

DIAGNOSING AGGRESSIVE AND THREATENING BEHAVIORS MEDIATED BY TRAINING IN EMPLOYEES AT THE WELFARE ORGANIZATION OF AHVAZ CITY

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Abstract

The present study aimed to diagnose aggressive and threatening behaviors via training among employees at the Welfare Organization in the city of Ahvaz, Iran. The statistical population of this study comprised 800 employees at Ahvaz's Welfare organization. Out of this, 200 people were selected via the simple sampling method, and the sample volume was provided by the Morgan Table. The present study fell under applied studies in terms of goal and was a descriptive and survey study. For this, a questionnaire was used to collect data, which were analyzed by SPSS 23 and AMOS software. Data analysis indicated that there was a significant relationship between aggressive and threatening behaviors mediated by training among employees at the Welfare Organization of Ahvaz City.

Keywords: aggression, threats, training, employees

INTRODUCTION

Workplace aggression and threat are seen as relatively stable personality traits, which some theorists maintain have biological roots, as hereditary and intrinsic, social factors and frustration could underly reasons for aggression. According to Freud's Psychoanalytical Theory, emphasis is laid on the intrinsic nature of aggression, as the tendency to harm others is caused by the instinct of death and energy release inside or outside. Some other psychoanalysts consider aggressive behaviors to be a return to the early periods of childhood. According to Lorenz's Behavioral Theory, aggression is emphasized to be instinctual and intrinsic, which is mainly aimed to provide enough living space for the survival and protection of an organism. In the Aggression-Frustration theory, all aggressive behaviors are conceived of as aggressive drivers, which originate from frustration. According to the Social Learning Theory, emphasis is on the role of reinforcement and observational patterns in the incidence and continuation of this type of behavior (DSM5). Here, attempts are made to find the external factors involved in aggressive behaviors, Frustration only causes aggression in people who have learned to expose such behaviors under unfavorable situations (Mehrzaad, K., et al., 2022). Hence, aggressive behaviors may be learned through observation and reinforced or consolidated by the consequences that follow. Bandura maintained that man learns aggression in a way he acquires complicated forms of social behaviors (i.e., through experience or observing others' behaviors) (Burshnic et al. 2018). According to the Biological Perspective, the focus is on the neurohormonal system and relevant disorders. The central nervous system, especially regions in the temporal area and the limbic system play a major role in stimulating and controlling aggressive behaviors. Concerning hormonal factors, male sex hormones, especially testosterone, have key roles. Also, the hypothesis of chronic low levels of brain serotonin, which is pathophysiologically associated with aggression, has been debated for several decades (Kirilmaz, S. K. (2022). While this theory was first based on indirect ways of investigating the functionality of serotonin, our understanding of neural mechanisms involved in impulsive aggression improved with the latest developments in neuroimaging. This study integrates evidence based on data from several neuroimaging domains in humans. Molecular neuroimaging findings reveal the relationship between impulsive aggression and the B1 serotonin receptor binding with serotonin, and the high levels of serotonin transporter and low levels of monoamine oxidase A, indicating that low interstitial serotonin levels are neuro-biological risk factors involved in aggressive and impulsive behaviors.

Imaging genetics demonstrates that serotonergic-related genetic polymorphs are associated with anti-social behaviors. Some evidence suggests that the low-expression monoamine oxidase A genotype is




