

Ageless Nature of Anger Expression in Tamil Culture

Haran R P¹, Pearlene Helen Mary. D^{2*}

ABSTRACT

Anger is the most common emotion that differs from person to person in its expression. Traditional Tamil culture gives pride over anger expression in terms of its manifestation, suppression and management. This research study was designed to compare youth (Age 15-24) and middle-adults (Age 35-60) in anger expression. A sample of 175 participants from two age groups from Tamil Nadu were selected through snowball sampling technique. Anger expression was assessed using Cayubit's Anger Expression Type Indicator Test (AETIT). The chi-square test for independence was used to analyse the data. The results of the study show that significant differences were not found between the two age groups in anger expression. Further implications of this study can be to investigate the ethnic differences and its influence on anger expression as a trait and behaviour. In this context, anger expression could also be theorized as one of the causes and attributes of community violence. In addition to this, future research could also examine the absence of validation of other emotions in Tamil society.

Keywords: Anger expression, Age, Youth, Middle-adult, Tamil culture.

Humans are emotional beings bounded with emotions in daily life (Khosla, 2013). In Psychology, the definition of emotions emerged through various theories: Cannon-Bard Theory states that emotion-provoking events leads to, subjective states called emotions whereas James-Lange Theory states that bodily reactions, that occur due to emotion-provoking events, leads to subjective states called emotions (Baron & Misra, 2017). Biologically, emotions are defined as subjective experiences that include physiological arousal and cognitive appraisal (Spielman, 2017). Sage Bharat propounded Rasa and Bhava Theory in Natya Shastra, an ancient Indian theory of emotions, which emphasized eight aesthetic moods and durable emotions – Rati (Erotic Feeling), Hasa (Mirth), Soka (Sorrow), Krodha (Anger), Utsaha (Energy/Mastery), Bhaya (Fear), Jugupsa (Disgust), Vismaya (Astonishment). The Sanskrit term "Rasa" means essence or juice of a thing and its taste (as cited in Baron & Misra, 2017). The expression of emotions originated before the emergence of language (Kagan & Kagan, 2007). Emotions in humans appear simple in childhood but with age, emotional responses become less random and diffused (Hurlock, 1980).

¹Final year UG student, Department of Psychology, The American College, Madurai, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, The American College, Madurai, India

*[Responding Author](#)

Received: March 17, 2020; Revision Received: April 17, 2020; Accepted: May 30, 2020

Ageless Nature of Anger Expression in Tamil Culture

Anger is one of the six primary emotions of human beings along with sadness, fear, surprise, joy, and disgust (Ekman, 2006). Anger is a highly experienced negative emotion, identified in all ages and cultures but relatively ignored in the psychological literature and called as the “forgotten emotion” (DiGiuseppe & Tafrate, 2007). The term anger is derived from the old Norse word, "angra," which means hostile attitude, surliness, ill-will that includes distress, agony, anguish, suffering and in other terms, this is an emotion welling up inside one’s skin. (Thomas & Donnellan, 1991). According to Darwin (1870), Anger is a powerful emotion found in all animal kinds when attacked or threatened by an enemy or in an urge to fight and protect themselves (as cited in Niles Eldredge, 2005). Anger serves as a stimulus to aggression for procuring of food, as a necessity for acquirement, as an aid to survival and maintenance of supremacy in the scale of evolution in the animal kingdom (Hyslop, 1915).

In Ancient Tamil literature “Purananuru” and “Tale of Anklet (Silapathikaram)” gives suitable examples of considering anger as a prime component of valour. In military environments anger expression and aggression is a way to compensate feelings such as inferiority, shame, hurt, irritation, and unassertiveness in front of a superior personnel (Shahsavarani & Noohi, 2014; Ali, 2017). It also emphasizes that healthy anger ends in self-preservation, defends one’s values and bounds, protection and regain of rights. In the “Tale of Anklet”, the protagonist is considered as a Goddess even though she burnt the whole city of Madurai to express her anger (Ayyar, 1940; Garg, 1992; Varsha, 2018). The people of Tamil Nadu worship the Goddess of anger named “Kali” (Tamilnadu Tourism, 2020). In Ancient Hindu Mythology, Queen Draupadi, vowed that she would not tie her hair until her husband had avenged their enemies (Rajagopalachari, 1972). Veils, vows or curses are used to express anger in ancient Greek and Tamil cultures (Cairns, 2001).

