



ARE HUMAN BEINGS INHERENTLY AGGRESSIVE? UNDERSTANDING HUMAN AGGRESSION WITH VARIOUS THEORIES*

İNSANLAR DOĞUŞTAN SALDIRGAN MIDIR? İNSAN SALDIRGANLIĞINI ÇEŞİTLİ TEORİLERLE ANLAMAK

Şeyma BİÇER HAZIR¹

1. Dr. Öğr. Gör., Atatürk University,
s.bicerhazir@atauni.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6875-4525>

Makale Türü
Derleme

Article Type
Review Article

Başvuru Tarihi/Application Date
18.02.2025

Yayına Kabul Tarihi/Acceptance Date
11.04.2025

DOI
10.20875/makusobed.1641997

* Part of this work was submitted as an essay in a postgraduate course to the University of Reading in 2016.

Abstract

This study conducts a discussion around the question of whether human aggression is innate or shaped by environmental factors. The aim of the study is to examine the causes of aggression in terms of biological (evolutionary) and socio-psychological dimensions and to reveal the multidimensional nature of aggression in line with the explanations provided by these two disciplines. The literature review method was based on the theories of important theorists such as Konrad Lorenz, Richard Dawkins, and Albert Bandura. The results show that aggression is not dependent on a single cause, and that biological tendencies emerge in interaction with social and environmental factors. The most important contribution of this study will be to present a more holistic perspective on the causes of violence, conflict, and war on both individual and societal levels of human aggression in this article that takes an interdisciplinary approach.

Keywords: Human Aggression, Socio-Psychological Perspectives, Biological Stance, The Selfish Gene, Social Learning Theory, Frustration-Aggression Theory, Deindividuation Theory

Öz

Bu çalışma, insan saldırganlığının doğuştan mı yoksa çevresel faktörlerle mi şekillendiği sorusu etrafında bir tartışma yürütmektedir. Çalışmanın amacı, saldırganlığın nedenlerini biyolojik (evrimsel) ve sosyo-psikolojik boyutuyla inceleyerek, bu iki disiplinin sunduğu açıklamalar doğrultusunda saldırganlığın çok boyutlu doğasını ortaya koymaktır. Literatür taraması yöntemiyle Konrad Lorenz, Richard Dawkins, Albert Bandura gibi önemli teorisyenlerin saldırganlıkla ilgili teorileri temel alınmıştır. Sonuçlar, saldırganlığın tek bir nedene bağlı olmadığı, biyolojik eğilimlerin sosyal ve çevresel faktörlerle etkileşim içinde gün yüzüne çıktığını göstermektedir. Disiplinlerarası bir yaklaşım ele alan makalede insan saldırganlığını hem bireysel hem de toplumsal düzeyde şiddet, çatışma ve savaşın nedenlerine dair daha bütüncül bir bakış açısı sunmak bu çalışmanın en önemli katkısı olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnsan Saldırganlığı, Sosyo-Psikolojik Perspektifler, Biyolojik Duruş, Bencil Gen, Sosyal Öğrenme Teorisi, Engellenme-Agresyon Teorisi, Deindividuation Teorisi

Bu makaleye atıfta bulunmak için:

Bıçer Hazır, Ş. (2025). Are human beings inherently aggressive? Understanding human aggression with various theories. *MAKU SOBED*, (41), 328-340. <https://doi.org/10.20875/makusobed.1641997>

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Amaç ve Giriş

Bugün dünyada, özellikle Orta Doğu ve Kuzey Afrika’da, 45’ten fazla silahlı çatışma devam etmektedir (Geneva Academy, 2024). Dünyanın pek çok yerinde savaşlar, çatışmalar ve terör olayları toplumların güvenliğini tehdit etmeye devam etmektedir. Amnesty International’ın verilerine göre, 2021 yılı itibarıyla dünya genelinde 89,2 milyon insan şiddet, zulüm ve insan hakları ihlalleri nedeniyle yerinden edilmiştir ve milyonlarca insan yaşamını yitirmiştir (Amnesty International, 2024).

Bu makale, biyolojik ve sosyo-psikolojik teoriler ışığında insan saldırganlığının nedenlerini disiplinlerarası bir yaklaşımla incelemektedir. Saldırganlığın içgüdüsel mi yoksa öğrenilmiş mi olduğu sorusunu ele alarak, bireysel, çevresel ve kültürel etkenlerin rolünü ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca bireysel davranışlarla şiddet, savaş ve çatışma gibi toplumsal olgular arasında bağ kurarak literatüre bütüncül bir katkı sunmayı hedeflemektedir. Çalışmanın, barış stratejilerine ve gelecekteki araştırmalara yön vermesi beklenmektedir.

Saldırganlığın Felsefi Temelleri

Saldırganlık kavramı, tarih boyunca çeşitli filozoflarca tartışılmıştır. Hobbes (1651), insan doğasını bencil ve saldırgan olarak tanımlamış, otorite olmadığında “herkesin herkesle savaşı” durumunun kaçınılmaz olduğunu savunmuştur. Locke (1689) ise insanın doğuştan barışçıl olduğunu, adalet ve iş birliği temelinde bir düzen kurulabileceğini öne sürmüştür. Rousseau (1755) da insanın özünde barışçıl olduğunu, ancak özel mülkiyet ve toplumsal eşitsizliklerin saldırganlığı tetiklediğini belirtmiştir. Bu görüşler, uluslararası ilişkilerde realizm ve liberalizm gibi teorilerin temelini oluşturmuştur (Bull, 1981; Williams, 1996).

