

Abstract

## Treatment in a Day Hospital and its Impact on Defense Mechanisms in Non-Psychotic Psychiatric Patients

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The outpatient clinic provides a special institutional service for psychiatric patients who need treatment in an environment similar to a hospital but allows them to return home and integrate into everyday life after therapy. This form of treatment is suitable for patients who do not require hospitalization, but who need a more intensive therapeutic program that includes active treatment.

**Objective:** To examine the differences in mature, immature and neurotic defense mechanisms before and after treatment in the Outpatient Clinic of Psychiatry.

**Respondents and methods:** The research was conducted in 2023. Ninety-two patients treated in the Outpatient Clinic of Psychiatry participated in the research, of which 18 (56.5%) were female and 74 (80.4%) were male, and the mean age of the subjects was  $M=52.45$  (range from 27 to 74;  $SD=10.34$ ). Demographic Questionnaire and Defense Style Questionnaire (DSQ-40) were used in the research.

**Results:** Overall, looking at defense mechanisms, the results showed that the neurotic defense mechanisms were significantly lower after treatment (t-test;  $p=0.039$ ). Individually looking at mature defense mechanisms, after treatment the subjects used sublimation significantly less (t-test;  $p=0.049$ ) while they used humor significantly more (t-test;  $p=0.008$ ). In the case of neurotic defense mechanisms, after treatment, subjects used pseudo-altruism (t-test;  $p=0.038$ ) and idealization (t-test;  $p=0.003$ ) significantly less, while they used reactive formation significantly more (t-test;  $p=0.035$ ); while with immature defense mechanisms after treatment, they used acting out (t-test;  $p=0.006$ ), denial (t-test;  $p=0.012$ ) and splitting (t-test;  $p=0.014$ ) significantly less, while they used passive aggression significantly more (t-test;  $p=0.002$ ).

**Conclusion:** Despite the relatively short duration of treatment, these findings suggest that even relatively short-term therapeutic procedures can have a significant impact on reducing

maladaptive defense mechanisms. These results emphasize the importance of therapeutic interventions in promoting adaptive defense mechanisms and reducing dysfunctional defense strategies. Although further research is needed to understand the long-term effects of therapy on defense mechanisms, these preliminary findings suggest that therapists can successfully intervene in reducing unhealthy defense patterns in their patients even in a relatively short period of time..

**Keywords:** outpatient clinic; defense mechanisms; psychotherapy

Sažetak

## Liječenje u dnevnoj bolnici i njegov utjecaj na mehanizme obrane kod nepsihotičnih psihijatrijskih pacijenata

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Dnevna bolnica pruža posebnu institucijsku uslugu za psihijatrijske pacijente kojima je potreban tretman u okruženju koje je slično bolničkom, ali omogućuje povratak kući i integraciju u svakodnevni život nakon terapije. Ovaj oblik liječenja pogodan je za pacijente koji ne zahtijevaju hospitalizaciju, ali im je potreban intenzivniji terapijski program koji uključuje aktivno liječenje.

Cilj: Ispitati razlike u zrelih, nezrelih i neurotskim mehanizmima obrane prije i nakon liječenja u Dnevnoj bolnici psihijatrije.

Ispitanici i metode: Istraživanje je provedeno tijekom 2023. godine. U istraživanju je sudjelovalo 92 bolesnika liječena u Dnevnoj bolnici psihijatrije, od toga ih je bilo 18 (56,5%) ženskog spola i 74 (80,4%) muškog spola, te je srednja vrijednost dobi ispitanika bila  $M=52,45$  (raspona od 27 do 74;  $SD=10,34$ ). U istraživanju su korišteni demografski upitnik i Defense Style Questionnaire (DSQ-40).

Rezultati: Ukupno gledajući mehanizme obrane rezultati su pokazali kako su neurotski mehanizmi obrane nakon liječenja značajno manji (t test;  $p=0,039$ ). Pojedinačno gledajući kod zrelih mehanizama obrane ispitanici su nakon liječenja značajno manje koristili sublimaciju (t test;  $p=0,049$ ) dok su značajno više koristili humor (t test;  $p=0,008$ ). Kod neurotskih mehanizama obrane ispitanici su nakon liječenja značajno manje koristili pseudoaltruizam (t test;  $p=0,038$ ) i idealizaciju (t test;  $p=0,003$ ), dok su značajno više koristili reaktivnu formaciju (t test;  $p=0,035$ ), dok su kod nezrelih mehanizama obrane nakon liječenja značajno manje koristili acting out (t test;  $p=0,006$ ), poricanje (t test;  $p=0,012$ ) i splitting (t test;  $p=0,014$ ), dok su značajno više koristili pasivnu agresiju (t test;  $p=0,002$ ).

**Zaključak:** Unatoč relativno kratkom trajanju liječenja, ovi nalazi sugeriraju kako i relativno kratkotrajni terapijski postupci mogu imati značajan utjecaj na smanjenje maladaptivnih mehanizama obrane. Ovi rezultati naglašavaju važnost terapijskih intervencija u promicanju adaptivnih mehanizama obrane i smanjenju disfunkcionalnih obrambenih strategija. Iako su potrebna daljnja istraživanja kako bi se razumjelo dugoročno djelovanje terapije na obrambene mehanizme, ovi preliminarni nalazi sugeriraju da terapeuti mogu uspješno intervenirati u smanjenju nezdravih obrambenih obrazaca kod svojih pacijenata čak i u relativno kratkom vremenskom periodu.

**Ključne riječi:** Dnevna bolnica; Mehanizmi obrane; psihoterapija