CHAPTER 10 - AGGRESSION
Its nature, causes and control

Study Unit 10.1 – Perspectives on aggression: In search of the Roots of Violence
Aggression – behaviour directed at harming someone who is trying to avoid such treatment

The role of biological factors: From instincts to the evolutionary perspective
Biological or genetic factors do play a role in determining aggression, but it is not the entire cause.

1. Human beings aggress against each other in different ways
2. The frequency of aggressive actions varies across societies

Drive theories: the motive to harm others
Aggression stems mainly from an externally elicited drive to harm others.

Drive theories of aggression – theories suggesting that aggression stems from external conditions that arouse the motive to harm others

Frustration-aggression hypothesis – frustration leads to the arousal of a drive, whose aim is to harm

The belief that frustration is a powerful determinant of aggression

Modern theories of aggression: The Social Learning Perspective and the General Aggression Model
Social Learning Perspective - individuals learn:

Various ways of harming others
Which people or groups are appropriate targets of aggression
Which actions justify retaliation or vengeance
In which situations is aggression permitted or approved

General Aggression Model (GAM) - Events may lead to overt (obvious) aggression
Initiated by 2 input variables: Factors leading to the current situation (situational factors) – provocation, exposure to aggression

Factors relating to the people involved (personal factors) – irritability, attitudes/beliefs about violence

The situational and personal variables lead to overt aggression through their impact on 3 processes:

Arousal – increase physiological arousal or excitement

Affective states - arouse hostile feelings and show outward feelings

Cognitions - induce hostile thoughts or bring beliefs and attitudes of aggression to mind

One may result in:

Thoughtful action – restraining anger

Impulsive action – overt aggressive actions occur

Study Unit 10.2 - Causes of human aggression: social, cultural, personal and situational

Social determinants of aggression: Frustration, Provocation and Heightened Arousal

Frustration: Why not getting what you want (or what you expect) can sometimes lead to aggression

The frustration-aggression hypothesis suggests that frustrated people always engage in aggression and that all acts of aggression stem from frustration

Not all aggression stems from frustration

People aggress when they do not get what they want

Frustration is one of many factors that lead to aggression
Direct provocation: When aggression (or teasing) breeds aggression

Physical or verbal provocation is one of the strongest causes of human aggression

Teasing - provoking statements that draw attention to the target's flaws and imperfections

Cultural differences:

Individualistic cultures - establish uniqueness and a positive self-image, therefore respond more negatively to teasing

Collectivist cultures - less concerned with uniqueness and more with getting along and being a part of the group, therefore respond less negatively

Heightened Arousal: Emotion, cognition and aggression

Heightened arousal can enhance aggression in response to provocation, frustration and other factors

Excitation transfer theory - Arousal produced in one situation can persist and intensify emotional reactions occurring in later situations

Exposure to Media Violence: Effects of violence in films, TV and video games

1. Such materials increase the likelihood of aggressive behaviour by people exposed to them
2. Effects are short and long term
3. The magnitude of these effects are large

The effects of media violence: why do they occur?

Relating to the GAM model:

Repeated exposure to media violence can affect cognitions relating to aggression creating a hostile expectation bias - an expectation that others will behave aggressively. This causes individuals to be more aggressive themselves

The effects of media violence: Neuroscience evidence for the impact of desensitization

Desensitization to violence - frequent exposure to violence in media result in people becoming less sensitive to violence and its consequences

Exposure to violent media increases the tendency to aggress:

1. It reduces individuals emotional reactions, so they perceive them as nothing unusual
2. Strengthens beliefs, expectations and other cognitive processes related to aggression
As a result of repeated exposure to violent media people develop strong knowledge structures (structures reflecting and combining beliefs, expectations, schemas and scripts)

When these knowledge structures are activated people respond aggressively because that is what they have “learned” to do.