Biyolojik ve Etolojik Yaklaşımlar

Biyolojik ve etolojik yaklaşımlar, saldırganlığın içgüdüsel bir dürtü olduğunu savunur. Lorenz (2002), saldırganlığın türlerin hayatta kalması için gerekli olduğunu, ancak kontrolsüz olduğunda tehlikeli hale gelebileceğini belirtir. Hayvanlar ritüelleşmiş davranışlarla saldırganlığı sınırlayabilirken, insanlarda bu tür doğal mekanizmalar zayıftır. Dawkins (2006) ise saldırganlığı genetik bir bakış açısıyla ele almış, “Bencil Gen” teorisiyle bireysel bencilliğin gen temelli olduğunu savunmuştur. Ancak kültürel aktarımın (memler) fedakârlık gibi davranışları mümkün kılabileceğini de eklemiştir. Gat (2006) ise kültürel evrimin saldırganlık üzerindeki etkisinin göz ardı edilemeyeceğini vurgular.

Psikolojik ve Sosyal Psikolojik Yaklaşımlar

Psikolojik yaklaşımlar, saldırganlığın öğrenilmiş bir davranış olduğunu öne sürer. Albert Bandura’nın Sosyal Öğrenme Teorisi (Bandura, 1971), bireylerin saldırgan davranışları gözlem yoluyla öğrendiğini ifade eder. Bandura, aynı zamanda medyanın ve video oyunlarının saldırganlık davranışlarını pekiştirdiğini belirtmiştir.

Hayal Kırıklığı-Saldırganlık Hipotezi (Dollard, et. Al, 1939) ise saldırganlığın hayal kırıklığına bağlı olarak ortaya çıktığını savunur. Ancak bu teori, her hayal kırıklığının saldırganlıkla sonuçlanmadığını kabul eder. Modern yaklaşımlar, hayal kırıklığının yarattığı olumsuz duyguların saldırganlığı tetikleyebileceğini vurgulamaktadır (Dollard, et. Al, 1939). Örneğin, bir savaş bölgesindeki zorlayıcı yaşam koşulları, bireylerde saldırgan davranışların ortaya çıkma olasılığını artırabilir.

Deindividuation (Bireysel Kimlik Kaybı) ve Toplumsal Etkiler

Deindividuation (Bireysel Kimlik Kaybı) teorisi (Mann, Newton & Innes, 1982), bireylerin topluluk içinde kimliklerini kaybettikleri ve sosyal değerlendirme kaygılarının azaldığı durumları açıklar. Kalabalık gruplar içinde, bireyler normalde sergilemeyecekleri saldırgan davranışlar gösterebilirler. Bu durum, sosyal medya ve siber zorbalık gibi örneklerde de görülmektedir. İnternetin anonimliği ve mesafe hissi, bireylerin saldırgan davranışlarda bulunma olasılığını artırabilir. Araştırmalar, sosyal medyanın aşırı kullanımının depresyon ve saldırganlık eğilimlerini artırabileceğini göstermektedir (bakınız: Shahid, Yousaf, Havaida’nın 2024’teki çalışmaları (Shadid at al, 2024), Haddad ve diğerlerinin çalışmaları (Haddad, at al, 2021)).

Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliği, saldırganlığın diğer bir önemli boyutudur (Basar, Demirci, 2015). Feminist yaklaşımlar, saldırganlığın yalnızca biyolojik ve psikolojik nedenlere dayandırılmayacağını, toplumsal yapıların ve kültürel normların da bu davranışı şekillendirdiğini savunmaktadır (Demirtas-Madran, 2020).

Çalışmanın Katkıları ve Sonuç

Bu çalışma, saldırganlığın biyolojik, psikolojik ve çevresel boyutlarını ele alarak, bireyler ve toplumlar üzerindeki etkilerini analiz etmektedir. Saldırganlık, bireyler arası ilişkilerden uluslararası çatışmalara kadar geniş bir yelpazede görülen karmaşık bir olgudur. Ekonomik eşitsizlik, savaş ve toplumsal ayrımcılık gibi unsurlar saldırganlığı artırabilirken, kültürel normlar, eğitim ve medya bu eğilimleri şekillendirebilir.

Literatür taramasının sonuçları saldırganlığın çevresel faktörler ve doğuştan gelen eğilimlerin bir kombinasyonundan etkilenen karmaşık ve çok boyutlu bir olgu olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Bununla birlikte, saldırganlığın doğasına ilişkin kesin kanıtların gerekli olduğunu hatırlamak önemlidir. Sonuç olarak, burada sunulan yorumlar sonuç olmaktan ziyade teorik bakış açıları olarak görülmelidir.

Sonuç olarak, saldırganlık biyolojik dürtülerin ötesinde çevresel ve toplumsal faktörlerle şekillenen bir olgudur. Daha barışçıl bir dünya için saldırganlık üzerine disiplinler arası çalışmalar yapılmalı ve etkilerini en aza indirecek politikalar geliştirilmelidir. Gelecekteki araştırmalar, bu olguyu toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliği, dijital medya ve uluslararası ilişkiler bağlamında daha geniş bir perspektifle ele almalıdır.

Bu makale, teorik temelli disiplinlerarası bir yaklaşım sunmakta ve teorik çalışmaların sınırlılıklarını kabul etmektedir. Gelecekteki araştırmaların, burada sunulan çerçeveleri ampirik olarak test etmesi önemlidir. Özellikle saldırganlığın sosyoekonomik koşullar, dijital medya ve kurumsal yapılarla ilişkisi ile devlet temelli saldırganlık üzerine ampirik çalışmalar, barış çalışmalarına önemli katkılar sağlayacaktır.

