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RESEARCH PAPER

The Effects of Neuro-linguistic Programming on a Psychotherapist's Communication Patterns: A Case Study

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
	Neurolinguistic programming is a broad term that encompasses many aspects of therapy, counselling, and effective communication patterns. The study's goal is to promote a positive image of neurolinguistic programming. The research attempted to define it using a study that was primarily conducted to investigate the positive attributes of NLP. Neurolinguistic programming is linked to three fields: neurology, linguistics, and programming itself. Bandler & Grinder (1975) devised an idea that provided enormous assistance to therapists and counsellors at the same time. This study aims to identify the use of bilingualism, paralinguistic gestures, eye contact, and appropriate word choice in therapy. During research, it was discovered that most of the human communication occurs through nonverbal cues. A psychotherapist's understanding of effective communication patterns is critical. The study reveals that neurolinguistic programming had a positive impact on a psychotherapist's communication patterns, which ultimately supports the entire phenomenon.

Introduction

Although Bandler & Grinder (1975) are widely credited as the founders of this theory, there is a large group of people who contributed with various techniques and agreed to collaborate on a common ground that can help people change their mindset to change their lives for the better. According to Grinder (2013) NLP was developed because of contributions from Robert Dilts, Frank Pucelik, Judith Delozier, David Gordon, and Leslie Cameron. The entire group, along with Grinder & Bandler (1975), went to observe three famous psychotherapists, including Milton Erickson (famous hypnotherapist and psychiatrist), Fritz Perls (originator of Gestalt Therapy), and Virginia Satir (famous originator of family systems therapy), to figure out all the techniques that can be used to excel at any domain more precisely in counselling and psychopathology.

Literature Review

Multiple NLP practitioners use neuro-linguistic programming to teach effective communication, manage behavioural issues, and improve cognitive abilities. It's the study of thought patterns and the ability to programme one's thought processing in both the conscious and subconscious mind. Modeling aids in the reconstruction of thought processing (Brown, 2004). The creators of Neuro-linguistics programming claim that it is a masterful blend of art and science. Bandler & Grinder (1975) both from University of Santa Cruz, were driven to discover the reason for successful people's exceptional and outstanding performance. To figure out what sets them apart from other people working in similar fields,

they pursued a variety of other revelations. It demonstrated the reasons for an individual's repeated behavioral patterns; similarly, this study will consider the impact of how effectively communication is developed using NLP techniques. (Bandler & Grinder, 1975)

Essentially, NLP is the study of effective strategies to be used daily in one's life to overcome phobias, anxiety issues, and depression, as well as to improve communication patterns among people of various professions, regardless of their ability to perceive any type of information within a specific framework (Lady, 2007). For example, if a patient can effectively communicate one's psychological condition (state of mind), it can undoubtedly assist a therapist in arriving at an appropriate diagnosis; however, if a communication gap is observed during a session, the patient is likely to suffer in silence.

NLP is described as "a process that can be applied to achieve excellence in any field" by Bayat & Walter, (2003). It is unquestionably necessary to acquire specific models that aid in the achievement of a desired goal to excel in any field using NLP. "Modeling a skill" means "finding out how the person who has the skill thinks about it and what are the beliefs that enable him to do it," according to Cornor & McDermott (2001). Modeling helps to stimulate creativity.

Individuals have different sets of beliefs, emotions, values, and behaviours. Modeling involves changing a mindset that isn't conducive to achieving the fruitful outcomes that an individual requires for various reasons. A psychotherapist uses similar techniques to gather all necessary information from a patient to provide possible treatment options.

Psychotherapists provide professional counselling, and it is critical for them to maintain open lines of communication with their clients. Although language is often thought of as the ultimate tool for communication, both verbal and nonverbal communication can help people exchange ideas or information. Although many people place a premium on verbal communication to ensure that the message is understood, nonverbal communication is just as important in treating patients with psychological problems. Non-verbal behaviour in nurse-elderly patient communication was studied by (Caris-Verhallen et al., 1999) and it was discovered that non-verbal communication accounts for 55 percent of the total 99 percent of verbal communication. People are bound to raise concerns about contradictory verbal and nonverbal communication.

