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Problems of frustration, aggression and low self-esteem among adolescents

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Abstract

The young generation of our country is being increasingly confronted with the problems of frustration, anger and development of low self esteem in the present age of science and technology. The problem of inferiority complex among adolescents is taking alarming proportions these days. Inferiority complex is a kind of psychological obstacle that occurs usually in adolescence and its reasons are complicated and its effects are negative and harmful. According to Adler, Inferiority complex arises when a person finds himself in a situation where his abilities and attitudes are denigrated or rejected by other people. Inferiority complex is a magnification of natural feelings of inferiority and results when strivings to overcome inferiority are greatly hindered. Anything in the individual that is below the average, or gives him a feeling of impotency or ineptitude leads to inferiority complex. Adolescents who consistently fail or repeat classes are found to develop inferiority complex and a non progressive attitude towards school and peers.

Keywords: Frustration, anger, low self-esteem and adolescents.

Introduction

In the present scenario of our country there is throat cutting competition among the adolescents in all the spheres of life whether educational or vocational. The excessive demands and expectations exerted by parents and peer pressure on the children may lead to the development of inferiority feelings among the adolescents. Individuals with inferiority complex display a tendency towards overcompensation and over reaction. Inferiority complex or lack of self-esteem leads to negative or risk seeking behaviors in young people. Theoretical and correlational analyses have yielded tenuous associations between low self-esteem and socially problematic outcomes or risk taking behaviors like substance abuse, aggression & poor school achievement. Frustration is a response to low self-esteem. Inferiority complex generates hostile frustration. Frustration is a state of emotional stress characterized by confusion, annoyance and anger. (Stagner, 1961) Interruption to goal seeking behavior causes frustration. The person's awareness of his inability to satisfy his drives and his failure to achieve the goals that he has set for himself makes him helpless and he suffers from an injured pride leading to frustration.

Frustration is expressed in various modes: Aggression, Resignation, Fixation and Regression. According to Freud, Aggression is an expression of Frustration. There is increase in aggression if the individual feels that he is being obstructed from achieving his goal. Frustration also leads to the development of pessimistic attitude among adolescents. There is lack of interest in work, mood fluctuations no plans, and future orientations, alienation from the society and lack of interest in the surroundings. Individuals with severe frustration may try to escape from certain situations or may even commit suicide in extreme circumstances.

Review of Related Literature

Eisenberg and Delaney (1998) postulate that anger is a result of individuals' pent up emotions, feelings and personal frustrations. According to them, there are three causes of anger: frustrating situations, in which an individual's efficiency and security are under threat, and when the person's behaviors do not match his/her expectations. According to **Spielberger (1991)**, anger consists of two components: state anger and trait anger. State anger is a subjective emotion accompanied by muscle tension and stimulation of the autonomous nervous system; its intensity may deviate from quite mild to quite strong. However, trait anger is perceived in far more situations as displeasing and frustrating, and

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accordingly it is described as a tendency to have rather frequent state anger.

There are three dimensions of anger: **physiological, social and cognitive, and behavioral and reaction.** The physiological dimension of anger is related to a physiological change occurring in the body when an individual is exposed to a frustration or situation that increases anger (Kisac, 1997). The social and cognitive dimension explains the interpretation of perceived anger within an individual. The reasons for anger, fear, and uneasiness are not related to the event itself, but rather to individuals' perception and how they interpret the symbols in their minds; their cliché beliefs; comments and evaluations of the events; and the ideas produced from these beliefs, comments, and evaluations (Ozer, 2000). Finally, the behavior and reaction dimension of anger is an expression of whether anger is expressed or not, and if it is, how it is expressed (Kisac, 1997). Each individual expresses anger differently. The expression may be defined as externalization, internalization, or controlling (Ozer, 1994; Spielberger, 1991).

Causes of Anger and Aggressive behaviour

(1) Alcohol or Drugs:

The habit of taking drugs and alcoholism among adolescents is also responsible for aggressive behaviour. If they are prevented by their parents from taking liquor and drugs adolescents can revert to aggressive behaviour.

(2) Gender and Hormones:

Hormones also play significant role in causing aggressive behaviour among adolescents. Men are more likely to be physically violent than women. Testosterone and other steroid hormones may underlie some of these problems. Women may face more difficulty in controlling their negative emotions in the few days ahead of their menstrual periods, when their hormones are at their lowest levels.

