

Module-13

Aggression

Mosby's medical dictionary (2009) defines aggression as "a forceful behavior, action, or attitude that is expressed physically, verbally, or symbolically. It may arise from innate drives or occur as a defense mechanism, often resulting from a threatened ego. It is manifested by either constructive or destructive acts directed toward oneself or against others." This definition explicates the basic nature and origin of aggressive behaviour. It incorporates attitude and action both. Further, it can take any form, from being physically expressed to verbally stated and also be symbolically reflected. An important feature of aggressive behaviour is the form in which it is manifested. It could be constructive as well as destructive. If used as a mode for asserting oneself in a threatening condition, such aggressive behaviour would be considered as constructive aggression. It primarily serves the purpose of self-protection. On the other hand, if the hostility is directed towards an external agent and does not serve the purpose of self-protection it is known as destructive aggression. Aggressive behaviour could also be inner directed. Inward aggression is the destructive aggressive behaviour that is inflicted on oneself.

How do we learn aggressive behaviour? One possibility is learning from one's social-personal environment. The other possibility is indirect learning from an experimental environment. If one is born and brought-up in a family where shouting, physical abuse and other forms of aggression are part of the day-to-day life, then he/ she is likely to learn it directly from the personal environment. Similarly, living in a crime infested area can also make the individual directly learn from the social environment. However, one might come across a situation where he/ she does not know how to react and the immediate emotional outcome is anger and hostility. If one succeeds handling the situation by showing such emotions, one has basically learnt

indirectly from an experimental environment. Recollect your experience with co-travelers who occupy your seat in the train. Your first such encounter might have made you learn how to tackle such situations in future.

Expression of anger is so common to us that a large part of it is accepted as rule of the game in many societies. Many forms of aggressive behaviour are neither hostile nor defensive. They are basically reinforced behaviour that a set of people consider as social practice. Manhandling of women by their husbands is not so uncommon in the Indian society. One of the popular TV programme, *Satyamev Jayate*, focused on domestic violence in its episode telecasted on 17 June 2012. Surprisingly, when men were asked about it they not only accepted slapping or beating their wife but also provided justification for it. Look at the two media reports given below. The first report published on 8th July 2011 in *India Today* highlights findings of UN Women report. The most striking feature of this report is that 39% respondent thought beating of wife was justifiable. The other publication dated 25th April 2012 in *India Today* highlights UNICEF report. The conspicuous characteristic of this report is that those who are not yet married considered physical abuse by husbands justified. The very fact that more than 50% of the boys and girls who are unmarried and a substantial percentage (39%) of wives themselves approved of physical abuse is an indicator that certain form of aggression has social approval.

UN report says Indian women justify wife-beating

Nearly 39 per cent of men and women in **India** think it is justifiable for a man to beat his wife.

This is a figure cited in the latest UN Women report which highlights that 35 per cent respondents had reported to be victims of physical violence by their partners, while 10 per cent faced **sexual violence** at the hands of their partners.

The report entitled Progress of the World's Women: In Pursuit of Justice also observes with regard to women's representation in the justice system: "India significantly lags behind the rest of the world, with women making up just 3 per cent of judges."

Lakshmi Puri, UN assistant secretary general and deputy executive director of UN Women, said comprehensive progress of women would also ensure comprehensive progress of societies - that could happen only with the help of legal reforms and better access of justice for women.

"That would be possible only with better access of justice for women. This would mean greater number of women parliamentarians, judges, lawyers and activists. India is, however, way off the mark," Puri added while launching the report.

UN Women also calls for greater representation of women in the police force to give victims of violence greater confidence while registering complaints.

The report quotes a Sakshi survey of 109 judges of various courts including the Supreme Court as well as women lawyers and litigants, which says half of those interviewed felt that women abused by their spouses had themselves to blame. About 68 per cent of the respondents said provocative clothing invited rape. "Close to 63 per cent of women in India, between ages 15-49, lack autonomy in the house and have no say in any of the vital everyday decisions: own healthcare, large household purchases, purchases for daily needs, and visits to family or relatives," says the India factsheet, released with the report.

The report makes a note of khap panchayats which "governs the affairs of family members of a clan covering several villages". The UN Women has expressed concern about the parallel system of justice meted out to women in these regions.

Indian adolescents support wife beating, says UNICEF report

TAGS: Wife beating | Unicef | United Nations Children's Fund | Global Report Card on Adolescents 2012



According to a survey, Indian boys and girls justify wife beating in the households.

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Women victims become culprits

A majority of Indian boys and girls justify wife beating in the households, a survey by the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) has found.

