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Relevance of Frustration Theories in the Present Indian Context: An Analysis of Related Factors

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Abstract

Frustration has become very common these days for different reasons. People are frustrated for different reasons, they are aggressive as well. The aggression leads to many conflicting situations leading to issues that can't be handled easily. Frustration is basically a psycho-social phenomenon, yet it exerts more negative role on the mental makeup of the teenagers who are school/college going students. Some of them are so affected that their life takes a turn and they become a victim of frustration-aggression. There is a critical need to revisit the frustration theories in order to analyse, grasp and use them to deal with the frustration affected students to bring them to the main stream. This paper is theoretical-analytical in approach which may lead to implications if an empirical study is carried out in the present Indian educational context. The outcome will be utilized as a theory building-enhancing research, however descriptive in nature.

Keywords: Frustration, aggression, psycho social phenomena, teenagers, students.

Introduction

Frustration is the feeling of irritation and state of annoyance when something blocks an individual from doing something to achieve a goal. Frustration is a complex phenomenon. It has significant differences in definition in psychology. (Yangicher, 2017). There are a number of key characteristics that differentiate frustration from other related categories of states – conflict, stress, concern, deprivation, etc., for example, the situation must include social influence on a personality and have a certain time characteristic. (Lukin, 1993; Rosenzweig, 1944; Tarabrina, 1984). Aggression may be an outcome of frustration which appears to be a malicious behavior or attitude. If frustration is not the sole reason of aggression, frustration at least triggers aggression depending on situations. It has been felt that frustration is not actually a behavior, but surely an attitude. For example, a dog while trying to protect its master may feel threatened by a stranger will bark fiercely whenever he or she comes around. This may be an aggression in the form of an attitude. Frustration-aggression is integral part of human life and social psychology. It is common in all the age groups, but aggression is more found among young and physically powerful lots, therefore educational institutions are affected the most. Thus, it becomes imperative to cater to the needs to the youngsters in general and school going boys and girls.

Psychology of the Youth

Youth is an independent phase in one's lives. Hurrelmann (1990, 9) says, 'Youth is a phase of life in its own right with its own quality of experience; at the same time, it is a product of its culture, which can be related to many sub cultural elements such as place, value in human life and its specific importance in the reproduction of society. Friebe (1983) opines that youth is 'a phase of life necessary for personal development and social placement, made possible by social measures and necessitated by the structural problems of society.' The youth phase is to be regarded as the capacities and skills of personality, which are typical and obviously necessary for the adult status which is to follow. The physical, spiritual, emotional and social development of youth depends upon various aspects relating to the influence of economic, ecological, cultural and social conditions In every society, youth has always

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Played a vital role in the development of the community and the nation. Development of the youth's values and norms and often ethical and political consciousness, determines their own behaviour and actions, and subsequently their attitudes toward life. They act as systems of reference, i.e. within the socio-culturally ascribed norms, through which they strive to maintain their personal and social identity. Recently, youths are confronting both the internal and external environment which provokes them for the change in a rather complex way. Every society has its own predominant and definite norms about the time span and sequence, within which the individual developmental tasks appropriate to youth have to be tackled. The developmental tasks of youth should be associated with the culturally and socially prescribed expectations and requirements, and which are laid down by the persons of their own age-group.

As the youths strive to achieve their tasks of different nature, they see themselves confronted by what society prescribes as norms, values and requirement for action, and they seek their identity in an intensive struggle to come to terms with them. The social hindrances and problems are used as reference points in order to produce and ensure a personal 'sense of life'. The picture of the world presented by the adult society is systematically questioned to ascertain whether its interpretation is relevant, and in this process, deficiencies and gaps, contradictions and ambivalences may well cause and trigger-off violent crisis in orientation and self-evaluation (Blos, 1973; Erikson, 1986). It is of prime concern for youths to consider a great deal of social problems in discussion, not only a way of interpretations which society offers and demands for action, but also their own competence to adjust to and mastery to control those events and demands. The youth have a higher level of cognitive, emotional, linguistic and social abilities as compared to adolescents, which makes it possible for them to give a critical thought and reason to solve the social problems which the world is facing at large. To the demands of this world that they became adult, they should react to the problems through challenge, commitment and control. This search for individual personality is a phase specific characteristic of the human development process, which in the manner mentioned above are characteristics of youth. The youth phase has the function of further developing and expanding the elementary social skills and capabilities acquired in childhood to the extent that the complex degrees of competence necessary to achieve an adult status are adopted and acquired in the college interacting partnership, politics and ethics and in the field of education in general, vocation/profession in particular.

