a positive reevaluation, when the situation is not under direct person's control (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

K. Horney has studied human behaviour cultural determinants, the social aspects of human life and the nature of the mutual relations between individuals. K. Horney believes that the internal conflicts of personality are to some extent determined by the society in which you live. She sees congenital anxiety as the bases of a human nature. The sense of anxiety becomes internal capacity of mental activity. What a person does - it is a transformation of anxiety. It is the main motivation for his actions.

K. Horney indicates that people are driven by two trends: striving for security and striving for satisfaction of own wishes. Both of these types of efforts are often contradictory and then neurotic conflict arises, which he tries to suppress, developing certain types of behaviour – „strategies” (Horney, 1942). In order to achieve the aim in a particular situation, in order to meet some need, a person acts. But sometimes his action, activity faces hindrances.

When the hindrances arise on the persons way, when the set goal cannot be reached, then the tension accumulates in the body. It becomes apparent on two levels: in behaviour and organic level. Humour reduces the stress, it makes it easier to endure the humiliation, reduces sense of awkwardness, helps mentally to deal with the pain and suffering. The humour in the right time and the right place helps to the vast majority of people in difficult circumstances, even facing severe suffering.

If the strain has arisen in person as a result of external (frustration) or internal (psychological conflict) barriers, and if discharge occurs through adaptive behaviour, then it is a positive reaction. A negative reaction is, if we are talking about non-adaptive behaviour or simple discharge, whose sole purpose is to remove tensions. Tensions may also find their way out through psychosomatic forms.

Discharge may occur in different forms:

1. Aggressive reactions – not every aggressive reaction is negative. They can even be efficient for reaching a specific purpose. Aggressive behaviour is negative if it changes the aggression subject, namely, when the object of aggression is not a cause of frustration. In this case aggressive behaviour is directed towards the so-called scapegoat – irrespective of whether it is a person or object. For example, if the father has not succeeded in work, he quarrels his child in the evening.

2. Extrapunitive reactions – these are aggressive reactions directed to objects or strangers, which we treat like they were the causes of frustration. For example, deliberately smash a vase, „skipping bile” on the bus, beating

the fist at the table. It is accompanied with emotions – anger, fury, irritability, indignation.

3. Intrapunitive reactions – subject in the contrary, may acknowledge that he himself is a cause of frustration. Then his aggressiveness is accompanied with shame, compunction, sense of guilt.

There is a universal source, that causes all of the problems for our body and life. It consists of four components: anger, guilt, fear, criticism of others (Lika, 1996).

Fear usually mobilises either an attack response or tendency to flee. One uses escape, evasion, when searching for an exit, to „save own face”. If the circumstances are so unfavourable, that is not possible to avoid the shame or a crisis, the most likely response is an attack. It should be taken into account that the escape (evasive) reaction depends on two factors:

- 1) the intensity of the threat;
- 2) the subject’s physical and mental endurance, from his self-confidence.

Psychological protection functions as particular psychohygenic factor that hinders the emergence of serious psychiatric disorders.

Z.Freud defines psychological protection as a set of unconscious mental processes, which are called to protect ME from the threat of the reality (as a rule – in childhood). Any mental process or operation (work, humour, game, etc.), as well as special protection mechanisms may be used for protection (Freud, 1989).

In the theory of the personality’s psychoanalytic orientation defenses are treated as specific psychological forms of protection established by ME forces.

Protection mechanisms not only sustain human dignity, but help him to cope with life's difficulties. Individual is not aware of them, and does not choose. They are typical for almost everybody in a certain level, and a serious problem arises if the person does not have an opportunity to adequately assess the reality. In situations where the intensity of needs is growing, but there are no conditions to meet them, the behavior is regulated by the psychological defence mechanisms. They help individual to avoid tensions, accompanied with conflicts between consciousness and unconsciousness. These mechanisms transform, restrain or completely banish from consciousness the information which is in contradiction with the EGO (I) requirements (R. Granovska, 1988; Freud, 1989).

Protection mechanisms maintain and protect human dignity, and with the help of it a person more or less successfully resolves the various conflict situations, arising from interaction with the outside world. More successfully an individual deals with the situation that causes frustration, the sooner improves his emotional and phisical self-feeling.