According to the Australian Institute of Professional Counselling (AIPC), a therapist should use micro skills such as attending behaviour, questioning, responding, noting, and reflecting, client observations, influencing, and confrontations to improve communication with clients. When the purpose of communication is met in every way, effective communication is achieved. "Each person, through genetic make-up, environmental influences, and individual biochemistry, has managed to programme herself or himself to be excellent at certain number of things, mediocre at others, and just awful in others," wrote NLP expert Charvet (1997) in his book "Words that change minds; mastering the language of influence." Among the various techniques used in NLP, Charvet (1997) concentrated on Bailey's LAB (language and behaviour profile) . LAB is a purely linguistic technique that does not necessitate the completion of extensive paperwork as other psychological tests do. It identifies an individual's behavioural patterns based on the words they use during a conversation with a skilled listener. "You can learn more about someone in 20 minutes using the LAB profile than you can in 20 years of marriage," says Shelle, an NLP practitioner and skilled LAB profile trainer. (1950) The renowned linguist Noam Chomsky finished his Ph.D. thesis on Transformational Grammar. In his thesis, he looked at three different ways that

people can perceive information through communication. Generalization, distortions, and deletions are among the processes. Because people create their own reality through their own perceptions, all three processes are thought to create a different reality for everyone. Individual perceptions, on the other hand, may be limited due to the amount of information that can be retained. Although, NLP is based on multiple models, it was created with the goal of identifying "the difference that actually makes the difference" in effective communication. One of these models was created using Noam Chomsky's work as a foundation, with Bandler (1975) discovered nearly 60 patterns of generalization, deletion, and distortion in people's language and behavior, which they dubbed Meta Programs. According to researchers, there are a variety of meta-programs that each person responds to differently. One of the most successful meta-programs is (VAK). NLP trainers frequently use the Visionary, Auditory, and Kinesthetic meta-program to figure out what makes people think differently and retrieve memories. By seeing images (visual), hearing sounds (auditory), and feeling sensations, the human brain processes information and generates related thoughts to that information (kinesthetic). When compared to other meta-programs, many people prefer to develop VAK programming and think in this way. On first contact, visual people are more likely to notice facial expressions and appearance, whereas auditory people are more likely to notice word choice and tone. Kinesthetic people, on the other hand, are more likely to respond to feelings and emotions. A sample of 45 right-handed white female participants (aged 18-40) was taken into consideration by Graunke and Roberts (1985) in an investigation to determine the impact of various imaging tasks on sensory predicate usage. Before they could perform imagery tasks based on NLP modelling, the participants had to complete two imagery questionnaires. Later, they were given tasks in kinesthetic, visual, and auditory sensory modalities to perform pleasant and unpleasant imagery tasks. Four additional tasks were included, which included five sensory modalities, a memory test, and a few accomplishment experiences. The therapist chose a few imagery samples at random and analyzed them separately. Previous Neurolinguistic programming research has identified sensory predicates as the trait measure or a person's primary representation system. When performing auditory imaging tasks, most of the participants were auditory types, while others were kinesthetic types when performing kinesthetic imaging tasks. However, the findings were inconsistent with Grinder and Bandler's (1975) conceptualization of representational systems, and therapists were advised to keep an eye on their clients' sensory predicates for better diagnosis.

"Everything about others that irritates us can lead us to a better understanding of ourselves."

Some researchers explain NLP is meant to establish how internal representation of one's thoughts occurs through communication, as it demonstrates multiple meta-programs. Even though numerous studies have been conducted on counsellor qualities, NLP has been considered to be quite affected among therapeutic techniques. Various reports on counsellor effectiveness are generated, followed by NLP training. According to Thomson (1984), counsellors who attended NLP trainings performed better in terms of counsellor effectiveness. On the other hand, Haynie (1983) mentions in a report that a group of undergraduates received "cognitive learning style based on NLP" for thirty minutes. When compared to a control group of students who did not receive any additional learning, no significant changes in facilitated communication skills were observed. By examining 12 samples of simple phobias, Liberman (1984) investigated the NLP dissociation and anchoring technique (Bandler and Grinder, 1975). Two treatment sessions were held in the same week, each lasting less than an hour. Clients were asked to imagine scenes that were

