



Psychological Correlates of Aggression

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Abstract:

Aggression is a very common feature in the present day world, yet not a sufficient number of studies have been conducted regarding positive aggression. The present study tried to prove that aggression cannot always be regarded as negative; positive aggression exhibits an aggressive spirited exterior, with a confident and composed performance that leads to some excellent deeding figures. However, a shallow aggressive exterior, without any star material on the interior that amounts to nothing but average performance makes us criticise aggressiveness.

Key words: Aggression, Positive Aggression, Frustration, Negative Aggression.

Positive versus negative aggression

Generally speaking, aggression is considered to have a negative function that not only elicits disapproval from others, but also is evaluated as destructive and damaging in its consequences. However, the term “aggressive” behavior is ambiguous, denoting both positive and negative behaviors (Blustein 1996). Similarly, it could be called “excessive” or “inappropriate” aggression. Positive aggression is a healthy, productive behavior if it promotes the basic values of survival,

protection, happiness, social acceptance, preservation, and intimate relations (Ellis 1976).

In the context of positive aggression, Gupta (1983) and Romi & Itskowitz (1990) argue that a certain amount of aggression is thought to be necessary and adaptive throughout childhood and adolescence because it helps build autonomy and identity. Furthermore, a certain degree of aggression or dominance helps to facilitate engagement in cooperative and competitive activities with one's peers. Channelled in the proper direction, human aggression is the force that enables a person to be healthfully self-assertive, dominant, and independent and to achieve mastery of both the environment and the self. Therefore, positive aggression takes many forms, including self-protection, standing up in the face of negation, pushing for new possibilities, and defending against harm (Jack 1999).

With respect to negative aggression, this is generally defined as a behavioural act that results in harming or hurting others. It has also been identified as an attacking behaviour that harms another of the same species (Atkinson et al. 1993). However, there are types of aggression, depending on the intentions of the aggressor and the situation that stimulated the aggressive response.

Because aggressive behaviour and thus the treatment of aggression varies greatly according to the intentions and conditions surrounding the aggression, aggression is typically categorized according to various types. Aggression is commonly viewed as being proactive or reactive; overt or covert; or physical, verbal, or relational (Werner & Crick 2004). Negative aggression behaviour has been defined as acts that result in personal injury or destruction of property. Encroaching on the home or territory of a resident and causing others financial, physical, emotional damage also is included in negative aggression (Moyer 1968). Negative aggression is also defined as forceful action which is directed towards the goal of harming or injuring another living being (Moyer 1968). Negative aggression

is considered unhealthy because it induces heightened emotions that can in the long-term be damaging to the individual.

Aggression is generally defined as a behavioural act that results in harming or hurting others (Bandura 1973). According to some theorists, aggression is an act whose goal is to injure an organism. The degree of aggression depends upon how powerful the frustration is and how many and what obstacles are on the way of frustration response. So, it cannot be always negative. Frustration is a situation where learning is stopped and other forms of adjustments are adopted. The biological theories of aggression have much to offer about the physical and neurobiological causes of aggressive acts.

Anger can also evolve from empathic concern or perceptions of injustice and is related to cognitive factors such as hostility (Spielberger et al. 1985) and cynicism (Martin, Watson, & Wan 2000). Anger can be adaptive by energizing an individual and heightening cognitive awareness to take action against a threat or perceived threat (Goleman 1995).

Anger is an emotion that is often difficult to control because of the intense physiological reactions involved in the fight or flight response that triggers anger. The fight response is a response triggered naturally by the body to protect itself against the instigating situation (Lazarus 1991). Intense, uncontrolled feelings of anger are often associated with externalizing behaviour problems, particularly aggression.

Positive aggression

Like so many other inherent characteristics of the male, “positive aggression” has been turned into a sickness, an abnormality, and a deviancy. By the words “positive aggression,” it is meant the constructive assertion of the truth, the vigorous expression of the moral high ground, and the explicit identification of a change that must now be made. Of course most people never heard of positive aggression — it is certainly not taught in the schools, religions, governments, or

corporations, because it empowers the individual, and draws power away from established hierarchies. And none of these organizations would want people to act up and go against the powers that be.

Positive aggression is a word that can work wonders for associations, organisation, team and workplaces, comprising of nothing but working in coordination. How, then, do we know if one's aggression has a positive connotation or a negative one? "Aggression is a very psychological component," says a well-known psychologist. "It can be classified under behavioural aggression and aggression in performance," he further explains. Often, we come across colleagues who are aggressive for no reason. However, this is not visible in their work output, which is why they are categorised as arrogant or too full of themselves. On the other hand, we have achievers who are aggressive in achieving quality output in terms of their performance. This certainly does not convey the impression that they are arrogant. Instead, it elevates their status as hard-core focused achievers in a subtle way. This is the difference between positive and negative aggression.

If someone exhibits an aggressive spirited exterior, with a confident and composed performance that leads to some excellent deeding figures, we all praise him as the next big deal! However, a shallow aggressive exterior, without any star material on the interior that amounts to nothing but average performance makes us criticise him.