specifically susceptible to impulsive aggression, which may be mediated by effects on corticolimbic functions. Interventions that (probably) change the level of serotonin affect activities in some brain areas involved in impulsive aggression, especially the amygdala, dorsal striatum, anterior cingulate, insula, and prefrontal cortex. Man has many useful emotions, and anger is a significant part of it, as there is a reason for it. Understanding these reasons can be very much helpful and promising on appropriate occasions; however, aggression is a kind of imbalance and a failure to control behavior under various situations, which would usually cause damage to and destroy one or other people. Aggression is thought of as a major life crisis, which causes mental health problems. These harms may be psychological, emotional, and physical through an individual's aggressive words and movements, and thus cause dysfunctions in the workplace (Maralov et al., 2022). Today, organizational training is not only a secondary measure but is also among the most sensitive and effective organizational activities. Training is one of the most fundamental ways to optimize and improve organizations. Training and improvement result in the following: positive thinking about work and organization, preparing to face increasing environmental changes, responding to individual and organizational goals, strengthening employee qualifications to gain knowledge, new skills, and abilities to improve occupational performance, expediting learning in the organization, helping organizational growth and survival, and organizational compatibility with environmental changes, promoting employees' mental health, and raising employees' public awareness of society developments (Gagnon et al. 2019; Thi, H. H. et al., 2023). Considering the importance of training in the workplace to improve organizational functions, the goal of the present study was to diagnose the phenomena of aggression and threats among employees by using training among these people at Ahvaz's Welfare Organization. Threat denotes intimidating the other of serious and imminent danger to force him/her to do some specific conduct (e.g., committing an offense or giving property) against his/her will, in a way the latter finds himself compelled to the threatening individual. fearing the consequences of the violation of his demands. Training and improvement result in the following: positive thinking about work and organization, preparing to face increasing environmental changes, responding to individual and organizational goals, strengthening employee qualifications to gain knowledge, new skills, and abilities to improve occupational performance, expediting learning in the organization, helping organizational growth and survival, and organizational compatibility with environmental changes, promoting employees' mental health, and raising employees' public awareness of society developments (Gagnon et al. 2019). Considering the importance of training in the workplace to improve organizational functions, the goal of the present study was to diagnose the phenomena of aggression and threats among employees by using training among employees at Ahvaz's Welfare Organization.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Some people are more exposed to aggression than others; these individual differences in anger involve personality dimensions that pertain to the frequency, intensity, and duration of anger that people experience. People with higher levels of anger are less able to control thoughts and hostile sentiments; moreover, people with mild anger are more motivated to encounter threatening situations. Aggression refers to any behavior to harm others, which is inherent in humans (Allen et al. 2018). Aggressive and threatening behaviors in the workplace are individual or collective interactions aimed at harming others. The oldest and probably the most well-known explanation for human aggression is the perspective that postulates humans are somehow planned for violence through their intrinsic nature. The most famous advocate of this theory is Sigmund Freud who argued that aggression was originating from the death instinct. To Lorenz, aggression that causes harm to others arises from a fighting instinct, which is shared by humans and other organisms (Shin et al. 2014). Aggression is learned through observation or the direct experience of aggressive conduct, together with the perceived or real confirmation of aggressive conduct. For him, children observe adults' aggressive behaviors and thus repeat them, and this can affect the individual's training, especially if aggression is in the organization or the workplace (Rezaei et al. 2020). Training has always been a reliable way to improve quality, and performance, and resolve problems. Training is aimed to create learning processes that would help improve peoples' performance in their work (Mandal et al. 2020).

In modern workplaces, employees need to continuously promote their knowledge and skills to perform



their occupational duties and responsibilities. Hence, leaders in organizations seek to employ the most effective training strategies to guarantee maximum performance and profitability (Üzüm, B., Özkan, O. S., & Çakan, S. 2022). Training is always seen as the most important tool to improve the overall performance of employees. One of the main and critical duties of managers in organizations is to focus on the organizational human capital by employing effective training and empowerment mechanisms in employees. This is because proficient and skillful employees are the most important contributors to the efficiency and efficacy of organizations, and education courses in schools and universities serve as the framework for the general and specialized knowledge that prepares people for entering the community. However, those employed in organizations require knowledge and skills to carry out their duties. This training helps employees to play a more effective role in achieving organizational goals (Eyeuche et al. 2019).

Today, training is thought of as an experience that is based on learning for creating relatively stable changes in the individual so that s/he is empowered to perform and improve abilities, increase skills, and as a consequence meet objectives intended; therefore, training refers to changing knowledge, attitude, and interaction with an environment of activities, and requires using predicted programs that reinforce qualities in employees and help them acquire knowledge, skills, and new abilities, which would facilitate their occupational performance and maximizes their efficiency in the organization. Training also helps employees become familiar with the environment and provides them with appropriate educational courses. Organizations that pay more attention to training human forces are more successful in providing new solutions to achieve efficiency and efficacy, and these organizations enjoy dynamic creativity and generate effective developments to interact with the social community (Peter et al. 2022).

Study Literature

In a study, Aslani (2022) identified and prioritized the factors affecting the efficacy of training employees in the workplace (Case study: Haftkal Municipality). This study aimed to identify and prioritize the factors affecting the efficacy of training employees in the workplace in the Haftkal region. This study was applied in terms of goal and descriptive in terms of data collection and fell under descriptive-explorative research. The statistical population of this study consisted of experts in the Haftkal municipality. Accordingly, experts were invited to give their viewpoints, and they had to meet some expertise conditions, produce M.A. or higher degrees and managerial records, and had to be interested in field studies. Therefore, the sampling method used in this study was purposive sampling which involved 13 people. Tools to collect data were library studies, interviews, and questionnaires. Using previous literature and based on data obtained from implementing the Delphi Technique, experts in the Haftkal Municipality identified five criteria of human, structural, educational, managerial, and backup factors to be the main components affecting the efficacy of employees in the workplace. They also used the AHP method to prioritize those factors. The findings of the study can be used to help managers make better decisions and change their attitudes toward the workplace.

