

Research Paper

Exploring Gender Differences in Expression of Anger in Young Adults

Kangan Singh^{1*}, Navya Tripathi², Kaushlendra Mani Tripathi³

ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study investigates anger expression patterns among young adults, aged 18-30, a crucial transitional phase marked by significant life changes. It emphasizes the importance of effective anger management skills for academic, career, and interpersonal success and highlights the potential consequences of maladaptive anger expression. The study aims to understand how gender influences anger expression and identify contributing factors. **Methodology:** The methodology includes a diverse sample of 200 young adults who completed the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) to assess anger expression. **Results:** Results indicate that males exhibit higher physical aggression, while females show slightly higher verbal aggression. No significant gender differences emerge in anger and hostility expression, though a borderline difference is noted in overall anger levels. **Conclusion:** This research provides insights into anger expression among young adults, informing interventions to promote healthier anger management and mitigate mental health challenges during this critical life phase.

Keywords: Aggression, Patterns, Difference, Anger Levels, Management

Exploring the dynamics of anger expression in emerging adults, typically encompassing the developmental phase spanning from late adolescence to early adulthood, represents a vital research undertaking given the intricate nature of this transitional juncture. This demographic grapples with substantial life modifications and hurdles, necessitating a comprehensive comprehension of their mechanisms for regulating and manifesting anger. The significance of this inquiry resides within multiple dimensions. Firstly, young adulthood is characterized by pivotal transitions, such as higher education pursuit, establishment of occupational trajectories, and the establishment of enduring romantic partnerships, where the proficient management of anger assumes pivotal importance for efficacious adaptation. Furthermore, the alterations in relational dynamics within this age cohort underscore the critical role of constructive anger expression in

¹Undergraduate Student, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India

²Undergraduate Student, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India

³Assistant Professor III, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India

*Corresponding Author

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Exploring Gender Differences in Expression of Anger in Young Adults

fostering and perpetuating interpersonal affiliations (Lowth, 2017). In the occupational sphere, young adults are forging their professional careers, thereby rendering the adept handling of anger indispensable for job performance and workplace interrelationships.

Moreover, the ramifications for psychological well-being are salient, given that inadequately managed anger in the context of young adulthood can serve as a precipitating factor for conditions such as anxiety, depression, and substance misuse, with the potential for enduring repercussions. Research objectives encompass an in-depth exploration of behavioral propensities, psychosocial determinants, the formulation of targeted intervention strategies, and the evaluation of protracted outcomes associated with the articulation of anger. This comprehension is of paramount significance, not solely for facilitating the smoother progression into the realm of adulthood, but also for nurturing more salubrious interpersonal bonds, promoting vocational advancement, and averting or ameliorating mental health challenges concomitant with dysfunctional anger expression. Neglecting to address issues linked to anger during young adulthood can precipitate interpersonal discord, vocational setbacks, psychological distress, legal entanglements, and even deleterious somatic health sequelae (Golden, 2021).

In accordance with the framework put forth by DeWall, Anderson, and Bushman (2012), aggression is delineated as behavior executed with the deliberate intent to inflict harm upon another individual who possesses the motivation to thwart such harm. This definition incorporates three pivotal attributes. First and foremost, the expression of aggressive behavior necessitates overt manifestation; contemplating harm or harboring anger, without corresponding actions, does not constitute aggression. Furthermore, it is imperative that aggressive conduct has a harmful quality. Accidentally colliding with someone, irrespective of any resultant harm, does not qualify as aggression due to its unintentional nature. Analogously, even when undertaken purposefully, administering a child a painful flu vaccine is not classified as aggressive behavior, as the primary intent is safeguarding rather than causing harm to the child (Allen & Anderson, 2017).

Aggression manifests in a myriad of forms, with three primary categories that enjoy widespread recognition: physical, verbal, and relational aggression. Physical aggression pertains to actions motivated by a desire to cause harm to the target, encompassing acts like punching, kicking, stabbing, or physically assaulting the individual. Deliberate destruction of the target's property, such as breaking windows, also falls under the purview of physical aggression. Employing verbal means to inflict harm upon the victim, including actions like shouting, name-calling, and propagating rumors, is categorized as verbal aggression. Relational aggression, on the other hand, involves aggression directed at the target's social connections, encompassing behaviors like spreading lies, disseminating false information, and sharing embarrassing imagery—essentially, any conduct with the potential to undermine the target's interpersonal relationships. It often overlaps with verbal aggression.

