

## Moderating role of Adjustment over Anger and Wellbeing among college students

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### ABSTRACT

This study was aimed to assess the multiple relationship between Anger, Adjustment and Well-being. The study was a descriptive and correlational research. To these 101 students from under graduation level were selected using purposive sampling method. To collect the data State Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI) developed by Spielberger (1994) which assesses the intensity of anger as an emotional state (State Anger) and the disposition to experience angry feelings as a personality trait (Trait Anger), College Adjustment Scales (CAS) developed by Anton and Reed (1990) consists 9 sub- dimensions and WHO General Wellbeing Scale (1998) were used. Because STAXI and CAS were multidimensional scales, the relationship among Anger, Adjustment and Wellbeing were primarily found out followed by regression analysis. The purpose of the study was to find out whether Adjustment functions as a moderating role in the relationship between Anger and Wellbeing. The Regression Analysis showed that the dimensions of predictor variables Anger and Adjustment are capable of predicting the outcome variable wellbeing. Among the dimensions of Adjustment, the Self Esteem Problems found to be moderating between the independent variables State Anger Feeling and State Anger over the dependent variable Well- being.

**Keywords:** *Adolescents, Anger, Adjustment and Wellbeing.*

Anger has negative impact on health and wellbeing. Anger is primarily considered as a survival response which is common to all creatures. But human beings possess some degree of mental flexibility where they can regulate and control the level of anger to some extent which is accepted according to social norms. As anger is contextualized as a multidimensional construct, which includes psychological, emotional, physiological and behavioural components. Hence defining it as a single psychobiological phenomenon poses theoretical and operational difficulties (Gilem & Hendler, 2017).

The rapid increase of anti- social behaviours and criminal activities by adolescents are mainly due to the inability to deal with their level of anger. With respect to a significant increase in frequency of crimes in youth, widespread abuses in families, increased terroristic attacks and

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entanglements of ordinary people in their routine interactions, anger is appeared to be the central most problem nowadays. (Hamdan- Mansour, Dardas, Nawafleh and Abu Absa, 2012). The adolescents have the tendency to be emotionally aroused very frequently. They can make a wise decision when they are calm and may make an unwise decision when they are emotionally aroused (Paus, 2009; Sternberg, 2008). Students with a higher score in anger have poorer mental health when compared with the low scores. Friends were considered as the major significant source of anger. It was also found that it is “somewhat difficult” to concentrate on their work, study and relationships when they are angry. (Prabhu, et. al., 2016).

Consideration of multiple physiological system is critical to our understanding of biological processes in the development of emotional functioning in adolescence. (Abaied et al, 2018). Cannon found that when an animal is confronted with fear, rage and pain, it responded with some types of physiological reactions which allowed it ‘flight or fight’. Then, these reactions were mobilized the secretion of adrenalin in the physiological system. When the cortex of the brain received this input of fear, rage and pain, it sends signal down to the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system to the adrenal glands and thus secretes the hormone adrenalin. This leads to the changes in the physiological system which includes deepened respiration, increased heartbeat, blood flow shifted away from the stomach and intestine to the central nervous system, the alimentary canal stops functioning, the sugar which is stored in liver for reserve frees, the spleen contracts and releases its concentrated corpuscles and adrenalin is secreted from adrenal medulla. All these transformations of the physiological system is to prepare an organism either to run away from the situation or to fight back, with the natural accompaniment of emotions fear and rage (Funkenstein, 1955).

Blair (2018) had studied the implications of trait anger on psychopathy and other disorders associated with aggression. He states that empathy and anger are two social emotions which modulate a person’s level of aggression. Anger is an emotional reaction to threat, frustration and social provocation. Uncharacteristically amplified level of anger, can be seen in conditions like disruptive mood dysregulation disorder and borderline personality disorder and increases the risk for reactive aggression. Males have high level of aggression than females. The younger age group (16-19 years) experienced more aggression than the older age group (20-26 years) (Sharma & Marimuthu, 2014). Both trait anger and anger expression out contributed significantly to the prediction of specific aspects of wellbeing such as health and life achievement (Coates, Petty, Bramson and Beccaria, 2006). Emotional and behavioural difficulties were negatively correlated with emotional wellbeing and positive affect and positively associated with negative affect (Garcia et. al., 2018). The influence of peers emerged as a prominent factor in enhancing as well as disturbing participants’ wellbeing (Khanna& Singh, 2015).

The level of anger and hostile behaviours among college students’ are largely stem from their inability to adjust with their own self, parents, teachers, peer groups, academic demands and so on. They are unable to adjust with their environment and this results in increased level of anger and frustration. Friendship, sense of community, involvement and the ability to impact other members of the community are all the elements which naturally lead to a reciprocal and beneficial relationship between the community and the individual and make a significant contribution to youths’ adjustment (Braun- Leensohn, Sagy, Sabato and Galli, 2013; Jimenez, Musitu, Ramos and Murgui, 2009; McMillan and Charis, 1986; Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger and Alisat, 2007). Female participants were significantly better in home, health and emotional adjustment than male participants. The adolescent girls performed well in

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academics than adolescent boys. A study on the adjustment problems and academic achievement in school going adolescents (Bijoyeta, 2016). The adolescents living with family had better adjustment level than the adolescents living in orphanages and girls had lower adjustment scores than the boys. A study on academic achievement and school adjustment among adolescents (Kaur & Chawla, 2018).