In another study, Barzen et al. (2021) investigated the efficacy of the positive cognitive behavioral therapy intervention on aggression among employees in the power and electronic sector. The study was a semi-experimental study with the pre- and post-test plan and a control group. The statistical population of this study consisted of all employees at Sahand Ertebat-Ayandeh Pezhouhan-e-Apadana Company in 2020. The sample study consisted of all 10 employees at the company as the experimental group, and again all 10 employees as the control group. The Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire were also used to measure the positive cognitive behavioral therapy intervention. After the scale was administered for both experiments and control groups, the intervention was held in twelve 90-minute sessions for the experimental groups, while the control group received no intervention. To collect post-test data, the scales were again administered for both groups. Also, SPSS 26 software was used to analyze data. Covariance results indicated that the dependent variable of aggression in the experiments group was significantly different from that of the control group, and the positive cognitive behavioral therapy intervention was found to reduce aggression among employees in the power and electronic sector.

In a study, Caillier (2021) investigated the effects of workplace aggression on employee satisfaction with job stress, work meaningfulness, and quitting jobs. Research on workplace aggression has been common in the past several decades, with most of them focusing on the outcomes of workplace aggression in



general and a kind of workplace aggression in specific. This article had a different approach. Specifically, it addressed the effects of workplace aggression in general and tested various types of workplace aggression on the relevant attitudes about satisfaction with job stress, the intention to quit jobs, and work meaningfulness. Also, the modifying effects of satisfaction with job stress in the relationship between workplace aggression and the intention to quit jobs, and the relationship between workplace aggression and work meaningfulness were examined. The study findings suggested that workplace aggression could reduce satisfaction with job stress and work meaningfulness. Workplace aggression also helped increase the intention to quit jobs. However, satisfaction with job stress was not correlated with workplace aggression in any work-related attitudinal models (i.e., the intention to quit jobs and work meaningfulness). Moreover, not all types of workplace aggression were found to affect working attitudes. In another study, Yagil (2021) investigated extra-organizational misuse, aggression, and customer impoliteness. Employees' daily encounter with customer impoliteness has also been found to have more severe outcomes than a colleague's misbehavior with a supervisor. So far, this section investigated the causes and results of customers' aggressive behaviors.

Research has shown that customer aggression is a common response to dissatisfaction with the quality of services that stimulates anger and is reinforced by customers' superior status. Repeated exposure to customer misbehavior reduces employees' performance and participation in sentiment regulation causes distress and even abandonment. Social services provided to employees and also expectations about customer behaviors modify the effects of misbehaviors on employee reactions (Rouholamin, A. et al., 2023). Organizational measures proposed to avoid misbehaviors with customers include using advertising messages to persuade consumers to remove inappropriate behavior patterns and developing a zero-tolerance policy against misusing customers. Organizations can use methods to improve employee abilities, help them better interact with management and get along with customer misbehavior, provide them with opportunities to share their experiences with their colleagues and encourage them to take working rest following difficult encounters. Proposed prospective research may include the application of new theoretical approaches to study employee experiences of customer misbehavior, identify special characteristics that increase employee flexibility against customer misbehavior, investigate the effects of misbehavior with customers on employees outside the workplace, study customer's cyber-misuse, systematically investigate managerial activities, etc. also, cross-cultural studies are aimed to investigate the effects of cultural dimensions on customer's willingness to misbehave with employees.

Aggression and threat in occupations are seen as relatively stable personality traits, which some theorists maintain have biological roots, as hereditary and intrinsic, social factors and frustration could underly reasons for aggression. Bandura maintained that man learns aggression in a way he acquires complicated forms of social behaviors (i.e., through experience or observing others' behaviors) (Burshnic et al. 2018). Research has shown that aggression is a relatively stable personality trait; so, if stable, it should be correlated with some other stable traits (Cheng et al. 2020).