Anger is accompanied by biological and physiological changes caused often by both internal and external events (Spielberger, 1983). People react or behave differently in anger. The natural and instinctive way to express anger is to respond aggressively but an individual cannot physically harm every person or object that annoys or irritates him (Cayubit, 2013). According to C.D. Spielberger (1999), anger is expressed in the following types: Suppressing, Expressing, and Controlling (calming down). Expressing is the healthiest way of handling anger because people are rarely encouraged to express anger in an assertive manner instead of being aggressive (Anger Manifest). Suppression is holding in, or denying, or ignoring the feelings of anger which is unhealthy and could be directed towards self (Anger Suppress). Controlling is trying to manage or calm down the feelings of anger both inward and outward by relaxing and allowing the feeling to subside (Anger Manage). Anger is a bidirectional and interpersonal emotion which contribute to hate, burnout and dissatisfaction in life if it is unresolved (La & Yun, 2019; Han et al., 2015).

Table 1 Types of Anger Expression by Cayubit (2013)

Anger Expression	Behaviour
Anger Manage	Attempts to manage feelings of anger by controlling its outward expression by calming down, cooling off, or relaxation.
Anger Manifest	Expresses angry feelings through verbally or physically aggressive Actions
Anger Suppress	Attempts to hide or suppress his angry feelings

Gender, morals, and ethnic identity moderates anger over the developmental stages (Quinn et al., 2014; Reyes et al., 2003) but male and female exhibited the same range of interindividual differences in anger expression (Zimprich & Mascherek, 2012). Widowhood, retirement

Ageless Nature of Anger Expression in Tamil Culture

roles, living with fewer people, less interpersonal estrangement and fewer life events lead to the characteristics of lower anger in old age (Schieman, 1999). The ethnic identity has chances of influencing anger expression in the individual's lifespan. So, this study aims to compare the anger expression between youths and middle-adults and hypothesizes that there are no differences between youth and middle-adults in Anger Expression (H_0). To date, limited studies have investigated the age differences in anger expression

METHODOLOGY

Sample

204 participants involved in this study, among that 9 were excluded as they did not come under the mentioned age category and 20 were excluded as those participants were not primary residents of districts in Tamil Nadu. 175 samples were taken into consideration that consists of 140 youths (15-24 years old) and 35 middle adults (35-60 years old). The samples were selected through the non-probability sampling method named, snowball sampling who were primarily residing in Tamil Nadu. The inclusion criteria for this research study includes the age range of 15-24 and 35-60, both the sexes male and female, beginner level of English-proficiency and demographic location of Tamil Nadu. Exclusion criteria is the age range of 0-14, 25-34 and above 60, and demographic location of other parts of Tamil Nadu.

Design

Ex post facto research design is used in this research study. The independent variable of this study is age and the dependant variable is anger expression.

Materials

Anger-Expression Type Indicator Test (AETIT) by Ryan Francis O. Cayubit, was used in this research study. This tool is a psychometric instrument developed in 2013 that measures the mode of anger-expression. This tool consists of 69 items that generates three different scores based on the scales of the test. The three subscales of this tool are Anger Manifest – AMNF (Items 1-36), Anger Suppress – ASUP (Items 37-51), Anger Manage – AMGE (Items 52-69). The raw scores are drawn by adding all the responses of the items within a subscale and by converting it to percentile. This scale has no total score. This scale makes use of three scores, as it recognizes the fact that every individual may express their anger in three different ways depending on a particular situation. The reliability of this tool is .93 and it is validated (Cayubit, 2013). The face validity was done by an expert.