Psychological defence mechanisms as a specific personality stabilisation system is analysed by psychologist R. Granovska. She finds that psychological protection is one of the displays of the interaction of the individual and the surrounding environment in situations, when the possible or indeed unsuccessful operation is connected with the requirement for experience of own personallity wholesomeness. This special mental activity materializes in specific information processing form, which can protect the personality from the tormenting shame experience and loss of dignity in motivated conflict conditions. The psychological protection is appearent in individual's trend to keep the familiar thinking about himself, to reduce dissonance, rejecting or misrepresenting information, which the person assesses as harmful and that destroys the original picture of himself and others. (Грановская,1988).

Psychological defence mechanism is connected with concious or unconcious reorganization of the value system components, as well as with changes in all personality's value hierarchy changes, to prevent the psychologically traumatic moments. Psychological protection functions are contradictory, in that aspect, that performing individual's adaptation to his inner world and psychological situation, they (functions) may worsen adaptation to the social environment. For example, the lowering of attachment level after the failure can be seen as a defence mechanism that protects against the bitterness after next failure, but at the same time also reduces the likelihood of victory.

The aim of psychological defence is one – resistance to unpleasent feelings, emotions, experiences, and reduction of anxiety and tension.

Psychological protection types: denial, humour, creation of reaction, conflicting feelings, repression, rationalisation, identification with the aggressor, the ascetism, affect isolation, regression, disintegration, projection, introjection, omnipotence, devaluation, primitive idealization, identification with a false image, move, sublimation, avoidance, marginalisation, alienation, compensation, exclusion. These safeguard mechanisms are treated as an integral part of the individual. They determine development of the individual in quite important aspects. If the safeguard mechanisms for some reason do not fulfil their function, it may contribute to creation of mental disorders. Performance of these mechanisms has been found both in adults and children (Lika, 1996).

In the context of stress research, humour is described as a behaviour, that in playful form unexpectedly changes the meaning of some object, event, or situation, creating amusement. Sense of humour characterises the ability of human to see sudden alternative meanings of what is happening, to assess the ongoing situation as less threatening and to change the emotional

background from serious to playful, thus experiencing amusement (Stokenberga, 2010).

The concept *humour* is used in a wide range of situations and it has multiple meanings. It may be as characteristics associated with funny and silly, as well as with the mental state, when a person faces, discloses, understands something laughable and funny, and a comic occurrence that has occurred to entertain (10).

The foreign word **humour** is generally connected with the words: jokes, quizing, tricks, wit, fun, laughing, fooling around, teasing, bullying, derision. It is difficult to avoid foreign words, describing variety of humour: satire, irony, comedy, sketch, the comic, caricature, parody, hyperbole, anecdote.

Talking about the interaction of the humour's logical construction and emotional dynamics, you can say: incompatible content situation occurs or a merger of ideas in the human mind, then there is a sudden change from one - the expected situation to another - unexpected, causing a rapid decline of concern, that expresses in spontaneous laughter, because 'energy and tension are looking for a way out.

For example, *"uncle, what are you doing there?"*

- I, Johnny, put manure on strawberries.

- But we at home always put whipped cream on strawberries instead .

Humour can be: offensive weapon (mock), the means for establishment of contact or delivering contact information (joke, humorous sketch, topical satire, the tool for teaching the moral standards (proverbs and sayings), an original tool for hiding ones attitude, point of view, in situations where it is necessary (jokes, returning a joke, changing the subject) (Droz, 2012). J.Sobolevski (2014), describing the humour, indicates that one of the brain mechanisms for survival is the ability to quickly identify dangerous situations, activating a survival response. Humour is an emotional experience of paradox.

While A.Clarke (2014) has concretized a universal formula of joke, indicating that the satisfaction with good joke is $H = M * S$.

H means the level of satisfaction with good joke, M – the level of false information in joke (misinformation), but S — the listener's ability to take something seriously (seriousness). A.Clarke (2014) indicates that the ability to joke is a complex mechanism of human evolution, whose task is quick analysis of the heard information, identification of the truth and fiction in it.