From the above said factors it can be inferred that, the level of Anger is capable of predicting the level of Adjustment and Wellbeing among college students. Adolescents need more opportunities to practice and discuss realistic decision making. One strategy to improve adolescent decision making is to provide more opportunities for them in role playing and peer group problem solving (Sternberg, 2011). One approach to control anger is based on the notion that certain emotions and feelings are incompatible with anger and aggression (Baron, 1977, 1983). Thus anger may disappear when a person is induced to smile, feels concern about the objects of his/ her attack (empathy). Several field studies support the view that anger and aggression can be reduced by incompatible responses (Morgan, King, Weisz and Schopler, 2012).

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Participants*

One hundred and one college students from a college in Coimbatore selected through Purposive Sampling Method, responded to a self-report questionnaire. The distribution of the participating students is as follows: Male 21, female 80, High Socio-Economic Status 10, Moderate 91 and Low 0. The minimum age is 18 and maximum is 22. The mean age is 19.41 and SD is 0.635.

#### *Tools*

- 1. State Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI):** Developed by Spielberger (1994) which assesses the intensity of anger as an emotional state (State Anger) and the disposition to experience angry feelings as a personality trait (Trait Anger) with 12 categories namely State Anger, State Anger Feeling, State Anger Verbal, State Anger Physical, Trait Anger, Trait Anger Temperament, Trait Anger Reaction, Anger Expression Out, Anger Expression In, Anger Control Out, Anger Control In and Anger Expression Index.
- 2. College Adjustment Scale** developed by Anton and Reed (1990) consists of 108 statements and 9 sub-dimensions namely Anxiety, Depression, Substance Abuse, Suicidal Ideation, Self-esteem, Interpersonal Problems, Family Problems, Academic Problems and Career Problems.
- 3. WHO General Wellbeing Index (1998)** has five items rated on 6-point Likert scale.

### RESULTS

*Table- 1 Mean and SD of Adjustment Problems*

<b>Adjustment Problems</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>
Substance Abuse Problems	14.47 (4.46)
Suicidal Ideation Problems	17.59 (5.86)
Family Problems	20.77 (6.01)
Depression Problems	21.32 (6.7)
Interpersonal Relationship Problems	22.99 (6.56)
Anxiety Problems	23.28 (7.04)
Career problems	23.55 (6.62)

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Academic Problems	24.29 (6.14)
Self- esteem Problems	24.47 (6.3)

**Table- 2 Mean and SD of Anger and Well- being**

<b>Dimensions of Anger</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>
State Anger Verbal	65.33 (7.85)
State Anger Feeling	60.9 (3.61)
State Anger	60.27 (3.54)
State Anger Physical	56.93 (7.85)
Trait Anger Reaction	54.15 (8.51)
Trait Anger	45.98 (7.09)
Trait Anger Temperament	45.79 (5.95)
Anger Expression Index	59.81 (3.15)
Anger Expression In	54.61 (6.69)
Anger Expression Out	54.09 (7.35)
Anger Control In	48.80 (3.60)
Anger Control Out	46.90 (3.76)
Well- being	15.32 (5.43)

**Table 3: Relationship between Moderating Variables- State Anger Feeling, Adjustment (Self Esteem Problems) and Wellbeing**

	M (SD)	(A)	(B)	(C)
State Anger Feeling (A)	60.27 (3.54)	1		
Adjustment_ Self Esteem Problems (B)	24.47 (6.3)	0.301**	1	
Wellbeing (C)	15.32 (5.43)	-0.256**	-0.378**	1

\*\*Significant at 0.01 level.

