PERCEPTION OF AGGRESSION OF SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS (UJ_AGGRESSIE_PERECEPTIONS2018WASHINGTON)

[1]MYBURGH CPH, [2]POGGENPOEL M, [3]HASTINGS- TOLSMA M

[1]University of Johannesburg, [2]University of Johannesburg, [3]Baylor University
E-mail: [1]chrism@uj.ac.za, [2]mariep@uj.ac.za, [3]Marie.Hastings-Tolsma@ucdenver.edu

Abstract -
Back ground: The dynamics of learning at a university from undergraduate to post-graduate is complex. Aggression is part and parcel of everyday life and learning. Knowledge management within such a context poses challenges to those involved, i.e. for student-learners, professors and management. In this paper we address students' perceptions of self, relationships and aggression.
Objectives: To explore and describe the significance of differences between the perceptions of students of aggression of various groups perceiving higher versus lower intra- or interpersonal relationships and to formulate guidelines.
Method: A quantitative, exploratory and empirical research design that is multivariate inferential and descriptive was followed. A questionnaire was electronically distributed to all students in a faculty of education. Cronbach alpha, factor analyses, and multivariate comparisons (Hotelling T-square followed by t-tests) were used to. The independent variables were self- love, interpersonal relationships and disconnectedness. Ethical clearance was obtained.
Results: reflected that when a person exhibits self-love there are significant differences with respect to aggression. A student with self-love is less aggressive towards self and others compared to persons perceiving themselves as having less self-love.
Conclusion: The challenge is to assist students to understand and manage their own perceptions of self, relationships and aggression to facilitate dynamic adult education

Keywords - Aggression, Factors influencing, Student perceptions, University

I. INTRODUCTION

To define aggression is evasive and complex, however even a toddler in role playis able to identify the manifestations of aggression. Aggression is often subtle, multi-faceted, dubious in presentation, variable and often indirect. Nevertheless persons are usually able to identify when aggression is presenting.In spite of this aggression is part of everyday life. It is difficult to consider any day without aggression. Aggression ranges from subtle manifestations to extreme acts of contravening own or another's rights.Aggression is part of the reality to be alive. Education students at a university are not isolated from the reality of the experiencing of aggression. They are constantly experiencing their own aggression and also of others. Education students will be in future subjected to aggression of learners, or colleagues or management; and own friends and family.

Aggression in the context of intra- and interpersonal relationships:
Aggression manifest through relationships, whether intrapersonal or interpersonal [1],[2]. Human aggression is dependent and tapered within the context of morals, values, previous experiences, social and family contexts, traditions, religious orientation and spirituality. Aspects such as self-respect, caring for oneself, having passion for oneself, and self-value is crucial[3]-[5].

Demarcation of aggression:
Although it is difficult to define the concept aggression, it isbehaviour, such as hostile, injurious or destructive behaviour, directed to another individual or the self, with the intent to harm [1],[6].It can be classified into: active overt aggression, verbal aggression, direct and physical aggression, and argumentative aggression.
Active overt aggressionis intended to harm another person physically, psychologically or to damage or destroy or to take a person's property [2],[7],[8]. Verbal aggression refers to attacking the self-concepts of other persons rather than their positions and include name-calling, threats, ultimatums, negativity, resentment and suspicion [9],[2],[10],[11]. Direct and physical aggression refer to a direct means of aggression taking place in face-to-face situations and include menacing gestures, swings at people, grabbing at clothing, striking, pushing, scratching, pulling hair, attacking, hitting, kicking, tripping, shoving and taking things [9],[2]. Argumentative aggression involves attacking the positions other persons and include a predisposition to recognize controversial issues, advocate positions and refute opposing positions [10].
Aggression manifests within intra- or interpersonal relationships, through bad mouthing someone else, spreading rumours, and telling secrets of a person to others, criticising others, giving negative names to another person, being seen as a hothead, influencing someone to dislike another person and teasing.Further, there can be a willingness to get into arguments, a tendency to yell at others and to shut others out of a group. Aggression can also manifest through the taking of others' property without permission, the telling of false stories, the writing of notes about others, and the planning to bother another

person. On the physical side aggression can be by getting into fights more frequently as compared to others, threatening others, the kicking of another person, being viewed by others as aggressive and pushing others to the ground.