R.A. Martin (9) substantiates, that in the daily life the humour has two functions: improvement of mutual relationship between people, for example, with the help of a joke it is possible to successfully resolve the conflict; to reduce stress, i.e., it is possible to laugh at danger. In both

situations, the humour can be used in both constructive and non-constructive manner. For example, *Maths teacher, indignant, quite long time and thoroughly tells how she vigorously pranced along a blackboard, then her heel slipped and ... well, you know ... One of her colleagues interferes in the bad-luck story, lively asking: „Oh, then you managed to retrieve the square root, did you?“*

Besides, as indicated by the R.A .Martin (9), humour displays of the men and women are different. For example, men tend to joke about the power and aggression, while women often use humour to form close relationships with other people.

R.A. Martin identified four styles of humour by which to judge about the human's mental state:

1. Affiliative style, which expresses as the individual's aspiration to be in the society of the other people. This humour style expression is ironic jokes.

2. Self-enhancing style, who does not heart anybody, bases on talking big, kind of protection, raising of individual self-esteem. For example, *the hedgehog sits on the stump and meditates: - I am strong, very strong. Bear goes by and blows the hedgehog from the strain. Again on the next day hedgehog is meditating: I am strong, very strong but lightweight.*

3. Aggressive style, that is expressed as sarcasm, irritating remments, mocking. It may be dangerous for people nearby.

For example, *patient prior to surgery: doctor, surely will I live? - will live, will live... Only thing, will you want it...*

4. Self-defeating style: humour user tries to touch with every joke, it can offend human self-esteem. For example, *How is called a blonde with collored hair? - Artificial Intellect.*

Aggression becomes humorous at the following conditions:

- 1) an object of aggression is not hurt too deep;
- 2) there is a social / situational reason for laughter;
- 3) the object is hated and despised;
- 4) there is also the revenge aspect;

5) the object is not from the same category as the aggressor and / or audience.

It is crucial on a daily basis, if a person can create alternatives, interpretations that decrease the threatening in ongoing situation, namely, if person is able himself to see something funny in an ongoing situation (Stokenberga, 2010).

Wit is based on the ability to see the hidden connection between unrelated things or bring it, giving the sense to something seemingly senseless (Freud, 1974). Freud also notes that any wit is based on the pursuit for comfort. It also is characterised by comism displays (word games and

thinking errors that cause fun), which is connected with amusement of watching the various situations, which suddenly turn otherwise than previously anticipated. In this case, the mismatch between our previous forecast

About what is going to happen and the real events, therefore the accumulated mental energy surplus drains in the laughter, the fun is not so much due to the content as because of the unexpected outcome (4).

Wit often serve for offload of either sexual or aggressive impulses, satisfying the bent in a socially acceptable manner and reducing the caused tensions (Stokenberga, 2010). Humour, which serves for running down others, mockery or self-humiliation, can have a negative effect on the emotional well-being, compared with a good-natured making fun or self-ironical view on life.

The humour is stimulus phenomenon that causes laughter, while the laughter is a phenomenon of answer. Linking humour with a message, it is possible to attract larger listeners attention, improve the level of remembering, what was said, to make thinking, ability to reason more efficient, as well as to boost creative thinking. The humour was not appreciated in the olden days, and there was a belief that humour is bad and even degrading quality, that shows low level of education and culture. But nowadays a good sense of humour is considered very positive traits, and some survey even revealed that people do not want to admit that they have a bad sense of humour (Chapman, A.J., Foot, H.C., 1996).

A joke said in the right time can dispel the tension, but a person who has a fine sense of humour, easy will conquer the sympathy of others. While a joke told on inappropriate moment, can not only cause dislike of the narrative, but even make the person an object of others laughter.

None of us is born with a sense of humour, it is the brain ability to perceive, bond and experience the situation and decide whether this situation is funny. Sense of humour is an intellectual phenomenon, it is a person's ability and awareness to see things funny or to express something in funny way, while laughing is one way to show our sense of humour. The humour is the cause and effect of laughter, which causes physiological and biochemical changes in the body. People use physical laughter, which helps to avoid depression and modesty.