1. INTRODUCTION

Amidst the profound chaos and warfare plaguing human civilisation, particularly when states themselves undermine and terrorize global order, we may be neglecting the fundamental problems that require our attention. At the same time, we grapple with little issues in this turmoil. Therefore, thinking over the question of ‘Are Human Beings Inherently Aggressive?’ is such a question that we need to pay attention. If we ask the question, ‘Why do people go into a war or what causes war?’, we should pay attention to aggression. Aggression is a phenomenon that touches different disciplines ranging across diverse fields from ethnology to biology, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and politics. In this article, aggression will be examined from the view of two disciplines: the evolutionary perspective of biology and socio-psychology. Looking at these two disciplines will also provide us to understand two counter approaches as aggression is an instinctive drive or other factors such as the environment are critical in the aggression of human beings. This essay suggests that, under certain conditions, aggression that originates from within can be easily triggered by elements that affect the surroundings.

This paper is designed to examine the underlying causes and dimensions of human aggression with an interdisciplinary approach, especially in the light of biological and socio-psychological theories. By comparatively addressing the question of whether aggression is instinctive or learned behavior, it aims to reveal that this phenomenon is shaped by environmental and cultural factors as well as individual characteristics. The study focuses on making a more holistic contribution to the literature by establishing a connection between individual behaviors and social and political phenomena (violence, war, conflict, etc.). Thus, it is expected to guide future research and contribute to the development of strategies for peace.

Today, there are more than 45 armed conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa alone. (Geneva Academy, 2024). By the end of 2021, 89.2 million people had been displaced due to violence, persecution, and human rights violations, and millions had died, according to Amnesty International. Wars, conflicts, and terrorism are all over the world (Amnesty International, 2024). Discussing the question above allows us to make sense of the roots of violence around us and the causes of wars around the world. Because aggression is a phenomenon that has shaped history from its earliest times. Thus, it is not a new phenomenon and an inheritance from our ancestors for 25.000 years (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003). Human history is full of wars, which are directly bound with aggression, bloody events, and genocides. Aggression is a fact that also affects people’s daily lives by turning to violence in traffic, in a queue, in domestic spaces, and anywhere. It is not difficult to see violence in every part of life, especially in the media, such as television, and also in social media, which has become integrated into our lives so quickly with the emergence of new technology.

Therefore, it is important to define aggression and explain the reasons that cause it. More importantly, the discussion about whether humans are inherently aggressive or whether those who have a naturally good nature can be affected by external and environmental factors, such as culture, social life, and others, and subsequently exhibit aggressive behaviour, is always topical.

1.1. Defining Aggression

There is no common ‘sense’ of the definition of aggression (Heinze, 2013). Different disciplines have different definitions of aggression. From a socio-psychological perspective, aggression can be defined as “*behavior directed toward another individual carried out with the proximate (immediate) intent to cause harm*” (Anderson and Huesmann, 2003, p. 296). From a psychological perspective, it is also defined as “*any sequence of behaviour, the goal response to which is an injury of the person towards whom it is directed*” (Dollard, Miller, Mowrer & Sears, 1939). Rather than focusing on possible solutions to prevent aggression, this research emphasizes the theories of particular scholars that explain the causes of aggression.

Beginning around the 17th and 18th centuries, it became a question in people’s minds whether humans are inherently aggressive or if they are born with a good nature.

1.1.1. Thomas Hobbes: Humanity’s Brutal State of Nature

Thomas Hobbes was the first philosopher in Europe to state that humanity’s ‘state of nature’ is bad, brutal, and selfish in his famous book ‘*Leviathan*’. Such a world, “a war of every man against every man” made life ‘poor, nasty, brutish and short’. A man will only be concerned with his well-being according to him, because there are not enough resources available. That being the case, he is both self-centred and sensible.

Humanity descends into anarchy and violence when there is no supreme authority present to guide it. Hobbes establishes a connection between the character of human people and the condition of not having authority.

1.1.2. John Locke and Jean-jacques Rousseau: the Optimistic Counterpoint

In contrast to Thomas Hobbes, John Locke (*Two Treatises of Government* (1689) and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690)) claimed that individuals possess the capacity to comprehend morality and act in alignment with the ideals of justice and the principle of fairness, although they may behave in their self-interest. Because, as he argued, humans are good and capable of living in peace. Similar to Locke, according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*Discourse on the Origins and Foundation of Inequality among Mankind* (1755)), first humans lived essentially peacefully until agriculture, demographic growth, private property, and class division became overriding social factors. These factors divided people and brought war to human lives (Gat, 2006).

In contrast to Thomas Hobbes, John Locke (*Two Treatises of Government* (1689) and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690)) claimed that individuals possess the capacity to comprehend morality and act in alignment with the ideals of justice and the principle of fairness, although they may behave in their self-interest. Because, as he argued, humans are good and capable of living in peace. Similar to Locke, according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*Discourse on the Origins and Foundation of Inequality among Mankind* (1755)), first humans lived essentially peacefully until agriculture, demographic growth, private property, and class division became overriding social factors. These factors divided people and brought war to human lives (Gat, 2006).

