Adolescents’ frustration tolerance for violence-based films

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Abstract

The present paper researches the way adolescents’ frustration tolerance changes under the influence of violence-based movies. The Rosenzweig frustration test was applied before and after watching such a film. The variables taken into consideration are: the index of group conformity as well as the participants’ overall tendencies. The outcomes have revealed insignificant alterations with regard to tolerance of frustration as a result of watching violence-based movies. Still, there has also been revealed the parameters likely to change under such circumstances. Identifying the impact mass-media may have on frustration, could provide a way to reduce subsequent criminal acts.

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Keywords: frustration, frustration tolerance, index of group conformity, overall tendencies, aggression;

1. Rationale

Frustration represents an act of adjustment to the surrounding environment, being part of the continuous interaction between the body and the environment, within the process of assimilation and adjustment (V. Pavelcu, 1970). Frustration is a negative emotional response to nonfulfillment of a potentially satisfying activity, thus, conducive of a feeling of being thwarted in attaining your goals.

In their Dictionary of Psychology, R. Doron and Fr. Parot (1999) define frustration as: “lack of an object likely to meet a need”. There is also a subjective aspect: satisfaction privation is experienced as deprivation of or denial by someone else. According to P. P. Neveanu (1978) frustration is: “a complex act of emotional imbalance nurtured at the level of personality, transitory or relatively stable, as a result of unfulfillment of needs, privation of what one used to own, materially and emotionally”.

The theory on resistance to frustration was elaborated by W.C. Reckless, in 1960, and tries to approach both the psychological and sociological views altogether. In the light of this theory, there are two features underlining the individual’s safety against aggression and frustration: internal, psychological and external, social. The external feature is made up of social groups which the young person is a member of and affiliated to (family, neighbours, friends etc.) and who may offer a social status, assurance of goal attainment, sense of membership etc. The internal feature gains importance under certain circumstances, representing a matrix providing the young man with self-awareness as opposed to other groups or individuals as well as frustration tolerance.

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Frustration arises when the individual is denied the satisfaction produced by the fulfillment of a certain need (J. Laplanche, J. B. Pontalis, 1994). Each individual displays the ability to overpass frustrations, coined as „frustration tolerance”. Frustration may either facilitate or hinder the attainment of personal goals, by both legal or illegal means.

Frustrations can break down into two categories: basic frustration or privation, characterized by individuals’ insatisfaction due to unfulfillment of a basic need. For instance, the hunger one may experience after going hungry for a long time. Subsequent frustration characterized by barriers hindering the fulfillment of a certain need. Much experimental research has been conducted on the latter category, by means of the Rosenzweig test. There is a subsequent frustration provided the individual who is hungry is prevented from eating as he/she receives an unexpected guest.

The undertaken research has ascertained that emotional frustration is more typical of criminal rather than non-criminal individuals. Accumulation of constant frustration lowers frustration tolerance. Hence, faced with belligerent situations, children and the young will often respond aggressively. This has been highlighted by a series of researches which applied the frustration Rosenzweig test to underaged criminals. Thus, V. Dragomirescu (1976), in the light of some studies conducted upon a batch of 210 underaged criminals, identified an aggression potential of 57,14%. The underaged displaying low frustration tolerance are strongly in need of a Self, showing aggression towards frustrated people. An increase of emotional tension as a result of frustration, requires a calming-down response, frequently displayed in the form of aggressive violent acts and reactions.

W. Reckless focuses on the importance of internal resistance whose elements may be identified by means of personality and prediction tests, which may represent a means of preventing responses of frustration-aggression or illicit and criminal acts (Mitrofan, 1992). Unlike psychological theories, he does not see a direct connection between frustration and aggression as the main factors regarding the etiology of the criminal act. Other authors are of the opinion that criminal acts are mainly the result of the individuals’ low capacity to deal with frustrations.

The queries on frustration-aggression concern: a) frustration itself does not lead to an aggressive behaviour, rather it induces a state of anxiety and emotional distress that may trigger or not an aggressive response; b) not any aggressive behaviour is the outcome of some frustration, since the individual’s pathology deals with cases of aggression (epilepsy, paranoia).

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 likely to ensure emotional support and safety, no matter the means.

The consequences are more or less serious, depending on a range of factors: the nature of the barrier, motivation nature and intensity, the frustrated individual’s structural-dynamic peculiarities. Responses to frustration differ. Thus, a child will respond to insignificant immediate conflicts. They may take different forms: aggression against objects when the child cannot blow off steam on the adults provoking frustration; jealousy; isolation; sometimes associated with hostility and stubborness; hypersensitivity due to low tolerance as a result of repeated exposure to frustration; addiction; selfishness etc.

As far as adults are concerned, responses to frustration are less intense and immediate (due to a high degree of tolerance). However, they may be more serious and durable. The frustrating situation may trigger responses lying on the edge of both normality and pathology (R. Pantelie, 2001).

The present study on frustration tolerance has considered two variables, elicited by means of the Rosenzweig test: a) the index of group conformity (GCR), its computation allows us to measure the individual’s response conformity with the average. It is an indicator of the individual’s adjustment to their social group. As there are 16 circumstances with an GCR, the maximum possible total is 16 GCR, that is 65% of the maximum. The average
GCR is 58.64%, with a margin of with a distance type 12.79. That is, the optimum interval is (45.85%, 71.38%). Pathological deviations occur at lower values of GCR; b) the number of tendencies accumulated by the human subjects. The smaller the number of tendencies, the better the human subject’s adjustment. The appropriate responses to frustration mainly depend on each new frustration-based situation, taken into consideration by the human subject, regardless of previous responses.