Various social problems linked with youth behaviour, such as unemployment, drug abuse, sexual deviation, crimes, political extremism and other problems during youth phase, have indeed concentrated predominantly among the youth, to which immediate attention is being drawn in public discourse. Unemployment has been perceived as a challenging as well as a serious problem throughout the world. In India, unemployment is increasing rapidly, and it has become a source of various unexpected deviant behaviours among youth, reflected in their activities in the

form of separatism, anti-nationalism, terrorism, regionalism etc. Unemployment exerts economic, social and psychological pressures, which result in deviant behaviour and mental ill health. Shelton (1985) reported that social and psychological impact of unemployment is in terms of reflected stress, depression, anxiety and interpersonal problems. Pryor & Ward (1985) in a study, pointed out that severe depression, drug abuse, increased marital and family problems, increased incidence of crime and delinquency were observed among unemployed youth. Unemployment led to various psychological effects, such as Youth are generally represented as unruly, in disciplined and uncooperative groups. This much publicized problem is more often than not, viewed in isolation without relating it to other structural aspects such as age, sex, education, occupation, context etc. The deviant behaviour exhibited by the contemporary Indian youth can be explained to a certain extent by the psychological concept 'Identity Crisis'. In the late teens and early twenties, an individual desperately strives to establish what is called 'ego identity'. An individual wishes to know who he is and what he has wanted to become, and what in actual fact he is going to become. He wishes to know mainly the adult occupational role he is going to play in future. If for some reason or another, an individual is not able to accomplish vocational identity, coupled with unsettled plans about marriage and spouse, he encounters what is called 'identity crisis'. The contemporary Indian student senses the social and economic insecurity that is in store for him. Erikson in Funkenstien (1959,75-76) says:"Among the special institutions designed for this stage, college education is probably the greatest organized artificial postponement of adulthood, emotionally speaking, that could be imagined.

Frustration and Alienation can be found as quite closely related to each other. Alienation is a problem of adjustment among the youth because it refers to a distinct experience of a lack of harmony in a man's intrinsic potential, and the possibility of its exploitation. The problem of alienation can be analyzed by identifying the role of values in the youths' lives. The Indian youth feel alienated as a result of the experience that the traditional and deep-rooted values are fast declining and are becoming difficult to cherish. The interpersonal relationships have become more a matter of routine rather than of cordiality and affection. The erosion of values has resulted in a general distrust, resentment and norm denial among the youth, and their final detachment from the society at large. The feeling of alienation loses life purposes and meaning in life.(Qureishy,1988). The sources of alienation and maladjustment are largely the same as far as the youth are concerned. The alienated youth, who truly represent the problem of adjustment, interrogate themselves for the purpose and meaning of their lives. The aspirations and ideals are incompatible with those of their society and so they seem to lose faith in it. Alienation is found to be related to various spheres of life or fields, such as culture, society, politics and work. It has far reaching implications on the psychosocial behaviour of an individual and society. In a democratic society like India, political alienation deteriorates the stability of the government. This alienation is rooted in certain social processes such as modernization,

urbanization and industrialization. Schwartz (1973) employed a variety of measures and found that alienation is significantly associated with a wide range of political behaviour, including revolutionary behaviour, reformism, protest, voting participation in radical political movements and vicarious use of mass media. It is now widely accepted that magnitude and distribution of political alienation are significantly related to the stability, integration and development of political systems. Alienation then appears to be a fundamental aspect of human political orientation.

