

APPETITIVE AGGRESSION AS PREDICTOR OF SOCIAL COMPETENCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF CHUKWUEMEKA ODUMEGWU OJUKWU UNIVERSITY, IGBARIAM CAMPUS, ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

Chidiebere Emmanuel Udensi
Department of Psychology,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka,
Anambra State, Nigeria.
Phone: +2347037084336
Email: udensichidiebere06@gmail.com

Nnamdi Josephat Obikeze,
Department of Psychology,
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University,
Igbariam campus, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Chinwe Onyemaechi
Department of Psychology,
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University,
Igbariam campus, Anambra State, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT: *The need to identify some of the factors which can lead to difficulties some of our undergraduates have in their interactions and relationships with others especially in the social environment like the university system led to investigate if one of these factors known as appetitive aggression will predict social competence among undergraduates. A sample of 200 students from two hundred level of Department of Psychology, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam campus, Anambra State, Nigeria participated in the study. Their age ranged from 18 to 25 years, with a mean age of 21.5 and a standard deviation of 1.38. They were administered Appetitive Aggression Scale and Social Skills and Attitude Scale. Multiple Linear Regression statistics was used to analyze the three hypotheses postulated. Result revealed that appetitive aggression predicted social competence among undergraduates, gender predicted social competence among undergraduates and appetitive aggression and gender jointly predicted social competence among undergraduates. Accordingly, the assistance of professional counsellors should be sort after to curtail the menace of appetitive aggression on the social competence of our undergraduates.*

KEYWORDS: Appetitive Aggression, Social Competence, Undergraduates

INTRODUCTION

Social competence is conceptualized as social, emotional, cognitive and behavioural skills needed for successful social adaptation. It is also a reflection of the ability to take another person's perspective concerning a situation, learn from past experiences, and apply that learning to the changes in social interactions.

Social competence is primarily viewed as the foundation upon which expectations for future interaction with others are built and perceptions of an individual's own behaviour are developed. It occasionally covers crucial aspects of social skills, social communication and interpersonal communication.

Gomez-Ortiz et al. (2019) defined social competence as "the effectiveness in social interaction which arises from the use of socio-

emotional skills to achieve personal goals over time and in different situations." In this way, social competence covers series of cognitive, social and emotional abilities of the person to manage the interpersonal relationships that occur in different contexts, favouring healthier relationships among others (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2005).

Social competence involves ability to communicate effectively with other people in a social setting. An individual's social competence is essential to ensure success in the adult world. Similarly, developing relationships and advocating for oneself are also essential skills for lifelong success.

Appetitive aggression is conceptualized as a form of biologically-driven aggressive behaviour that does not serve the goal of resisting

a threat, but implies finding a certain pleasure in the observation or perpetration of violence. At a biological level, appetitive aggression goes with a surge in adrenaline, as well as the release of cortisol and endorphins, hormones that have a variety of physiological functions, some of which include pain alleviation and euphoria.

Appetitive aggression involves positive feelings linked with the perpetration of violent behaviour. It has been revealed to make provision for resilience against the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It is also a sub-category of instrumental aggression, characterized by the primary intrinsic enjoyment of aggressive activity.

Elbert et al. (2017) defined appetitive aggression as “an intrinsic part of the human behavioural repertoire or reserve.” However, scientific discourse continues to generalize appetitive aggression as a human experience while simultaneously limiting it as a primarily male experience. Appetitive aggression is also viewed as a feeling that seeks to enhance arousal with a positive valence (Weierstall & Elbert, 2012). It is seen as the attraction to violent behaviour which can get to its peak in the experience of a combat high. Ultimately, appetitive aspect of aggression is characterized by violence-related cues such as the struggling of the victim, irrespective of secondary rewards such as gaining status or reproductive success, as would be required for instrumental aggression.

The knowledge this study intends to impact is expected to help in the understanding of how appetitive aggression can predict social competence among students. Hence, the study sets out to attend to these specific purposes:

1. To find out if appetitive aggression will predict social competence among undergraduates.
2. To find out if gender will predict social competence among undergraduates.
3. To find out if appetitive aggression and gender will jointly predict social competence among undergraduates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Greenspan's Model of Social Competence: The theory of social competence by Greenspan (1981) underscores that social

competence is that portion of an individual's personal effectiveness in interpersonal situations and social rules which can be attributed to degrees of temperament, character and social awareness. It proposed that there are three general approaches to understand social competence: outcome-oriented, skill-oriented and content-oriented approaches.

The outcome-oriented approach involves the competence of an individual to attain asked social objects. Within the confines of this approach, a distinction is made between colourful affiliated capacities and skills similar as competence to interact with terrain effectively, to deal with a changing world, to adequately respond to the complexity of living in society, to negotiate the asked affects to one's action and to learn indispensable tendencies responses in courses of action to attain a given thing.