Aggression is a harmful social reaction aimed at causing harm and inconvenience among others. Aggression is classified into two direct and indirect categories. Direct aggression is associated with physical and verbal behaviors, while indirect aggression affects social relations (Coccaro et al. 2015). Today, organizational training is not only a secondary measure but is also among the most sensitive and effective organizational activities. Training is one of the most fundamental ways to optimize and improve organizations. Training and improvement result in the following: positive thinking about work and organization, preparing to face increasing environmental changes, responding to individual and organizational goals, strengthening employee qualifications to gain knowledge, new skills, and abilities to improve occupational performance, expediting learning in the organization, helping organizational growth and survival, and organizational compatibility with environmental changes, promoting employees' mental health, and raising employees' public awareness of society developments (Gagnon et al. 2019). Considering the importance of training in the workplace to improve organizational functions, the goal of the present study was to diagnose the phenomena of aggression and threats among employees by using training among employees at Ahvaz's Welfare Organization.



Study Hypothesis

Main Hypothesis

- There is a significant relationship between aggression and threat in employees and training among employees at the Welfare Organization of Ahvaz City.

Secondary Hypotheses

- There is a significant relationship between aggression and training in employees at the Welfare Organization in the city of Ahvaz.
- There is a significant relationship between threats and training in employees at the Welfare Organization in the city of Ahvaz.
- There is a significant relationship between threats and aggression among employees at the Welfare Organization in the city of Ahvaz.

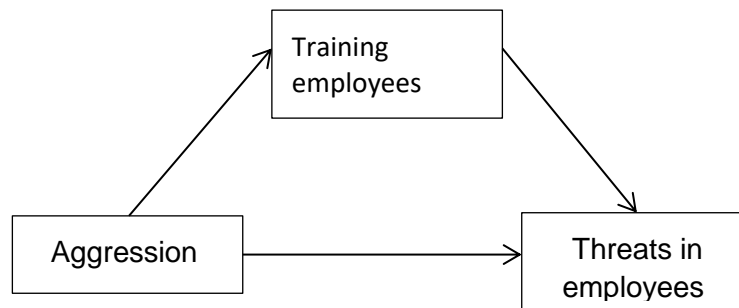


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the study

Study Methods

The present study had an applied goal because the findings can be used in Welfare Organizations and all other companies and organizations. On the other hand, because this study pays attention to the development of applied knowledge in a special field, it falls under applied research. This study also falls under descriptive research in terms of how intended data can be obtained. Since data are obtained via sampling methods, the study is also a survey as it investigates the distribution of a statistical population. Because the goal of the present study was to diagnose aggression and threats among employees mediated by training at a welfare organization in Ahvaz, the study fell under descriptive-survey research. For this, Dahar Employee Training Questionnaire (2015), Molki Employee Deviation Behavior Scale (2006) (8 items), and Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire were used to collect data. The statistical population of this study comprised 800 employees at Ahvaz’s Welfare organization. Out of this number, 200 people were selected via the simple sampling method, and the sample volume was made by the Morgan Table. To analyze data, SPSS 23 and AMOS software was used.

Table 1: Questionnaire’s reliability calculation

Questionnaires	Cronbach’s alpha
Total items	0.811
Aggression Questionnaire	0.925
Employee training questionnaire	0.845
Employee deviation behavior questionnaire	0.839

Descriptive Findings

This section deals with descriptive results. Descriptive results include descriptive statistics. The following investigates each of these indices for every variable in the study.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of study variables

Variables	Average	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Aggression	3.388	0.370	-0.349	0.850
Threats in employees	3.202	0.644	-0.016	-0.097
Training	3.379	0.810	-0.866	0.524

According to Table 1, the highest average pertains to the variable of training and the lowest to threats among employees. Also, the standard deviation indicates the distribution of most of the data. In other words, the majority of the data lies within the average \pm standard deviation. The skewness coefficient is an index that specifies the value of skewness, ranging from -3 to +3. If skewness is zero, the distribution is asymmetrical, which lies at a standard level for all study variables. The kurtosis value of all variables was also normal.

Investigating the Normality of Data Distribution

This study used the valid Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test to investigate the normality of the distribution of the main variables.

Table 3: Variable normality test

Variable	Type of distribution applied	Sig.	Error level	Hypothesis confirmation	Results
Aggression	Normal	0.125	0.05	H ₀	Normal
Threats in employees	Normal	0.200	0.05	H ₀	Normal
Training	Normal	0.115	0.05	H ₀	Normal

According to values from Kolmogorov-Smirnov test statistics in Table 3, the expected distribution is not significantly different from the observed distribution for all variables, and therefore, the distribution of these variables is normal.