Additionally, passive-aggressiveness, though less extensively studied, represents a distinct form of hostility. It entails purposefully engaging in behaviors that indirectly inflict discomfort upon the target, such as refusing invitations to social gatherings or deliberately neglecting social interactions in situations that customarily call for amicable engagement (Allen & Anderson, 2017).

The distinction between reactive and proactive aggressiveness introduces several significant dichotomies. Proactive aggression, also known as planned, purposeful, or instrumental

Exploring Gender Differences in Expression of Anger in Young Adults

aggression, stands in contrast to reactive aggression, often labeled as hostile, emotional, irate, impulsive, or retaliatory violence, and is typically characterized as "hot" in nature. Proactive aggression is generally premeditated, calculated, devoid of strong emotions, and primarily driven by motives other than causing harm, such as financial gain. In contrast, reactive aggression manifests in response to a provocation, is frequently impulsive, accompanied by feelings of anger, and is, despite its intentionality, primarily a means to an end (DeWall, Anderson, Bushman, Allen & Anderson, 2017).

Another dimension to consider is the dichotomy between direct and indirect aggression. In cases of direct aggression, the victim is physically present during the act, whereas in indirect aggression, the victim is absent. For instance, kicking someone represents a direct form of physical aggression, whereas slashing someone's vehicle tires while they are not present exemplifies indirect physical hostility (Allen & Anderson, 2017).

Displaced aggression represents yet another category of aggression (DeWall, Anderson, & Bushman, Allen & Anderson, 2017). This form of aggression occurs when an individual directs their aggressive impulses towards an alternative target who is innocent and not responsible for the provocations that triggered the initial aggressive impulse. To illustrate, if a woman experiences an insult at her workplace and consciously resists the urge to retaliate, she might release her pent-up aggression by yelling at her spouse when she returns home. When the replacement target, in some instances, inadvertently engages in behavior that provokes or exacerbates the existing hostility due to a minor transgression, this is referred to as triggered displaced aggression. In the previously mentioned example, the wife would likely exhibit displaced aggression if she returned home and observed that her husband had not fulfilled his promise to do the dishes (Allen & Anderson, 2017).

The Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ), originally developed and validated by Buss and Perry in 1992, was administered to a sample of 1253 college freshmen enrolled in introductory psychology courses. This 29-item assessment tool serves to gauge various dimensions of aggression, including physical aggressiveness, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility, which are the four primary expressions of aggressive behavior. Participants provided their responses to each questionnaire item using a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 (extremely uncharacteristic of me) to 5 (extremely characteristic of me) (Buss & Perry, 1992).

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the initial version of the BPAQ revealed adequate reliability for the four distinct subscales, as well as for the overall composite score (Buss & Perry, 1992). Moreover, the four-factor model exhibited a satisfactory fit during the validation process.

This instrument has been translated and validated in various languages, including Dutch (Hornsveld et al., 2009), Spanish (Morales-Vives et al., 2005), Japanese (Nakano, 2001; Ramirez et al., 2001), Chinese (Maxwell, 2007), Italian (Fossati et al., 2003), Swedish (Prochazka & Agren, 2001), Turkish (Demirtas-Madran, 2012), European Portuguese (Cunha & Gonçalves, 2012; Simões, 1993), among others (Cunha, Pexito, Cruz, Goncalves, 2021). These adaptations have allowed for the cross-cultural application of the BPAQ, enabling the assessment of aggression across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

Exploring Gender Differences in Expression of Anger in Young Adults

Buss and Perry's conceptualization in 1992 outlined four primary categories of aggressiveness, which can be further elaborated as follows:

