

Anger and interpersonal relationships: social life in adolescence

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Abstract

Around 1.6 million people across the world die due to violent and anger related acts according to World Health Organization (WHO). One out of five people have problems in their interpersonal relationships due to their anger feelings and expressions. Thus it can be stated that anger control and management is required for the improvisation of relations and life in general. The present study investigates the relationship of anger and interpersonal relationships. Moreover it looks into the gender differences on anger and interpersonal relations. Samples of 200 adolescents (100 male and 100 female students of preparatory year program) were selected from King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah. The age range of the participants was 16 to 19 years. Aggression Questionnaire (ASQ) (Arnold Buss and Mark Perry, 1992) and Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (Cohen, Mermestein, & Kmarck, 1985) were used to measure anger and interpersonal relationship respectively. Correlation analysis revealed that there is a negative relationship between anger and interpersonal relationship. T-test results indicate that males exhibit more anger and anger related behaviors than females. No significant gender differences were found on interpersonal relationships. Implications for the improvement of educational and counseling programs for the management and control of anger among the adolescents are also discussed.

Keywords: Anger, Interpersonal Relationship, Counseling, Adolescents, statistical analysis

Introduction

Adolescence is characterized by remarkable changes and due to this perception of the outer world it is modified at this stage of life. There are noteworthy emotional fickle and alterations during adolescence. Emotions are constant, vibrant, and interactive processes that are structured socially. One of the emotions that is high-flying in adolescence is Anger (Adams, 1995). Adolescents feel angry when they are prevented to execute their physical or social activities specifically in the situation where they perceive a condemnation on their personalities, activities or status. They get angered when they are embarrassed, misjudged, or disregarded, as these situations are perceived by them as a threat to their personalities (Yazgan-Inanç, Bilgin, & Atıcı, 2007). Mental health issues often surface at adolescence. Research study reports that adolescents suffer from mental, emotional and behavioral problems that have repercussions in other areas of life. (National Institute of Health, 1999)

Culture prospects also have their impact on the expressivity and control of anger. Anger and aggression has become a widespread problem due to a number of social, political, financial and cultural factors (Jalabi, 1998). Anger has been an area of great reason for numerous cases and accidents of aggression and violence leading to injuries and deaths of thousands of people. A research reported 34% of violent events of adolescent students resulted in harm at physical, social, psychological, and economic level. Arab adolescents have difficulty in expressing as well as

controlling their emotions (Al-Anazi, 2010). A research study conducted in Taif, Saudi Arabia on the adolescents to investigate the behavioral problems, divulged that the salient problems experienced by the adolescents were anxiety & apprehension (13.5%), somatic complaints (12.2%) obsessions (10.8%), aggression (8.1%), criminal behavior and depression (4.1%) (Aleissa, 2001). A research conducted on personality characteristics of female juvenile delinquents in Mecca, Saudi Arabia revealed that female juveniles had a significantly high neuroticism and extraversion. However, they had low self-esteem than their non-delinquent counterparts (Awad, 2000).

For adolescents anger is a social emotion, and its expressivity usually has some outcomes and consequences for the social relations prevalent in the society. Anger is believed to have a negative impact on the interpersonal relationships. Anger is one of the most significant of all negative emotions in terms of social outcomes (Lazarus, 1996). Anger may possibly impair the interpersonal relationship (Van Kleef, De Dreu & Manstead, 2004). Anger is activated by interpersonal relationships as well as has an influence on the relationships; it is an artifact of social interactions. Adolescents are angered when they perceive an unfair treatment or a failure in fulfillment of social contract by others. Similarly, anger has a negative impact on relations, as at times anger expression deteriorates the relations (Ko, 2007). Protracted condition of anger hinders a person's mental as well as physical health and additively it shackles his/her interpersonal relationship (Hazaleus & Deffenbacher, 1986)

Literature review reports that feelings and expression of anger is closely connected with reduced social support, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, lack of coping skills, and a number of mental health problems (Dahlen & Martin, 2005; Wolf & Foshee, 2003). Some studies also reveal that enhancement in the provision of social support could compensate the negative effects of anger (Dahlen & Martin, 2005) and Ahsan (2016).

