15.3 Social Psychological Explanations of Aggression: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7182 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Outline Social Learning Theory as an explanation for human aggression.

(Total for Question 1 is 3 marks)

2 Evaluate the frustration-aggression hypothesis with three developed points.

(Total for Question 2 is 6 marks)

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3 Discuss social psychological explanations of aggression, comparing frustration-aggression, SLT and de-individuation.

(Total for Question 3 is 16 marks)

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Mark scheme · 15.3 Social Psychological Explanations of Aggression: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

states that aggression is learned through observation of others oe	**B1**
identifies imitation and modelling as key processes oe	**B1**
mentions vicarious reinforcement, where observing others being rewarded increases the likelihood of copying aggressive behaviour oe	**B1**

Answer: SLT says aggression is learned by observing and imitating others; people are more likely to copy aggressive models, especially if the model is seen to be rewarded, a process known as vicarious reinforcement.

Question 2

identifies limitation: aggression sometimes occurs without clear prior frustration oe	**M1**
explains why this is a problem for the theory, e.g. spontaneous or premeditated aggression that lacks an antecedent blocked goal is not accounted for by the hypothesis oe	**A1**
identifies limitation: the original hypothesis is too simple and requires moderating variables such as the intensity of frustration, the presence of cues, or individual differences oe	**M1**
explains development, e.g. later researchers added role of environmental cues and cognitive appraisal, showing the hypothesis alone does not fully predict when aggression will occur oe	**A1**
offers supporting empirical counter-evidence or qualification, e.g. research showing frustration does not always produce aggression and other factors mediate the response oe	**M1**
explains impact, e.g. the mixed empirical support reduces the explanatory power of the frustration-aggression hypothesis as a sole explanation for aggressive behaviour oe	**A1**

Answer: The hypothesis is limited because aggression can and does happen without prior frustration, and the original account needed additional variables such as cues, appraisal and individual differences to explain when frustration leads to aggression; empirical research offers mixed support, weakening its claim as a comprehensive explanation.

Question 3

Level 4 Knowledge of the social psychological explanations is accurate and detailed. The answer shows thorough, well-developed evaluation, interacting evidence, methodological and ethical critique, and clear comparison between explanations. Application to scenarios or theoretical integration is well developed. The response is well structured and uses specialist terminology precisely.	**13-16**
Level 3 Knowledge is clear and mostly accurate. Discussion includes evaluation and some interaction between theory and evidence, with attention to methodology and ethics. Comparison between explanations is present but may be uneven. Application and judgement are present but not fully developed. Specialist terminology is used appropriately.	**9-12**
Level 2 Knowledge is present but limited or partially inaccurate. Evaluation is superficial or one sided, and comparisons between explanations are minimal. Some relevant evidence or methodological points may be missing. The answer lacks depth and organisation, and specialist terminology is used inconsistently.	**5-8**
Level 1 Very limited knowledge and understanding. Little or no evaluation. Comparisons are absent. The response may be fragmentary, poorly organised, and show little use of appropriate terminology.	**1-4**
Level 0 No creditable content.	**0**

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Indicative content:

- AO1: Frustration-aggression hypothesis: blocked goals create frustration which produces an aggressive impulse; later revisions include displacement and the role of environmental cues in triggering aggression.
- AO1: Social Learning Theory (Bandura): aggression is learned through observation, modelling and imitation, particularly when observers see models rewarded (vicarious reinforcement); cognitive mediators such as self-efficacy determine whether observed behaviour is enacted.
- AO1: De-individuation: in crowds or groups people may lose individual identity, show reduced private and public self-awareness and feel anonymous, lowering restraint and increasing the likelihood of aggressive acts.
- AO2: Apply theories to examples: frustration may explain displaced aggression when direct retaliation is blocked; SLT explains how observed aggressive behaviour in peers or media can be imitated, especially with vicarious reinforcement and increased self-efficacy; de-individuation explains how anonymity and crowd dynamics remove inhibitions.
- AO3: Strengths and evidence: Bandura's laboratory work provides controlled evidence for modelling and vicarious reinforcement; frustration-aggression has face validity and plausible mechanisms such as displacement and cue-triggering; de-individuation links well to observational accounts of crowd violence.
- AO3: Limitations and mixed evidence: frustration is neither necessary nor sufficient for aggression, because aggression can occur without prior frustration and not all frustration leads to aggression; empirical support for SLT is mixed between lab and field studies, with ecological validity issues and potential confounds in natural settings; de-individuation studies often use artificial tasks and face ethical limits, and alternative explanations such as emergent group norms or social identity processes may better explain crowd aggression.
- AO3: Methodological and ethical critiques: lab studies may lack ecological validity, field studies struggle with causality, and ethical constraints limit realistic investigation of severe aggression. Measures used as proxies for aggression may not generalise to serious violent behaviour.
- AO3: Integration and nuance: social psychological explanations capture situational and social learning influences and can be complementary rather than mutually exclusive, for example frustration creating arousal that is then shaped by observed models and by crowd anonymity. Individual differences and cognitive appraisal mediate outcomes.
- AO3: Conclusion: an informed judgement might argue that social psychological explanations explain many forms of everyday aggressive behaviour and escalation in crowds, but they are incomplete as sole explanations of all aggression; best account comes from integrating frustration, learning mechanisms and situational group processes while recognising methodological limits and the role of dispositional and biological factors outside the scope of this question.

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