

Gender, Age and Marital Status Differences in Anger Expression Among Tumu College of Education Students

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of sex, age and marital status on the expression of anger among Tumu college of education students. A descriptive survey design guided this investigation. A sample size of 250 college students were used for the investigation. The sampling technique used to select the participants for the investigation was simple random sampling. A Self-report anger instrument was used to collect the data for the study based on six-point Likert type scale. The data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results indicated a statistically significant difference with regard to the influence of gender on anger. Also, there was no statistically significant influence of age on anger. Again, the study revealed no statistically significant difference of marital status on anger. In view of the results of the study, it was recommended that counsellors should provide anger management therapies to college students irrespective of age and marital status. Also, counsellors should take gender into consideration when providing interventions with regard to coping with anger.

Keywords: Anger, Gender, Age, Marital Status, Impact, Students, College.

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1. Introduction

Anger is regarded in all societies as a strong human feeling that emanates from a variety of sources such as, wrongdoing, maltreatment, abuse or unfairness. This is experienced when a person feels that he has been unjustly treated, hurt or encounters a situation that keeps him away from achieving what he desired (Hendricks, Bore, Aslinia & Morris, 2013).

Anger is noted to have a positive influence on human physical, intellectual as well as on the social well-being. This can pose a severe threat in an individual's well-being such as, cognition, affectivity, behavioural patterns and social relations. Again, anger is seen as, a potent tool vibrant for human existence because it overwhelms worries and builds self-confidence of a person against any aggression (Platt, as cited in Hendricks, Bore, Aslinia & Morris, 2013; Suman, 2016). Therefore, it is desirable that a normal human being should experience an amount of aggression that is considered normal and considerable. Extreme or excessive anger can be cognitively, socially and physically dangerous to individuals. Cognitively, severe anger has been associated with poor decision-making, which causes worries in one's life such as, impaired thinking (Suman, 2016). Socially, intense aggression has been linked to poor societal care. This is true because anger has been construed as a psychological variable which has a negative effect on social relations as compared to other feelings (Suman). Physically, extreme expression of aggression has been linked to certain diseases such as, colds and flu (Tice & Baumeister, as cited in Philip, Henry, Hosie & Milne, 2006). In addition, coronary heart diseases, stroke, cancer and hypertension are symptoms of chronic anger. Furthermore, anger is the main chief cause of some psychological health problems such as worry, insomnia, depression as well as self-injury (Suman, 2016). Severe anger is noted to be a negative inner feeling state to a basic reaction (Kassinove & Subhodolsky, as cited in Boman, 2003) whose purpose is to ginger an individual to overcome difficulties (Lewis, as cited in Boman).

Spielberger (2015), found anger not to be a unitary concept, but made up of sub-components namely; state and trait anger, anger expression out and anger expression in as well as anger control in. State rage refers to an amount of aggression a person experiences at the time of testing while attribution rage refers to one's predisposition to show anger. Outward expression of fury is the ability of a person to show angry feelings verbally or physically in an aggressive manner whereas inward expression of fury is the ability of a person to experience aggression but show it covertly. This means anger is noted as a melting pot. Outward control of anger refers to how frequently the overt showing of aggressive feelings are managed whereas inward management of anger refers to how regularly aggressive feelings are managed by inner relaxing strategies such as, taking a deep breathing and relaxing.

Another dimension of anger expression is inactive fury and hostile fury (Suman, 2016). Inactive fury is expressed in this form; dispassion such as, giving someone a fake smile; evasiveness in the form of evading clash; negativity such as, setting yourself up for failure, being exposed to fatality; compulsive behaviour such as, always very clean and tidy; psychological manipulation like irritating people to violence and then controlling them;

secretive behaviours such as gossiping, stealing, avoiding eye contact; self-blaming such as saying sorry repeatedly (Suman). On the other hand, the signs of hostile fury are; intimidation like frightening people directly and molesting animals; destructiveness in the form of breaking school properties; imposing like, looking so big; hurtfulness such as, sexual harassment; manic behaviours such as, not paying attention to people; selfishness in the form of not sharing with others as well as jumping lines (Suman, 2016).

Anger is also construed to be similar to rage and aggression. However, these two terms are not similar to anger. Rage is the incapability of a person to process feelings or life events as a result of the fact that the person's ability to manage feelings has not been adequately advanced or momentarily vanished with reference to more recent distress (Schore, as cited in Suman, 2016). Rage is noted to be a burden of varied emotions attempting to explode as raw identical emotions that poured out when another life episode cannot be managed (Harvey, as cited in Suman, 2016). Anger, on the other hand, is positive when considered to be a defensive reaction to perceived danger whereas the showing of anger in negativity is, aggression and dealing with the inappropriate form, is rage as a result of probable potential errors in opinion and appraisal (Suman).