The findings of the survey were shocking as not just men, but even adolescents in the age group of 15 to 19 feel that wife beating is justified.

The Unicef's "Global Report Card on Adolescents 2012" says that 57 per cent of adolescent boys in the country think a husband is justified in beating his wife.

Moreover, over half of the Indian adolescent girls -- around 53 per cent of them -- think that a husband is justified in beating his wife.

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In comparison, 41 per cent women in Bangladesh and 54 per cent in Sri Lanka harbour a similar feeling. In Nepal, however, the prevalence of both men and women justifying domestic violence is inordinately high at 88 per cent and 80 per cent respectively.

According to the report, societal attitudes that convey acceptance or justification of domestic violence are making girls and women more vulnerable to abuse.

The report explains that because of reporting bias, this might be an under estimation of the actual size of the problem in several countries.



Certain behaviour that is usually considered aggressive by the society might not contain emotion, rather they reflect reinforced social practices. For instance, shouting at wife or children need not always be emotion-laden. It could be a behavioural pattern that the person concerned might have learnt from the family or community. Such expressions are outcome of reinforcement and hence the person concerned repeats it without realization. When you analyze aggression from the directionality point of view, it represents approach behaviour rather than withdrawal behaviour. Studies confirm that as compared to neutral stimuli we process threat stimuli on priority. This has survival significance. Missing or delaying the processing and decision making could be a threat for one's survival. Hence, the brain identifies threatening stimuli very fast. Findings of research on visual cueing task also hold that angry faces have preferential processing over the neutral ones.

Understanding Frustration

The primitive reaction to restricted bodily movements is frustration explicitly reflecting in aggressive form. Irrespective of our age one of the major sources of frustration is the denial of free movement. Just hold the hand or the feet of a small baby and the baby will start screaming. Extend it to the other extreme. If you observe the extreme of legal punishment (other than capital punishment) attached to aggressive behaviours, i.e., life sentence, it primarily involves withdrawal of freedom from the culprit to freely move in the society. With increasing worldly experiences one comes across various agents of frustration but freedom of movement does not completely lose its strength.

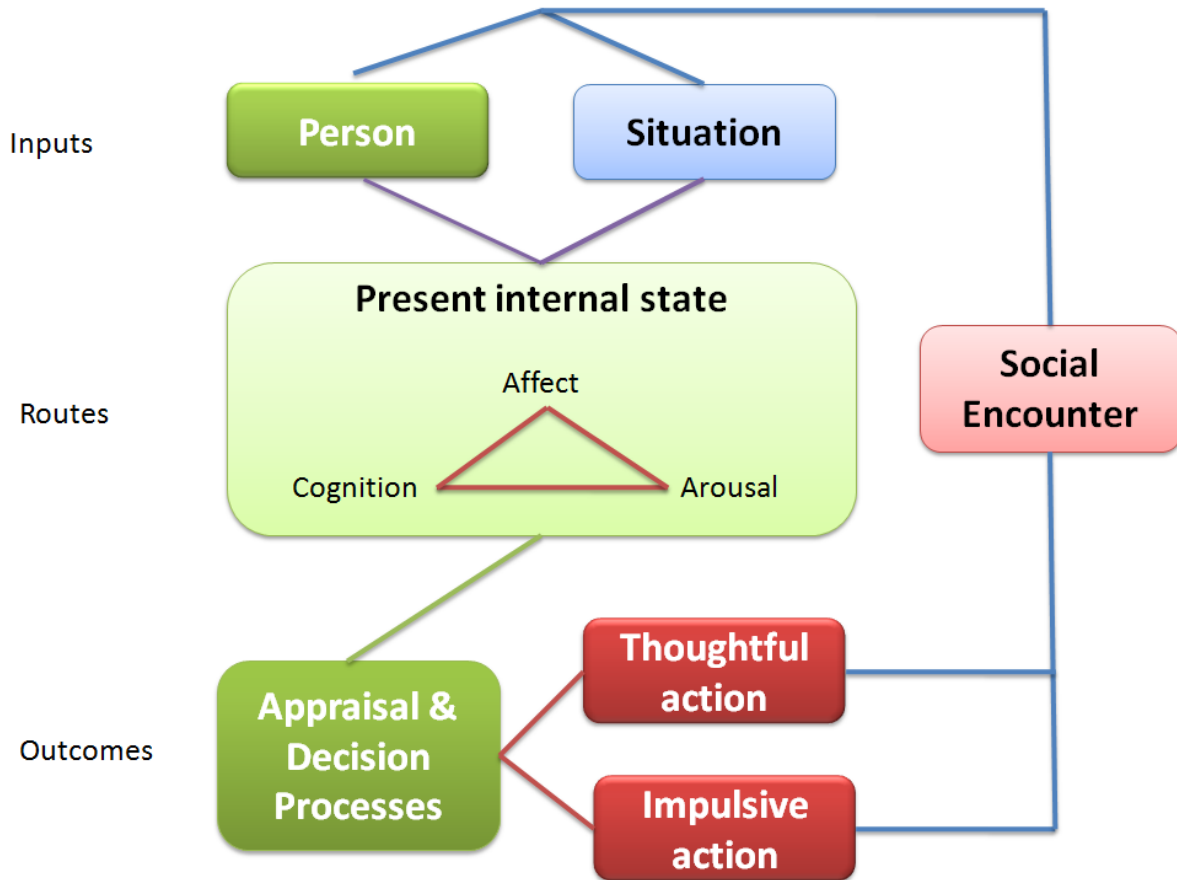
With the development of language ability the expression of verbal or other symbolic cues from the environment can frustrate as one is endowed with the ability to understand them. Similarly, language can be used as a tool to express anger. Few other symbolic clues such as frowning and waving of hand can also evoke aggression. With the extension of one's definition of the "self" the cues inducing aggression starts expanding from immediate family members to friends and relatives and can further extend to those from the same city, state or country. Inclusion of religion, ethnicity, race and gender is very obvious. Hence, an attack or threat to these constituents can instigate aggressive retaliation.



