

Theories of aggression

Psychology



THEORIES OF AGGRESSION Module Module no: The present paper aims to elaborate three major theories of aggression along with explaining their application and validity in the contemporary era. The paper also investigates the reasons behind aggressive behavior of the individuals on some specific occasion, and consequences and effects of such an abnormal behavior. Frustration-aggression hypothesis, social learning theory drive theory of aggression and general aggression model has also been included in the present study. The paper also examines the impact of socialization on the aggressive behavior of the people. The Paper Social psychology has always been interested in exploring the personality traits of the individuals in the light of their behavior while entering into interaction with other members of society. Researches have been conducted and investigations have been made to discover the abnormal behavior of the people that is in sharp contrast to their routine attitude. Aggression and antagonism also come under the definition of abnormal behavior, where man is not in perfect senses during the fits of anger and furiousness, which is strictly against the prevailing social norms, cultural values and religious belief, and thus sometimes commits such an act that may harm or hurt himself or others, and may pave the way towards his ultimate ruination even. Social psychologists concentrate upon three major theories of aggression, which are as following: Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis: Articulated by Dollard & Miller (1939), frustration-aggression hypothesis aims to submit that sometimes aggression among the individuals arises out of the hurt they receive from the stronger person or group against which they do not have power to defend themselves. However, since sheer feelings of antagonism cannot be expressed before the person or community responsible for the

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same, they displace the same against the weaker stratum even it is quite innocent fellow, which has not caused any harm to them. The hypothesis held that the occurrence of aggression always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression. (Dollard et al., 1939: 1: quoted in Robarchek, 1977: 762) In other words, the aggression is actually the outcome of the injustice on the stronger part of society, which is shifted to the weaker individuals out of utter frustration, irritation and annoyance. By closely examining the social traits, it becomes crystal clear that the same behavior can easily be found in both domestic and professional life. It is therefore the wives, victim of domestic violence, aptly beat the innocent children or snub the servants in order to appease their anger and frustration. Similarly, the employees express their antagonism on peons, laborers and other working staff after being humiliated at the hands of their superiors. Similarly, the social injustices and inequalities are turning the people belonging to third world countries as violent, aggressors and suicide bombers, who relieve their frustration by killing innocent men, women and children in cold blood to revenge the injustices inflicted upon them by the powerful and prosperous stratum of their social structure. Social Learning Theory: Articulated by Albert Bandura, social learning theory declares aggression as the outcome of the behavior man learns from other members of society. Consequently, all the social evils and crimes including theft, burglary, robbery, rape and homicide etc are actually the outcome of the socialization man has experienced in the initial years of his life. Hence, man learns how to act, react and behave with others from his family, peers, neighbors, school and social environment during his childhood and adolescence. Socialization is a <https://assignbuster.com/theories-of-aggression/>

very delicate and sensitive issue, and looks for complete and thorough attention of the family for the satisfactory and appropriate brought up of the children. Since children are just innocent stratum of society, they imitate the senior people, particularly the family members in all activities. If they find their elders, teachers and peers involved into crimes, fighting, battering, rape and other nefarious activities, they would certainly try to imitate the same acts they witness in front of their eyes. Aggression is, according to Bandura, an intentional causal behavior that results in injury to a person or the destruction of property. (Hart et al., 2006: 4) Bandura is of the opinion that aggressive responses among the individuals are the outcome of learned social behavior: direct experience or the observation-modeling of others. The family is the basic building block of society because it performs the most important functions including conferring social position and regulating social activity. To most family members the family is a haven in a heartless world. (Macionis & Plummer, 2008: 466) It is therefore it has frequently been observed that the children of the criminals get indulged into different types of crimes provided they have been brought up under the supervision of criminal parents. Similarly, the area observing high crime rate also contains high number of criminals in it, where the interaction of the people with criminals also develops their inclinations towards the same activities and offences. Drive Theories of Aggression: Drive theories of aggression appear as a reaction to the frustration-aggression hypothesis, where the supporters of drive theories submit to state that aggression among the individuals is not merely the product of frustration. Rather, other factors also contribute to inviting antagonism in humans. Berkowitz and Feshbach separately, in 1965 and 1970 respectively, presented aggressive drive theory, where both these

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psychologist theorists argue that the aggression is actually generated from the inner energy that motivates humans to take an action in an energetic and powerful manner in order to force others to submit to their word or statement. Aggressive drive has been conceived of, essentially, as an internal state of energy that: (a) is produced by aversive stimulation, (b) compels the organism to aggressive action, and (c) is diminished or terminated after the execution of such action. The drive state is thus reactive rather than spontaneous, and it has appetitive properties that define particular appropriate consummatory acts. (Hart & Kritsonis, 2006: 3)

The theorists do not deny the existence of frustration that urges the individuals to displace it in one way or the other, yet internal energy and drive to express one's strength and feelings as well force humans to display aggression generally against the weaker community or stratum of society. Hence, they do not declare learning as an important factor behind display of aggression and torture. Somehow, the social learning theorists are of the opinion that aggressive behavior is entirely learnt one, which may leave its effects through electronic and print media including TV, newspaper, video, internet and other sources. Somehow, supporters of drive theory argue that unfulfilled desires cause misuse of power and exhibition of antagonism against the members of society. (Pervin, 1990: 372) To conclude, different theorists have presented different theoretical frameworks on the foundations of the researches they conducted and the studies they made by evaluating the social and natural phenomena existing all around them. All these theories maintain validity in their scope to some extent, and strength of which cannot be negated altogether. On the one side, the frustration appears to be demonstrating its soundness, where powerful countries, states,

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communities and groups always inflict their antagonism on weak nations, strata or individuals. Similarly, aggression is also the outcome of the socialization process under which the individuals have been brought up. Consequently, the families observing domestic violence and the children watching torturous movies and films aptly have aggressive inclinations in their personalities. References Hart, Karen E. & Kritsonis, William Allan (2006) Critical Analysis of an Original Writing on Social Learning Theory: Imitation of Film-Mediated Aggressive Models By: Albert Bandura, Dorothea Ross and Sheila A. Ross 1963 National Forum of Applied Educational Research Journal Retrieved from <http://www.nationalforum.com> Macionis, John J. & Plummer, Kenneth (2008) Sociology: A Global Introduction. Eleventh Edition Prentice-Hall Pervin, Lawrence A. (1990) Personality: Theory, Assessment & Research Fifth Edition John Wiley & Sons Inc New York Robarchek, Clayton A. (1978) Frustration, Aggression and the Nonviolent Semai American Ethnologist Vol. 4, No. 4 762-779. Copyright © 1977 by the American Anthropological Association <http://www.peacefulsocieties.org/Archtext/Robar77.pdf>