Methodology

Objectives

- To study relationship between anger and interpersonal relationships.
- To investigate the gender differences on anger and interpersonal relationships among adolescents.

Hypotheses:

- Anger is negatively related with interpersonal relationships among the adolescents.
- There is a significant difference in anger and interpersonal relationship among male and female adolescents.

Sample

A sample of 200 adolescents (100 male and 100 female students attending preparatory year program a prerequisite for Saudi students before starting their graduate studies) was selected from King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah. The age range of the participants was 16 to 19 years.

Instruments

A demographic sheet was used for collection of age, faculty and gender. Two validated scales were used to measure anger and interpersonal relationships.

Aggression Questionnaire (AQ): A questionnaire measuring anger developed by Arnold Buss and Mark Perry (1992) was administered to the participants. It consists of 29 items where participants respond to the statements along a 5 point continuum from "extremely uncharacteristic of me=1" to "extremely characteristic of me=5." The questionnaire returns scores for 4 dimensions of aggression i.e. Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger and Hostility. The overall scale

reliability is 0.93 and for subscales it is Physical Aggression 0.82, Verbal Aggression 0.73, Anger 0.79 and Hostility 0.85.

Interpersonal Support Evaluation List: Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (shortened version-12 items), developed by Cohen, Mermestein, & Kmarck (1985) was employed to measure the quality of interpersonal relationships and availability of social support to the respondents of the present study. Cronbach's alpha for the full scale is 0.70. The questionnaire had 3 different subscales designed to measure three dimensions of Perceived Social Support; Appraisal Support, Belonging Support & Tangible Support. Each is measured on a 4 point scale ranging from 'Definitely True' to 'Definitely False'.

Procedure

The data for the present study was collected from 200 students (100 male and 100 female students of preparatory year program) of King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah. The respondents were explained the purpose of the study and after seeking their consent, the study questionnaires were administered on the respondents. They were asked to truly respond to the each item in the study questionnaire. The respondents were assured for the confidentiality of the responses. The respondents were thanked for their cooperation at the end of their participation. After the data was collected, the data was entered into SPSS 21v and the results were analyzed.

Results

Table 1: Reliability Analysis of Study Scale (N=200).

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Aggression Questionnaire	29	0.65
Interpersonal Support Evaluation List	12	0.98

When using Likert-type scales it is imperative to calculate and report Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency reliability for any scales or subscales one may be using. Table 1 shows that Cronbach's Alpha for Aggression Questionnaire & Interpersonal Support Evaluation List to be 0.65 and 0.98 which shows that the items have a good internal consistency.

Table 2: Pearson's Product Moment Correlations for Anger & Interpersonal Relationship (N=200)

	Anger	
	r	Sig.
Interpersonal Relationships	-0.17*	.01

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 2 indicates that there is a significant negative relationship between anger and interpersonal relationships. The findings are significant at $p = 0.01$. According to the ranges of the effect sizes given by Jacob Cohen (1988) there is a small to medium effect size but a significant one.

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-values on Anger and Interpersonal Relationships (N=200).

	Gender	N	M	SD	df	t	p	95% CI	
								LL	UL
Anger	boys	100	103.40	41.07	198	4.21	.00	13.52	37.29
	girls	100	77.99	44.12					
Interpersonal Relationship	boys	100	31.76	4.23	198	.84	.40	1.77	.71
	girls	100	32.29	4.68					

Table 3 indicates a higher tendency of anger in male adolescents as compared to female adolescents.. The results are significant at the level of 0.01. The results also report an insignificant gender difference on interpersonal relationship; this indicates that there is no difference in the quality of relationship and social support perceived by male and female adolescents.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-values on Types of Anger (N=200).