1.1.3. Influence on International Relations Theories

Philosophers mentioned above are also two essential names in the discipline of International Relations (IR) in terms of developing theories of IR as realism and liberalism in the light of their contributions to the discussions of the nature of states as well as the nature of human beings. From Hobbes and Rousseau onwards, philosophers and scholars held a variety of opinions, which caused them to be split. Some scholars looked at things from Hobbes's perspective, while others agreed with Locke and Rousseau's approach to the problem. From a biological perspective, aggression is accepted as an instinctive drive. There are also two approaches in psychology – Social Learning Theory and Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis – that will be discussed in this essay. From the point of view of these two approaches, aggression is a learned behaviour after birth; it is learned by observation, or it is a response to frustration. Some Ethologists, such as Konrad Lorenz (2002), argue that to analyse human aggression, one needs to start with animal aggression because they see humans as a kind of animal, generally ignoring external factors which are directly connected with human social life and culture. On the other hand, some writers, such as Azar Gat, define the differences between animals and humans. According to Azar Gat (2002), animals have only undergone biological evolution, and this has quite a *slow pace*. On the other hand, humans also have cultural evolution, which has transformed them faster than their biological evolution. Cultural evolution is much more complex, and culture, environment, nature, and biological needs are all interwoven in this process. To sum up, humans have a history and advanced interaction abilities that animals do not. This could be seen as *humanity's most distinctive* feature (Gat, 2006, pp. 3-4). There is also another thought that attributes importance to 'genes' concerning aggression (Dawkins, 2006).

2. Biological Perspectives on Aggression

2.1. Konrad Lorenz: Aggression as an Instinctive Drive

Ethologist Konrad Lorenz wrote his book, *On Aggression*, in 1966. This book had a significant influence on people who studied aggression and human behaviour. Lorenz stated that human aggression is an instinct that is fed by an energy source that flows lastingly, and it is embedded in all species and humans. It does not have to be a reaction to external influence. According to Lorenz, energy that is bound instinctively to an action is accumulated lastingly, and if enough energy is accumulated, even if there is no external stimulus, energy can flow to the outside. People and animals always want to seek a way to alleviate their emotional energy. Moreover, they try to find stimuli; if they cannot, they create it (Lorenz, 2002).

Another argument that Lorenz makes is that violence is necessary for life and serves the purpose of life. It also helps individuals and species continue to exist, which is a benefit to both of them. Intra-species

aggression acts as a power which helps to continue the existence of that species. Similar to Lorenz, E. O. Wilson (1975) examined the evolution of aggression and its role in the survival of early human behaviours. However, Lorenz elaborated that the impulse that sustains animal existence transforms into a distinct and 'exaggerated' state, becoming 'wild' or uncontrolled. In other words, instead of serving as a thing that helps to continue the existence of life, aggression can become something that *threatens* its continued existence (Lorenz, 2002).

A parallel is drawn between the behaviour of animals and that of humans by Lorenz. According to him, humans are a special form of animal, and because of this, it is essential to make an effort to comprehend animal aggression before attempting to comprehend human aggression. In addition to this, he differentiates between carnivores and humans in terms of how they display their anger. Carnivores can soothe their hostility by engaging in ritual combat, which allows them to do so without causing injury to one another. When it comes to protection, however, humans do not possess such a mechanism. As a result of this, they are unable to exhibit aggressive behaviour in the same way that a carnivore would. Lorenz's ideas were criticised in terms of ignoring social issues and merely focusing on aggression as an instinctive drive because some believe that social life can trigger or, indeed, mitigate aggression. Without considering social life or the effect of the environment, it would remain impossible to properly analyse human aggression.

2.3. Richard Dawkins and the Gene-Centric View

Richard Dawkins developed his gene-centred idea in the light of an evolutionary perspective in his book 'The Selfish Gene'. According to Dawkins (2006), evolution is misunderstood by considering the organism and the group as its central focus, whereas genes are the starting point. The dominant characteristic of a successful gene is ruthless selfishness. This feature of genes may also cause selfishness in individuals' behaviour.

Genes are immortal: they live thousands and millions of years, but individuals, who are 'survival machines', are mortal. Genes are transferred from generation to generation. During fertilization, they do not disappear but change their alleles and then metaphorically continue on their way. Genes always struggle with their alleles to stay alive. For reaching future generations, they are rivals to alleles already in the gene pool. In this sense, genes are the base units of selfishness (Dawkins, 2006).

Additionally, for a survival machine, another survival machine is a part of the environment. Survival machines of the same species are much more prone to violate each other's life frontiers. According to Dawkins, one of the reasons for this is that half the population in a given species is a potential partner for the other half; they are potential parents for future children. This causes rivalry within any given species. Another reason is that all members of the same species, being similar individuals and thus protecting their genes in the same environment, are direct rivals for the necessary resources required to continue to live (Dawkins, 2006).

Dawkins (2006) also mentions memes in his book. He accepts the uniqueness of humankind. He explains this uniqueness through the concept of 'culture'. 'Culture', as a new determiner, is described by Dawkins through the concept of memes. In this regard, songs, ideas, slogans, fashion, pottery production, etc., are examples of memes. In just the same manner as genes, which breed via sperm and eggs by passing from one body to another, memes pass from one brain to another by 'repetition'. For example, when a professor or teacher hears or reads a brilliant or impressive idea, they want to share it with their students (or others). Although Dawkins maintains that individuals are selfish in their behaviour since they are born with selfish genes, he thinks that memes have the potential to improve the level of altruism that exists in human beings. He (Dawkins, 2006) emphasises that people can overcome the self-centred genes that are inherited from their parents at the time of creation.

According to some writers, to understand human aggression, it is important to observe the behaviour of primate species because some findings in recent years challenge the belief of human uniqueness. In other words, most other primate species can use their brain and live in a social environment. Humans, who are members of the primates, just have a brain that has been shaped by evolution in such a manner as to provide people the ability, for example, to gossip, socialize, cooperate, and cheat. Species whose behaviour is driven by their social life or their environment could be violent or peaceful. Despite their instinctive aggression, some species can make peace or cooperate with other individuals of the same species (Sapolsky, 2006). It is possible to say that there is an 'instinct hormone' which can aggressively drive people's behaviour, but this can be triggered or mitigated by external factors: some might say 'environment', others might say 'social life' or 'culture', in this latter regard.