**Violent pornography: When sex and aggression mix**

Exposure to violent pornography can increase men’s willingness to aggress against women

Repeated exposure results in the desensitizing effect

Exposure leads men and women to accept dangerous myths about sexual violence

**Cultural factors in aggression: “cultures of honour” and sexual jealousy**

Cultural factors suggest that aggression is appropriate or required under certain circumstances – ex for honour

Cultures of honour - strong norms indicating that aggression is an appropriate response to insults of honour

**Sexual Jealousy: One key effect of concern with one’s honour**

Infidelity is highly threatening to male honour

It can result in severe punishment for all those involved

Violence stemming from jealousy that threaten a man’s honour are excused or condoned in cultures of honour

**Personality and Aggression: Why some people are more aggressive than others**

TASS Model – Traits as situational sensitive model

Many aspects of personality function in a threshold manner: only when situational factors are strong enough to trigger them, do they influence behaviour/aggression

**The type A behaviour pattern**

Type A behaviour pattern - competitive, impatient, irritable, aggressive and hostile

Type B behaviour pattern - not competitive, patient, relaxed and calm

Hostile aggression - the prime objective is inflicting some kind of harm on the victim
Instrumental aggression - primary goal is not to harm but for attainment of another goal; access to valued resources or praise for being “tough”

Narcissism, ego threat and aggression

Narcissistic people may react strongly to mild provocations because they believe they are better than others

Sensation seeking and aggression

- People high in sensation seeking or impulsiveness experience hostile feelings more often than others
- Tendencies to get bored and seek experiences may lead to hostile thoughts
- They are attracted to situations that elicit aggression
- They are more likely to experience anger and hostility
- They are more likely to focus on the immediate rather than delayed consequences of their behaviour
- They show higher levels of physical and verbal aggression than others

Gender differences in aggression

- Males are more likely to aggress when they have not been provoked; when provocation is intense this disappears
- The size of gender differences in aggression differs with the aggression in question – males are more likely to react with direct aggression and females with indirect
- For men and women aggression can be a social plus to people with high status

Bistrategic controllers - combine high levels of aggression with pro-social, relationship boosting actions

Situational determinants of aggression: the effects of heat and alcohol

In the heat of anger: temperature and aggression

When people get hot they become irritable and may be more likely to lash out at others

After prolonged exposure to high temperatures, people become so uncomfortable they focus on reducing discomfort and not attacking others

Alcohol and aggression

Alcohol impairs cognitive functions making it harder to evaluate others intentions as hostile or not

It has been associated with such behaviour in the past
Study unit 10.3 – Aggression in ongoing relationships: Bullying and Aggression at work

Bullying: singling out others for repeated abuse

Bullying - one person is the target of repeated aggression by another; the target has less power than those engaging in aggression

Why do people engage in bullying?

Two motives:  Hold power over others

Be part of the “tough group” therefore high in status

The characteristics of bullies and victims

Pure bullies - always and only bullies

Pure victims - always and only victims

Bully-victims - switch back and forth between roles

Bullies believe others act the way they do intentionally or because of lasting characteristics

Bullies and bully-victims tend to have lower self esteem

Therefore, they aggress to build their esteem

Bullies and bully-victims believe the best way to respond is with aggression

Workplace aggression: Harming others at work

Workplace aggression - any form of behaviour in which people seek to harm others at work

Effect-danger ratio - producing the most amount of harm to the victim as possible while minimising the chance of retaliation

Three types of hostility:

Obstructionism - behaviour to destruct or impede the targets performance

Incivility - intent to harm the target in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect

Overt aggression - anything concerning work place violence; assault, theft etc
Study Unit 10.4 – The prevention and control of aggression

Punishment - procedures where consequences are delivered to individuals when they engage in specific actions

Forgiveness - giving up the desire to punish and instead, acting kind and helpful towards them

Catharsis hypothesis - if people vent their anger and hostility in non harmful ways, their tendencies to engage in more dangerous types of aggression are reduced