The frustration-aggression hypothesis (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower, & Sears, 1939) explains frustration as "the state that emerges when circumstances interfere with a goal response" that lead to an aggressive outcome. Studies suggest that frustration-aggression is contingent upon the proximity of the goal. As our behaviour is susceptible to conditioning, even the sight, sound or any other signal (stimuli) related to the source of frustration can trigger aggressive reaction. The contributions of Miller et al. (1941) and Berkowitz (1969) further explains this hypothesis. This hypothesis actually refers to displacement – if the frustration causing aggression cannot be challenged, then scapegoats become the victim of the displaced aggression. Interestingly, Nicholas (1950) has argued that frustration does not always lead to aggression. At times it might get replaced by suitable substitute. Berkowitz (1969) has asserted that frustration alone does not produce aggression. Rather the interaction between an environmental cue and an internal emotional state result into aggression.

Model of Aggression

The social-cognitive information processing models of aggression explains such behaviour in a social situation. These models bank on the basic premise of information processing. The figure given below illustrates Anderson and Bushman's (2002) model.



Memory is a complex associative network of nodes characterizing cognitive notions and emotions. Life experiences facilitate linkages among these nodes. Strongly interconnected set of concepts make the knowledge structure. These knowledge structures guide interpretation and behaviour. Person and situation related variables affect the present internal state of the

individual. In turn, this state influences appraisal and decision processes. Aggression is an outcome of this.

Aggressive Behaviour

Aggression could be direct or indirect based on the presence-absence of the target. People engage in both types of strategies. At times people tell stories about the target of aggression in his/ her absence. Such narrations could have elements of lie or exaggeration in order to put the target in trouble. This is indirect aggression. Studies suggest that this strategy is used more by females. When aggression is manifested in the presence of the target it is classified as direct aggression. Males have been found to engage more in direct physical aggression. Interestingly, both males and females are likely to equally engage in verbal aggression.

There is a line of division between aggression and violence. All aggression need not be violence, but all violence is aggression. Besides being direct or indirect aggression could be manifested in physical or verbal forms whereas violence is a very intense form of physical aggression. When the goal-directed behaviour experiences blockades, people try to learn from the situation. One can either avoid or withdraw in such situations, something that we have already discussed earlier, or can confront to solve it. Hostile aggression is a primitive response to some frustrating agent. In hostile aggression behaviour is intended to impose damage to a person, group or their belongings. Human history has also witnessed cultural aggression. Cultural aggression might take a form of attack on others in order to control, manipulate or modify them. However, all culture put premium on certain forms of aggression. When aggressive outbursts exceed the limit of social approval, it is socially condemned and is mostly legally punishable.

Although all society has its own norms, certain forms of behaviour manifested by some of the members might violate the prescribed code of conduct. Lying, cheating, fighting and several such behaviour fall in this category. Although they violate the prescribed norms, they might still be accepted as rugged components of the society. Many of these behaviours might be adopted for seeking status in the peer group. Such non-hostile behaviours are largely permitted by the society. Problem begins when the behaviour turns hostile. There are subcultures where otherwise deviant forms of behaviour are accepted. In order to acquire acceptance, increase status or continue membership someone from that background might practice deviant delinquent behaviour. Several tribes in India, such as the Pardhi tribe, were clubbed under the Criminal Tribes Act.