3. Psychological and Socio-Psychological Perspectives

3.1 Social Learning Theory

In addition to the biological and ethological approaches, there are also psychological and socio-psychological perspectives within the field of psychology that provide light on our comprehension of aggression. Social Learning Theory, developed by Albert Bandura (1971), is one of these theories. In contrast to the approaches mentioned above, Bandura explains aggression as a learned behaviour from observation of the environment (Shalit, 1988). In the same way that people learn how to drive or ride a bicycle, they also learn how to communicate violent conduct to others or how to prevent it from occurring. According to this approach, the most basic way for learning aggressive behaviour is that an individual observation needs to be ‘reinforced’ through these kinds of behaviour directly. ‘Reinforcement’, in this sense, means to increase the possibility of repeating the same behaviour by rewarding the aggressive behaviour of an individual (Taylor et al., 2000). For example, when a child who fights with a friend at school and is injured is told to do the same thing another time by his father, the child will repeat the behaviour with a sense of justification. This behavior is a kind of learning style of aggression based on revenge (Taylor et al., 2000).

Aggression is a characteristic that is associated with masculinity in certain societies and cultures (Taylor et al., 2000). The use of aggressive and violent language is praised and rewarded through political and nationalist projects such as military service, war conditions, and being always on the alert. This is connected to the first point. Therefore, individuals can find encouragement in the fact that they can behave in this manner and they are accepted by society. Some feminists argue that aggression is not only a natural representation of masculinity, but is another way in which they challenge the typical male-centric interpretations of violence known as aggressiveness. According to them, rather, it is a conduct that has been conditioned and is supported by cultural standards that elevate authority, control, and physical prowess (Taylor et al., 2000).

Moreover, aggression can also be learned by observation. According to some social psychologists (Liu and et al., 2013), the most important way of learning aggressive behaviour is through observing a ‘model’. One way this can be achieved is through repetition. Children become more aggressive when they observe an aggressive model. If such a model is then observed to be rewarded for his/her aggressive behaviour, if he/she shares the same gender with the child, or if they have a close relationship with the child (such as father, mother or teacher), then the child is further inclined to copy the model (Taylor et al., 2000). Bandura’s Social Learning Theory shows that individuals, especially children, whose aggression is rewarded with each win in virtual games such as video and computer games, reflect this in real life and become more aggressive and violent individuals in real life. For example, a child who observes his father trying to solve problems at home through physical or psychological violence may resort to similar aggressive tactics to address conflicts at school. This learned behaviour extends beyond physical aggression, encompassing verbal threats, bullying, and emotional manipulation. When the child sees aggression as an effective means to resolve issues, especially if it goes unpunished or even rewarded, it reinforces the perception that such behaviour is acceptable and justified. Bandura’s Social Learning Theory emphasizes the role of observational learning, imitation, and modelling in shaping behaviours, especially during childhood when individuals are more susceptible to external influences.

Moreover, if the child observes that aggressive behaviour leads to tangible outcomes such as gaining control, getting what they want, or avoiding negative consequences, it reinforces the belief that aggression is a useful strategy (Liu et al., 2013). This can lead to a pattern of escalating aggressive behaviours, not only within the family but also in other social contexts like school and peer groups. The normalization of aggression in the child’s environment, including exposure to violent media or interactions with aggressive peers, further solidifies these learned behaviours, making it challenging to develop alternative, non-aggressive ways of handling conflicts (Huesmann et al., 2017).

3.2. Frustration-Aggression Theory

Another theory that explains the cause of the aggression is the Frustration-Aggression theory. This theory was suggested by John Dollard and his colleagues in 1939. When the Frustration-Aggression theory was initially put forward, researchers argued the opinion that “Frustration causes aggression” (Baumeister and Bushman, 2011, p.13). This theory explains aggression in a different way from instinct theories. According to this theory, aggression is accepted as an impulse. Contrary to instinct, impulse does not always exist. An impulse emerges when an organism's vital needs are unsatisfied, and it serves to remove deprivation in the

human body. As insufficient food gives rise to a hunger impulse, or as inadequate water leads to a thirst impulse, frustration emerges as an aggressive impulse (Baron, 1977).

Researchers who argue the Frustration-Aggression model do not acknowledge innate aggressive impulses (Baron, 1977; Geen, 1990). In the 1940s, the original model of this idea argued that aggression always arises due to frustration (Baron, 1977, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 2014). However, this first model was criticized by many researchers e.g., Berkowitz, 1989; Bandura, 1973; Zillmann, 1979; Geen, 1990; Thomas, 1989). As is known, frustration does not always cause aggression; humans who are frustrated can show different response behaviours to aggression. For example, a human who encounters frustration due to being fired from his/her job can show a desperation or grief reaction or fall into depression instead of responding aggressively. Alternatively, instead of these reactions, there can be a struggle to resolve the problem that caused the frustration; the individual in the example above may look for a new job or try to increase their qualifications with a computer or language course. As can be understood from these points, not every single aggressive behaviour emerges due to frustration. For instance, the soldier who might behave aggressively in his professional capacity does not behave aggressively because of frustration. He/she behaves in this manner because of his/her commander's orders; boxers fight their rivals because of the associated rewards, not as some preventative measure.