There has been evidence that certain factors such as, gender, age and marital status has an influence on anger. On the part of gender and anger research studies indicated that there have been disparities among genders with regard to formulation of decisions as well as portraying feeling (Brandits & Garofalo, 2012). It is found that women are more passionately sensitive to anger whereas men have a more status of being prone to anger. Women feel rage, but may show rage in varied ways than men. For example, instead of showing rage by destroying things women rather converse with their friends (Suman, 2016). On the other hand, women display fury in the same way like men but experience struggle in identifying and acknowledging the reactions as a result of societal expectation or restraints (Karrenman & Bekker, 2012). Men have a habit of showing anger more frequently and happily (Fischer & Evers, 2011) and this is attributed to the fact that, males feel comfortably displaying anger, because it is accepted by society (Burt, 2014). Karrenman and Bekker (2011), study on gender among adolescent boys and girls found disparities associated with anger and feeling among genders. An investigation conducted by (Sadeh, Javdani, Finy & Verona (2011) revealed that, woman showed more inner self-anger than men, but did not find out whether disparities occurred among the sexes before the investigation. Buntaine and Costenbader (1997) also revealed in their study that males and females self-reports showed no major difference in anger expression. This study is further supported by Zimprich and Mascherek (2012) that no anger disparity occurred among men and women. The study revealed that males and females may show and react to conditions in different ways, but they normally experience the same levels of anger. There has been a cultural norm in Western Society that, females have a reduced amount of violence than males and do not show extreme rage (Caring, Buttel & Dutton, as cited in Burt, 2014). This wrong impression occurred in Western culture until a report from the U.S. National Family violence survey of 1975 found that, women were also as mad as men and showed extreme rage the same amount that men demonstrated. Ramirez, Fujihara and Goozen (2001), investigated culture and gender disparities in anger and violence and the results indicated that there has been a greater level of anger among men than women in the Dutch sample. Okuda, et al., (2015) investigated the incidence and associates of rage in a community using a national survey found similar results. Baggio's (1993) study on gender disparities in behavioural responses to aggravation of rage showed that, anger was found in more reports by men respondents as compared to females. Stiffler (2008), study that investigated some factors influencing the showing of rage found that there exists no statistically substantial disparity among men total fury and women total fury. Also, Allen and Haccoun's (1976) study found no evidence for gender disparities in the frequency or amount of anger. On the other hand, Burt (2014) study at Florida showed sex disparities to the extent that women exhibited intense fury manifestation, as well as a smaller amount of anger regulation. The results also indicated that women got better chances of overall improvement in anger. Boman's (2013) study at South Australia revealed that there has not been disparity in boys and girls experience of rage but acknowledged that girls are more probable to show positivity in anger than boys. The findings also indicated that boys showed more aggressive tendencies towards school than girls.

There also exists empirical evidence that indicates that advancement in age is related to improvements in the capacity to regulate feelings (Gross & John, 2003). It is also found that lifelong experiences may tend to improve regulation of feelings which would probable lead to a less frequent experience of negative affectivity amongst old adults (Gross & John). It has also been revealed that old adults report lesser intensities of experienced rage in daily life than the young adults (Schieman, 1999). Gross and John (1999), also found a reduction in age to be related to a decrease in the experienced amount of anger, but not other feelings. In a study carried out by Birditt and Gingerman as cited in Phillips et al., (2006), found that old adults were less probable to describe showing anger due to societal clash. However, the scholars also agreed that the old adults were not different from the younger ones in terms of their level of other sentiments felt. Phillips et al., (2006) study showed that, the aged expresses anger openly less frequently and exhibits more internal regulation strategies compared to the younger adults. It is also found that, old adults expressed more irritation and rage than the young ones (Malatesta-Magai et al., & Culver, 1992). In a study conducted by Kunzman et al., (2013), who investigated oldness disparity in the incidence of unhappiness and fury among some Germans found that adolescents who were in their late period indicated the

greatest rage. In addition, it was also discovered that the incidence of anger increases from adolescents who were in their late period to young adulthood. However, a study conducted by Deno et al., and Endo (2021) found significant age difference in anger expression among a sample of Japanese adolescents. The study revealed that adolescents within the age group of 9-10 showed less anger towards their parents than those within the age group of 15-16.