In the society like ours one has to understand that compliance and cooperation are expected but in certain forms aggression is also rewarded. In such situations aggressive retaliation of hostile nature is unacceptable and is likely to be legally punishable. Physical fight between students at the age of schooling is a common observation, but shoot-out at school is very new to the Indian society. Look at the newspaper report about shoot-out by students in a school in Punjab. Such aggressive acts invite legal punishments.

3 injured in firing during school clash

Aseem Bassi, Hindustan Times
Amritsar, February 16, 2012

In a shocking incident of school violence, three children sustained bullet injuries after a clash between students of 10+1 class in a government school in village Bhangali near Majitha.

The students who received injuries of bullet splinters were identified as Lovepreet Singh, Parampreet Singh and Shahbaaz Singh. One more student named Gurwinder Singh received an injury due to some blunt weapon.

All the injured were rushed to the hospital. Lovepreet and Parampreet received injuries in feet and legs.

The police have identified the suspect students, who belonged to the same school and have launched a manhunt to nab the boys. The incident took place in Government Senior Secondary School Bhangali.

Talking to HT, injured student Lovepreet Singh said, "There was a clash going on between some students of 10+1 and when we were coming down from stairs, there was a gunshot that injured me and Parampreet."

We have nothing to do with the clash. The clash was between some other students but the splinters hit us, he added.

However the police have started its investigation after registering a case under section 307 and Arms act against suspects identified as Navdeep Singh, Akashdeep Singh and couple of other students.

As the suspects are on the run, the police is yet to find out that from where the boys got the weapon. Police claimed that a country made (desi) pistol of 12 Bore' was used in the firing incident.

Detailing on the incident, DSP Majitha, Gursewak Singh said, "We rushed to the school as soon as the information was received. Couple of students have received injuries of bullet splinters. We have registered a case and raids are conducted to nab the students involved in this," he added.

We have learnt that there was some enmity between two groups and that led to incident, added DSP

SSP Amritsar (rural) S.P.S. Parmar stressed that as per preliminary investigations, the weapon used was illegal. Police was working to arrest the suspect students and also know that from where the weapon was got, added SSP.

Meanwhile, the parents and kin of the injured students not only demanded a strict action from police but also slammed the school authorities for poor discipline.

Gurpreet Kaur, sister of injured Lovepreet Singh said, "My brother was not involved in clash. But the way firing has took place in school indicates that there was hardly any check in school,"

How can students come with a weapon there, she added.

Relatives of Parampreet Singh also demanded strict action and stressed that school needs to improve discipline level.

It is learnt that school in the past also has seen violent incidents.

The case has been registered on the complaint of student named Shahbaaz Singh.

Look at the other rare phenomena of stabbing of teachers by their students, again a recent change visible in our society.

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NEWS > CITIES > CHENNAI CHENNAI, February 9, 2012

Student stabs teacher to death in Chennai school

R. SUJATHA



Parents and the general public gather in front of St. Mary's Anglo Indian Higher Secondary School on Armenian Street in Chennai on Thursday, where a teacher (inset) was murdered by a student. Photo: S.S. Kumar

A teacher was stabbed to death in the classroom of a private school here on Thursday, allegedly by a 15-year-old student who was upset at being repeatedly reprimanded by her for not doing well in studies.

R. Uma Maheswari (39), who had been teaching science and Hindi for close to a decade at the St. Mary's Anglo-Indian Higher Secondary School on Armenian Street in Parry's Corner, was sitting in the first floor room, for the IX A Hindi class, when the boy rushed in, slashed her throat and stabbed her in the abdomen and chest.

She was taken to a nearby private hospital, which referred her to the Government General Hospital. But she died on the way.

The murder happened around 10.50 a.m. According to Fr. Bosco Periyannayagam, a member of the school committee, the boy ran ahead of others into the classroom, where Ms. Maheswari was sitting in a chair waiting for the students. After approaching her on the pretext of wanting to drop rubbish into the bin, he took out a knife wrapped in a paper and attacked her.

According to a police official, other students who had followed him into the class raised an alarm on seeing the attack. Teachers from the staff room on the same floor ran into the classroom and overpowered the boy, who did not attempt to flee. Following information from the school, Esplanade police arrived and took custody of the boy.

"The boy has been studying in the school for the past five years and is regular but he did not study well. It is the practice of teachers to write remarks in the diary about the performance of the students. The teacher had made notes about his poor show," Fr. Periyannayagam told reporters.