The skill-oriented approach refers to the person's social mindfulness. Social mindfulness is defined by the person's skills, capacities and heartstrings to gain his objects, for case and to master the social terrain, it is competence to engage effectively in complex interpersonal relations and to use and understand people effectively is social cognition.

The content-oriented approach focuses on colourful behavioural traits that adds to socially successful outgrowth. This approach basically encompasses four global traits/orders or capabilities, namely: physical health and growth, cognitive competence, educational achievement and motivational and emotional variables.

The basic approaches of Greenspan are relevant to social competence. They emphasize the need for individuals with disabilities to pay as much attention to social awareness as is paid to cognitive abilities and adaptive behaviour.

Empirical Review

The empirical study by Moran et al. (2014) on a lab-based study induced two importantly different forms of aggression through an imaginary role-play. The student participant assumed the role of a criminal who killed another man, in one condition with reactive motivation (manslaughter), and in another with the lust to kill. It was speculatively reported that testosterone enhances activation of the reward

system through appetitive acts of aggression (Welker, 2015).

In a study conducted by Smith et al. (2020) on the effects of appetitive aggression on a selected individual population, it was revealed that persons who exhibited high levels of appetitive aggression were more likely to experience difficulties in social interactions and relationships.

In an investigation carried out by Gomez et al. (2016) on the percentage of death caused by members of the same species in various mammals, it was revealed and as well concluded that phylogenetically, the percentage of human deaths through interpersonal violence (appetitive aggression) is 2%, a rate which can also be observed in apes.

Xulu et al. (2015) carried out a study on the reactive and appetitive readiness for aggression using gang members in the townships of South Africa. Findings revealed that while appetitive aggression did not show any correlation with the serotonin transporter polymorphism, the intron 2 variants showed significant associations as the 10-repeat allele of intron 2 was only found in individuals with high appetitive aggression.

Sequel to the above, following the empirical studies on the study variables, and the need that this gap be bridged, the following hypotheses were postulated:

1. Appetitive aggression will significantly predict social competence among undergraduates.
2. Gender will significantly predict social competence among undergraduates.
3. Appetitive aggression and gender will jointly and significantly predict social competence among undergraduates.

METHOD

Participants: A sample of 200 participants that met the sampling criteria were selected from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam campus, Anambra State. Convenience sampling technique was used in sampling them. Their age ranged between 18 and 25 years, with a mean age of 21.5 and a standard deviation of 1.38.

Instruments: Two instruments used in this study were: Appetitive Aggression Scale (AAS) and Social Skills and Attitude Scale (SSAS).

Appetitive aggression scale (AAS) was an instrument used in the assessment of human's attraction to violence. It was developed by Weierstall and Elbert (2011). The ASS consists of 17 items rated on a two-point scale ranging from 1 (Yes) to 2 (Witnessed). The third item on the scale is for the respondent to give a personal detailed information on whether he/she have ever been harmed by another person through other means, stating how the harm occurred. The present researcher carried out a pilot test and obtained a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .673.

Social skills and attitude scale (SSAS) is a 20-item inventory designed to assess social competence and to serve as a basis for planning intervention in this area and is also rated on four-point scale ranging from 1 (Excellent: I always do this) to 4 (Tricky: I find this tricky). It was developed by Gresham and Elliott (1990). The items also centers on positive behaviours and social skills, the absence of behavioural problems and existence of age appropriate social cognition. The present researcher carried out a pilot test and obtained a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .874.

Procedure: The researcher's ethical clearance for the study was obtained at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam campus, Anambra State. Thereafter, informed consent and assent were obtained from the school authorities. The researchers purposively selected two hundred (200) level students of Department of Psychology who were used for the study. The two hundred (200) participants completed their measuring instruments (questionnaires) accurately and were used for final analysis. The two instruments were administered to the consented participants at their lecture halls and were collected immediately after about 40minutes. Out of two hundred (200) questionnaires that were administered, only one hundred and ninety-two (192) were completed and returned.

Design and Statistics: This is a survey study that used predictive design. Multiple linear regression statistics was used to analyze the data generated.

RESULT

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Studied Variables

	Mean	Std	N
Social Competence	36.5700	10.009	200
Appetitive Aggression	106.020	12.335	200
Gender	1.30	.457	200

The presentation order is as follows: Table 2: Zero-order correlation coefficients. And Table 3: Standardized Beta Coefficients results for effects

of Appetitive Aggression and Gender on Social Competence.