CHAPTER 11 – GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

THE CONSEQUENCES OF BELONGING

Study Unit 11.1 - Groups: When we join and when we leave

Group - collection of people bonded together as a unit

Common-bond groups - involves face to face interaction; members are bonded to each other: affiliation needs, intimacy

Common-identity groups - face to face interaction is absent; members are linked through their category as a whole rather than each other: identity needs, social identity

Groups differ in terms of their:

Entitativity - the extent a group is compared as being a coherent entity

Characteristics of groups high in entitativity:

1. Members interact often, not necessarily face to face (ex, internet)
2. The group is of consequence to its members
3. Members share common goals
4. Members are similar in important ways

Highly entitative groups are more likely to be stereotyped than groups low in entitativity
Groups: Key Components

Status: Hierarchies in groups

Group members differ in status

Status - position or rank within a group

Status is linked to a variety of desirable outcomes

Prototypical people - embodying the group’s central attributes; generally accorded status and elected leader

Roles: Differentiation of functions within groups

Roles - the set of behaviours that individuals occupying specific positions within a group are expected to perform

Different individuals occupy each role in any group

Norms: The rules of the game

Groups affect the behaviour of their members via norms:

Norms - rules concerning how members should behave

Collectivism - the norm is to maintain harmony among members; disagreement and conflict are avoided (collective groups)

Individualism - the norm is to stand out from the group and be different, disagreeing with groups is seen as courageous (individualistic groups)

Cohesiveness: The force that binds

Cohesiveness - all forces (factors) that cause members to remain in the group

Cohesive groups have a sense of solidarity: see themselves as homogeneous, supportive of in-group members, achieve group goals over individual goals, high morale

Study Unit 11.2 – The benefits of joining: What groups do for us

Gain self-knowledge from belonging to groups

Membership tells us what kind of person we are or would like to be

Groups help us reach goals – attaining prestige and self esteem
The more an individual is seeking self-enhancement: boosting ones public image: the more important the groups’ status is to that person

The more a person is seeking self-transcendence: contribute by helping others: the less important the groups’ status is to the person

Politicised collective identity - a result of recognised shared grievances; engage in a power struggle on behalf of the group

The costs of getting accepted into a group

Once we put effort into joining a group we may need to change our attitudes toward the group positively to justify our behaviours

After initiation and learning the group is unattractive, our commitment toward the group will increase

The cost of membership why groups sometimes splinter

Group membership restricts freedom; members are expected to behave in certain ways

Groups make demands on members’ time, energy and resources; demands must be met or member must surrender membership

Groups may adopt policies or positions that some members’ disapprove of

Individuals may leave/groups may splinter when something in the group has changed significantly and they no longer fall in the boundaries of their extended self-concept

Ideology - philosophical and political values that govern a group

When differences in ideologies become disparate, members cannot see themselves as part of the same group or sharing a social identity with other members’

Schism - splintering of a group into distinct factions following an ideological rift among members

Study Unit 11.3 – Effects of the presence of others: From task performance to behaviour in crowds

Social facilitation: Performing in the presence of others

The presence of others can affect our performance
Can having an audience distract us?

The presence of others can produce cognitive overload

Performers must divide attention between the task and the audience; this can restrict attention causing one to only focus on one cue or stimuli

Distraction-conflict theory - the presence of others induces tendencies to focus on the task and the audience, resulting in increased arousal and narrow attentional focus

Drive-theory - the presence of others is arousing and can increase or reduce performance depending on whether the responses in a given situation are correct or incorrect

Evaluation-apprehension view - as audience disrupts a performance because of anxiety about being evaluated

Study Unit 11.4 – Social Loafing: Letting others do the work

Additive tasks - contributions of each member are combined into a single group output

Social loafing - reductions in motivation and effort when individuals work in a group compared to working alone

If people feel dispensable to group, they are likely to loaf

The more fairness in a group, the less loafing will occur

Reducing social loafing: useful techniques

Make outputs individually identifiable

Increase commitment to the task and task performance

Increase the importance or value of tasks

Assure all members that their contributions to the task are unique

Effects of being in a crowd

Hooliganism - negative stereotype about crowd behaviour at sporting events

Deindividuation - when in a crowd people lose their individuality and act as others do

Being in a crowd makes people anonymous and less responsible for their actions, resulting in unrestrained, antisocial actions.
Being in a crowd or deindividuation does not always lead to negative behaviour:

It increases the likelihood that crowd members will follow group norms – showing respect, singing etc.

