

THE PLACE OF PSEUDO PSYCHOLOGY IN PSYCHOLOGICAL PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Prao to the introduction of real psychology as it is practiced today, pseudo psychology has dominated the study of human and animal behaviour. People who experience psychological challenges were being assisted to resolve them through unorthodox method otherwise known as pseudo psychology. It is a situation where soothsayers, astrologists, psychics, phrenologists graphologists, herbalists, among others use mere beliefs, folk-tales, superstition and tradition to treat people with psychological and mental illnesses. This study examined the origin of pseudo psychology and its relationship with real psychology. The study also discussed the forms of pseudo psychology, its benefits and weaknesses. Finally, it highlighted the summary/conclusion and recommended the need to include pseudo-psychology in psychological practice in Nigeria.

Keywords: Psychology, Pseudo Psychological Practice.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, psychology is a discipline that tries to study human and animal behaviour scientifically. In other words it sets out to understand human and animal behaviour through scientific processes. This accounts to why psychology has been classified as a science of human behaviour.

Psychology just like other science disciplines is objective, verifiable, precise, accurate reliable, abstract, systematic and could be replicated. Any deviation from the above process is unscientific. While psychology employs scientific methods such as observation and experimentation to study human and animal behaviour, pseudo psychology employs unscientific method to understand and study human and animal behaviours.

The term pseudo means false or pretend whereas pseudo psychology refers to a psychological practice that is false or unfounded. The science of psychology is built on rigorous principles such as research, evidence and testable ideas. Any discipline that is treated like a science but does not meet these standards can be called pseudo science. Many of the practices that fall under the umbrella of pseudo psychology include, psychics, astrology; palmistry, and graphology. They lack any scientific data to back up their theories or claims. Pseudo psychology is therefore the study of the mind using biased or false data. It is just any study that is not based on real science but extremely watered down to the point of being untrue. Lamoti (2013) defined pseudo psychology as a fraudulent or unscientific

approach to psychology. To Kuhn (2019) pseudo psychology is the study of the mind using biased or false data.

Pseudo psychology is therefore an approach to explaining, and predicating behaviour and events that appear to be psychology but is not supported by empirical and objective evidence. Pseudo psychology and psychology tend to have a common goal but use different approaches in the attainment of their goals or objectives.

History of Pseudo-Psychology

The history of pseudo-psychology is as old as man. It is the study of pseudoscientific theories over time. A pseudo science is a set of ideas that presents itself as science while it does not meet the necessary criteria to properly be regarded as such. It is a very difficult task to distinguish between science and pseudo science because they tend to pursue a similar goal following different approaches and technique. Nonetheless one common proposal for demarcation between the two is the falsification criteria, notably contributed to by the great philosopher, Karl Proper.

In the history of Pseudo science, it can be especially hard to separate the two, because some sciences had their root from pseudo sciences.

An example of this is the science chemistry, which traced its origins from the protoscience of alchemy.

The vast diversity in pseudosciences further complicates the history of pseudoscience. Some pseudosciences originated in the pre-scientific era, such as astrology and acupuncture. Others developed as part of an ideology, such as Lysenkoism or as response to perceived threats to an ideology. For instance the practice of creationism was developed as a response to the scientific theory of evolution by Darwin.

Despite failing to meet proper scientific standards, many pseudo sciences had survived. This is usually due to a persistent core of devoted who refused to accept scientific criticisms of their beliefs or due to popular misconception. Again, Sheer Popularity could also be a factor as it is attested by astrology which remains popular despite being rejected by a large majority of scientists.

Despite the growing acceptability and popularity of psychology, the world over pseudo the practice of pseudo psychology had persisted among some practitioner who handle psychological emotional and social problems of their clients. There is no gain saying the fact that some particularly in Africa societies lack the requisite knowledge, skills and competencies of science and therefore find it difficult to adjust to the modern trend which is scientifically based.