Intra- and interpersonal relationships within the context of this paper are viewed as influencing, demarcating and even determining the manifestations of aggression. Aggression is dependent on the level refinement, sophistication and elegance of intra- and interpersonal relationships. When a person on the one hand is experiencing a mentally healthy and fulfilling life and is at ease with themselves and others it is expected that it will influence the perceptions of aggression exerted on others and the perception of experiences of aggression from others. On the other hand if intra- and interpersonal relationships are challenged or even at risk, this will influence perceptions of experienced and exerted aggression.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Within a university context it seems as if the involved persons are often ignoring the phenomenon of aggression on campus, in lecture halls, and especially in learning situations. These perceptions recently changed somewhat as a result of student riots on most campuses in South Africa. However, lecturers in the past were definitely aware of aggression and the way in which it sometimes rampantly causes almost unmanageable situations [12].Very little research about these challenging situations is reported in the literature. We were interested whether different groups of students perceive aggression differently, and what are the levels of perceived aggression.

Aims:

- To explore and describe the significance of differences between the perceptions of students of aggression of various groups perceiving higher versus lower intra- or interpersonal relationships.

Research design and method:

Aninferential quantitative descriptive exploratory empirical research strategy was followed. Validity (especially content validity) and reliability formed the basis of this strategy. Various and diverse consecutive factor analyses were conducted followed by reliability analyses. This was followed by multi- and univariate hypotheses testing.

Questionnaire:

Anelectronic questionnaire (available on request) was distributed to all students in a faculty of education. The completed questionnaires formed the data. (The selected items will be presented in table 1 during the presentation). In total 85 items were answered from "Extremely uncharacteristic of me =1" through "Extremely characteristic of me=5". Finally, 38 items were selected. Recognised ethical principles were adhered to.

Population, Sample, Operationalization; and Validity and reliability:

Data of 266 students were used: 177 females &82 post-graduate students. 28 items described aggression; &13 intra- and interpersonal aspects (independent variables). Data were subjected to consecutive principle component factor analyses, varimax rotation and reliability calculated using Cronbach alpha coefficients.

The final solution was 7 factors (table 1) describing intra- and interpersonal aspects, and aggression. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy of the factor analysis is 0.860 (table 1;[13]). Bartlett's coefficient to assess sphericity is significant (P-value of 0.000). As the KMO value is above 0.5 and the Barlett's test is significant.

The focus of this paper is to investigate the participants' perceptions with respect to intra- and interpersonal relationships (independent variables; see factors 4, 5 and 7) with regard to perceptions on aggression. Aggression was operationalised in terms of the 4 factors (table 1: factor 1, 2, 3 and 6) as the dependent variable(s).

Factors describing independent variables: intra- and interpersonal dimensions

The three factors describing the intra- and interpersonal relationships are:

Factor 4 (5 items):**Self-love**as it reflect that participants love themselves, care for themselves, understand themselves, are not harsh towards themselves and do not act their anger on someone else.

Factor 5 (5 items):**Constructive interpersonal relationships** as it described a person as approachable, friendly, sociable, caring and supportive.

Factor 7 (3 items): **Disconnected interpersonal relationships** as it describe perceptions of being submissive, being a "loner" and being complaisant.

Factors describing dimensions of aggression (dependent variables)

Factor 1 (7 items): **Active overt aggression**as it describe a tendency to push other persons to the ground, taking things without permission, writing small notes criticising other people, kicking other persons, telling false stories and planning secretly to bother other persons.

Factor 2 (items):**Verbal aggression**as it describe a tendency to say bad things behind someone else's back, tell secrets of person to another, negative name-giving, criticise other's appearance, influence others to dislike someone else and tease another person.

Factor 3 (7 items):**Direct and physical aggression**describe being seen as a hothead, having threatened others, being aggressive towards oneself, getting into fights more than the average person and when annoyed by someone a willingness to tell them off it.

Factor 6 (4 items):**Argumentative aggression**describe themselves as getting into arguments when they disagree, a tendency to shut other people out of a group, a tendency yell at others without a good reason and disagreeing with others.

Hypotheses: to test the differences between groups on aggression: The median count of each factor with respect to intra- and interpersonal relationships was used to divide the group into two, thus obtaining a group with a high count versus a group with a low count for each of the three factors describing intra- and interpersonal relationships. In each the group with a higher mean on for ex. Self-love (factor 4),Constructive interpersonal relationships (factor 5) or Disconnected interpersonal relationships (factor 7) was compared to the group with the low mean on the factors describing aggression, i.e. aggression total (all 25 items) and thereafter the four factors. The four factors (1, 2, 3 and 6) describing aggression together formed the vectors of aggression. Hotelling T-square tests were applied followed by Student t-tests. (See table 2, 3 and 4).