related to their phobias or anxieties during sessions to create a place where they could dissociate themselves from those issues. Patients were asked to imagine pleasant scenes in control conditions for three weeks, like the previous scenario. As a result, when compared to the control conditions method, the NLP method had a significant impact on reducing phobic behaviour and distress among clients. According to a report that critically examined neurolinguistic psychotherapy as an effective treatment choice for psychotherapeutic change among people suffering from depression or anxiety, NLP is quite effective as a treatment, but the methodology of psychological intervention for patients still needs to be improved. Through a descriptive case study, Hossack (1993) supported the effectiveness of guided imagery in the treatment of depression. Another study on clinical diagnosis of anxiety by Konnefal (1992) was ineffective due to a lack of clear selection criteria for study subjects. Hossack added a few recommendations for future research, including a well-defined NLP psychotherapy process, a cost-benefit analysis, and proper use of NLP resources during treatment sessions (Barkham et. al. 1998, 2005). Bourne, Dominowski, and Loftus (1979). The originators of NLP considered the human brain to be an information processing system. Their research is primarily focused on aspects of human psychology and linguistics. The processing system is further divided into components that are somewhat self-contained and compatible. The human brain is divided into five channels, each of which corresponds to one of the five senses. These elements are referred to as sensory modalities in psychology. These are further divided into primary and secondary categories. Visual (V), auditory (A), and kinesthetic (K) are the three primary sensory modalities (K). Secondary sensory modalities include olfactory (O) and gustatory (G). Visual analogues (such as shape and colour) and visual digitals (such as written symbols) are further subdivisions of primary sensory modalities. Auditory digital, auditory tonal (pitch, timbre, etc) (spoken language), kinesthetic primary (physical sensations and feelings), and kinesthetic emotional (emotions). Bandler & Macdonald (1988) explained that each sensory modality's sub modalities contain internal distinctions that operate different channels of the human mind. The auditory channel is extremely important in music therapy, which is used by psychotherapists in various sessions. Harmonic structure, pitch, loudness, and rhythmic structure are all included in these auditory sub modalities. All these modalities have the potential to alter responses. It can certainly assist a therapist in determining a person's personality type based on his or her tone and volume of voice during a casual conversation during a session. The human psyche, according to NLP, is made up of distinct parts or relatively independent agents that interact. Gestalt psychology, Gregory Bateson's theories of mind, and Marvin Minsky's theory of frames all inspired modelling based on these agents. Marvin Minsky's theory was founded on the concept of object-orientation in computer programming. Although these sections do not depict a complete map of the human mind, they do assist in identifying personality traits and behaviors.

Guided Imagery with Music (Bonny and Savary, 1990) corresponds to perceptual positions in which a person is allegedly asked to put themselves in the shoes of another, thereby eliciting empathy. About linguistic distinction, there are three perceptual conditions: use of 'I,' 'you,' and 'it.' For example, if a person is thinking from a specific perspective in any perceptual situation, all their representational systems should be focused on that perspective for clear responses. Guided Imagery with Music may be a useful tool for exploring one's surroundings without using words. The hierarchy of levels of experience is divided as follows by Robert Dilts (1991), author of NLP: environment, behavior, capability, beliefs, identity, and spirit. These levels work differently for each person when it comes to opening in front of a therapist, but they all add value to the information shared during a

session. In addition, four basic NLP tasks are used in modelling: elicitation, utilization, design, and installation.

Material and Methods

It was a qualitative and quantitative study, also known as mixed methodology, based on a case study of a psychotherapist in Lahore, Pakistan, who practices hypnotherapy and works as an NLP trainer. The study took an eclectic approach that included interviews, observations, and questionnaires with open-ended and closed-ended questions. The therapist interview and the types of questions on the questionnaire were important research tools. The interview took place in Lahore's Mariam Healing Center. It had a calm, relaxing, and comfortable atmosphere. The office room was pleasant, with paintings on the walls and a large sitting area. It was also necessary to review the psychotherapist's patients to determine the quality of her treatment. Patients were given questionnaires to fill out after therapy to provide feedback on the psychotherapist who had been interviewed previously.

Results and Discussion

The research included total of six respondents consisting of three males and three females simultaneously. The result obtained through questionnaire was quite satisfactory as majority of respondents were contented. Approximately, 99% of the total respondents provided with positive feedback while only 1% of them were unsatisfied. There were equal distribution of respondents being analyzed through the research. It has been observed that 90% of the respondents were unmarried and a 10% of them were married. Certainly, both married and unmarried respondents had different problems   with respect to their marital status. It was noted through the research that 80% of upper middle-class clients visited respective psychotherapist, only 20% of the respondents had elite and lower middle-class background respectively.

Analytical Questions

The first section of the questionnaire contains ten analytical questions that describe psychotherapist qualities such as positive attitude, confident personality, empathy, eye-contact, good listening skills, and profound communication skills, as well as how well these qualities are used throughout a therapy session. Female respondents' responses were generally positive, while 1% of male respondents were slightly dissatisfied.