The problem of alienation among the youth, it seems, can be meaningfully analyzed by identifying the role of values in their lives and revitalizing them, so as to resolve their wanting impact on behaviour. Many problems that confront our youth presumably stem from the fact that the values have ceased to play an active role in their lives. The socio-cultural environment is experienced by the youth as one where the traditional values are not held high and to be successful in life is to be practical. It is of no avail to be sincere, responsible and daring. It is like inviting trouble to be honest, hospitable, righteous and modest. Fidelity, dutifulness and love sound primitive. Patriotism and humility do not pay. Selfless devotion and sacrifice are impracticable. The youth become more reassured of such realization as they face them. They find themselves in a state of helplessness. They resist accepting the value system on which the structure of society rests. Their old role in society being not well defined, they start entertaining a feeling of worthlessness, which in turn gives rise to the feelings of mistrust and confusion. Most college and university students are in the post-adolescent age, which is on the threshold of adulthood, but still they are usually found mentally immature and over sensitive. They react to all sorts of situations by their emotional responses and impulsive attitudes, may it be a serious problem or a trivial one. During this emotive stage, with their impulsive attitudes, they could be easily used for any purpose, be it constructive or destructive.

Frustration-aggression: The concept

A Dictionary of the Social Sciences defines 'frustration' as the obstruction or thwarting of a felt need and / or the feelings that result from such obstruction. Morgan (1961) defines it as follows: 'When the striving behaviour of a motivated organism is blocked by obstacles, we say the organism is frustrated'. Freud (1920) says: "Frustration occurred whenever pleasure seeking or pain avoiding behaviour was blocked". Sears (1946) has defined frustration as "that condition which exists when goal response suffers interference". Maslow and Mittleman (1951) conceive of frustration as involving danger to the integrity of personality, the lowering of self-esteem, or damage of the feeling of security. Dragomira & Todorescub (2011) contend: with regard to adolescents and young people, aggression must not be understood as a hallmark of criminal behaviour. It is rather their attempt to discover their own identity and even forge a combative attitude necessary to earn them the appropriate social status among adults. Their aggression may evolve towards criminal acts when the young man realizes that both his

attitude and behaviour are rejected by the society as a whole. Hence, the young will reject or disapprove of conventional-traditional models; he/she will leave and drop out family or school. Then, he/she will affiliate to those groups from where they can muster emotional support and safety.

Depressive symptoms

Clinical evidence of depression has been given by the psychoanalytic view that depression results from aggression which might turn inward against the self. On the other hand, from the observation of depressive as well as aggressive features in patients with major depression (Rose and Fioravanti, 2010) where subtypes of depressed groups with and without certain aspects of aggression could be identified. In addition, Aggression can be characterized by low tolerance to frustration (Mahon, Yarcheski & Hanks, 2007)

Theories of Frustration

Rosenzweig's Frustration Theory

In 1934, Saul Rosenzweig published a 'heuristic classification of types of reactions to frustration' (A heuristic device is one that is intended to stimulate research). The theory consisted of three major points. First, there was a very global definition of frustration conceived of as the occurrence of an obstacle that prevented the satisfaction of a need. Second, and perhaps the best-known feature of this approach, was a classification of types of reactions to frustration, namely Extra-punitive, Intropunitive and non-punitive reactions. Finally, Rosenzweig addressed himself to the concept of frustration tolerance. He made two assertions: (a) frustration tolerance tends to increase with age, and (b) there is some sort of 'optimum' amount of frustration that an individual should experience at a particular development level in order to attain maximal frustration tolerance.

The Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis

This theory was presented by a group of social scientists working at Yale's Institute of Human Relations. Taking inspiration from Freud who explained aggression as the result of frustration, Dollard et al. also known as the 'Yale group' formulated a theory that frustration results in aggression. The basis of this theory consisted of two seemingly very straightforward propositions: (a) the occurrence of frustration always increased the tendency of an organism to respond aggressively, and (b) whenever an organism responded aggressively, this was prima - facie evidence of the previous occurrence of frustration. In brief, frustration ultimately leads to aggression; aggression always implies that frustration has occurred at some previous time. This hypothesis proved to exert an impact on life associated with frustration and aggression. The theory became a huge success for two main reasons: First, the theory is generally well structured and clearly articulated. Second, the theory is very close to common sense. Finally, it justifies its claims as Selg (1971) observed. Zillmann (1979) contends, although not as strong, this kind of justification can be drawn upon as a ready-made excuse for uncontrolled or aggressive actions.