III. DIFFERENTIAL ANALYSIS OF AGGRESSION

Self-love: From table 2 it follows that a significant difference between the two groups forALL factors were identified. This indicates that the more persons perceive that they exhibit self-love the less aggressiveness they perceive they demonstrate.The means are relatively low, ranging between 1.14 and 2.26, on a 5-point scale. Thus the higher Self-love, the significantly lesser the tendency towards aggression as compared to the group of students that perceive themselves as having a lower self-love. Further, the means for both groups are low, but even much lower for the group perceiving themselves to have a higher Self-love. This overall indicates that perceptions of high Self-love seemingly plays a pertinent role in counteracting perceptions of high aggressiveness.

Table 2: Significance of differences between groups of students perceiving themselves as having higher versus lesser Self-love by aggression[a,b,c]

Factors of aggression	Cutpoint =20	N	Mean	Std.Devia-tion	P-value
Factor 1: Active overt aggression	higher	136	1.14	.26	
	lesser	130	1.48	.72	.000**
Factor 2: Verbal aggression	higher	136	1.60	.58	
	lesser	130	2.06	.81	.000**
Factor 3: Direct and physical aggression	higher	136	1.63	.51	.000**
	lesser	130	2.25	.86	
Factor 6: Argumentative aggression	higher	136	1.89	.69	.000**
	lesser	130	2.26	.84	
Aggression (total – 25 items)	higher	136	1.53	.35	
	lesser	130	1.98	.66	.000**

a. ** Significant difference on the 1% level of significance.
b. Wilk's Lambda P-value = 0.000: indicating a significant multivariate difference between higher versus lesser **Selflove** for the vectors composed of factor 1, 2, 3 and 6. Aggression total was excluded for this comparison
c. Cutpoint on **Selflove** was 20. The "higher" group was greater than and the "lesser" group less than 20. The minimum = 5 and a maximum= 25 for the 5 item

Constructive interpersonal relationships:
From table 3 it follows that higher counts on this factor compared to lower counts entails a lower Aggression total; Verbal; direct &physical; and Argumentative aggression.The means on the different factors are indicating that the participants perceive themselves as being less aggressive, however the differences in means in this case are closer to each other for high versus low counts on **Constructive Interpersonal relationships,** i.e. the largest difference is 0.26 (factor 6) and the smallest difference is 0.12 (factor 1). Compared to this, the largest difference for self-love is 0.62 (factor 3) and the smallest is 0.34 (factor 1).

Table 3: Significance of differences between groups of students perceiving themselves as having higher versus lesser Constructive interpersonal relationships by aggression[a,b,c]

Factors of aggression	Cutpoint=21	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value
Factor 1:Active overt aggression	higher	140	1.25	.58	
	lesser	126	1.37	.55	.251
Factor 2: Verbal aggression	higher	140	1.74	.74	
	lesser	126	1.92	.71	.010*
Factor 3: Direct and physical aggression	higher	140	1.85	.79	.018*
	lesser	126	2.02	.74	
Factor 6: Argumentative aggression	higher	140	1.94	.82	.001**
	lesser	126	2.22	.73	
Aggression (total – 25 items)	higher	140	1.67	.60	
	lesser	126	1.84	.53	.003**

a. Two-sided P-value divided to obtain the reported one-sided P-value. ** Significant difference on the 1% level of significance. * Significant difference on the 5% level of significance
b. Wilk's Lambda P-value = 0.000: Wilk's Lambda P-value = 0.000: indicating a significant multivariate difference between higher versus lesser **Constructive interpersonal relationships** for the vectors composed of factor 1, 2, 3 and 6. Aggression total was excluded for this comparison
c. Cutpoint on **Constructive interpersonal relationships** was 21. The "higher" group was greater than and the "lesser" group less than 21. The minimum = 5 and a maximum= 25 for the 5 items

Disconnected interpersonal relationships:

Significant differences are observed for factor 1 &3. The differences between the high and lower disconnected groups are relatively small; the largest difference 0.16 (factor 3)and the smallest 0.05 (factor 6). We concluded that although some differences are significant, it cannot be substantial as differences are small on 5-point scale.