Professionalism

A therapist should be professional when it comes to counselling and therapy sessions, yet it was observed that the therapist successfully followed proper professional ethics during and after treatment as well

Personality

For effective communication, a therapist must choose relevant, simple language. Environmental stressors, ethnicity, and social justice are all linked to language. When a therapist is addressing specific language issues such as language acquisition problems, loss of first language, and so on, relevant clinical data of a client who may be experiencing ethnic identity confusion, a certain amount of pressure to communicate in a second language to avoid discrimination, family conflicts, and loss of cultural membership can be revealed. For effective communication between a therapist and client it is important for a client to be open

about his or her feelings so that it is convenient for a therapist to be efficient with diagnosis. If a therapist's bilingual skills are acknowledged that means client certainly ensures his or her comfort level along with therapist's effective linguistic abilities as well.

Recordings

Substitution Words

It was observed through analyzing the recordings of an interview conducted for the current research that for effective communication it is extremely important for a psychotherapist to use words that can add meaning to the conversation. For instance, therapist sates that, "If any patient comes to me and I just say that oh my God you are suffering from obsessive compulsive disorder and you might end up in a mental asylum, this will extremely terrify the client and make him or her anxious. So, I rather choose to say that these are just their thought patterns that need to be managed and they need to try few breathing exercises to make yourself feel better." The right choice of words during a therapy ensures productive communication and effective treatment as well.

Communication Patterns

It has been observed through the research that choice of words is integral part of any psychotherapy because it provides comfort and self-satisfaction to each client. According to the author of a book Words Can Change your Brain, it is described that words can have a significant impact on one's behavior. It has been stated by the authors of the book that, "A single word has the power to influence the expression of genes that regulate physical and emotional stress." Simple use of positive words can bring about constructive change in daily rituals of an individual due to brain's cognitive functioning. For instance, mere use of words such as "affection" and "peace" can strengthen areas of frontal lobes and promote brain's cognitive functioning by propelling the motivational centers of the brain into action that develops resiliency in an individual. Use of unsympathetic words during a therapy session can disrupt specific genes that play a key part in the adequate production of neurochemicals that happen to protect us from stress factors. Human beings are programmed to worry that is why the primal brains protecting us from threats for survival. On the other hand, use of negative words can raise the activity in our amygdala (it is responsible for handling fear in human brain). It produces certain hormones and neurotransmitters that turns to interrupts our brain functioning due to stress-producing hormones. As this part of brain is strongly connected to logic, reasoning, and language, it will hinder positive communication between two individuals due to wrong choice of words during a conversation. Newberg and Waldman (2009) states that "negative choice of words alarms normal brain functioning and partially shut down the frontal lobes where logic and reason centers are being located causing anger and frustration in an individual.

Bilingualism

Certainly, bilingual therapy is considered as one of the integral therapeutic discourses that put together the client's linguistic features and integrates bilingual or multilingual features as significant factors of contextual and psychological functioning. As culture and language are closely rooted, the focus towards language diversity retorts to proficient multicultural counseling that consists on efficient knowledge of bilingual practices, sense of self- awareness in therapist, and excellent skills in particular bilingual interventions.

At the early stages of Psychodynamic theory, a renowned psychologist Sigmund Freud recognized treatment with bilinguals, however the language features as such were not considered to be involved in therapeutic change. With the passage of time, in early 1930's few psychodynamic clinicians discovered bilingualism. In addition to this, a profound view emerged on language choice as a defense mechanism. According to a case study published back in 1950s explained the significant impact of multiple languages on psychodynamic processes for instance, transference, and repression and ego functions. Individuals that tend to speak more than two languages are described to possess dual sense of self that happen to respond differently to distinct context stimuli. Moreover, bilingualism gathers two variant concepts of each language along with different way of communication of thoughts and emotions. Similarly, both languages also add into diverse organizational sets of knowledge, multiple self-identities, and bicultural dynamics. However, integral part of bilingualism in therapy withholds intact emotions and cognitions that are definite to each language help to store memories in in schema. Unlike each language domain can help to store memories due to meaningful linguistic characteristics at a particular period. The therapist was observed to be bilingual during therapeutic sessions for developing better understanding with clients on individual level. It helped not only clients to perceive what is being delivered through therapy session in fact it also helped to build a rapport among both therapist and individual on a collective level. For example, a German client was unable to comprehend Urdu language which was mother tongue of therapist, however, the therapist code-switched to English language as both therapist and client were quite proficient in English language due to its significance all around the world. This helped the therapist to find a midway to communicate with her German client. To ensure ideal understanding, natural flow of therapeutic interactions and to make the most of the bilingual interventions collectively, it is extremely important to have parallel bilingual skills between a client and the therapist. It is hard to attain translation of figures of speech due to regional and national variations coexist within a same language.