(3) Brain Damage:

An injury to brain may lead to us being less able to control our emotions and our reactions. Brain damage may occur as a result of a fall or an accident. It may also occur when a person is suffering from repeated high fever or convulsions. If the brain damage is more severe they may also have some difficulties learning at school. There are other medical disorders of the brain, such as infections and tumours that cause similar problems. Often these disorders can be treated successfully in the early stages, so it is very important to have a regular checkup.

(4) Poor Training:

Sometimes lack of affection from parents and poor sibling relationships are also responsible for causing anger and aggressive behaviour among the adolescents. We learn to cope with our strong negative feelings from our experiences of growing up. Lack of cooperation from the parents, teachers and friends also result in aggressive behaviour among the adolescents. If the parents, friends and teachers showed the right ways to adolescents to adjust successfully to work and society, they might have suffered less problems.

(5) Stress:

In the present age of excessive competition a person can suffer from high levels of stress at his job or in the college. High levels of stress tend to make us less able to cope with

strong unpleasant feelings. We may become irritable, less tolerant of other people and more quickly frustrated when things do not go smoothly. If we are in a stressful personal relationship or having too much pressure at our workplace that may lead to emotional outbursts which make our stress even worse. High stress often causes sleep disorders that make us less able to cope with everyday problems and results in frustration and aggressive behaviour among adolescents.

During adolescence, parents are the main source of support for the development of personality traits and play significant role in decision making process. (Wall, Covell, & Macintyre, 1999). Teachers also play an important role in the development of balanced personality and academic attitude among adolescents. (Gurkan, 1993); but peers are the most sought after sources of help and support. The mutual sharing of personal, social, or moral ideas by peers supports the individual and his/her social development (Turner, 1999). Regardless of the level of stress in the adolescent's life, social support sources positively affect the individual's adaptation in a positive way (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Contemporary research on the topic indicates that an individual's academic success, problem solving abilities, social accomplishment level (Altunbas, 2002), decision-making abilities (Gucray, 1998), life satisfaction level (Duru, 2007), and self-esteem (Esenay, 2002; Kahrman, 2002; Unuvar, 2003) are positively affected by an increased social support system.

Adolescents and low self esteem

One of the important concepts during adolescence is the self-esteem. Communication and social interaction with other people is important for an adolescent and plays a vital role in the development of self-esteem (Harter, 1993). Self-esteem is a developed attitude about one's personality (Kaya & Sackes 2004) and is an important factor in directing behavior throughout the various aspects of life (Hamarta, 2004). Rosenberg (1965) classified self-esteem as positive and negative views in the self-evaluation of an individual as a whole. In this respect, social support is an important factor for the formation of self-esteem during adolescence (Rosenberg, 1981). It is a well-known fact that the relationship of parents and peers with an adolescent supports the development of self-esteem (Hoffman, Ushpiz, & Levy-Shiff, 1988; Kulaksizoglu, 2001).

Impact of low self-esteem among adolescents

School and Work

The school and college environment play a very important role in the development of positive self-esteem among the adolescents. Uncongenial atmosphere of the school, college, lack of personal interest and appreciation of good work on the part of the teacher results in the development of poor self-esteem among the adolescents. There may be a consistent pattern of underperformance and avoidance of challenges, or perhaps rigorous perfectionism and relentless hard work, fuelled by fear of failure. People with low self-esteem find it hard to give themselves credit for their achievements, or to believe that their good results are the outcome of their own skills and strengths.

Personal Relationships

People with low self-esteem may suffer from poor social relationships. In their relationships and social contacts with other individuals of the community people with low self-esteem may suffer from acute (even disabling) self-

consciousness, oversensitivity to criticism and disapproval, excessive eagerness to please even outright withdrawal from any sort of intimacy or contact. Some people adopt a policy of always being the life and soul of the party, always appearing confident and in control, or always putting others first, no matter what the cost or they may even spend their time in isolation and alienation from the members of the society.

Leisure activities: People with low self-esteem may avoid any activity in which there is a risk of being judged (art classes, for example, or competitive sports), or may believe that they do not deserve rewards or treats or to relax and enjoy themselves.

Self-Care:

People with low self-esteem may not take proper care of themselves. They may struggle on when they feel ill, put off going to the hairdresser or the dentist, not bother to buy new clothes, drink excessively or smoke or use street drugs. Or conversely, they may spend hours perfecting every detail of how they look, convinced that this is the only way to be attractive to other people.