Table 4: Significance of differences between groups of students perceiving themselves as having higher versus lesser Disconnected interpersonal relationships by aggression[a,b,c]

Factors of aggression	Cutpoint=8	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value
Factor 1: Active overt aggression	higher	140	1.35	.62	.042*
	lesser	126	1.26	.49	
Factor 2: Verbal aggression	higher	140	1.86	.76	.091
	lesser	126	1.78	.70	
Factor 3: Direct and physical aggression	higher	140	2.01	.81	
	lesser	126	1.85	.71	.023*
Factor 6: Argumentative aggression	higher	140	2.05	.85	
	lesser	126	2.10	.72	.154
Aggression (total – 25 items)	higher	140	1.79	.63	
	lesser	126	1.70	.51	.056

a. Two-sided P-value divided to obtain the reported one-sided P-value. ** Significant difference on the 1% level of significance. * Significant difference on the 5% level of significance
b. Wilk's Lambda P-value = 0.000: Wilk's Lambda P-value = 0.000: indicating a significant multivariate difference between higher versus lesser**Disconnected interpersonal relationships** for the vectors composed of factor 1, 2, 3 and 6. Aggression total was excluded for this comparison
c. Cutpoint on **Disconnected interpersonal relationships** was 8. The "higher" group was greater than and the "lesser" group less than 8. The minimum = 3 and a maximum= 15 for the 3 items

Overarching findings and implications:

It seems that Self-love (factor 4- reflective of constructive intrapersonal relationships) as compared to Constructive (factor 5) or Disconnected interpersonal relationships (factor 7) indicates that it is more sensitive with regards to indicating or reflecting significant differences between the groups concerning aggression. The individual's perceptions of self and internal life play a pivotal role concerning perceptions of aggression. In line with existing research and theory it seems that when the mental health of an individual is well, then most other aspects concerning intra- and interpersonal relationships is well. Thus in addressing the mental health of students the focus should be on the individual's mental health and thereafter, Constructive intrapersonal and finally Disconnected

interpersonal relationships. This is in accordance with positive psychology that claims that the focus should be on constructive and positive intra- and interpersonal relationships. Often the negative aspects of relationships will then solved without unnecessary focussing on less constructive aspects.

The findings reflected that when a person exhibits self-love, as compared to lesser self-love there is a significant difference in aggression. A student with self-love is less aggressive towards self and others as compared to persons perceiving themselves as having less self-love. The challenge is to assist students to understand and manage their own perceptions of self, relationships and aggression to facilitate dynamic adult education.

REFERENCES

[1] R. Imtiaz, G. Yasin and A. Yaseen, "Sociological Study of the Factors Affecting the Aggressive," Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS), Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 99-108, September 2010.

[2] Kaukiainen, C. Salmivalli, K. Bjorkqvist, K. Osterman, A. Lahtinen, A. Kostamo andK. Lagerspetz, (2001). "Overt and covert aggression in work settings in relation to the subjective well-being of employees," Aggressive Behavior.,vol. 27, pp.360-371, 2001.

[3] J. Pietersma and A.Dijkstra,"Cognitive self-affirmation inclination: an individual difference in dealing with self-threats,British Journal of Social Psychology., vol. 51, no.1, pp. 33-51, 2012.

[4] C.A. MacDonald, "Health Psychology-Self-love," (macds@healthpsychology.org). Accessed 05/11/2015, 2015.

[5] E. Santilli, "8 Ways to increase your self-love," (http://thehealthapple.com/self-love/&text=self+love+). Accessed 05/11/2015, 2015.

[6] C.A. Anderson and L.R. Huesman, L.R. "Chapter 14: Human aggression-a social cognitive view," In. Hogg, M.A. & Cooper, J.Eds. The Sage Handbook of Social Psychology. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003.

[7] P. Kumar and A. Mittel, A. "Religious attitude, modernisation and aggression of college going students and its impact on their academic achievement," International Journal of Educational and Psychological Research, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 49-45, 2014.

[8] Oade, A. "Free yourself from bullying-become bully-proof and regain control of your life," London, UK: Mint Hall Publishing, 2015.

[9] K. Bjorkqvist, K.M.J. Lagerspetz and K. Osterman, K. "Direct and Indirect Aggression Scales," Finland: Abo Akademi University, 1992.

[10] D. A. Infante and A.S.Rancer, "Chapter 8: Argumentativeness and verbal aggression'" In. Burleson, B.R. & Kunkel, A.W. Eds. Communication Yearbook 19. London, UK: Routlege, 2012.

[11] American Academy of Pediatrics, "The Modified Overt Aggression Scale. Addressing mental health concerns," Accessed 22/05/2015, 2012.

[12] R. Toerien, C. Myburgh and M. Poggenpoel, "Lecturers' experience of aggression in a faculty of a university," Conference Proceedings: 31st Pan-Pacific Conference, June 2-5, 2014, Sakai City, Osako, Japan.

[13] Field, "Discovering statistics using SPSS," London, UK: Sage, 2005.

★★★