Satire is verbal caricature, which deliberately shows people or society mutilated. For simplicity odd qualities are discarded, bearing only the most relevant. The reader sees the familiar in absurd and the absurd in familiar. Without this dual view the satire lacked the sense of humour. Satirist sometimes use also the other way - show the weaknesses of society, comparing it with the animals life. Satire is based on the justified anger or outrage about unfairness or unacceptable behaviour. The best weapon of

satirist is irony – like talking with his opponent's mouth, he shows how his idea is absurd. The irony is a form of expression of anger. Black humour is irony and sarcasm in its essence. Irony and sarcasm is an expression of passive aggression. For example,

During the lesson Johnny enters the classroom with his head bandaged.

Mad teacher asks:

-and ... what happened this time?

I fell down from the fifth floor.

And what, did you really fly whole two hours?

In order to find out the people view about the humour, the survey was carried out electronically at www.visidati.lv „Sense of humour”. The survey results were used in aggregated form only. Each respondent responses were not analysed separately.





The answers were obtained by summing up all of the answers to the specific question. The percentage value of each reply was obtained by dividing the number of times each answer was given with the total amount of the given answers.

Respondents’ statistics: Number of respondents: 50, 6 of them male and 44 female. Average age of respondents – 36,5 years.

Summary of results:

1. Do you read/hear jokes on mass media?(multiple responses possible)







1st diagram

Frequently	25		50%
Rarely	21		42%
Neither read or listen, since the daily life is full of jokes	1		2%
Other	3		6%
Sum of submitted answers	50		

- Other answers: Read unregularly; sometimes; yes, listen.

2. Do you like anecdotes? (multiple responses possible)

2nd diagram

• jokes about blondes	15		19.7%
• jokes about politics	12		15.8%
• like rude jokes	3		3.9%
• don't like to read anecdotes	3		3.9%
• I like to listen anecdotes	39		51.3%
Other	4		5.3%
Sum of submitted answers	76		

Other answers:

- Life situations create anecdotes;
- Like to tell anecdotes;
- Like the humour show "Krivoje zerkalo";

- About kids, animals, nationalities, relationships.
3. Do you painfully experience own failure situations in work or private life?

3rd diagram

Yes	34		68%
No	8		16%
Other	8		16%
Sum of submitted answers	50		

- Other answers: Depends on situation. On next day I forget my previous day’s failures; sometimes (6); I try to analyse them and to stand accross.

4. Are you often wistful?



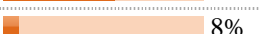



4th diagram

Yes	11		22%
No	32		64%
Other	7		14%
Sum of submitted answers	50		

- Other answers: time to time (6); when I am tired.

5. Do you answer on other persons “sharpness” with sarcasm?


5th diagram

Always	2		4%
Sometimes	28		56%
Yes	4		8%
No	8		16%
• I get confused in such situations and keep silent	7		14%
Other	1		2%
Sum of submitted answers	50		

Other answers: I look, what kind of person is ahead me.

6. Can you overcome other people with a verbal wit?



6th diagram

Yes	16		32%
No	8		16%
Haven’t thought about it	20		40%
Other	6		12%
Sum of submitted answers	50		

- Other answers: sometimes (5); sometimes, depends on mood.

7. Will you be sad, if someone says you do not have a sence of humour?

7th diagram

Yes	12		24%
No	34		68%
Other	4		8%
Sum of submitted answers	50		

Other answers:

- I know very well, that I have it;
- Will become angry;
- It depends, who says it (2).

Conclusion

Choosing the problems and the ways of solving them under psychological pressure or as a result of own free will, the person is in a social and cultural interaction with other people, making progress in reaching the set objectives and suffering losses. Contact and interaction with other people in action of life, basing on analysis of the positive and negative results, as well as on the acquired experience reflection, you can change the individual image and to reduce the psychological protection.

Humour provides physical and emotional benefits. Good humour can improve the quality of individual's life. A better understanding of humour can help to overcome the stress and physical pain and inspire to use it in solving everyday situations.

Personality development theory addresses the following sources of conflicts, which result in excitement and need for protection: counteracting forces; an inferiority complex, which is contrary to the urge for perfection; incompatible needs at the same time, which encourage individuals to strive for other people and desire to be independent of them, complex interpersonal relationships; the contradictions that arise in personal identity development process.

Psychological safeguard mechanisms, including humour, act as a kind of negative experiences filter. Up to a certain limit psychological prevention ensures protection of individual from worry.

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