Today it is a common phenomenon among health practitioner in Africa to employ both psychology and pseudo psychology in the course of practice. Pseudo science has therefore come to stay amidst criticisms by modern psychologists and their clients.

Differences between Psychology and Pseudo Psychology

Psychology is the scientific study of human and animal behaviour as well as mental processes unlike pseudo psychology which is based on anecdotal information. The

information backing pseudo psychology is not based on research and it has not been retested by others.

The study of psychology is based on scientific technique and processes that are verifiable but pseudo psychology is based on common beliefs, folk wisdom, and superstitions.

Pseudo psychology is a field that purports to be a branch of psychological study but whose ideas have not been empirically challenged. Pseudo psychology is an approach to understanding or analyzing the mind or behaviour that uses unscientific or fraudulent methods while psychology is an approach to understanding or analyzing the mind or behaviour that uses scientific and verifiable methods. Psychology employs scientific methods to understand human and animal behaviour unlike pseudo psychology that is based on heresay testimonies, rumours and fake or false news that are unfounded.

Psychology is based on facts, laws and theories whereas pseudo. Psychology is based on mere beliefs, folk tales, and traditions. Pseudo psychology lack any scientific data to back up their theories unlike psychological studies that are based on theories.

Psychology is a science that is based on scientific approach to understanding human behaviour while pseudo psychology refers to beliefs and activities that are deemed to be scientific but lack the basic features of science.

According to Lan, Mohr, Hu and Kuhon (2019) pseudo psychology is a fake science that is not based on scientific principles, theories and verifiable ideas. It is associated with fraudulent practices and gaze work.

Types and Forms of Pseudo-Psychology

There are different forms of pseudo psychology commonly used by some therapists in an attempt to handle individuals with spiritual, social and psychological problems. The most commonly used ones are; graphology, palmistry, phrenology, astrology, psychics.

1. Graphology: This is the believe that one's handwriting reveals one's personality traits and could also be used to predict job performance. For instance, the pseudo psychologists believe that people with bad hand writing are careless and not intelligent and that people with good handwriting are good people and intelligent. This claim is mere speculation.

2. Palmistry: This is the claim and belief that lines and the pattern of the individual's palm have something to do with their person activities and that the nature of the lines and the pattern could be used to predict one's future or destiny.

3. Phrenology: It is the belief that the bumps on one's head and shape of one's skull determine one's personality, intelligence and other individual characteristics. For instance, there is the general believe that people with big heads are likely to be intelligent whereas those with small heads are likely to be criminals and stupid. These claims have no scientific proof, yet some people still believe it to be truth.

4. Astrology: This is the divination of the supposed influences of the stars and planets on human affairs and terrestrial events by their positions and aspects. It can also be defined as the type of divination that involves the forecasting of earthly and human events through the observation and interpretation of the fixed stars, the sun, the moon and the planets.

5. Psychic: This is the believe that a person is considered to have special extra-powers to carry out an activity or events which ordinary persons could not. It is the power possessed by a person which enable him or her to perform tasks which other persons may not easily

perform. For instance future tellers, seer, prophets, pastors, babalowa, Herbalists, Cassandra, astrologers, mind readers magicians etc (Nash, M.R & Barmier, A.J. (2012).

Benefits of Pseudo Psychology

Although pseudo psychology lacks scientific support, it is an approach that tries to explain and predict behaviour and events of individuals who are in need.

Pseudo psychology does not undergo rigorous procedure and is very easy to conduct and practice. Pseudo-psychological demonstrations significantly increased peoples beliefs that it was possible to read a person's mind by observing micro expressions and psychological profiles. Pseudo psychology effectively prime a person's decisions through subtle suggestions.

Pseudo psychology activities and practices provokes scientific research to verify findings and make observation. It also increased people's beliefs in whether psychological principles can be used more generally to read a person's thoughts in different situations.