Procedure

The subjects of this study received the call for participation through various online platforms as a google form link (snowball sampling) and the informed consent was given when they clicked that link. It had an online consent form of voluntary participation and the participants who accepted this were directed to the demographic details followed by the test and those who declined were directed to the end. The test directions were given before starting the AETIT and once they completed the test, the participants were redirected to the end which thanks the participants. The participants were instructed to contact the author if they have any queries, through e-mail.

RESULTS

Chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the association between age and anger expression. Table 2 shows the cross-tabulation of age and anger expression. From the table 2, it is inferred that among the total population 37.71% are people with the behaviour of anger manage, 32% of anger manifest and 30.29% of anger suppress. From the table 3, it is

Ageless Nature of Anger Expression in Tamil Culture

inferred that the differences between both variables were not significant as the chi-square value is greater than the significant value, $\chi^2 (2, n=175) = .761, p = .684$. So, the results failed to reject the null hypothesis (H_0).

Table 2 Anger Expression of Youth and Middle-Adults

Age	Anger Expression (AX)						Total	
	AMGE		AMNF		ASUP		N	%
	N	%	n	%	n	%		
Youth	55	39.29	44	31.43	41	29.29	140	100
Middle-Adults	11	31.43	12	34.29	12	34.29	35	100
Total	66	37.71	56	32	53	30.29	175	100

$\chi^2 (2) = .761, p = .684$

Table 3 Chi-square results for Age and Anger Expression

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.761 ^a	2	.684
Likelihood Ratio	.774	2	.679
N of Valid Cases	175		

The chi-square test for independence indicated no significant difference in the anger expression of youth and middle-adults, $\chi^2 (2, n=175) = .761, p = .684$

DISCUSSION

The result of this research supports the null hypothesis of no significant differences between youth and middle-adults which implies that there is no change in anger expression across the developmental period. This finding contradicts the previous findings of various studies done in the United States of America and the United Kingdom which said age influences anger expression (Phillips et al., 2006; Thomas, 2002; Birditt & Fingerman, 2003; Wrosch et al., 2018). The reason for this dissimilarity in the findings of this study can be the cultural or ethnic differences, which plays a vital role in expressing anger (Novin et al., 2011). In Tamil culture, Anger is given a valuable priority in human life which is reliable with references to ancient literature sayings such as “Unexpressed anger will never subside” (Pollet, 1995), “Anger indeed is the arch-rival of man” (*Subhashita-Ratna-Bhandagara*, 1929), “Great anger is more destructive than the sword”. As the resemblance of valour and pride in anger, Tamil people engage in various violent activities such as community violence, honour killing and murders which gives recognition in the community they belong to. This was supported by the current social issues. 187 honour killings were recorded in Tamil Nadu in the past 5 years which is considered as a pride to their community (Kathir, 2018). A couple was killed by their own family members for an inter-caste marriage to maintain the pride of their caste (Kathiresan, 2019). A famous journal Frontline quoted “Tamil society today displays a weird combination of feudal and caste oriented mindsets” (Rajasekaran, 2020). The students of a famous college in Chennai were suspended for creating public nuisance, gang violence and carrying weapons in public transports, which is considered as valour (Murugesan, 2019). A school student was severely attacked by his classmates in a riot to show the pride of their social classes in Madurai (Anjana Shekar, 2019). A caste mob lynched a youth, who was suspected to be stalking a girl in the neighbourhood, simply because he belonged to a lower class community (Kirubakaran, 2020). These social issues show that irrespective of age, from children to elderly, anger is expressed to be validated in the society. The validations of anger

in this culture influences the environment and the development of individuals. This might be the reason for no age differences in anger expression in Tamil Nadu. Future scope of this research study could examine anger expression in different developmental stages, work places, and communities, and invalidation of other emotions in Tamil society.