Recently, this theory was reinterpreted, and it was argued that frustration based on the extent of negative emotions can cause aggression (Berkowitz, 1989). According to this view, aggression is caused not because of frustration, but because of the negative feelings created by frustration. A frustrating experience may cause one to feel anger, hostility, and discomfort, and these feelings actuate the behaviours related to aggression and the physical reactions that accompany aggression. At the end of this cognitive process, whether aggressive behaviours are displayed is dependent on environmental conditions (Fox & Spector, 2009). If some elements support aggression in the environment, for example, in a situation with a weapon such as a gun or where a human is behaving aggressively, it increases the possibility of reciprocal aggressive behaviour (Feldman, 1998).

The Frustration-Aggression Theory explains why certain settings, such as war zones or communities that are impoverished, display higher levels of aggressiveness and violence in comparison to other environments. Because aggression frequently shifts depending on the circumstances. It is more likely that aggressive outbursts will be prompted by irritation in high-stress situations, such as regions and locations where war and conflict are a matter of life, congested urban areas, or competitive companies. As a result of political instability, a lack of resources, and intervention from outside sources, aggressiveness can be exacerbated, as seen by the basic reasons behind the Syrian Civil War, the genocide in Palestine, and other wars in the Middle East and global battle zones. Consequently, the Frustration-Aggression model identifies external circumstances, such as environmental factors, as the primary element that determines behaviour.

4. Environmental and Social Influences

4.1. Deindividuation Theory

Some modern theories aim to explain the effect of being in crowded groups in gaining an understanding of aggression. Deindividuation (developed by Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment (Zimbardo, 1969)) is a theory that indicates a condition characterised by less self-awareness and diminished concern for social appraisal, often manifesting in groups and crowds. Aggressive behaviour that an individual wouldn't normally show up may occur in a social group or crowd (Mann, Newton & Innes, 1982). In such circumstances, individuals may experience a loss of moral accountability and personal identity, which may result in behaviours such as mob violence, looting, or rioting. According to deindividuation theory, riots, genocides, and inhumane treatment in prisons are all examples of situations that can be explained using this concept.

4.1.1. Social Media and Cyberbullying

This theory also helps to explain aggression on social media and cyberbullying, which are the most common examples of aggression and violence in today's world (Diener, 1980; Reicher et al., 1995). The Internet's anonymity and distance can induce conditions akin to deindividuation, in which individuals are more inclined to engage in hostile behaviour and feel less accountable for their actions. The anonymity and apparent absence of accountability on social media platforms may further foster this acquired violent behaviour. For

example, if someone witnesses others displaying aggressive behaviours online, such as abusing another in the comments area, and there are no repercussions or even endorsements for the harsh remarks, it may motivate others to emulate this kind of behaviour. Furthermore, many studies (Twenge et al., 2018; Keles, McCrae ve Grealish, 2020; Sampasa-Kanyinga & Lewis, 2015) show that excessive social media use increases depressive tendencies and aggressive behaviors in individuals. It cannot be claimed that these behavioural abnormalities are only attributable to the unconscious utilisation of social media networks. It is posited that a correlation exists between behavioral problems and an individual's personality and genetic predispositions (Eraslan & Kukuoglu, 2019). In light of this, it is essential to take into consideration both the influences of the environment and the genetic elements simultaneously.

To sum up, many scholars and thinkers who follow Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, some of whom are from different disciplines, have looked at aggression from different perspectives (Lorenz, 2002; Dawkins, 2006; Bandura, 1971; Gat, 2006, Dollard et al., 1939) Whereas some look at it as an instinct drive, others take the view that it is a learned behaviour, or is affected by environmental and external factors. All these theories are also essential for comprehending human aggression that we confront today, and state aggression, which can be a further subject of discussions around aggression. For example, gender aggression and violence are some of the problems that we confront in the everyday life of society and politics. Despite improvements in gender equality and women's rights, substantial discrepancies remained in pay fairness, leadership representation, and access to education and healthcare. Feminist scholars (Hooks, 2000; Walby, 1990; Hunnicutt, 2009) contend that this gender aggression arises not from psychological and genetic reasons but is profoundly entrenched in patriarchal systems that endorse and sustain gender-based violence. Comprehending aggressiveness in this setting necessitates both individual psychological evaluation and structural criticism.

5. CONCLUSION

The persistent violence permeating all facets of daily existence, including politics and society, underscores the necessity of rigorously analysing aggression as an intrinsic element of human behaviour. This underscores us to investigate its origins— they can be biological, psychological, or environmental—and to comprehend its influence on both individual conduct and widespread conflicts. Such contemplation may illuminate strategies to alleviate aggression and promote more harmonious interactions within societies and between nations.

Ethologist Konrad Lorenz (2002) in 'On Aggression', as well as stating that human aggression is an instinctive drive which is fed by an energy source that flows lastingly and is embedded inside species and humans, also emphasises that aggression is important for life and service of life, and serves individuals and species in the continuity of their existences. While the instinct that exists in animals helps them to survive and continue their existence, the same instinct can turn to a 'wildness' that threatens their existence. The weapon industry is an example of this situation; while individuals might claim the need for self-defense, technologically advanced weapons also ultimately threaten the species' long-term continuity.

Although Richard Dawkins (2006) accepts aggression as an instinctive behaviour, his starting point is 'genes'. The dominant characteristic of a successful gene is ruthless selfishness. This feature of genes also causes selfishness in the individual's behaviour (Dawkins, 2006). Genes always struggle with their alleles to stay alive. To reach future generations, they compete with alleles in the gene pool. In this sense, genes are the base units of selfishness. Although Dawkins defends the idea that individuals are selfish in their behaviour because of their selfish genes, he believes that altruism in human beings can be improved by memes. He emphasizes that people have enough power to defeat their own 'selfish' genes.