During questioning by police, the boy said he had recently seen the Hindi movie Agneepath and was influenced by the hero who takes revenge on those who falsely implicate his father. The boy had failed in both mathematics and Hindi. While the mathematics teacher had not scolded him, Ms. Maheswari had written remarks in his diary. This angered him.

The boy hails from an affluent family. A police official described him as a pampered child at home. "He was given Rs.100 as pocket money daily."

Ms. Maheswari was a resident of Mandaveli and has two daughters.

Another form of aggressive behaviour could be retaliation against a real or perceived source of deprivation. This could be reflected in the physical form or be inflicted upon scapegoats. In such situation innocent people suffer the retaliatory aggression. You can easily find examples of scapegoats in your surroundings. Bulling of weaker member of the group, being hostile to someone who is defenseless and targeting a less popular member of the group can be easily observed in all types of environment. Look at the image published in the magazine *Outlook*. It shows a migrant driver from another state being victim of aggression of residents of another state who belonged to a political party.

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Slugged: MNS activists thrash a 'bhaiyya' driver in Mumbai

MAGAZINE | MAR 03, 2008

The Outsider Factor

The migration of people from UP and Bihar to other parts of the country has become controversial in recent years.

Pathological Aggression

Aggressive behaviour can be an outcome of compensation or reaction formation. Compensatory behaviour could be of two types— compensation in kind and compensation by a substitute. Compensation in kind explains the unusual drive of a person that finally makes him/her achieve in the area where he/ she had some deficiency. It is intensification of an otherwise normal reaction. On the other hand, compensation by a substitute explicates situations when a person develops certain ability in order to make-up for something that he/ she lack. This is a common means for adjustment to failure and frustration. Compensatory behaviour boosts one's ego and positively affects one's self-esteem. Over-aggressive behaviour might be a reaction to fear that one is experiencing or the anticipation of fearful situation might also trigger over-aggressive behaviour. This is an instance of reaction formation. However, such reactions are largely borderline cases. Inability to control one's impulse is classified as a disorder.

Impulse-control disorders

Many psychiatric disorders, such as antisocial personality disorder, conduct disorder, substance-related disorders, mood disorders, includes certain degree of inability to control ones impulse. The classification of the American Psychiatric Association has put another category by the name 'Impulse-control disorders not elsewhere classified'. It includes intermittent explosive disorder, kleptomania, pyromania, pathological gambling, trichotillomania and impulse-control disorder not otherwise specified.

As the name suggests, intermittent explosive disorder reflects inability to resist aggressive impulses that results into serious assaults or damage to property. On the other hand,

klepto and pyromania are manic tendencies. Kleptomania is characterized by inability to control the impulse of stealing objects that will neither be used by the person nor be used for other monetary benefit. Pyromania differentiates itself from other manic tendencies and is characterized by the uncontrollable tendency to set things on fire for pleasure. Maladaptive gambling behaviour is termed as pathological. Trichotillomania portrays deriving gratification out of recurrent pulling out of one's own hair. It results into noticeable hair loss. The table given below summarizes the diagnostic criteria of the selected impulse-control disorders described by the American Psychiatric Association.

Diagnostic criteria for intermittent explosive disorder*	
A.	Several discrete episodes of failure to resist aggressive impulses that result in serious assaultive acts or destruction of property.
B.	The degree of aggressiveness expressed during the episodes is grossly out of proportion to any precipitating psychosocial stressors.
C.	The aggressive episodes are not better accounted for by another mental disorder and are not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance or a general medical condition.
Diagnostic criteria for kleptomania*	
A.	Recurrent failure to resist impulses to steal objects that are not needed for personal use or for their monetary value.
B.	Increasing sense of tension immediately before committing the theft.
C.	Pleasure, gratification, or relief at the time of committing the theft.
D.	The stealing is not committed to express anger or vengeance and is not in response to a delusion or a hallucination.

E. The stealing is not better accounted for by conduct disorder, a manic episode, or antisocial personality disorder.

Diagnostic criteria for pyromania*

A. Deliberate and purposeful fire setting on more than one occasion.

B. Tension or affective arousal before the act.

C. Fascination with, interest in, curiosity about, or attraction to fire and its situational contexts.

D. Pleasure, gratification, or relief when setting fires, or when witnessing or participating in their aftermath.

E. The fire setting is not done for monetary gain, as an expression of sociopolitical ideology, to conceal criminal activity, to express anger or vengeance, to improve one's living circumstances, in response to a delusion or hallucination, or as a result of impaired judgment.

F. The fire setting is not better accounted for by conduct disorder, a manic episode, or antisocial personality disorder.

*Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (4th Edition). American Psychiatric Association.