2. Purpose

The present study aims at comparing the frustration tolerance of criminal adolescents as well as non-criminal ones, participants in the research. Then, it attempts to compare the variance of frustration tolerance in terms of: index of group conformity and overall tendencies for different categories of adolescents, criminal or non-criminal, after watching violence-based movies.

3. Methods

The current study is based on a classical testing methodology, using the Rosenzweig frustration test, applied to a batch of human subjects, before as well as after watching a violence-based movie. The structure of batches under analysis is shown in the following tables. The batches have been compared by means of a statistical contrasting procedure of the ANCOVA test (analysis of covariance).

<p>| Table 1. Structure of the first batch made up of criminal and non-criminal young male subjects |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. crt.</th>
<th>Target groups</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Criminal young males aged between 14 and 16, in rehabilitation centres</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Young males aged 14</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Young males aged 16</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Table 2. Structure of the second batch made up of non-criminal young male and female subjects |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. crt.</th>
<th>Target groups</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Young males aged 14</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Young males aged 16</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>Young females aged 14</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 5</td>
<td>Young females aged 16</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Research findings and outcomes

4.1. Comparison of frustration tolerance between criminal and non-criminal adolescents, before watching a violence-based movie (Table 1)

4.1.1. Index of group conformity (GCR) for the batch of young males (Table 1)

The implementation of the ANCOVA comparison test has revealed significant statistical differences between the group of criminal young males (Group 1) and the group of young males aged 14 (Group 2), where p=0.050. There are significant statistical differences between the group made up of criminal young males (Group 1) and the group consisting of young males aged 16 (Group 3), where p<0.01. Likewise, there are significant statistical differences between the group of young males aged 14 (Group 2) and the group of young males aged 16 (Group 3), where p<0.01.
4.1.2. Overall tendencies for the batch of males (Table 1)

The implementation of the ANCOVA comparison test has revealed significant statistical differences between the group of criminal young males (Group 1) and the group of young males aged 14 (Group 2), where p=0.047. There are significant statistical differences between the group made up of criminal young males (Group 1) and the group consisting of young males aged 16 (Group 3), where p<0.003. There are no significant statistical differences between the group of young males aged 14 (Group 2) and the group of young males aged 16 (Group 3), where p=0.182.

These outcomes ascertain the hypothesis according to which, between the two target groups, made up of both criminal and non-criminal human subjects, there are significant differences in overall tendencies. This means that the criminal ones are greatly prone to social pathology, indicated by the higher value of the overall tendency parameter.

4.2. Changes in frustration tolerance for criminal and non-criminal adolescents due to violence-based movies.

4.2.1. Index of group conformity (GCR) for the batch of young male subjects (Table 1)

Watching violence-based movies has led to a lower index of group conformity (GCR) for the target group (Table 1). The results have shown F=1.323, where p=0.252. Hence, the index of group conformity (GCR) does not indicate significant changes for the whole batch of young males, criminal or non-criminal, as a result of their watching violence-based movies.

The same is valid for groups analyzed separately. There is no decrease in the index of group conformity (GCR). There is no significant decrease for the factor1*tiplot where F=1.117 with p=0.330.

4.2.2. Overall tendencies for the batch of young male subjects (Table 1) after watching violence-based movies

Watching violence-based movies has significantly lowered the value of the overall tendency (F=4.233, and p=0.042). Thus, this brings to a slight improvement of possible pathological tendencies rather than to their worsening as it would have been expected.

4.2.3. Index of group conformity (GCR) for the batch of young non-criminal male and female subjects (Table 2)

Watching violence-based movies has led to a low index of group conformity (GCR) for the whole non-criminal target group. Yet, this value is not significant, as shown by the collected data: F=0.439, where p=0.509.

The same is valid for the batches where the low value is given by: factor1*tiplot where F=0.127 with p=0.944.

4.2.4. Overall tendencies for the batch of young non-criminal male and female subjects (Table 2)

Watching violence-based movies has significantly lowered the value of the overall tendency as shown by the collected results: F=1.267, and p=0.262. In conclusion, watching the movie has not only lowered frustration tolerance but it has also strengthened it due to catharsis.

5. Conclusions

The present paper grounds itself on the hypothesis that, the criminal adolescents’ frustration tolerance is significantly lower, from a statistical point of view, in comparison with non-criminal adolescents”. In order to validate this hypothesis, two parameters have been analyzed: the index of group conformity as well as the overall tendencies. Thus, the hypothesis has been proved.
The second hypothesis assumes that, in the aftermath of violence-based movies, frustration tolerance significantly decreases, from a statistical point of view, for both criminal and non-criminal adolescents. This hypothesis has not been proved for neither of the parameters considered. Moreover, with regard to overall tendency parameter, there has been ascertained a significant drop, proving that watching such a movie has not lowered frustration tolerance, on the contrary, it has strengthened it due to a catharsis effect. Aggression would have been expected to be determined by a drop in frustration tolerance, yet, the results have revealed the opposite.

Slightly significant changes in frustration tolerance as a result of watching violence-based movies sustain our intention to continue and expand our research on different batches of human subjects. Furthermore, they bring forth possible long-term consequences such movies may have, if watched daily or frequently by adolescents.

References