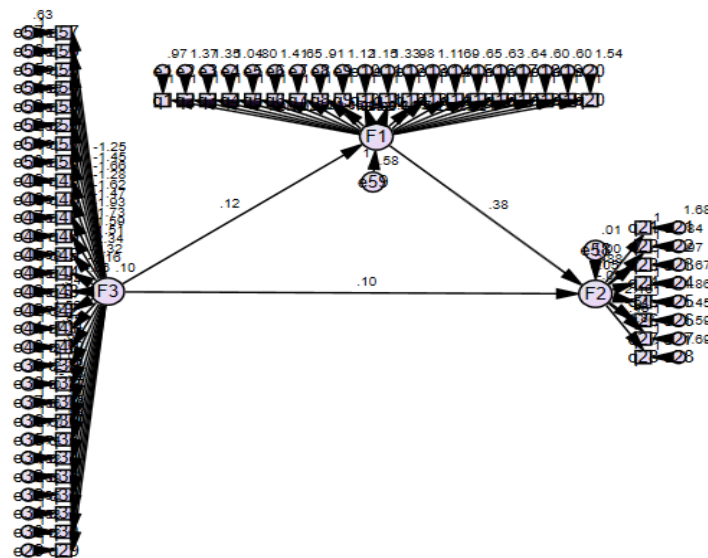


Figure 1: Standard coefficient values of relationships between study model variables in the structural model

A summary of the results from the structural model fit is given below in the table.

Table 4: results from the structural model fit

Relationships between concepts and indices in the model	Standard coefficients	Standard error	Test statistics	Sig.
Relationship between aggression and training among Welfare Organization employees in the city of Ahvaz	0.12	0.035	4.911	0.0000
Relationship between threats and training among Welfare Organization employees in the city of Ahvaz	0.38	0.064	6.124	0.0000
Relationship between aggression and threats among Welfare Organization employees in the city of Ahvaz	0.10	0.024	3.723	0.000



Table 5: Study model fit indices

Indices	Desirable limit	Reported value
(GFI)	0.9 and higher	0.93
(NFI)	0.9 and higher	0.90
(NNFI)	0.9 and higher	0.91
(IFI)	0.9 and higher	0.92
(CFI)	0.9 and higher	0.92
(RMSEA)	Less than 0.1	0.043

As given in Table 5, all the fit indices of the model are at a desirable level.

First Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between aggression and training in employees at the Welfare Organization in the city of Ahvaz.

Table results indicated that the standard regression coefficient value was 0.12 and the T value was 4.911. Thus, at the significance level of 5%, the relationship between aggression and training in welfare employees is significant and direct (because the significance level is less than 0.05, and the regression sign is positive). In other words, since the significance level is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected and the opposite hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, there is a significant relationship between aggression and training in employees in the Welfare Organization in the city of Ahvaz.

Second Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between threats and training in employees at the Welfare Organization in the city of Ahvaz.

Table results indicated that the standard regression coefficient value was 0.38 and the T value was 6.124. Thus, at the significance level of 5%, the relationship between threats and training in welfare employees is significant and direct (because the significance level is less than 0.05, and the regression sign is positive). In other words, since the significance level is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected and the opposite hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, there is a significant relationship between threats and training in employees in the Welfare Organization in the city of Ahvaz.

Third Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between threats and aggression among employees at the Welfare Organization in the city of Ahvaz.

Table results indicated that the standard regression coefficient value was 0.10 and the T value was 3.723. Thus, at the significance level of 5%, the relationship between aggression and threats in welfare employees is significant and direct (because the significance level is less than 0.05, and the regression sign is positive). In other words, since the significance level is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected and the opposite hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, there is a significant relationship between threats and aggression among employees in the Welfare Organization in the city of Ahvaz.

The main Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between aggression and threat in employees and training among employees at the Welfare Organization of Ahvaz City.

The Sobel test is used to examine the mediating role.

The Sobel Test is called the *product of the coefficient* approach, the Delta method (DM), or the normal theory approach. This test is used to infer the coefficient of the indirect *ab* effects and is based on the theory of inference used for the direct effect. The indirect *ab* effect is a specific sample estimate of an indirect effect in society (TaTb), which is subjected to the sampling variance. A p-value of *ab* can be obtained by having an estimate of the standard *ab* error and assuming data normality and *ab* sampling distribution.