**Table- 4: Moderation Analysis on Adjustment over Anger and Wellbeing**

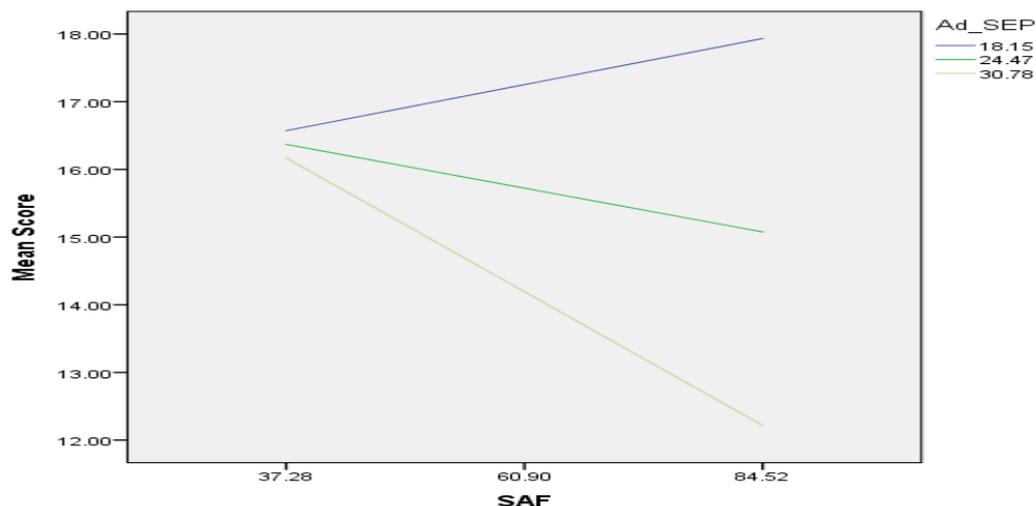
<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
State Anger Feeling <b>Dependent Variable:</b> Wellbeing	0.1964	0.0873	2.1799	0.0317*	0.0170	0.3638
Adjustment_ Self Esteem Problems <b>Dependent Variable:</b> Wellbeing	0.3000	0.2329	1.2879	0.02009*	-0.1623	0.7622
Int_1 <b>Dependent Variable:</b> Wellbeing	-0.0089	-0.0033	-2.6756	0.0088**	-0.0155	-0.0023

Note: \*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01

R<sup>2</sup>=0.2223

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**Figure- 1: Moderation Analysis on Adjustment over Anger and Wellbeing**



## DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study is to investigate whether Adjustment moderates over Anger and Wellbeing. For this mediated moderation analysis was performed using SPSS.

Table- 1 shows the Mean and SD of Adjustment problems. Among 9 dimensions of Adjustment problems, the Self- esteem problems were found to have high mean value followed by Academic and Career problems. Self- esteem serves as a motivational factor that people will take of themselves and explore their highest potential. If people have problems in adjusting with their environment, it will be first reflected on how they value themselves. While considering the low mean scores, the Substance Abuse Problems were found to have low mean score followed by Suicidal Ideation Problems.

Table- 2 shows the Mean and SD of Anger and Well- being. In Anger variable, among the dimensions namely State Anger, Trait Anger and Anger Expression, State Anger found to have high mean value followed by Anger Expression and Trait Anger. Trait anger refers to a personality trait which is long lasting in nature whereas state anger refers to a temporary feeling, which usually depends on the intensity of the external stimuli. Sometimes the anger which is not expressed externally will remain as internal rumination. Hence anger expression is yet another important element of anger. With respect to wellbeing, the mean value is interpreted as moderate level of well-being.

Table 3 shows the relationship between the moderating variables Anger, Adjustment and Wellbeing of the sample. State Anger Feeling is positively related with Self Esteem Problems (Adjustment) and Wellbeing is negatively related with State Anger Feeling and Self Esteem Problems (Adjustment).

Table 4 shows the moderating role of Adjustment over Anger and Wellbeing of the sample. The first Regression model with Wellbeing as dependent variable is significant ( $p=0.0317$ ). Second Regression model with wellbeing as dependent variable is also significant ( $p=0.02009$ ). The effect of Self- esteem problems over State Anger Feeling and Wellbeing were found to be significant. In other words, among all the Anger and Adjustment categories,

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there is an interaction only among State Anger Feeling and Self- esteem problems while having Well-being as a dependent variable.

Figure 1 shows how self- esteem problems moderate the influence of anger on well- being. This is depicted in three levels of Self- esteem problems. When self- esteem problems is at 18.15, there is an increase in the level of well- being, with respect to State Anger Feeling. As the level of Self- esteem problem increases to 24.47 the level of well- being decreases. When it increases further to 30. 78, the degree of decrease of well- being further increases.

The theoretical aspects of the present study can be implemented in the practical applications as follows. Firstly, the role of Adjustment on Anger and Wellbeing were verified. No research has yet revealed the possible effects of these three variables among college students. Secondly, it is possible to implement a program to decrease the level of Anger among college students which will have direct or indirect effect on their level of Adjustment and Well-being. Thirdly this study conceptually differentiated the State anger, Trait anger and anger expression. Hence it is possible to create awareness among the students on identifying, differentiating and mindfully responding to the anger provoking stimuli. Also the findings of the current research would help in educating the significant others like parents, teachers and peers of college students, who deal with behavioural issues of college students, which in turn results in reduction of number of people who become victims of emotional dysregulation, increasing access to care and improving healthy emotional outcomes for college students. In context with the scope of further research, this study will serve as a basic study in understanding on why college students who have the problems of Adjustment also have problems of Anger regulation. Findings of the current research might lead researchers to explore new dimensions of problems related with behavioural issues of college students.

Limitations of this study suggest some future studies. The first limitation of this study is that due to the very less number of sample showed willingness in participating in the research study, non- probability sampling method was adopted. The second limitation is that only students from one educational institution were selected. Therefore, the results of this study has limited level of generalizability across the globe.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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