	Gender	N	M	SD	df	t	p	95% CI	
								LL	UL
Physical Aggression	boy	100	32.99	12.27	198	4.04	.000	3.82	11.09
	girl	100	25.53	13.74					
Verbal Aggression	boy	100	21.22	8.40	198	3.76	.000	2.17	6.96
	girl	100	16.65	8.75					
Anger	boy	100	24.59	10.37	198	3.75	.000	2.62	8.43
	girl	100	19.06	10.46					
Hostility	boy	100	27.84	13.07	198	4.34	.000	4.47	11.92
	girl	100	19.64	13.61					

Table 4 indicates gender based differences in anger and anger related behaviors. Findings revealed that male adolescents have predominantly higher anger and anger related behaviors as compared to female adolescents and that the differences are significant at 0.01 level of significance

Discussion and Implications

The occurrence, feelings and expression of emotions of a person at one precise moment in time is not just presented and controlled by the enduring interactive patterns with others around him or her, but rather it is the history of the shared experiences in those relationships and also by the futuristic projections and expectations of where those relationships may move ahead. Emotions are capable to come up with its connotations and expectedness from a relationship in which it occurs and also which it molds in return (Tiedens & Leach, 2004). Anger alongside the settings of a worsening or weakening relationship may demonstrate a much abrupt onset and a rapid escalation than anger in the backdrop of a prosperous or happy relationship. The research studies indicate that emotions enable people to navigate their social interactions and contexts in which they live in (Mesquita, 2001).

The Arab literature has exposed a concern in developing therapeutic and curative programs in order to reduce violent and aggressive trends among the adolescents (Abdel - Khalek, 2002; Azab, 2002). This point towards a major problem experienced by the adolescents and issues caused due to this negative emotion. Therefore, the present study was designed to study the interpersonal relationships by scrutinizing the emotions of the adolescents. The emotion of anger was specifically studied in the study. Anger is a negative emotion and many times it is a problem in itself. Mostly, when anger is articulated in awkward and unsupportive ways, it becomes a problem specifically when it appears to require management of healthy, respectful and affectionate relationships. An international report states that 1 out of 5 people have problems in their interpersonal relationships due to their anger feelings and expressions (Mental Health Foundation, 1999). A study conducted by Garni (2001) in Saudi Arabia presented that family size, parent-student attachment, sponsorship, and parents’ education are related with violent behaviors. Numerous researches indicate that anger emotions and expressivity is related with reduced social support, interpersonal relations and mental health (Dahlen & Martin, 2005; Wolf & Foshee, 2003).

The findings of the present study are in line with the literature. The results revealed that there is a significant negative relationship between anger and interpersonal relationships among

adolescents. The present study investigated the gender differences in anger among the adolescents and found that male adolescents experience more anger as compared to female adolescents. The literature reveals contrary findings related to gender differences but the present findings were supported by (Guimaraes & Pasian, 2006). Present study further indicated gender based differences in anger and anger related behaviors. Findings revealed that male adolescents have predominantly higher anger and anger related behaviors like physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility as compared to female adolescents.

This study results also reported an insignificant gender difference on interpersonal relationship; thus indicating that there is no difference in the quality of relationship and social support perceived by male and female adolescents. Many studies have established that there are no gender differences in social support and relationships (Colarossi & Eccles, 2003). Studies have reported no gender difference in interpersonal support and relations in context of relations with parents, teachers and peers (Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Malecki & Demaray, 2003; Moradi & Funderbunk, 2006; Tam, Lee, Har, & Pook, 2011)

The findings of the present study provide implications for the development of educational and counseling programs for the management and control of anger among the adolescents in order to protect and enrich the social relationships and in turn to be more successful and mentally healthy individuals. Future research should encompass elderly age groups with varied educational qualification and taking into account the urban and rural backgrounds.

Conclusion

The present study has been undertaken to look into the relationship between Anger and Interpersonal Relationship viz-e-vis adolescence and in addition to that effect of the two variables across gender is also studied. Such a topic is rarely studied in the Arab world and the least in Saudi Arabia. To the knowledge of the author this is the first study in Saudi Arabia to examine such a relationship. The outcomes/findings of our research are quite convincing, and thus on the basis of the results obtained it can be concluded that there is a significant negative relationship between anger and interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, gender differences existed as far as the anger is concerned with higher tendency in males but with regard to interpersonal relationships on significant differences were observed. Though the present study mainly addressed the adolescents however, the results may be applicable also to students of higher ages.

On the basis of the promising findings presented in this paper, work on the remaining issues on the topic, especially the case involving contingency models i.e. mediation and moderation of the variables will be presented in future papers.

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