In general, the normal estimate can be used to investigate the significance of a relationship in the Sobel test. By estimating the standard error of the indirect effect, the null hypothesis can be tested against the opposite hypothesis. The Z statistic equals the *ab*-to-its standard error ratio. In other words, the Z-value is obtained from the following:

(1)

$$Z - \text{Value} = \frac{a * b}{\sqrt{(b^2 * s_a^2) + (a^2 * s_b^2)}}$$



In this relationship:

a: Path coefficient between the independent and mediator variables

b: Path coefficient between the dependent and mediator variables

Sa: Standard error of path between the independent and mediator variables

Sb: Standard error of path between the dependent and mediator variables

(2)

$$Z - \text{Value} = \frac{0.369 * 0.621}{\sqrt{(0.369^2 * 0.040^2) + (0.621^2 * 0.119^2)}} = 3.928$$

The Sobel Test was used to calculate the mediating role of training in employees at the Welfare Organization in the city of Ahvaz. Because the Sobel test value was 3.928 based on the t statistic value, and its value is outside the 1.96 and -1.96 intervals, the hypothesis is said to be confirmed. Thus, there is a significant relationship between aggression and threats among employees with the mediation role of training among the employees.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to diagnose aggression and threats mediated with training among employees at the Welfare Organization in the city of Ahvaz, Iran. The findings revealed that the main hypothesis stating a significant relationship between aggression and threats among employees with the mediation of training was confirmed due to the p level smaller than 0.05; therefore, it was found that there was a significant relationship between aggression and threats among employees with the mediation of training. The findings also suggested that the first hypothesis stating a significant relationship between aggression and training among employees was also supported due to the p levels smaller than 0.5. Thus, aggression and training were significantly correlated. Findings from the second hypothesis stating a significant relationship between threats and training among employees were also supported due to the p levels smaller than 0.05. In other words, a significant relationship was noted between threats and training among employees. Findings revealed that the third hypothesis stating a significant relationship between aggression and threats among employees was also supported due to the p levels smaller than 0.05. Therefore, there was a significant relationship between aggression and threats among employees. The findings were found to be correspondent to those of Yagil et al. (2021) and Caillier et al. (2021).

Suggestions


- To improve training in human forces in organizations, suggestions are made to allot more budgets and provide more useful content to reduce aggression.
- To improve organizational developments and organizational processes, suitable training programs are proposed to be provided to employees.
- To control aggression in employees, counseling programs for employees are recommended.
- Managers are recommended to change their views and understand environmental situations to pay more attention to employees' behavioral issues.
- Future research is suggested to take up challenges to control aggression among employees.
- Managers are recommended to pay more attention to the physical and mental check-ups of employees and evaluate their performance.
- Organizational members should be allowed to have the freedom to express their views and have no fear of revealing their feelings inside the organization.
- Environmental and exacerbating factors should be eliminated.
- Threatening and intimidating behaviors against employees are suggested to be eliminated.
- It is suggested to use empathy and intimacy, create healthy relations with employees, and encourage them to receive training to reduce harm and help provide a comfortable situation.



- Speaking about one's feelings with others is very much helpful, and may help mental release.
- Intimate and amicable relations in the family and workplace can effectively help prevent anger.
- Replacing aggressive behaviors with other behaviors is an example of non-aggressive patterns, which is emphasized by social learning theorists.
- To control and deal with aggression, nothing is better than finding the causes, as finding and resolving problems could prove effective in improving the disease trend.
- A conflict between work and family among employees can aggravate aggression, and it can spread to families through negative emotions and add to work and family conflicts. As a result, it is required to create a balance between work and family.
- Managers as physicians are suggested to spend a day in the month and to form a specialized team to evaluate employees' behaviors and intra-organizational issues. This team may be composed of experts of various disciplines, who can play a major role in increasing employees' performance, occupational satisfaction, and organizational commitment. This team can include psychology, human resources, organizational behavior, financial, and public relations experts. These experts can help identify problems and resolve intraorganizational issues. This method increases employee spirit, occupational satisfaction, organizational happiness, organizational commitment, and finally efficiency in the organization.
- Managers in organizations are recommended to cooperate with the Research and Development Units and to form a specialized symposium of intraorganizational managers to learn about modern management and development issues and help their employees how to increase their efficacy and efficiency. This is because, today, modern management directly responds to managers and focuses on empowerment and value creation (Delhart, 2000). As a consequence, managers need to focus on discourse in their environments, flexibility and attention to technologies, focus on employee needs, and handling affairs. Human force hurdles should be eliminated and employee problems be addressed.

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