The Frustration-Regression Hypothesis

It was put forward by Barker, Dembo and Lewin (1941). It was influenced by Freud's suggestion based on the notion that frustration could cause an individual to revert to modes of action that had characterized his behaviour at an earlier development stage. This is called the frustration - regression hypothesis.

The Frustration - Fixation Hypothesis

Another important theory is that of Maier ((1949), which was formulated mainly on the basis of his experiments on rats. His basic principle was that the behaviour arising out of true frustration could not be explained in terms of conventional learning and motivational principles. This was just the opposite of the frustration aggression hypothesis, e.g., which was definitely rooted in one of the influential learning theories of the day. Maier (1949) stated that the basic characteristic of behaviour in a truly frustrating situation was that it became 'fixated'; that this fixation did not arise because of ordinary reinforcement or motivational factors, and could not be changed by the therapeutic application of these factors. Fixated behaviour, in short, was an end in itself and was to be considered entirely different from ordinary problem - solving behaviour.

The Brown and Farber Frustration Theory

The major thesis of Brown and Farber of the State University of Iowa faculty was that frustration could be regarded as a higher - order hypothetical construct. Frustration, then according to Brown and Farber, is a conflict between two opposing response tendencies - one response tendency, being the one originally evoked by the situation (presumably some kind of goal response), the other being some alternative response aroused by the frustrating interfering conditions themselves. This conflict between opposing tendencies leads to whatever could be said to be the unique behavioural consequences of frustration. Because frustration is defined in terms of the relationship between two hypothetical constructs - the opposing response 'tendencies' - frustration is a higher-order construct: it is defined in terms of first-order constructs.

Amsel's 'Frustrative Non-reward' Theory

One of the most recent, and still very active theories of frustration is in some ways similar to that of Brown and Farber, but Amsel's construct is different. His frustration construct is basically an addition, to the concept of 'fractional antedating reactions'. Amsel's unique contributions to the evolution of the frustration concept are two: (a) only one basic operation is considered in this theory - non-reward after experience with reward. This is in distinct contrast to some of the elaborate lists of variables that can lead to frustration offered by other psychologists (b) The anticipatory frustration concept is used as a basis for an explanation of some long-standing problems in the field of learning and motivation - the effect of intermittent reinforcement on resistance to extinction, and the occurrence of discrimination learning. Intermittent reinforcement, under most conditions, increases resistance

to extinction as compared with continuous reinforcement. Discrimination learning - learning to perform a response in the presence of one stimulus and inhibit it in the presence of another similar stimulus - is likewise a readily demonstrable phenomenon.