A study conducted by Zafar and Kausar (2014), investigated emotional and social problems of 40 married and 40 divorced women in Pakistan. The results indicated that, divorced females experience more depression, anxiety, stress, isolation, societal relations anxiety as well as intense level of state anger, anger out and total anger likened to the married females. The study also indicated substantial association among the emotional and societal problems of the married and divorced females. Similarly, a study conducted by Averdijk, Malti, Ribeaud and Elsner as cited in (Zafar & Kausar, 2014), using a sample of 40 females who were divorced and another group of 40 females who were favourably staying with their partners indicated that, divorced females were more hostile and displayed intense state and trait anger as likened to the married ones. In addition, the divorced women stated intense worry and anxiety more than the married females. Furthermore, the feelings of loneliness and rejection were reported more in divorce females than the married females. Other studies conducted by Ainsworth, Allison and Furstenberg, Amato and Arditti cited in (Zafar & Kausar, 2014), found that divorced and married females were significantly dissimilar in depression, worry, feelings of isolation, anxiety and rage. Tumu College of Education is one of the institutions of Education in Ghana situated in the Upper West Region of Ghana, and it appears no study on the influence age, sex, and marital status differences in anger expression has been conducted among the College students in Tumu. The purpose of the study was to explore the influence of age, sex, and marital status differences in anger expression among College of education students in Tumu College of Education.

2. Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. examine what difference exists in anger expression among male and female college students in Tumu College of Education.
2. determine what difference exists in anger expression among male and female college students in Tumu College of Education in terms of age
3. assess what difference exists in anger expression among male and female college students in Tumu College of Education on the basis of marital status.

3. Hypotheses of the Study

The study was guided by the following hypotheses:

1. H_0 : There is no statistically significant difference in anger expression among male and female college students in Tumu College of Education.
 H_1 : There is a statistically significant difference in anger expression among male and female college students in Tumu College of Education.
2. H_0 : There is no statistically significant difference in anger expression among college students in Tumu College of Education in terms of age.
 H_1 : There is a statistically significant difference in anger expression among college students in Tumu College of Education in terms of age.
3. H_0 : There is no statistically significant difference in anger expression among college students in Tumu College of Education on the basis of marital status.
 H_1 : There is a statistically significant difference in anger expression among college students in Tumu College of Education on the basis of marital status.

4. Research Methods

4.1 Research Design

Descriptive research design was used for the study. This type of design allows the researchers to collect data and describe a phenomenon (Amedahe & Asamoah-Gyimah, 2018). This design basically was suitable for the study because it tries to find out the existing situation of a particular phenomenon (Gay, 1992).

4.2 Population and Sample

The population of the study was level 200 students of Tumu College of Education. The total population for the study was three hundred and eighty-eight (388) second year Tumu College of Education students. They were made up of 213 males and 175 females. The sample size for the study was 250 respondents made up of 139 males and 111 females.

4.3 Sampling Procedure

Simple random sampling was used to select 250 level 200 Tumu College of Education students in the Upper West Region of Ghana for the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents for the study in order to ensure equity.

4.4 Research Instrument

The instrument used for collecting the data was Anger self-report instrument made up of 30 items based on six Point Likert-type scale. The instrument has the response options, 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Moderately Disagree, 3=Slightly Disagree, 4=Slightly Agree, 5=Moderately Agree and 6=Strongly Agree. The total score of the instrument is 180 and has a minimum score of 30. A score of 105 and above indicates the participant has anger. To determine the reliability of the instrument, test and re-test technique was used. Thirty of the level 200 Tumu College of education students who were not part of the sample selected for the study were used for the pre-test. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. Thus, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.70. This is considered reliable based on Pallant's (2010) assertion.

4.5 Data Collection Procedure

The Anger Self Report instruments were personally administered to Tumu College of Education students during long break time. At the College, all the selected participants were gathered at the assembly hall. The essence of the study was explained to the respondents after that, the instruments were administered to the respondents. The completed questionnaires were all collected from the respondents by the researchers.

4.6 Methods of Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the data analysis. The mean, standard deviation, frequencies and percentages were used for the descriptive statistics whereas t-test and ANOVA were used for the inferential statistics.

Table 1- Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N= 250)

Item	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	139	55.6
Female	111	44.4
Age		
17-20	10	4.0
21-24	184	73.6
25 and above	56	22.4
Marital Status		
Single	234	93.6
Married	14	5.6
Divorced	2	0.8

Table 1 shows the bio-data of the respondents. With respect to gender of the respondents, it can be seen that 139 (55.6%) indicated that majority of the respondents were males whereas the females were 111 representing 44.4 percent. The Table further indicates that 10 (4.0%) of the respondents were between the ages of 17 and 20, while 184 (73.6%) of the respondents were between 21 to 24 years indicating the highest age group. Again, 56 (22.4%) of the respondents were between the ages of 25 years and more. Table 1 also shows the marital status of the respondents. It was revealed that majority of the respondents were single 234 (93.6%) with 14 (5.6%) of the respondents being married. Furthermore, 2 (0.8%) of the respondents indicated that they were divorced.

Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant difference in anger expression among male and female college students in Tumu College of Education. The results are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2- Influence of Gender on Anger

Gender	N	Mean	SD
Male	139	108.25	15.31
Female	111	101.75	17.42

Cut-off point= 105.0

Table 2 showed that the computed mean of means for males was 108.25 with a standard deviation of 15.31 implying that male participants indicated higher level of anger expression compared to the female participants with a mean score of 101.75 and standard deviation of 17.42.

Table 3- *Independent Samples T-test on the Influence of Gender on Anger*

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	Sig (2tailed)
Male	139	108.25	15.31	248	3.137	.002*
Female	111	101.75	17.42			

*Significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows the independent samples t-test performed on the influence of gender on anger. The Table indicated that the mean for the males was 108.25 with a standard deviation of 15.31 while the mean for females was 101.75 with a standard deviation of 17.42. It can be concluded from Table 3 that there is statistically significant difference in male and female anger scores ($t = 3.137$, $df = 248$, $p = 0.002$, 2-tailed). The probability value (p-value) of 0.002 is less than the 0.05 significant level. Therefore, based on the result, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means there is a statistically significant difference in anger expression among male and female college students in Tumu College of Education.

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant difference in anger expression among college students in Tumu College of Education in terms of age. The results are indicated in Table 4.

Table 4- *Influence of Age on Anger*

Age	N	Mean	SD
17-20	10	108.00	17.32
21-24	184	104.58	17.37
25 and above	56	107.48	13.46

Mean of means = 105.00

Table 4 showed that the highest mean for the age range of 17-20 was 108.00 with a standard deviation of 17.32 implying that they showed the highest level of anger expression. This was followed by participants in the range of 25 years and above ($M = 107.48$, $SD = 13.46$). The participants in the age range of 21-24 who were the majority rather indicated a low level of anger expression ($M = 104.58$, $SD = 17.37$).

Table 5- *One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the Influence of Age on Anger*

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F-cal	P value
Between groups	431.813	2	215.907	.785	.457
Within groups	67938.591	247	275.055		
Total	68370.404	249			

It can be observed from Table 5 that the P value of .457 is greater than the significant level of 0.05 implying that there was no statistically significant difference on the influence of age on anger expression [$F(247) = .785$, $p > .457$]. In view of this, the null hypothesis is retained. This implies, there is no statistically significant difference in anger expression among college students in Tumu College of Education in terms of age.

Hypothesis 3: There is no statistically significant difference in anger expression among college students in Tumu College of Education on the basis of marital status. The results are indicated in Table 6.

Table 6- *Influence of Marital Status on Anger*

Marital Status	N	Mean	SD
Single	234	105.84	16.34
Married	14	97.00	19.75
Divorced	2	109.00	1.41

Cut-off point= 105.00

From Table 6, it can be seen that participants who stated that they were divorced indicated the highest expression of anger ($M = 109.00$, $SD = 1.41$). This was followed by participants who stated that they were single ($M = 105.84$, $SD = 16.34$). Married participants indicated the least form of anger ($M = 97.00$, $SD = 19.75$).

Table 7- *One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the Influence of Marital Status on Anger*

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F-cal	P value
Between groups	1059.254	2	529.627	1.943	.145
Within groups	67311.150	247	272.515		
Total	68370.404	249			

It can be observed from Table 7 that the P value of .145 is greater than the significant level of 0.05 indicating that there was no statistically significant difference on the influence of marital status on anger [$F(247) = 1.943$, $p > .145$]. In view of this, the null hypothesis is retained. This means, there is no statistically significant difference in anger expression among college students in Tumu College of Education on the basis of marital status.