Despite the great studies by psychology as a science, pseudo psychology still enjoy a large number of followers who still believe and practice different forms of pseudo psychology such as palmistry, psychic, phrenology, graphology, astrology etc

Pseudo psychology is a source of knowledge and skills to therapists who handle some behaviour problems that have no scientific explanations. For instance, people still consult psychics, magicians, herbalists, magicians etc for their spiritual concerns.

Pseudo psychology is easily available and affordable to most people. This makes the practice popular among people in the developing and under developed nation such as Nigeria. It help people discover the root cause of symptoms like anxiety and depression by bringing attention to issues and patterns that may lie outside of awareness.

Criticisms of Pseudo Psychology

The benefits of pseudo psychology notwithstanding, it has been criticized by scholars in the areas of real psychology.

1. Pseudo psychology activities is not objective and cannot be replicated. Scientists discredit events that cannot be replicated under similar conditions.
2. The practice of pseudo psychology leads to ready acceptance of chance events as evidence of paranormal phenomena.
3. It has the risk of treatment avoidance. An individual who is suffering from a mental disorder can lose a lot of time seeking help in pseudo psychological techniques while their problem worsens.
4. There seem to be no explanation for paranormal phenomena.
5. It has been observed that pseudo psychological practices such as magic and other processes are used to perpetrate fraud on others.
6. It has led to the contamination of psychology and the loss of prestige of the discipline. This loss of prestige also affects the level of confidence that other health professionals place in psychotherapy.
7. Another very common case is that of false memories, either by confabulations to fill a gap or by distorting real memories. False memories have been widely studied and anyone with sufficient expertise can generate them. (Braun, Ellis & Loftus, 2012).
8. It reduces activities conscious beings into passive unthinking beings.

9. Pseudo psychology is not scientifically based and therefore lacks generally acceptability.
10. It could lead to direct harm on the patient in the course of treatment especially by those who have training to work in clinical settings. For all these reasons, pseudo psychology is dangerous and should not be taken lightly.

Summary/Conclusion

Pseudo psychology is the unscientific study of human and animal behaviour as well as mental processes. It lacks the basic features of science such as empiricism, objectivity, replicability, objectivity etc.

There are many examples of pseudo psychology. Thus: Psychics, astrology, palmistry and graphology. Psychology differs from pseudo psychology because it takes the scientific approach to understanding human behaviour unlike pseudo psychology that lacks any scientific data to back up their theories. The activities of pseudo psychology are based on common beliefs, folk wisdom and superstitions.

Although pseudo psychology is not based on a scientific approach but it has increased people's beliefs that it was possible to read a person's mind through observation. Again, some therapists still use pseudo psychology in their practices in handling psychological challenges. The situation seems to continue today, with a considerable number of psychologists still being willing to incorporate pseudo scientific practices into their work (Stapleton et al 2015). There is a need to use both real psychology and pseudo psychology in handling psychological problems. Psychologists should stress the need for the use of psychological approaches more practice and deemphasize the contrived use of pseudo psychology in view of its benefits.

Pseudo-psychology is a large family with a long tradition, high penetration into contemporary psychology, and enormous unifying theoretical construct that appears in all its branches with different variations and nuances. Psychologists must not underestimate its resources and sophistication. It is a formidable challenge for psychological practice.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Psychologists particularly the counselling psychologists should consider some techniques used by pseudo-psychology in their real practice. For instance techniques such as observing the charts closely, wisdom, examining one's belief system and tradition. Though these techniques are unscientific but they could be source of gathering data.
2. Considering the educational or literacy level of most Nigerians coupled with poverty, pseudo psychology is still recommended for those who may not afford the services of clinical psychologists, psychiatrists etc which are very expensive.
3. Pseudo psychology is indigenous and at time with the culture of the Nigerian people. The average Nigerian believes so much on history, tradition, superstition and belief which are the basis of pseudo-psychology. The inclusive of pseudo-psychology in the present day psychological practice which follows rigorous scientific process will help to improve practice in Nigeria.

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