- 1. Physical Aggression:** This form of aggression entails direct harm towards a victim, involving physical actions such as slapping, kicking, scratching, or biting, with the potential to escalate harm when weapons like knives, spears, or firearms are employed. Typically, it is accompanied by visible facial expressions and a readiness for physical assault. Physical aggression often manifests with aggressive facial cues and physical signs, indicating its imminent occurrence (Bhateri & Singh, 2015).
- 2. Verbal Aggression:** Verbal aggression serves as an alternative to physical aggression. It encompasses behaviors like swearing, mocking, criticizing, scolding, or taunting others, frequently resulting in psychological distress, anxiety, or damage to one's self-esteem. Verbal aggression may involve shouting and yelling, which serve as stylistic-paralinguistic elements that complement the aggressive verbal content. Additionally, verbal threats to inflict physical or psychological harm may be present, including the dissemination of false information or damaging rumors aimed at tarnishing someone's reputation (Bhateri & Singh, 2015).
- 3. Anger:** Anger denotes the physiological arousal resulting from this emotional state. Physiological responses to anger include elevated blood pressure, increased heart rate, accelerated breathing, redistribution of blood from the intestines to major skeletal muscles, and the release of sugar into the bloodstream. These physiological changes prepare the individual for the intense physical effort often associated with physical aggression. It's important to note that anger frequently precedes the expression of hostility and serves as a short-lived, immediate emergency response (Bhateri & Singh, 2015).
- 4. Hostility:** Hostility is the cognitive component of aggression, encompassing a range of mental processes such as thoughts, judgments, memories, fantasies, and plans. This dimension comprises emotions like dislike, malice, and resentment towards others. Suspicion regarding the presence of others or their malicious intentions is also a facet of hostility. Hostility may accompany anger as an immediate response to a current situation. Despite initial appearances, resentment and suspicion can be related and are associated with this cognitive facet of aggression (Bhateri & Singh, 2015).

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to see how gender affects the appearance of anger expression patterns in young people and to uncover any underlying causes that may be contributing to gender differences in rage expression within this cohort.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

We conducted the study with 200 young adults aged 18-30, ensuring diverse representation across age, gender, and culture, with informed consent obtained from all participants.

Design

Based on previous research in this sector, a battery of observational psychometric measures was chosen and adjusted to meet our specific needs. In this investigation, four factors were employed. The psychometric assessment was administered to each individual through Google forms.

Exploring Gender Differences in Expression of Anger in Young Adults

Instrument

The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) was used to assess anger expression. It includes 29 Likert-scale items measuring various dimensions of aggression.

Procedure

1. Recruitment: Participants were recruited from multiple sources and provided informed consent.
2. Data Collection: Participants completed the BPAQ privately, honestly sharing their typical anger-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
3. Demographics: Participants provided age, gender, cultural background, and relevant personal history.
4. Data Analysis: We analyzed BPAQ data using statistical tests, exploring gender differences in anger expression.

Scoring

The **Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ)** is a 29-item questionnaire that measures aggression as a personality trait. The total score ranges from 29 to 145, with higher scores indicating higher levels of aggression. The BPAQ has four subscales:

- Physical aggression: Items 1–9
- Verbal aggression: Items 10–14
- Anger: Items 15–21
- Hostility: Items 22–29

To calculate the total score, add the responses for all 29 items. Each question is scored on a scale of 1 (extremely uncharacteristic) to 5. The two items (7 and 18) worded in the direction opposite to aggression are reverse-scored.

The scores are normalized on a scale of 0 to 1, with 1 being the highest level of aggression.

Ethical Considerations

- Obtained ethical approval.
- Ensured participant confidentiality.
- Informed consent and withdrawal rights were upheld.

Data Analysis

Our study employed a rigorous psychological lens, utilizing SPSS for data analysis. The canvas of our investigation centered on the nuanced landscape of anger expression among young adults, with a particular focus on the delicate interplay between gender and emotive responses. By employing independent t-tests, we meticulously compared the means of distinct variables. The statistical framework served as a gateway into the emotional intricacies, shedding light on anger expression in the male and female psyches. As we delved deeper into our findings, we discerned significant gender-based disparities, revealing a captivating divergence in how anger unfurls. This exploration not only enriched our comprehension of the multifaceted nature of anger but also unveiled the unique ways of emotional communication, providing a profound glimpse into the inner workings of the human psyche.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the exploration of gender dynamics in anger expression among young adults, the t-test emerged as a compass, guiding us through the complex statistical scrutiny. Initially, we amplified our analysis with different descriptive statistics, casting light on the mean and

Exploring Gender Differences in Expression of Anger in Young Adults

standard deviation of both sexes' data. Recognizing the diverse scales inherent in our measures, we re-casted the entire dataset into T-scores, those standardized markers with a mean of 50, thereby paving the way for a nuanced multivariate analysis.