Management techniques for Anger, Frustration and low self esteem

According to **Coopersmith (1967)**, every individual has the desire to do something to attract the attention of other persons in the society. The attention an individual receives from members of the society and the degree of social acceptance and plays a very positive role in self-esteem development. If the individual has high self-esteem he is likely to be much more effective, happy, successful, and confident when interacting with the people and environment. **Rosenberg (1965)** suggested that low self-esteem results in loss of self confidence among the individual to interact with the other members of the society and this results in weakening of ties and bonds with the individual and the society. According to social-bonding theory, weaker ties with society and its individuals results in decreasing conformity to social norms and increases delinquency rate among the adolescents. (**Hirschi, 1969**). Humanistic psychologists such as **Rogers (1961)** have argued that a lack of unconditional positive self-regard is linked to psychological problems, including aggression. Finally, neo-freudians also postulate that low self-regard motivates aggression. For example, **Horney (1950)** and **Adler (1956)** theorized that aggression and antisocial behavior are motivated by feelings of inferiority rooted in early childhood experiences of rejection and humiliation.

Tracy and Robins (2003) suggested that individuals protect themselves against feelings of inferiority and shame by externalizing blame for their failures on other people which leads to feelings of hostility and anger toward other people. For adolescents, the anger stimulus is social. Nevertheless, other people's personalities and behaviors may also trigger anger in young people. For this reason, adolescents and their families may have conflicts with society. The adolescent has a certain set of ideas and beliefs which he has inherited from his parents during his childhood which sometimes are in conflict with the mindset of the members of the society. Therefore, adolescence is an important period that must be understood by both the family and society (**Arslan, 2008**). During adolescence, the feeling of belonging is quite significant and a significantly increased amount of time is spent outside of the family with friends,

which, in turn, is an important step for socialization. However, it does not mean that the adolescents want to stay away from their families or spend time alone. Those who trust their families and have strong relationships with them have been observed to maintain good relationships with their peers as well.

For adolescents to solve problems concerning their peers and family, adapt to their environment, and keep themselves psychologically well, social support is important. Parents often get frustrated with their children. Unfortunately, many parents attempt to manage their children using forms of anger. Parents yell, threaten to lose emotional control, use physical punishment, threaten to severely punish, and use a lot of sarcasm – all ineffective methods for managing children. Children closely observe and imitate the behavior of their parents. Two common sources of our anger are low frustration tolerance and threats to our self-worth. Anger can be perfectly normal, and healthy for children if it is expressed appropriately. The feelings of students should be duly acknowledged and let them know that their point is valid and that you understand. Students should know that being angry is okay, but that there is an appropriate way to deal with their feelings. Emphasize upon them that anger can be expressed in a calm and respectful manner. Recognize the difference between anger and aggression. Although the two are similar and may occur together, anger is an emotion that may result from frustration, low self-esteem or disappointment; whereas aggression is a negative act intended to hurt someone or something.

Negative consequences should focus on aggression, and not necessarily anger. Try to prevent conditions in the classroom that are likely to induce frustration and or anger. For example, be sure that tasks and expectations are appropriate for the student's age and abilities. Be proactive. Before an angry outburst erupts, talk with your class about acceptable and unacceptable ways of handling frustrating situations. Once a problem surfaces, it is more difficult for students to consider better ways to handle their feelings.

Conclusions

Anger-prone children should be encouraged to avoid situations that are likely to trigger anger and help prepare them for situations that may be unavoidable. Develop problem solving attitude and stress management skills among the students. Emphasize upon them the importance of listening carefully and thinking of different ways and strategies to solve the problem that makes them angry, compromising, and evaluating their own actions. Encourage the child to "slow down" and think before he or she acts. Often, when a child gets angry, one immediately boils over and does not think about the consequences of his/her actions. Teaching children techniques of assessing the situation before acting can reduce these behaviors from occurring. Encourage the child to express his or her anger verbally. Rather than using physically aggressive responses, they can talk about the reasons responsible for their frustrations. Provide alternative routes to the adolescents so that they can vent off their pent up emotions and anger. For young children, create a "cool down" chair or spot in the room where they can feel comfortable while calming themselves. For older students, where appropriate, allow them to go see a counselor or interventionist. Be a role model for the students. Model appropriate ways of handling difficult situations and frustration. Give credit and compliment to the child when he or she demonstrates problem solving attitude or anger management techniques.

When the child reacts to a situation in an appropriate manner, appreciate his behaviour. It is important to acknowledge the good behaviours as well as the bad. But if the problem still persists refer the student for individual or group counseling.

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