REFERENCES

- A Kathir. (2018, February 5). 187 honour killings in five years in Tamil Nadu, claims activist. DtNext.In. <https://www.dtnext.in/News/TamilNadu/2018/02/05030137/1060872/187-honour-killings-in-five-years-in-Tamil-Nadu-claims-.vpf>
- Ali, N. (2017). The Purananuru and the Tamil Concept of Valour. *Bharatiya Prajna: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Indian Studies*, 1(3). <https://doi.org/10.21659/bp.v1n3.s204>
- Anjana Shekar. (2019, October 13). Shocking caste violence in TN: Classmate slits 14-yr-old Dalit boy with sharp blade. *The News Minute*. <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/shocking-caste-violence-tn-classmate-slits-14-yr-old-dalit-boy-sharp-blade-110471>
- Ayyar, A. P. (1940). *Kovalan and Kannaki (the Story of the Silappadhikaram)*. C. Coomarasawmy Naidu & Sons.
- Baron, R. A., & Misra, G. (2017). *Psychology: : Indian subcontinent edition*. Pearson.
- Birditt, K. S., & Fingerman, K. L. (2003). Age and Gender Differences in Adults' Descriptions of Emotional Reactions to Interpersonal Problems. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 58(4), P237–P245. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/58.4.P237>
- Cairns, D. L. (2001). Anger and the veil in ancient Greek culture. *Greece and Rome*, 48(1), 18–32. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gr/48.1.18>
- Cayubit, R. F. O. (2013). Development and Standardization of the Anger Expression Type Indicator Test (AETIT). *Philippine Educational Measurement and Evaluation Association*, 4, 12.
- Charles D. Spielberger. (1983). *Advances in Personality Assessment—Google Books* (James N. Butcher & C. D. Spielberger, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2). Routledge. <https://books.google.co.in/books?id=oZrhAQAQAQBAJ&lpg=PA161&ots=oK5PXP9bTJ&dq=what%20is%20anger&lr&pg=PA162#v=onepage&q=what%20is%20anger&f=false>
- DiGiuseppe, R., & Tafrate, R. C. (2007). *Understanding Anger Disorders*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Ekman, P. (2006). Darwin and Facial Expression: A Century of Research in Review. ISHK.
- Garg, G. R. (1992). *Encyclopaedia of the Hindu World*. Concept Publishing Company.
- Han, A., Won, J., Kim, O., & Lee, S. E. (2015). Anger Expression Types and Interpersonal Problems in Nurses. *Asian Nursing Research*, 9(2), 146–151. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anr.2015.04.001>
- Hurlock, E. B. (Elizabeth B., 1898-1988. (1980). *Developmental psychology: A life-span approach (India)*. Fifth edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, [1980] ©1980. <https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/999546345202121>
- Hyslop, T. B. (1915). Anger. *Journal of Mental Science*, 61(254), 371–391. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.61.254.371>
- Kagan, D. and A. S. R. P. of P. E. J., & Kagan, J. (2007). *What is Emotion?: History, Measures, and Meanings*. Yale University Press.
- Kathiresan. (2019, July 8). Father of Woman Confesses to Killing Inter-Caste Couple in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi. *The Wire*. <https://thewire.in/caste/father-of-woman-confesses-to-killing-inter-caste-couple-in-tamil-nadus-thoothukudi>
- Khosla, M. (2013). *Understanding Emotions from an Indian perspective: implications for Wellbeing*.