Paralinguistic Gestures

As far as effective communication is concerned it is extremely important to consider paralinguistic gestures in account. Paralinguistic cues in verbal communication are the vocal signals apart from basic oral message. It ensures meaningful message has been conveyed beyond correct use of grammar and words in a person's speech. These cues include amplitude, pitch, quality of voice and tone as well. On the other hand, paralanguage may include imitative speech and laughter as well. Prosody is another form of paralinguistic cue that deals with stress patterns, rhythm, and intonation of a person's speech. These features help to communicate attitudes and transfer feelings through facial expressions and provide meaning of words by not only saying them rather the way they choose to say those words. Most of the times these features are observed as culturally coded and are integral part of verbal communication on a subconscious level.

Eye-contact

A proper eye contact is important for a psychotherapist for effective communication as it builds rapport between therapist and client. According to Neurolinguistic programing, there is a particular technique that is meant to analyze individual's eye-movement to figure out personality traits. In addition to this, it provides feedback for initiating and turn-taking in a particular conversation.

Humanistic Approach

There are numerous theoretical viewpoints when it comes to humanistic approaches in psychotherapy. Two major therapies that prevailed within few years are Gestalt therapy and person-centered therapy emerged in late 1950s and early 1960s to the alternative approaches known as behaviorism and psychoanalysis. Humanistic theories comprise of three therapies that are existential therapy, client- centered therapy and gestalt therapy. Existential therapy is meant for clients to find out the hidden meaning of their lives through focused self-determination, a sense of responsibility and individual's will power. Secondly, Carl Rogers proposed client-centered therapy targets on self-beliefs of clients that can help them to control their own fortunes. A psychotherapist is supposed to be genuinely interested and show compassion towards the client for effective communication. The research finding also reveals that the psychotherapist used client centered therapy to bring about positive changes in everyone. However, the Gestalt therapy deals with being aware of present moment and take responsibility of each action in one's life. In psychotherapy, humanistic approaches are meant to emphasize self-actualization and primarily focus upon exploring the inner world of a client. It has been observed through these systems that it is quite natural for a client to deny any painful experience because it keeps bringing back all relatable memories to that aspect of experience.

Many people tend to reject different aspects of their life experiences due to specific cultural norms and certain expectations that become part of people's self-concept with the passage of time, mostly observed during their developmental path from childhood to adulthood. Individuals that manage to detach themselves from variant toxic societal influences are more prone towards healthy growth either it be physical or mental. It certainly leads towards full functioning of healthy mind and body to simultaneously satisfy one's psychological and physiological needs. Furthermore, all those independent healthy individuals meant to experience both external and internal processes and events without felling a prey to inadequate societal pressures. According to Carl Roger's assumption, human beings are supposed to be inherently good in nature. Moreover, people need to be motivated to reach their full capacity in terms of healthy psychological growth. It is one of the common human behaviors to work efficiently when provided with adequate amount of emotional and unconditional support. With reference to organismic valuing process, Carl Rogers regards a need of positive affirmation by significant others is highly important to evaluate life experiences in terms of good and bad regardless of societal and cultural influences in one's life. However, Rogers believes that every individual requires love and positivity by close relatives to fulfill one's emotional needs. Overall, each therapist tends to use different therapies for better treatment likewise the psychotherapist integrated a blend of different therapies for efficient results. This technique is known as integrative or holistic therapy. These therapies include non-traditional methods to deal with client's condition for instance hypnotherapy and guided imagery.

Conclusion

It has been concluded through this entire research that 99% of the total clients felt positive impact among themselves after taking regular sessions from a psychotherapist with equipped knowledge of Neuro linguistic programming that with conviction added value to every therapeutic session conducted by the therapist. Profound communication skills and positive attitude towards each patient made it clear that a therapist needs to acquire essential listening skills, develop empathy and should always carry an open approach as well. The right choice of words, bilingualism, paralinguistic gestures, use of simple language,

appropriate use of substitution words collectively added to effective communication patterns of the psychotherapist. It is certainly significant to maintain confidentiality among the patients to ensure their safety. Initially it was aimed to conduct interviews among patients to attain profound perspective of each patient with reference to each session. Yet the questions asked through questionnaires helped to understand patient's viewpoint for psychotherapist.

Limitation

The main barrier that was observed while conducting the research was the lack of empirical support in previous research. Moreover, on account of maintaining the confidentiality of a client, there was no direct contact with the client to observe positive impact of NLP in their sessions rather the feedback was collected through questionnaires alone.

Recommendations

Although the research proved a positive impact of neurolinguistic programming on a psychotherapist, yet it can improve therapy sessions if non-verbal cues are taken as importantly as verbal cues during each communication.

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