5. Discussion of Findings

This section discussed the various findings of the study in relation to the hypotheses formulated.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in anger expression among male and female college students in

Tumu College of Education

With respect to hypothesis one, the influence of gender on anger expression, the current study revealed that males stated higher form of anger expression as compared to the females. This agrees with the finding of Ramirez et al., (2001). The recent outcome is also consistent with the national survey of Okuda et al. (2015) on the existence and associates of anger in the community. Their study concluded that, male participants were more likely to get angry as compared to females in the community. Furthermore, Baggio's (1993) study on sex differences also buttressed that rage was found in more reports by males than women. Generally speaking, literature explaining sex differences on anger seem to be of the view that females tend to express other forms of emotions except for anger. Some possible reasons for the recent result may be due to the fact that the Ghanaian society has brought about personal and social unacceptability of anger on females to either hide or suppress it. This is to say that the societal orientation of females permits them to openly express their emotions than males, but females venting out their anger is regarded as unfeminine. On the other hand, the society has made males to be less emotionally expressive with the exception of anger. Thus, males are discriminative in their emotional expression. This may explain why male participants in the current study indicated intense level of anger compared to the females. Also, in testing the hypothesis to ascertain the influence of gender on anger, it was revealed that there is statistically substantial difference among the sexes on anger. Contrarily to the finding of the current study, Stiffler (2008) in a study that investigated some factors that affect the showing of rage found that there was no statistically substantial difference between total anger of the sexes. This study is also contrarily to (Buntaine & Costenbader; Zimprich & Mascherek, as cited in Burt (2014) who found no significant disparity between sexes anger. The current study also contradicts the finding of Allen and Haccoun (1976), where sex disparities in the incidence or intensity of anger do not exist.

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant difference in anger expression among college students in Tumu College of Education in terms of age.

With respect to hypothesis two, the influence of age on anger expression, the results indicated no statistically significant difference on the influence of age on anger. This current study is in contrast with Deno et al., and Endo (2021) found significant age differences in anger expression among a sample of Japanese adolescents. The current study revealed that respondents in the age range of 17-20, thus, the late adolescents indicated the highest expression of rage. This current finding is in agreement with Kunzmann et al., (2013), who found that the incidence of rage increases from late adolescence to a period of young adulthood. However, other findings of these scholars found that, anger displays a steady decrease until old age is in contrast with the current study's finding in which the old adults surprisingly indicated an increased level of anger. The current finding is also contrary to the finding of Philips et al., (2006), who found that old adults showed rage externally less frequently, and also reported more internal regulation of anger using relaxing strategies likened to their young ones. The study also indicated that respondents in the age range of 21-24 who were the young adults indicated a low level of anger. The recent result is in contrast with the outcome of Stoner and Spencer (1987), who found that the young adult category expressed more anger-out than the old category. One would have thought that the old category would have accumulated enough experience in life to enable them have less intense anger expression or they might have learned to manage their anger more constructively but the finding indicated the old adults had high level of anger. This finding is contrarily to the work of Schieman's (1999), study who found that old adults report lesser levels of felt rage in everyday lives than the young ones. This may be due to the fact that the old adults probably did not give a socially desired response to the items. Again, the young adults in the current study indicated a low level of anger. Perhaps, respondents used in the current study have not had life experiences that would make them harbour bitter experiences as compared to their older counterparts.

Hypothesis 3: There is no statistically significant difference in anger expression among college students in Tumu College of Education on the basis of marital status.

Hypothesis three sought to find out the influence of marital status on anger expression. The study revealed that the respondents who were divorced indicated the highest level of anger expression. This study is consistent with Zafar and Kausar (2014), who found that separated females were more aggressive, showed more state and trait anger than the married ones. In addition, the results indicated that feelings of loneliness and denial were reported more in separated women. This study is further buttressed by Ainsworth, Allison and Furstenberg, Amato and Arditti as cited in (Zafar & Kausar, 2014) that separated and married females are significantly different in depression, stress, feelings of isolation, anxiety and rage. This may be due to the fact that the experience of going through divorce has made a lot of divorcees bitter and are carrying a lot of pain along. Again, it is also possible that the problems that ensued before the divorce occurred were so serious that couples deem, they cannot simply forgive. This study also revealed that respondents who were single exhibited a high level of anger. Perhaps, single respondents used in the study are generally not satisfied with their lives and, therefore, express anger at the least provocation. It is also possible that because the single respondents have not got the right partners, they have not had the opportunity to learn from others how to really manage their anger. With respect to the married respondents, it was observed that they showed the least form of anger. Probably, experience in marriage has fostered in the married respondents' tolerance towards offenders and some coping mechanisms when they are faced with situations that elicits anger.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions were drawn from the study. It was found that gender has a statistically significant influence on anger expression. This is because male and female students did respond differently to anger. In addition, it was revealed that age and marital status has no statistically substantial influence on anger expression. This implies all age groups and marital categories did not respond to anger expression differently. Considering the findings of the study, it was recommended that counsellors in Colleges of Education should provide anger management therapies to individual college students or group of college students irrespective of age and marital status, but gender should be taken into consideration.

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