**Study Unit 11.5 – Coordination in groups: Cooperation or Conflict?**

**Cooperation**
- working together to attain shared goals

**Conflict**
- when individuals or groups believe others will take actions incompatible with their own interests

**Cooperation: Working with others to achieve shared goals**

Some goals people seek can’t be shared – same job or romantic partner

**Social dilemmas: Where cooperation could occur but often doesn’t**

- when each person can increase individual gains by acting selfishly, but if most people do the same thing, the outcomes experienced by all is reduced

Decreasing the attractiveness of competition increases cooperation

**Conflict: Its nature, causes and effects**

Incompatible interests and recognition of the parties involved

Social factors play a role in initiating conflicts

**Faulty attribution error**
- the causes of others behaviour

**Erroneous attributions**
- the causes of negative outcomes are important in conflicts and cause them to occur when they could be avoided

**Faulty communication**
- communicating in a way that annoys or angers others

**Status quo bias**
- powerful groups defend the current status quo to be less accurate at intergroup perception than the groups that are challenging them

Conflict may stem from poor performance and negative feedback by the group
Resolving conflicts: Useful techniques

Bargaining: The universal process

Most common strategy

Bargaining (negotiation) - opposing sides exchange offers directly or through representatives

Superordinate goals: Were all in this together

Superordinate goals - goals that both sides seek and that tie their interests together rather than set them apart

Study Unit 11.6 – Perceived fairness in groups: Its nature and effects

Rules for judging fairness: distributive, procedural and transactional justice

Distributive justice (fairness) - rewards should be divided among members according to their contributions

Procedural justice - the fairness of the procedures through which rewards have been distributed

1. The extent to which procedures are applied the same to all people
2. Opportunities for correcting errors in distributions
3. Decision makers aren’t influenced by their own self-interest
4. Decisions are ethical and values are held by all those involved

Transactional justice - the way information about outcomes and procedures are explained

We judge fairness:

In terms of the rewards we receive – distributive justice

The procedures used to reach these rewards – procedural justice

The way we are informed about these rewards – transactional justice
Reactions to perceived unfairness – Dealing with injustice

If unfairness centres on rewards (distributive justice) people change their balance between contributions and outcomes

When unfairness centres on procedures (procedural justice) or a lack of courteous treatment by the people determining rewards (transactional justice), people adopt different tactics

Study Unit 11.7 – Decision making by groups: How it occurs and the pitfalls it faces

The decision making process: How groups attain consensus

The decision quality of groups: less or more extreme

Groups are more likely to adopt extreme positions than if members made decisions alone

Group polarisation - shift towards views that are more extreme than the ones they initially began with

Social comparison: wanting to be better than average holds views of being better than others

During group discussions most arguments favour the initial preference

The downside of group decision making

Groupthink: when cohesiveness is dangerous

Groupthink - highly cohesive groups think they can do no wrong and that information contrary to the group’s view should be rejected

Emergent group norms - norms suggesting the group is infallible (incapable of making mistakes), morally superior

The failure to share information unique to each member

Groups do not always pool resources and share information resulting in decisions which tend to reflect shared information

This is fine if the information points to the best decision unless the best decision is not shared among members which prevents them from reaching the best decision
Brainstorming: Idea generation in groups

Brainstorming - meeting as a group to generate ideas together

If members believe their ideas will be viewed negatively, they are unable to come up with new ideas while also trying to expand on others ideas.