Major Frustrating Blocks

Closely related to the conceptualization of frustration are the major frustrating blocks. Major frustrating blocks in general posit some mediating event occurring between specific and antecedent, and consequent conditions that cause these conditions to be related. The exact means of measuring or otherwise operationally identifying the major blocks is unspecified. Types of reactions in frustration - aggression hypothesis have been used to refer to major blocks. For instance, ego-defense, and obstacle - dominance and need- persistence have been used as the measure of types of reaction. There may be various types of reactions to frustration, e.g. Extraggression or E-A- in which aggression is turned on to the environment; intraggression or I.A. - in which it is turned by the subject upon himself; and ingression or M-A - in which aggression is evaded in an attempt to gloss over frustration. Under types of aggression fall Obstacle - dominance or O-D- in which the barrier occasioning the frustration stands out in the responses, Ego defense or E-D- in which the ego of the subject predominates; and Need-persistence or N-P- in which the solution of the frustrating problem is emphasized. The new usage substitutes 'type of aggression' for the previously employed term 'type of reaction'. The implication is that Obstacle - dominance, Ego - defense and Need-persistence are all to be regarded as forms of aggression (Rosenzweig, 1985). Leckey (1945) maintained that aggression is a natural consequence of the struggle to achieve and maintain consistency of the personality. When we consider the variety of behavioural adjustments that youths have been called upon to make to the great variety of challenges with which they have been confronted, we cannot help, but be directed by other resources. In this regard, youths adopt a negative approach to achieve their goals. In the Indian social context, the youths become concerned exclusively with their selfish interests, so alienated from the rest of the group, that they lose all sense of involvement in them and live entirely for themselves. Such a society is doomed to extinction. Man is by nature aggressive, he may demonstrate his behaviour by social forces. Youth's independence on the destructive need is what appears to be the indispensable condition for the survival of their society. The frequency of violent behaviour in youths proves that aggressiveness is innate among them. The phenomenon of aggressive behaviour is not as simple as the aggressionists have made it out to be. It is a much more complex phenomenon. No human being has ever been born with aggressive or hostile impulses, and no one becomes aggressive or hostile without learning to do so. When the youth's goal is denied, they add stimulation by the appropriate stimuli and their social organization into certain patterns of behaviour. Aggression will spontaneously make its appearance in any variety in the youth. There may be several forms of aggression which an

individual expresses to achieve his goals. Human beings may express their aggression in an extra-punitive way - blame or hostility is directed towards an external object or thing in the environment, in an intra-punitive way - blame or hostility is directed towards self, or a non-punitive way - gloss over to the frustrating situation. The most important of the requirement for the achievement of any goal is the satisfaction of the need. Frustration leads to maladjustment and aggression while satisfaction leads to healthy development and cooperativeness. College trains students for vocations and aids them in their personal and social adjustment and consequently to their adjustment. Youths see these goals with different degrees of clarity, and respond to them with varying degrees of adjustment. There are several areas of adjustment which seem to be linked with the youth's behaviour, and dissatisfaction in these may lead to maladjustment.

Aggression and Maladjustment

Studies show that aggressive behaviour is a result of frustration (Dollard et.al. 1939, Mallick and McCandless 1966; Hurrocks, 1962), physical conditions like disturbed sleep due to worry or anxiety, illness, insufficient recreational facilities, poor health, lack of play during day time, inability to achieve goals etc., emotional instability, depressive tendency (Julka, 1963), insult hurled on a person (Geen, 1968; Gentry, 1970), personal attack (Buss, 1961), threat to self-esteem (Worchel, 1960), watching of aggressive behaviour in movies (Berkowitz, 1970), exposure to modes showing aggressive acts (Mathur, 1976) and low levels of intelligence (Swatantra, 1871). The Yale group, in their well-known monograph 'Frustration and Aggression', (Dollard et. al. 1939), defined aggression as an act whose response is an injury to an organism. They consider verbs like destroy, damage, and torment, retaliate, hurt, blow up, humiliate, insult, threaten and intimidate as actions of an aggressive nature. While aggression has acquired the status of a psychological term, most of the related terms are still denoted by their dictionary meanings as under:

- Violence inflicts damage on person or property,
- Hostility - is the emotive potentiality for aggression,
- Anger acts as the igniting spark for aggression,
- Hatred - a strong, repugnance of what one finds unpleasant etc.

Aggression is a major issue in the psychological problems found in children and adolescents. This form of maladjustment is of a serious nature in which there are persistent symptoms of violent and destructive behaviour. Aggressive children and adolescents are in conflict with all forms of authority and are at war with teachers, classmates and with the society at large. They do not do well in academics and are not responsive to the natural demands and the people around them. Aggressiveness appears to be approved in covert, sophisticated forms but frowned upon in the overt, primitive, physical sorts that characterize children's behaviour, except in such formalized events as athletic contest and war. (Bhan, 1984). Frustration results in aggression, which in turn results in maladjustment. The cause of frustration may be personal, cultural or social. The