The independent samples t-tests conducted to explore gender differences in anger expression among young adults revealed the following results as shown in Table 1:

Table 1 Independent Sample Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
PA Equal Variance	8.712	.010	-3.169	198	.02	-2.945	.929	-4.778	-1.112
Assumed Equal Variance not Assumed			-3.065	154.230	.03	-2.945	.961	-4.843	-1.047
VA Equal Variance	.243	.622	-1.693	198	.092	-1.015	.599	-2.197	.167
Assumed Equal Variance not Assumed			-1.670	167.825	.097	-1.015	.608	-2.214	.185
A Equal Variance	.022	.882	-.700	198	.485	-.569	.812	-2.171	1.033
Assumed Equal Variance not Assumed			-.696	172.917	.487	-.569	.817	-2.182	1.044
H Equal Variance	.012	.912	-.404	198	.687	-.347	.860	-2.043	1.348
Assumed Equal Variance not Assumed			-.402	173.132	.688	-.347	.864	-2.054	1.359
Total Equal Variance	.752	.387	-1.890	198	.060	-4.876	2.580	-9.964	.211
Assumed Equal Variance not Assumed			-1.856	164.518	.065	-4.876	2.628	-10.065	.312

For Physical Aggression (PA): When equal variances were assumed, a statistically significant difference was found ($p = 0.02$). Males displayed higher levels of physical

Exploring Gender Differences in Expression of Anger in Young Adults

aggression, with a mean difference of -2.945. This difference remained significant when equal variances were not assumed ($p = 0.03$).

For Verbal Aggression (VA): When equal variances were assumed, the difference between males and females was not statistically significant ($p = 0.092$). However, when equal variances were not assumed, the difference became marginally significant ($p = 0.097$), with males still displaying slightly higher levels of verbal aggression (Mean Difference = -1.015). For Anger (A): Neither when equal variances were assumed ($p = 0.485$) nor when equal variances were not assumed ($p = 0.487$) did the results show a statistically significant difference in anger expression between genders.

For Hostility (H): Similar to the anger variable, neither when equal variances were assumed ($p = 0.687$) nor when equal variances were not assumed ($p = 0.688$) did the results reveal a statistically significant difference in hostility expression between males and females.

For the Total expression of anger: When equal variances were assumed, there was a borderline significant difference ($p = 0.060$). Males tended to exhibit slightly higher overall anger levels, with a mean difference of -4.876. This borderline significance persisted when equal variances were not assumed ($p = 0.065$).

Table 2 Group Statistics

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PA 1	117	23.04	5.911	.546
PA 0	83	25.99	7.200	.790
VA 1	117	15.15	4.036	.373
VA 0	83	16.17	4.370	.480
A 1	117	19.62	5.578	.516
A 0	83	20.19	5.775	.634
H 1	117	24.70	5.908	.546
H 0	83	25.05	6.105	.670
Total 1	117	82.52	17.141	1.585
Total 0	83	87.40	19.098	2.096

CONCLUSION

In scrutinizing the intricate landscape of aggression among young adults, this study employed the Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire as a compass to navigate the realms of physical aggression (PA), verbal aggression (VA), anger, and hostility across genders. The analysis began with the illumination of descriptive statistics for both male and female participants, and the subsequent alchemy of transformation turned raw data into T-scores, providing a normalized lens for exploration. The findings resonated with a nuanced symphony of gender distinctions; Physical Aggression (PA): The results unfurled a significant dichotomy, casting a spotlight on the divergence between male and female expressions of physical aggression. Males, with a notable mean difference of -2.945, stood as torchbearers of heightened physical assertiveness; Verbal Aggression (VA): While initial observations suggested no statistical divergence between genders, a subtle undercurrent emerged when assumptions of equal variances were dismissed. The marginally significant findings hinted at a delicate interplay in verbal aggression, with males holding a slender edge (Mean Difference = -1.015); Anger Expression: The canvas of anger expression painted a harmonious tableau, with no discernible statistical disparity between male and

Exploring Gender Differences in Expression of Anger in Young Adults

female participants, fostering a sense of equilibrium in the emotional landscape; Hostility Expression: Similar to anger, the realm of hostility echoed with a shared cadence, as neither assumed nor discarded variances illuminated a significant difference between male and female expressions of hostility; Overall Anger Levels: The variance of total anger expression bore the imprint of nuanced gender dynamics. Although not achieving conventional significance, males adorned themselves with slightly higher overall anger levels, subtly enriching the emotional tapestry of the study.

In essence, this exploration uncovered the subtle nuances in how young adults express aggression, unveiling a distinctive gender-based polarity across the emotional spectrum. The study not only contributes to our understanding of gender-specific variations in aggression but also adds an enriching layer to the broader narrative of human emotional expression among the youthful demographic.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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