

Gender Differences in Anger and Self-esteem in School Children

Sahar Chugtai & *Aasma Yousaf

Centre for Clinical Psychology, University of the Punjab, Lahore

The present study aims to ascertain the relationship between anger and self-esteem of school boys and girls. It was hypothesized that there is likely to be a relationship between anger and self-esteem. It was also hypothesized that boys and girls will likely to differ with respect to anger and self-esteem. A sample of 200 school boys (n=100) and girls (n=100) within the age range of 13-19 years (M=15 and SD=.90) were recruited from private English medium schools in Lahore. Convenient sampling technique was used to select sample. Demographic Questionnaire, State Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI; Spielberger, 1997) and Offer Self Image Questionnaire for Adolescents-Revised (OSIQ-R; Offer et al., 1992) were administered to assess anger and self-esteem respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation revealed that subscales of anger had significant positive relationship with self-esteem i.e. morals, family relations, mastery, vocational and educational goals, superior adjustment and Idealism. Moreover, state anger, anger-in, anger-out and trait anger reaction had negative relationship with body image. Likewise state anger, trait anger and anger-in have negative relationship with social relations subscale of self-esteem. Furthermore, trait anger, trait anger temperament and anger-out had negative relationship with sexual attitude. t-test revealed that girls expressed more concern over body image and sexual attitude while boys had high scores in morals and family relationships. While no gender differences were found with respect to different domains of anger. This study will enhance awareness regarding devising counseling programs for anger management and self-esteem enhancement of school students.

Keywords: Anger, Self-esteem, family relationships, social relationships

Novaco (1992) explained anger as a normal reaction of people when they get angry at various situations but it becomes unhealthy or dysfunctional when its frequency, intensity and duration increases (as cited in O'Neill, 1999). Mental Health Organization (2008) provided the statistics of UK that almost one third of population reported that they have close relationship with those who has difficulty in controlling their anger. More than 1 in 10 reported that they felt difficulty in controlling their own anger. One in five of people (20%) reported that they have ended their relationship because other person behaved angrily. Moreover, 64% either strongly agree or agree that generally people are getting angrier. Theorists believe that anger is linked with self-esteem. Self-esteem means the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life as to take life positively and whenever any problem is faced the person deals with it effectively

*Corresponding Author's Email: aasmayousaf@yahoo.com

and to be satisfied and happy with ones abilities and give self-respect to oneself (Branden, 1969).

Many researches posit that low self-esteem leads to the experience of anger and anxiety (Ellis & Maclaren, 1998; Mathes, Eugene, Adams, Heather, Davies & Ruth; 1985; Todd, 2008). In the same context, Baumeister, Laura and Joseph (1996) found in a research that anger resulting in violence was closely related to threatened self-esteem. However, they also presented the conventional view describing that there is a relationship between low self-esteem and high anger.

Leary and Baumeister (2000) proposed sociometer theory which posits that self-esteem is the person's potential for building relationships and a person's self-esteem will be based depending on the people with whom the person is attached to (as cited in Zanna, 2000). Thus, if a person has high self-esteem due to the relationships around him/her, the anger expression may be reduced. