

PSYCHOLOGY

**A Review of Recent Findings In Relation to Aggression
And Its Influencing Factors**

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ABSTRACT:

Aggression, or internal anger, is one of the relatively common behavioral problems that have attracted the attention of many researchers in this field. The purpose of this article is to investigate aggressive behavior as one of the symptoms of mental illness in society. In this regard, the existing theories regarding aggression are presented first. Then, the influential factors in the emergence of this behavior are discussed, and the results of studies conducted on them are presented.

Keywords: *Aggression, Anger, Theoretical Foundations.*

1- Introduction:

Aggression is a common behavioral problem that can be expressed in harmful ways, resulting in verbal or physical conflicts. While aggression is a natural behavior that can be helpful in problem-solving when within the limits of moderation and control, it can also lead to problematic or harmful behavior. Signs of aggression include insulting others, expressing a sense of power, bullying, unjust criticism, shouting out of anger, using inappropriate language, emotional abuse, threatening gestures, and more. These signs may stem from an individual's personality dimensions and can lead to serious consequences over time (Abbasi, 2022). The purpose of this article is to explore aggressive behavior as a symptom of mental illness in society. It is important to investigate this issue as individuals of various ages can create an unsafe environment for those around them through their aggressive behavior. While aggression can occur at any age, it is most prevalent in adolescence and youth. Aggressive behavior is a serious issue that can have significant individual and social consequences. In recent years, aggression has received significant attention both theoretically and clinically (Mohammadi, et al, 2018). Aggression is a harmful behavior aimed at causing harm to others, with physical and verbal aggression being the most common forms (Cava, et al. 2020). The psychological and physical effects of aggression have been extensively studied at both individual and social levels. Researchers have shown that aggressive adolescents often lack skills in anger management and understanding the perspectives of others. They tend to respond inappropriately and aggressively to social issues compared to non-aggressive peers and choose aggressive solutions to solve problems (Rowell Huesmann, 2018). Aggressive behavior in children and adolescents can lead to physical, social, and psychological consequences. Aggression has been linked to drug and alcohol use, smoking, poor school

adjustment, school expulsion, feelings of hopelessness, social maladjustment, loneliness, disregard for the rights and desires of others, stomach ulcers, hypertension, and depression. These consequences can have a significant impact on an adolescent's overall well-being, including their physical and mental health, academic performance, and social relationships (Grøtan, et al. 2019). Aggression can arise when individuals are under pressure and unable to tolerate the situation, leading to conflict and aggressive behavior. Aggression is a major global problem linked to crimes, inequalities, deviations, and even wars. Understanding the roots and effective factors of aggression is essential to improve the mental health of society. The purpose of investigating aggressive behavior as a symptom of mental illness is important because individuals of all ages can create an unsafe environment for those around them due to their aggressive behavior.

2. Theories of aggression:

The first comprehensive theory of aggression is attributed to Freud, who viewed aggression as a secondary effect of the life drive. Freud believed that the primary drive in humans is the libido, which has a desire for immortality and survival. When the impulses of the libido are blocked or do not reach their goal, aggressive reactions may emerge. However, after World War I, Freud changed his theory and viewed aggression as a manifestation and sign of the death drive (Valizadeh, 2010). Freud considered aggression a manifestation of instinctual forces, with hostile tendencies and destruction stemming from the death drive. He believed that aggression towards oneself and others was inevitable and that it accumulated until it inevitably led to an explosion. In contrast, Konrad Lorenz proposed that aggression is an inherent trait of all living beings' instincts and that energy accumulates until a behavioral explosion occurs (West, et al. 2022). Both Freud and Lorenz viewed aggression as a hidden

force in humans, gradually becoming compact and compressed until it needs to be discharged (Sengupta, et al. 2022). However, Freud saw aggression as destructive, while Lorenz saw it as constructive. Lorenz believed that there are two types of reactions to danger: the aggressive reaction and the escape reaction. Lorenz has observed a direct relationship between an animal's fighting ability and its level of inhibition in fighting (Tinbergen, 1968). Lorenz has argued that, there is an internal urge to attack in animals and in man. An individual does not simply wait to be provoked, but, if actual attack has not been possible for some time, this urge to fight builds up until the individual actively seeks the opportunity to indulge in fighting (Tinbergen, 1968). The weaker an animal's fighting ability, the higher the level of involvement with members of the same species. However, humans do not have powerful tools for fighting, which have reduced their ability to fight. Therefore, humans have less inhibition for fighting with their own kind and have a tendency towards violence against them. The problem arises from humans' intellect and innovations regarding weapons, which have greatly increased their fighting abilities and given them unlimited power for violence. In the theory of social learning (1977–1973), Albert Bandura also expressed the belief that if aggressive behaviors are not controlled and moderated in time, they will lead to aggression (Hogye, 2022). According to Bandura's social learning theory, environmental factors control the acquisition and maintenance of aggressive behavior and do not consider it inherent or instinctual. According to this view, aggressive behaviors are usually acquired through observing others, which is why they are teachable and preventable and probably do not have an inherent basis (Valizadeh, 2010). Mass communication media, such as television and virtual spaces, play an important role in teaching aggressive behaviors (Valizadeh, 2014). Studies have shown that observing the aggressive behavior of others weakens these

inhibitions and increases the likelihood that the observer will resort to aggression (Valizadeh, 2014). Berkowitz believed that all external and internal anger stimuli converge on an intermediate variable called negative affect (Valizadeh, 2014). At this level, cognition is only used to identify the stimulus. However, aggression is not incited at this stage; rather, a tendency arises in the individual to end the unpleasant conditions. The initial response of the individual to these unpleasant conditions is either fight or flight. Berkowitz states that both responses are simultaneously aroused, but which one ultimately occurs depends on various factors. These factors include: 1) the individual's genetic predisposition and readiness; 2) their previous conditioning and learning history; and 3) their evaluation and recognition of different aspects of the situation that facilitate or inhibit aggression. In this regard, behavioral genetic studies have shown that some genetic components reveal a tendency towards aggressive behavior (Mariz, 2022). These genetic components can be indicators of the individual's unconscious and immediate tendency to display aggressive responses. Therefore, these variables are involved in the individual's readiness and tendency to display fight or flight responses and in the emergence of aggression. The second category of influential factors in an individual's response to negative affect is their previous conditioning and learning history. Negative affect triggers one's own related memory in such a way that it can activate previous negative emotions, memories, and behavioral patterns that the individual has learned and displayed in response to these emotions and memories (Valizadeh, 2014). Recalling previous memories related to the current situation can intensify the individual's tendency towards a certain type of response. Another important issue in the individual's learning history is the type of response they have received from the environment regarding their past aggression. Research has shown that aggression is usually reinforced when the

aggressive individual achieves their goals and the victim of aggression retreats from their position. Based on the cognitive association theory, it is believed that anger, like all emotions, is a multidimensional mental association and can be considered a performance syndrome (Valizadeh, 2010). However, some studies have shown that aggression can be learned as a behavioral pattern and taught as a behavior. Studies have shown that individuals with high levels of anxiety and stress tend to react strongly to aggressive behaviors (Valizadeh, 2010). Therefore, the individual's learning history and the type of response they have had to aggression in the past can have a significant impact on their response to anger-provoking factors and aggression. Based on different reactions in various practical domains, the multidimensional theory considers empirical, physical, cognitive, and behavioral components essential in understanding how the anger system responds (Valizadeh, 2010). In summary, the cognitive response to anger involves reappraisal, personal conversation, imagination, and simulation, which are stored in memory. In the frustration-aggression theory proposed by Dollard and colleagues (Kruglanski, 2022), aggression is always the result of frustration, and frustration always leads to aggression. Neither can occur without the other. The theory emphasizes the experiences that may lead to aggression in any individual rather than focusing on the tendency towards aggression in different types of people. The origin of frustration can be in the individual's personality structure or in their external environment. According to their belief, because the intensity of frustration is variable, the level of internal tendency towards aggression is also variable. Psychoanalysts also accept the frustration-aggression theory and consider frustration an important factor in the emergence of aggression. In 1989, Berkowitz showed that even unexpected and severe frustration always leads to aggression (Berkowitz, 1989). Some researchers distinguish between two types of aggression: reactive and

instrumental. Reactive aggression, or retaliatory aggression, is considered a goal rather than a tool with the aim of causing physical or psychological harm. According to Leonard, this type of aggression has an essentially emotional component, and its goal is to harm. Berkowitz calls this type of aggression "affective aggression," in which the aggressive individual perceives the other person or people as a threat or a harmful stimulus (Thomson, 2019). Instrumental aggression involves acts of violence and causing pain and suffering to others as a means to achieve a goal, which can take various forms such as material reward, victory, or admiration. This type of aggression involves non-emotional violence and is focused on carrying out a duty. Additionally, aggression in psychology and other behavioral and social sciences refers to behavior that causes harm and pain to others (Eagly, & Steffen, 1986).

3- Effective factors in the occurrence of aggression based on theoretical components:

One of the important factors in the emergence of aggression is failure, an emotional failure that appears in the individual due to their inability to achieve their desired goal. When a person or thing prevents an individual from achieving their wishes, this feeling of failure arises and, in many cases, leads to aggression. In some cases, it can even make individuals depressed, hopeless, and sad because they did not achieve their expected outcome after much effort, and in this situation, they may exhibit aggressive behavior. The intensity of failure is variable, so the internal tendency towards aggression is also variable. According to the frustration-aggression theory proposed by Dollard and colleagues (Kruglanski, 2022), the origin of failure is in the individual's personality structure and their external environment, and failure, especially when it is unexpected and severe, always leads to aggression (Breuer, & Elson, 2017). Personality disorders are also another factor that can contribute to the

emergence of aggression in individuals. In this regard, individuals who exhibit aggressive behavior in public places usually have the highest display of histrionic, narcissistic, and depressive personality traits and the lowest display of dependent, schizotypal, and avoidant personality traits. A study was conducted in 2014 by Selby, and his colleagues to investigate the differences between two groups of individuals with personality disorders and clinical symptoms in terms of their tendency to engage in aggressive behavior (Selby, et al. 2009). The results of their study showed that the difference between the two groups was significant in all personality disorders except for passive-aggressive and obsessive-compulsive personality disorders and in all clinical symptoms except for post-traumatic stress disorder and somatoform disorder. Computer games are also one of the factors that can contribute to the emergence of aggression. Computer games can easily lead to aggression due to their attractive features, such as diverse images, high graphics, and ease of use. Exposure to violent concepts in computer games and movies can increase aggressive behavior in real-life environments, especially among children and adolescents who tend to imitate what they see. Media exposure to violent behavior can also lead to an increase in violence and aggression, and many individuals become victims of aggression every year due to the lessons they have learned from the media. For example, a study investigated the relationship between violent computer games and the level of aggression in male high school students (Ferguson, et al. 2008). The results showed a significant relationship between computer games and the level of aggression in students, and environmental factors are one of the most effective factors in influencing children's behavior and thoughts. Additionally, observing aggressive behavior increases the level of aggression in children and adolescents, and the more violent the computer games, the higher the level of aggression. Internet addiction and dependence on

virtual spaces can cause behavioral problems such as aggression, negligence, impulsivity, and emotional-cognitive problems, including depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, a lack of empathy and interpersonal sensitivity, and social isolation. In this regard, cyber-aggression is one of the behaviors that occur in the context of internet addiction and is considered one of the modern forms of aggression (Ferguson & Wang, 2019). Cyberbullying is one of the adaptation problems and a form of violence that occurs repeatedly over time by using electronic means by bullies in the cyber environment during adolescence, both inside and outside of schools, and leaves negative effects. In support of this assessment, a study was conducted to design a structural model of the relationship between cyber bullying and internet addiction as a mediator based on the family communication model (Atadokht, & Ahmadi, 2021). The results showed that family relationships are the most enduring social institution and have an indirect correlation with cyber bullying through mediating internet addiction. Therefore, internet addiction is a mediating variable in the relationship between family communication patterns and cyber bullying. In a psychological study conducted by Minaei and colleagues, they investigated cyber bullying in adolescents (Muñoz-Fernández, & Sánchez-Jiménez, 2020; Besharpoor, et al. 2019; Yang, et al. 2022]. The results showed that there is a significant difference between girls and boys in the incidence of cyber bullying. Another factor that contributes to the incidence of aggression is addiction to alcohol and drugs, which exacerbate behaviors such as violence, aggression, anger, and depression. Addiction is a biopsychosocial disease, and many factors can contribute to the predisposition to addiction, which can also be a factor in aggression. However, in individuals with psychopathy or antisocial personality disorder, the incidence of aggression intensifies with drug and alcohol use. These individuals do not care whether their behavior is right or wrong. They are often