Along with biological and ethological approaches, there are also psychological and socio-psychological approaches that try to explain aggression, two of which are Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1971) and the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis (Dollard et al., 1939). According to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, people learn to express or impede aggressive behaviour in the same manner as learning how to drive or ride a bicycle. According to this approach, the most basic way to learn aggressive behaviour is that an individual's viewpoint needs to be reinforced with these kinds of behaviour directly. 'Reinforcement' increases the possibility of repeating the same behaviour by rewarding the aggressive behaviour of an individual.

The Frustration-Aggression model does not recognise innate aggressive impulses. The original model of this idea argued that aggression always arises due to frustration. On the other hand, frustration does not

always cause aggression; human beings who are frustrated can show a range of different behaviours rather than aggression. Recently, this theory has been improved, and now argues that frustration based on the extent of negative emotions being felt can cause aggression. From this point of view, aggression is not the direct result of frustration but is rather the result of the negative feelings created by frustration.

The influence of crowding on the comprehension of aggressiveness is explained by a few contemporary ideas. The term ‘deindividuation’ refers to a state that is characterized by a decreased sense of self-awareness and social care, particularly in the context of communal settings and large groups. It is possible that social groups or crowds could create unusual violent behaviour. Mob violence, looting, and riots are all possible outcomes that can result from a loss of moral accountability and personal identification. Riots, genocides, and the inhumanity that occurs in jails can all be explained by deindividuation theory.

This theory also explains social media aggressiveness and cyberbullying, the most popular forms of hostility and violence today. Internet anonymity and distance can lead to deindividuation, making people more likely to be hostile and less accountable. The anonymity and perceived lack of accountability on social media may encourage this acquired violence. If someone sees others abusing others in the comments and there are no repercussions or endorsements, it may inspire others to do the same. Numerous research studies demonstrate that excessive social media use increases depression and aggression. Not all of these behavioural anomalies are caused by unconscious social media use. Behavioural issues may be linked to personality and genetics. It is important to address environmental and genetic issues jointly. For future studies, research examining the phenomenon of aggression from the perspectives of political science and international relations can provide insights into international events such as wars, genocides, and terrorism.

The results of the literature review emphasise that aggression is a complicated and multidimensional phenomenon that is impacted by a combination of environmental factors and innate tendencies. It is important to remember, nonetheless, that conclusive evidence regarding the nature of aggressiveness is necessary. Consequently, rather than being concluding remarks, the interpretations presented here should be viewed as theoretical viewpoints.

It agrees with scholars who have examined aggression from a biological (such as Lorenz and Dawkins) and socio-psychological stance (Such as Bandura’s theory and Dollard’s and his colleagues’ theory) emphasizing the role of environmental influences. As a result, the theories that assert aggression is either a conduct that is influenced by external conditions or an instinctive desire, in fact, are complementary to a certain extent. This is how Azar Gat (2006) gives a concise summary of the situation: However, although being an ‘evolution-shaped’ and ‘innate’ trait, lethal aggressiveness is also considered an ‘optional tactic.’ It is always possible for external factors to easily provoke aggressive behaviour when the appropriate conditions arise. This paper presents an interdisciplinary approach based on theoretical work. In this sense, recognizing the limitations of a purely theoretical investigation, future empirical work should aim to test the frameworks discussed here. In particular, exploring the interaction of the phenomenon of aggression with factors such as socioeconomic conditions, digital media, and institutional structures is essential for future work. Furthermore, empirical research on aggression in the context of international relations, especially state aggression, will contribute to future peace studies in terms of understanding the international system.

Hence, this paper presents an interdisciplinary approach based on theoretical work. In this sense, recognizing the limitations of a purely theoretical investigation, future empirical work should aim to test the frameworks discussed here. In particular, exploring the interaction of the phenomenon of aggression with factors such as socioeconomic conditions, digital media, and institutional structures is essential for future work. Furthermore, empirical research on aggression in the context of international relations, especially state aggression, will contribute to future peace studies in terms of understanding the international system.



Bu çalışma etik kurul izni gerektirmemektedir.

Makale araştırma ve yayın etiğine uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır.

Yazarlar arasında herhangi bir çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.

Araştırmanın tüm süreci, çalışmanın beyan edilen tek yazarı tarafından gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Makale ile ilgili notlar