Table 2: Zero order correlation matric using raw data

	1	2	3
Social Competence	1		
Appetitive Aggression	.018	1	
Gender	.010	.183*	1

Table 2: shows the zero-order correlation coefficient of the studied variables. There was a positive correlation between Social Competence and Appetitive Aggression at $r=.018$, $P<.05$, and

the relationship between Social Competence and Gender was significant and positive at $r = .010$, $P<.05$.

Table 3: Standardized Beta Coefficient Result for Independent Effects of Appetitive Aggression and Gender on Social Competence.

Predictor variable	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Df(df ²)	F	B	Sig
Model 1 Social Competence	.077	.067	1(197)	8.187		
Appetitive Aggression					.209*	.003
Gender					.224*	.001

* $p<.05$

The two models were analyzed independently using multiple regression enter method. The following outcomes were obtained. Model 1 (hypothesis one) in Table 3 showed that when enter method was applied to Social Competence for independent predictors Appetitive Aggression, the adjusted R^2 was .067. The ANOVA summary (f-ratio) shows that the adjusted R^2 value was significant at $f(2,197) = 8.187$, $p<.05$. Specifically, the unstandardized beta value for Appetitive Aggression was ($\beta=.209^*$, $P < .05$), and Gender was also significant at ($\beta=.224^*$, $P < .05$).

Summary of Findings

1. Appetitive aggression predicted social competence among undergraduates

2. Gender predicted social competence among undergraduates
3. Appetitive aggression and gender jointly predicted social competence among undergraduates.

DISCUSSION

Result revealed that appetitive aggression is a positive predictor of social competence among undergraduates. This means that appetitive aggression has a strong positive interaction with social competence in the sense that students who do not have the social adjustment skills, potentials or capacity may have the tendency to be aggressive towards those ones who are measuring up with the challenges of a

social environment like the school, where serious academic exercise usually takes place.

This finding answers the research question formulated for it in the affirmative. It also agrees with Smith et al. (2020) that found that individuals who displayed high levels of appetitive aggression were more likely to experience difficulties in social interactions and relationships. This means that persons who exhibit high degrees of appetitive aggression find it hard to interact with others well or stay in long-lasting relationships within the social environment. This is simply because no one will want to be intentionally hurt, injured or even killed because of the satisfaction another derives in perpetrating such a painful, irrational and disillusioned act of violence or aggression on him or her for no just cause.

The second revelation made from the findings is that gender is also a positive predictor of social competence among undergraduates. This means that appetitive aggression applies to both male and female gender according to their level of response to situational factors like quarrels, misunderstandings, perception of being victimized by others on certain occasions etc, erupting from the social environment such as the university system.

However, the exposition made from the third findings is that appetitive aggression and gender are joint predictors of social competence among undergraduates. This means that appetitive aggression has a lot to do with the male and female gender in determining their social adjustment/skills in the social environment. This corroborates with the findings of Gomez et al. (2016) which revealed that the percentage of human deaths through interpersonal violence is 2%, a rate which can also be observed in apes.

This means that interpersonal violence, signifying appetitive aggression, jointly applied to both male and female gender where the above findings observed that human deaths hiked by 2% which was also seen in the case of apes. This rating, by the researchers' proposition is not good enough as lives were indiscriminately wasted and cut short at their primes owing to an aggression whose objective is targeted towards destruction and perpetration of evil simply for the satisfaction the individual derives from it and nothing more.

Implications

The findings of this study continue to emphasize that appetitive aggression may not go down well with social competence when it is not reasonably controlled by these undergraduates in the social environment. In other words, when they are faced with academic stress, for instance, which is one of the social vices within the social environment like the university system, it is not a welcome call for them to engage in interpersonal (appetitive) aggression against others. This would rather cause more harm than good, thereby creating unnecessary tension in the system.

However, if the school management can provide some remedial measures such as establishing a counseling center where professional counselors will be there at all times to address these aggressive or violent students who derive satisfaction from the pain or discomfort of others in a bid to reveal the hurt they feel inside, for those who care to take cognizance of what their actions actually depicts, for not measuring up with those they are now oppressing. This would undoubtedly, go a long way in curtailing this menace and setting these aggressive students on the right track which is geared towards the achievement of their goals in life.

Conclusion

This study is concluding that the presence of appetitive aggression among undergraduates is as a result of inadequate social adjustment/skills. In other words, when these social adjustment/skills are in place, through counselling and self-discovery talks which could still be organized from time to time for these students, it would certainly lead to less or zero interpersonal (appetitive) aggression.

Future Research

Future research in the area social competence among undergraduates should focus more in understanding what actually brings about their appetitive aggression. This is necessary considering that such psychological defect could hamper their optimal academic performance.

Studies should seek to know what other vices actually constitute the social competence of appetitive aggression among undergraduates. This will enable future research in this area to

know how to apply them as additional measures in order to adequately tackle this problem of appetitive aggression among our students.

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