insensitive, behave ruthlessly towards others with indifference to their rights and feelings, usually exhibit aggressive or violent behavior, and harm others physically or psychologically. They do not follow social norms and accepted laws, which is why they may break the law. These individuals usually have drug and alcohol addictions. Finally, due to these characteristics, they usually cannot be responsible towards their family, work, or school environment and refuse to accept responsibility for their actions. In this regard, a study was conducted on the relationship between antisocial and borderline personality disorders and drug addiction in men aged 18 to 35 (Yang, et al. 2004). The results showed that many addicts have borderline and antisocial personality traits, which, in addition to these traits, showed a significant difference in paranoid, schizotypal, sadistic, aggressive-passive, dependent, avoidant, and schizoid scales. Another influential factor in creating aggression is relative deprivation. Relative deprivation is one of the psychological, social, biological, and environmental factors that play a role in creating aggression. In general, expectations fulfillment is something that every human being considers themselves deserving of, but the gap between individuals' expectations systems and their attitudes towards the possibility of fulfilling their expectations creates a sense of relative deprivation in their minds. Individuals who are in social networks that are at a higher level in terms of cultural and economic capital always compare their living conditions with others and feel a sense of relative deprivation. Deprivation and unfulfilled desires have an impact on collective behavior. Disbelief in young people, ignoring their position, and ignoring their natural and innate desires are major problems that make them not accept commitment and responsibility towards society. In this regard, a study was conducted on the role of relative deprivation in creating collective behavior among young people in Kermanshah city based on Blumer's Interactionist Theory

(Moradi, & Saeedipour, 2011). According to Blumer's theory, humans are interpretive and perceptive beings who can be at risk of falling into an animalistic state. Social interaction is a process in which humans shape their interpretation, behavior, and conduct towards others or in social situations. Social interaction is a process in which each individual participates with awareness and interpretation, and based on the actions of others and their own interpretation, they consciously shape their own behavior. Based on the findings of the research, relative deprivation is a key factor in creating and shaping collective behaviors, including anti-social and aggressive behaviors. Also, the relative deprivation and moral expectations variables, with a value of 51.74, indicate the likelihood of collective behaviors such as aggression in young people. Another study examined the role of social deprivation in creating aggressive behavior among young people in Shiraz (Moradi, & Bakhshandeh, 2011). The results showed a significant relationship between social aggression and social deprivation variables, education, and income. Among the other influential factors in the emergence of aggression, economic and social factors can be mentioned.

In almost all parts of the world, inflation, poverty, economic inequality, and inflation can be considered important factors in the emergence of aggression, crimes, violence, and looting. Economic challenges can affect the mindset and behavior of individuals, have significant effects on the quantity and quality of aggressive behavior, and have significant negative effects on society's crime rates. Our country is not exempt from this issue, and given the inflation and the decline in people's income, there will be many grounds for economic-related crimes. In this regard, Madni and his colleagues conducted a study in 2020 to examine the effects of social and economic factors on aggressive behavior (Madni, & Khan, 2021). It is true that aggression can be one of the factors that lead to behavioral disorders in adolescent

girls, particularly in early adolescence when girls prioritize playing girl games. The research findings show that the level of aggression in adolescent girls is statistically significant at 0.76, taking into account their age. However, due to the weak, inverse relationship between aggression and age, this relationship is not significant. Therefore, it is important to pay special attention to preventing aggression in adolescent girls and teaching them positive and constructive behavioral patterns. Additionally, understanding factors that contribute to the occurrence of aggression, such as culture and society, family, and the media, can be effective in preventing aggression in adolescent girls. Yes, that is correct. The findings of the study suggest that aggression and violent behavior can cover a wide range of behaviors, from relatively mild actions like insulting or belittling others to extremely serious crimes like murder. These types of crimes are often unpredictable and difficult to anticipate. Therefore, in order to develop fair and effective criminal policies towards violent crimes, it is important to understand the factors that contribute to the occurrence of these crimes, the variations in the types of crimes, and the types of individuals who commit them. By taking these factors into account, policymakers can develop strategies to prevent and address violent crimes in a more effective manner. That is correct. The family factor, particularly the behavior of parents, is another important factor in the occurrence of behavioral disorders, including aggression. There is a correlation between parental misbehavior and children's behavioral disorders, including aggression. Parenting styles can play a significant role in creating behavioral problems in adolescents, such as aggression. For example, a study conducted in Shabestar City investigated the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent aggression. The study found that certain parenting styles, such as authoritarian or neglectful parenting, were positively associated with adolescent aggression, while other styles, such as authoritative