Positive aggression is a dynamic construct influenced by diverse biological, psychological, and social factors. A good deal of research has been conducted on positive aggression and it was found to be appearing as an important factor in the prediction of personal, academic and career success. Studies on aggression with respect to various psychosocial correlates have been found in a variety of fields. Empirical studies investigating the relationship of positive aggression with numerous psychological and psychosocial factors were reported by several researchers and simultaneously revealing the significance of

positive aggression and its beneficial aspects with remarkable contribution in the field of interpersonal relationships, success in work and personal life, social psychology, managing occupational stress, academic field, improving personality, enhancing performance and many more positive behaviour pattern.

Transcending the limits of direct observation, Cairns developed a procedure in which children identify members' social groups (Cairns & Cairns 1994). The procedure has shown reliable correspondence with observed interactions among members of a network (Cairns, Perrin, & Cairns 1985). This methodological advance has yielded solid evidence that physically aggressive children are as likely as non-aggressive children to be included in a peer group, and aggressive youth may be popular or highly prominent in their networks (Rodkin, & Van Acker 2000). However, the kind of peer group a child inhabits can make a difference in their subsequent adjustment (Positive aggression). Negative peer characteristics (e.g., negative aggression, low academic competence) increase the risk for maladjustment (Cairns & Cairns 2001), while positive peer characteristics (e.g., positive aggression) increase the child's protection from subsequent maladjustment (Mahoney 2000). Even among the most aggressive youth who later in life experienced multiple maladjustments, some periods of positive adjustment can be identified along their developmental pathways.

All relationships such as parent-child, teacher-student, between peers or colleagues etc., which are perceived as our strengths are usually based on dimensions of aggression. Previous theories supported that if one has a good amount of psychological emotion, the person will have a good ability to adjust and a special capacity to solve problems of daily life. An analysis of the traits of persons high on psychometric intelligence (IQ) but have a high amount of positive aggression yields the stereotype of a person who is not critical, and comfortable with others.

Aggression cannot be often negative

According to Jerry Deffenbacher, a psychologist who specializes in anger management, some people really are more "hotheaded" than others; they get angry more easily and more intensely than the average person does. There are also those who don't show their anger in loud spectacular ways but are chronically irritable and grumpy. Easily angered people don't always curse and throw things; sometimes they withdraw socially, sulk, or get physically ill.

People who are easily angered generally have what some psychologists call a low tolerance for frustration, meaning simply that they feel that they should not have to be subjected to frustration, inconvenience, or annoyance. They can't take things in stride, and they're particularly infuriated if the situation seems somehow unjust, often taking things negatively: for example, being corrected for a minor mistake. What makes these people this way? One cause may be genetic or physiological: there is evidence that some children are born irritable, touchy, and easily angered, and that these signs are present from a very early age. Another may be sociocultural. Anger is not often regarded as negative; we're taught that it's all right to express anxiety, depression, or other emotions but not to express anger. As a result, we don't learn how to handle it or channel it constructively. Research has also found that family background plays a role. Typically, people who are easily angered come from families that are disruptive, chaotic, and not skilled at emotional communications.

Anger is "an emotional state that varies in intensity from mild irritation to intense fury and rage," according to Charles Spielberger, who specializes in the study of anger. Like other emotions, it is accompanied by physiological and biological changes; when you get angry, your heart rate and blood pressure go up, as do the levels of your energy hormones, adrenaline, and noradrenaline. Anger cannot often be defined as negative caused by both external and internal events. You

could be angry at a specific person (such as a co-worker or supervisor) or event (a traffic jam, a cancelled flight), or your anger could be caused by worrying or brooding about your personal problems. Memories of traumatic or enraging events can also trigger angry feelings. Aggression is an important focus for owing to its relative stability over time and consistent link to a variety of negative outcomes later in life, including delinquency, substance use, conduct problems, poor adjustment, and academic difficulties (poor grades, suspension, expulsion, and dropping out of school).

- **Physical aggression** includes such behaviours as pushing, shoving, hitting, slapping, biting, kicking, hair-pulling, stabbing, shooting, and rape.

- **Verbal aggression** includes threatening and intimidating others and engaging in malicious teasing, taunting, and name-calling.

- **Indirect aggression** includes such behaviours as gossiping, spreading cruel rumours, and encouraging others to reject or exclude someone.

These include Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Conduct Disorder, both of which have prevalence rates ranging from 6 to 10% in the general population and even higher among males, according to the American Psychiatric Association. A number of individual characteristics have been shown to increase risk for aggressive behaviour. These include a difficult temperament as an infant, low intelligence, hyperactivity, impulsivity, and attention problems. Additionally, aggressive children frequently have poor social problem-solving skills: they often misinterpret other children's behaviour as hostile, and they are often unable to find non-aggressive solutions to conflicts.