- Kirubakaran, P. (2020, February 16). TN: 7 ARRESTED IN MOB LYNCHING CASE. Republic World. <https://www.republicworld.com/india-news/law-and-order/tn-dalit-youth-lynched-to-death-in-villupuram-caste-motivated-violence.html>
- La, I. S., & Yun, E. K. (2019). Effects of Trait Anger and Anger Expression on Job Satisfaction and Burnout in Preceptor Nurses and Newly Graduated Nurses: A Dyadic Analysis. *Asian Nursing Research*, 13(4), 242–248. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anr.2019.09.002>
- Murugesan. (2019, July 24). Chennai's Pachaiyappa's College suspends 2 students for violence. The Hindu. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/chennais-pachaiyappas-college-suspends-2-students-for-violence/article28698960.ece>
- Novin, S., Rieffe, C., Banerjee, R., Miers, A. C., & Cheung, J. (2011). Anger response styles in Chinese and Dutch children: A socio-cultural perspective on anger regulation. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 29(4), 806–822. <https://doi.org/10.1348/2044-835X.002010>
- Phillips, L. H., Henry, J. D., Hosie, J. A., & Milne, A. B. (2006). Age, anger regulation and well-being. *Aging & Mental Health*, 10(3), 250–256. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13607860500310385>
- Pollet, G. (1995). Indian Epic Values: Rāmāyaṇa and Its Impact: Proceedings of the 8th International Rāmāyaṇa Conference, Leuven, 6-8 July 1991. Peeters Publishers.
- Quinn, C. A., Rollock, D., & Vrana, S. R. (2014). A test of Spielberger's state-trait theory of anger with adolescents: Five hypotheses. *Emotion*, 14(1), 74–84. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0034031>
- Rajagopalachari, C. (1972). Mahabharata. Diamond Pocket Books (P) Ltd.
- Rajasekaran, I. (2020, February 26). 'Purity and honour.' Frontline. <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/article30911129.ece>
- Reyes, L. R., Meininger, J. C., Liehr, P., Chan, W., & Mueller, W. H. (2003). Anger in Adolescents: Sex, Ethnicity, Age Differences, and Psychometric Properties. *Nursing Research*, 52(1), 2. https://journals.lww.com/nursingresearchonline/Abstract/2003/01000/Anger_in_Adolescents__Sex,_Ethnicity,_Age.2.aspx
- Schieman, S. (1999). Age and Anger. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 40(3), 273. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2676352>
- Shahsavarani, A. M., & Noohi, S. (2014). Explaining the Bases and Fundamentals of Anger: A literature Review. 1(4), 7.
- Spielman, R. M. (2017). Psychology. OpenStax. https://d3bxy9euw4e147.cloudfront.net/oscms-prodcms/media/documents/Psychology-OP_F4YYkDr.pdf
- Subhashita-Ratna-Bhandagara Or Gems of Sanskrit Poetry: A Collection of Witty, Epigrammatic, Instructive and Descriptive Verses. (1929). Pandurang Jawaji.
- Tamilnadu Tourism. (2020). Vakra Kali Amman Temple—Pondicherry Temples Information—Tamilnadu Tourism Travels. <https://www.tamilnadutourism.com/pondicherry/temples/thiruvakkarai-vakra-kali-amman-temple.php>
- Thomas, S. P. (2002). Age Differences in Anger Frequency, Intensity, and Expression. *Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association*, 8(2), 44–50. <https://doi.org/10.1067/mpn.2002.124412>
- Thomas, S. P., & Donnellan, M. M. (1991). Correlates of Anger Symptoms in Women in Middle Adulthood. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 5(4), 266–272. <https://doi.org/10.4278/0890-1171-5.4.266>
- Varsha, K. (2018). The Mother- Goddess Kannaki in South India. *International Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics*, 119(12), 2667–2674. <https://acadpubl.eu/hub/2018-119-12/articles/7/1803.pdf>

Ageless Nature of Anger Expression in Tamil Culture

Wrosch, C., Barlow, M. A., & Kunzmann, U. (2018). Age-related changes in older adults' anger and sadness: The role of perceived control. *Psychology and Aging, 33*(2), 350–360. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pag0000229>

Zimprich, D., & Mascherek, A. (2012). Anger expression in Swiss adolescents: Establishing measurement invariance across gender in the AX scales. *Journal of Adolescence, 35*(4), 1013–1022. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2012.02.008>

Acknowledgements

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Haran R P & P H Mary. D (2020). Ageless Nature of Anger Expression in Tamil Culture. *International Journal of Indian Psychology, 8*(2), 010-016. DIP:18.01.282/20200802, DOI:10.25215/0802.282