parenting, were negatively associated with aggression in adolescents. Therefore, understanding the role of family dynamics, including parenting styles, can be helpful in preventing and addressing aggression and behavioral disorders in adolescent girls (Li, et al. 2022; Ahangaranzabi, 2011). The results of this study showed that there was a relationship between democratic parenting style and physical aggression, as well as between democratic parenting style and hostility. However, there was no relationship between democratic parenting styles and verbal aggression. Additionally, a relationship was found between democratic parenting styles and anger. On the other hand, there was no relationship between permissive parenting styles and aggression. In addition to the findings mentioned earlier, the study found that there was no relationship between permissive parenting style and physical aggression, but there was a relationship between permissive parenting style and hostility, anger, and verbal aggression. Moreover, the study found that there was a relationship between authoritarian parenting style and relational aggression, physical aggression, hostility, and anger, but no relationship was found between authoritarian parenting style and verbal aggression. The study concluded that a democratic parenting style was the most effective method for reducing aggression and its components. Additionally, another study investigated the effectiveness of a parenting training package in reducing aggression and delinquency problems in teenagers. This was a semi-experimental study that showed promising results (Li, et al. 2022). The study concluded that educating parents is one of the fundamental solutions for reducing the challenges of dealing with aggression in adolescents. One of the factors that can significantly contribute to the emergence of aggression is the temperature of the earth. Given the rapid increase in global warming, behaviors resulting from severe weather events and longer-term changes in food production and water availability can lead to some groups of

people being forced to migrate and become refugees or internally displaced persons (Miles-Novelo, & Anderson, 2019). This movement can in turn increase the potential for violent behavior, especially in response to the challenges created by climate change. In this regard, Novolo and colleagues concluded in a 2019 study that rapid global warming can increase aggression and violence. Their model showed that the relationship between rapid warming and anti-social behavior affects the risk factors for aggression and violence. Countries that have experienced severe turmoil, especially in the face of violence and conflict, are those with high population densities that have experienced severe losses of land, water, agricultural, and livestock products. These countries are particularly susceptible to increasing aggression and violence resulting from rapid climate change. Therefore, even in the most economically advanced and deprived countries, the harmful effects of rapid climate change have had disproportionate effects on the lives of their populations and have led to increased aggression. On the other hand, identifying anxiety and depression as mediating mechanisms in the formation of aggression, especially among couples under economic pressure or psychological aggression, plays an important role in their evaluation and treatment (Falconier, 2010). Therefore, even in the most economically advanced countries and the most deprived ones, the harmful effects of rapid climate change have had disproportionate effects on the lives of their populations and have led to increased aggression. On the other hand, identifying anxiety and depression as mediating mechanisms in the formation of aggression, especially among couples under economic pressure and psychological aggression, plays an important role in their evaluation and treatment."

4- Conclusion:

Aggressive behavior is a symptom of mental health problems and is a major global problem that can occur at any age. Aggression is often linked to crime, inequality, deviations, and wars. The frustration-aggression theory states that aggression is the result of frustration. Personality disorders, such as histrionic, narcissistic, and depressive traits, can contribute to the emergence of aggression. Computer games are also a factor in the development of aggressive behavior. Addiction to the internet and virtual spaces can lead to behavioral problems, including cyber aggression, cognitive and emotional problems, and social isolation. Family relationships can indirectly contribute to cyber aggression through internet addiction, which is a mediating variable in the relationship between family communication patterns and cyber aggression. Alcohol and drug addiction can exacerbate aggressive behaviors and may intensify aggression in psychopathic or antisocial individuals who refuse to take responsibility for their actions. Relative deprivation is another influential factor in the emergence of aggression. Relative deprivation is a factor in creating aggression, where people feel deprived when they perceive a gap between their expectations and the possibility of fulfilling them. Social networks that expose people to higher levels of cultural and economic capital can contribute to this feeling of deprivation. Economic and social factors such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality can also contribute to the emergence of aggression, crimes, violence, and riots. The family, especially the behavior patterns of parents, is another important factor, and teaching parents is considered a solution to reducing teenage aggression. Economic challenges can affect mindset and behavior patterns and contribute to the commission of violent crimes. Extreme weather events and longer-term changes in food and water production caused by rapid global warming can lead to increased aggression and

violence. High population densities that experience severe loss of land, water, crops, and livestock are also susceptible to increased aggression and violence due to rapid climate change. Studies show that rapid climate change has disproportionately affected people's behavior and caused increased aggression in both advanced economies and deprived countries. Anxiety and depression also play a role in the formation of aggression, especially among couples under economic pressure and psychological attack. Economic pressure can create an indirect link between economic pressure and negative behavior, including aggression, between parties.

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