Anger is as a person's response to a threat or the perception of a threat against an individual or group (Lazarus 1991). The types of threats that tend to trigger an anger response are broad in scope and include both physical threats and psychological threats, or threats to a person's pride or dignity. Recent theories have suggested that aggressive

behaviour has assumed a product of both psycho-social and biological factors. Psychologists have identified a number of psychological and social factors are producing aggressive behaviour in individuals.

To study the development of aggression in and throughout childhood and adolescence is important because aggressive behaviours are associated with many problematic outcomes such as delinquency, substance misuse, criminal offences, and related problems of psychosocial malfunction. Being aggressive in childhood and adolescence is frequently linked with longer-term negative developmental trajectories with pessimistic prognoses for adult functioning and wellbeing. Playing a role in the aetiology of aggressive behaviours can form the basis for developing preventive and intervening strategies for reducing the likelihood of problematic developmental trajectories. Any negative feelings can set off aggression, including not only feelings of frustration and anger, but also pain, fear, and irritation. (Berkowitz's Revised Theory 1989).

Frustration cannot often lead to aggression

Frustration is a confusing and ambiguous term. It can mean simply denial or deprivation of some 'good' desired by an individual or group; but this usage is misleading because it implies that there is some psychological state in common between those who are deprived of or denied different kinds of desired 'good'. But there is clearly a world of difference between the feelings of, say, a nationalist who finds the demand for national independence rejected and those of a motorist who is deprived of gasoline by a tanker-drivers' strike. It is not clear whether every aggression leads to frustration.

Dollard, j. (1939) propagated the Frustration Aggression theory which states that the reason of aggressive behaviour is always complex. N. E. Miller (1941) corrected Dollard's theory and said that frustration gives rise to various

types of behaviour and aggression one of them. Maslow (1941) and M. H. Appley (1962) also studied the Frustration-Aggression theory and concluded that when there is no danger in the frustration it does not result in aggression. Same way, when there is no emotional arousal in the person due to frustration then too aggressive behaviour is not produced. Buss (1961), on the basis of his studies, concluded that insult, irritation and other noxious stimuli can also cause aggressive behaviour in the person.

There are many connotations of frustration. It may be the emotion that accompanies an experience of being dissatisfied in accomplishing the goals, an action of hampering someone's plans or attempts or an emotion of aggravation at being wedged or disparaged. In psychological terms, frustration is a general emotional retort to antagonism. In a relation with anger and displeasure, it occurs from the apparent resistance to the accomplishment of individual will. The greater the hindrance and the superior the will, the more the frustration is expected to occur in some one's mind.

Frustration does not often not become a manifestation of aggression. For example, when change occurs and people are not prepared for this change, they may exhibit frustration. Frustration can quickly escalate different psychological problems, not only anger. Threats feed the same situation. Behaviour can quickly go from words of problems – yelling and swearing – to action of words – pushing, property destruction and even personal attack.

Frustration is defined as the unexpected blockage of an anticipated goal attainment (Berkowitz 1989; Dollard et al. 1939). Since the early beginnings of learning theory (Hull 1934; Pavlov 1927), frustration has been in the centre of research interest in various domains of psychology, for example social psychology (Berkowitz 1989) neuropsychology (Harman-Jones et al. 2003) or animal research (Papini & Dudley 1977). The consequences of Frustration and its underlying mechanisms are to a great extent well understood.

Major Points

- Argues that aggression occurs when we desire obtaining a goal, expect to be gratified, & then are blocked from doing so.
- Violent behavior erupts from this frustration. Often is directed to a target other than source of aggression (displacement).
- It is not acceptable to yell at the boss, so we kick the dog, yell at spouse etc.
- Data on theory are mixed (sometimes frustration increased aggressiveness, sometimes not).
- If frustration is justifiable, but situation is such that person didn't intentionally cause it (car broken down on road), then it doesn't lead to aggression.

Directions

The recent advances in theory and research we have reviewed suggest that different correlate processes are crucial in determining whether people act upon versus override their aggressive urges. Aggression is generally defined as a behavioural act that results in harming or hurting others. However, there are types of aggression, depending on the intentions of the aggressor and the situation that stimulated the aggressive response. Implement aggression can be positive - the person will have a good ability to adjust and a special capacity to solve problems of daily life.

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Berkowitz's (1989) Revised Theory

- Any negative feelings can set off aggression, including not only feelings of frustration and anger, but also pain, fear, and irritation
- We can reduce or minimize aggression by several methods
- Not all frustration lead to aggression
- Physical discomfort is similar to frustration

Results indicate that aggressive behaviour and other disruptive behaviour symptoms cannot depend on the frustration only; there must be more negative outcomes.

Conclusion

If aggression can be negative, it can also be positive. Often studies have identified anger as negative but there are findings that support its positive side as well. Positive aggression is a healthy, productive behaviour if it promotes the basic values of survival, protection, happiness, social acceptance, preservation, and intimate relations. The present review suggests that experimental research on the psychological and neural mechanisms underlying positive aggression can eventually contribute to reducing the psychological, economic, physical, and social harm associated with uncontrolled aggression in society.

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