REFERENCES

- Amnesty International. (2024). Armed conflict. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/armed-conflict/>
- Anderson, C. A. ve Huesmann, L. R. (2003). Human aggression: A social-cognitive view. In M. A. Hogg & J. Cooper (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (pp. 296–323). Sage Publications.
- Baron, R. (1977). *Human aggression*. Plenum Press.
- Başar, F. ve Demirci, N. (2016). Toplumsal Cinsiyet Esitsizliği ve Şiddet. *Kadın Sağlığı Hemşireliği Dergisi*, 2(1), 41-52.
- Baumeister, R. F. ve Bushman, B. J. (2011). *Social psychology and human nature*. Wadsworth.
- Bandura, A. (1971). *Social learning theory*. General Learning Press.
- Berkowitz, L. (1989). Frustration-aggression hypothesis: Examination and reformulation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 106(1), 59–73. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.106.1.59>
- Bull, H. (1981). Hobbes and the international anarchy. *Social Research*, 48(4), 717–738. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40970843>
- Dawkins, R. (2006). *The selfish gene*. Oxford University Press.
- Demirtaş-Madran, H. A. (2020). Cinsiyet ve saldırganlık ilişkisi: Görgül ve kuramsal çalışmalara güncel bir bakış. *Türk Psikoloji Yazıları*, 23(45), 97-114.
- Diener, E. (1980). Deindividuation: The absence of self-awareness and self-regulation in group members. In P. B. Paulus (Ed.), *Psychology of group influence* (pp. 209–242). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Dollard, J., Miller, N. E., Doob, L. W., Mowrer, O. H. ve Sears, R. R. (1939). *Frustration and aggression*. Yale University Press.
- Eraslan, L. ve Kukuoglu, A. (2019). Social relations in the virtual world and social media aggression. *World Journal on Educational Technology: Current Issues*, 11(2), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.18844/wjet.v11i2>
- Feldman, R. S. (1998). *Social psychology* (2nd ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Fox, S. ve Spector, P. E. (2009). A model of work frustration-aggression. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20 (6), 915–931. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1379\(199911\)20:6<915::AID-JOB918>3.0.CO;2-6](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1379(199911)20:6<915::AID-JOB918>3.0.CO;2-6)
- Gat, A. (2006). *War in human civilization*. Oxford University Press.
- Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. (2024). Today's armed conflicts. <http://geneva-academy.ch>
- Geen, R. G. (1990). *Human aggression*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks-Cole.
- Glasgow University. (2015). Aggression: Problems with definitions. http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~paddy/level_2/L7_aggrobio.pdf
- Haddad, C., Malaeb, D., Sacre, H., Bou Khalil, J., Khansa, W., Al Hajj, R., Kheir, N., Saade, S., Obeid, S. ve Hallit, S. (2021). Association of problematic internet use with depression, impulsivity, anger, aggression, and social anxiety: Results of a national study among Lebanese adolescents. *Pediatric investigation*, 5(4), 255–264. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ped4.12299>
- Heinze, J. (2013). Aggression in humans and other animals – A biological prelude. In H.-H. Kortüm & J. Heinze (Eds.), *Aggression in humans and other primates* (pp. 3–18). Deutsche Nationalbibliothek.

- Hooks, B. (2000). *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Huesmann, L. R., Dubow, E. F., Boxer, P., Landau, S. F., Gvirsman, S. D. ve Shikaki, K. (2017). Children's exposure to violent political conflict stimulates aggression at peers by increasing emotional distress, aggressive script rehearsal, and normative beliefs favoring aggression. *Development and psychopathology*, 29(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579416001115>
- Hunnicutt, G. (2009). Varieties of patriarchy and violence against women: Resurrecting "patriarchy" as a theoretical tool. *Violence Against Women*, 15(5), 553–573. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801208331246>
- Keles, B., McCrae, N. ve Grealish, A. (2020). A systematic review: The influence of social media on depression, anxiety and psychological distress in adolescents. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25(1), 79–93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2019.1590851>
- Lorenz, K. (2002). *On aggression*. Routledge.
- Liu, J., Lewis, G. ve Evans, L. (2013). Understanding aggressive behaviour across the lifespan. *Journal of psychiatric and mental health nursing*, 20 (2), 156–168. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2850.2012.01902.x>
- Mann, L., Newton, J. W. ve Innes, J. M. (1982). A test between deindividuation and emergent norm theories of crowd aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 42(2), 260–272. <https://doi.org/10.1037/03514.42.2.260>
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. (2014). Biological and social causes of aggression. <http://homepages.rpi.edu/~verwyc/oh10.html>
- Reicher, S., Spears, R. ve Postmes, T. (1995). A social identity model of deindividuation phenomena. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 6 (1), 161–198. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14792779443000049>
- Sampasa-Kanyinga, H. ve Lewis, R. F. (2015). Frequent use of social networking sites is associated with poor psychological functioning among children and adolescents. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 18(7), 380–385. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2015.0055>
- Sapolsky, R. M. (2006). A natural history of peace. *Foreign Affairs*, 85 (1), 104–120. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/natural-history-peace>
- Shalit, B. (1988). *The psychology of conflict and combat*. Praeger.
- Shahid, M. S. ., Yousaf, R. . ve Munir, H. (2024). Social media addiction, depression and aggression in young adults. *Journal of Professional & Applied Psychology*, 5(2), 276–285. <https://doi.org/10.52053/jpap.v5i2.297>
- Taylor, S. E., Peplau, L. A. ve Sears, O. D. (2000). *Social psychology* (10th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Twenge, J. M., Joiner, T. E., Rogers, M. L. ve Martin, G. N. (2018). Increases in depressive symptoms, suicide-related outcomes, and suicide rates among U.S. adolescents after 2010 and links to increased new media screen time. *Clinical Psychological Science*, 6(1), 3–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167702617723376>
- Thomas, D. G. (1989). Social withdrawal and aggression in children: Behavioral alternatives to frustration. In K. H. Rubin & D. Pepler (Eds.), *The development and treatment of childhood aggression* (pp. 219–237). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Nauts, S., Langner, O., Huijsmans, I., Vonk, R. ve Wigboldus, D. H. J. (2000). Person perception: Forming impressions of others. In S. E. Taylor, L. A. Peplau ve D. O. Sears (Eds.), *Social psychology* (pp. 62–97). Wadsworth. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335/a000179>
- Walby, S. (1990). *Theorizing patriarchy*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wilson, E. O. (1975). *Sociobiology: The new synthesis*. Harvard University Press.

Zillmann, D. (1979). *Hostility and aggression*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Zimbardo, P. G. (1969). The human choice: Individuation, reason, and order versus deindividuation, impulse, and chaos. In W. J. Arnold & D. Levine (Eds.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation* (Vol. 17, pp. 237–307). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.