need for the diagnostic appraisal of adjustment / maladjustment of the college level students is well established in the modern age. The global picture of students' unrest and resulting aggressive behaviour and violence has invited the social scientists to do something in this direction, otherwise the younger generation will prove to be explosive and their actions will not only bring disaster to the society but may prove suicidal. The analysis of the adolescents' behaviour clearly indicates that this population is exposed to various physical, socio-cultural and psychological stresses which are constantly pressing their adjustive capabilities. The socio-cultural, economic, educational, vocational, and marital and political scenarios have much more aggravated the problem of students' adjustment in their daily life. The period of adolescence is a transition period. The adolescent has shifted from childhood to adolescence. He has moved from dependency towards an urge for being independent. Sometimes the conflicting demands of the parents and the teachers make him puzzled over his role and position in the society. This age is of stress, and stress because of increased sexual indulgence of different forms and need for companionship. The college - going students have desire for recognition, prestige, dominance, and self-assertion. There is a conflict over homosexual and heterosexual attraction. They may suffer sometimes from severe crisis of identity with regard to their self-concepts, goals and aspirations. They may develop various educational, personal or vocational maladjustments. The so called socially advantaged and disadvantaged groups of people have their own problems during their student life. Especially during the present period, which is characterized by caste-ism, communalism, provincialism and many other 'isms'; there exists a crisis of confidence among individuals. The college environment these days is characterized by hostility, drug addiction, defiance of authority, and struggle for so called superiority. The student population reflects that they are the product of highly materialistic values. Sometimes it appears that the present generation is the product of a value less society. The students complain that they do not have correct models before them and consequently they fail to develop a correct value system and attitude. The educational environment is so much polluted especially in our country, that it has degenerated our young generation. The students develop a big gap between their real and ideal self. Sometimes they complain that they are more involved in making negative adjustments for their survival.

Another problem relating to adolescents' adjustment is the excessive concentration on generation gap resulting in indifference and being. This problem has been much aggravated by the effect of western culture. The college-going students have a serious conflict over their acceptance of old Indian values and norms and copying of modern values. There is an excessive indulgence in sex and aggression, which is much more exaggerated by the unhealthy television serials and movies. All such events have their adverse effect on the behaviour patterns of our adolescents and produce obstacles in their effort towards making healthy and desired adjustment. This brief note on the diversified problems of adjustment which our

adolescents are facing in a much more serious manner at present is an eye opener. They have to be counselled at an early stage if they have some problems of adjustment in any walk of life.

Education for frustrated students

The main aim of higher education is to shape the character of youth as the best citizens of the nation, as well as to make them persons of high morality and highly spiritual individuals. All these qualities are related with characterization of an individual. These qualities are reflected through the behaviour of a person. But a continuous deterioration and fall in values can be observed in our youth and people of the country. The existing higher education and education overall seems to be a failure in shaping the character of the youth. Values are the pillars of meaningful life, and education is the tool which can bring a change. All these things gave birth to a new concept "value based education".

Education is a powerful instrument of social change and human progress. It is also a powerful tool to cultivate moral and spiritual values in an individual. Universities are the big educational institutes and hence the responsibility is directly imposed on them. It has been said that "Vidya datati vinayam" (education imparts politeness), but practically it has not been actually practiced and accomplished in most of the Indian universities.

Traditionally, the Indian value system has been based on the stability of the family, the democratic political system, the teachings of the schools and other social institutions and the religious morals. Institutions must try to imbibe Indian traditional, philosophical and aesthetic values to softly deal with aggression among students who are future of the next generation.

Conclusions

Frustration as a concept is crucially important. It exists in all the societies and among all the age groups, however the level, degree and types may vary from place to place. Theories related to frustration, aggression, conflict, maladjustment etc contribute to the concept of frustration and related aspects. It can't be ignored for different reasons especially in the educational context. Frustration is a feeling that arouses due to the act of blockers that hinder the process of accomplishment and attainment of certain desired targets. Therefore, there is a need to analyse the possible blockers in the perspective of frustration. Most importantly there is a crucial need to utilize the availability of certain pertinent theories of frustration in order to cope with the severity of frustration and its possible effect on life in general and education in particular. Based on the analyses, there is also a need to conduct an empirical study in the present context in India and a comparative study within Indian states/regions and the students of other countries (if possible).

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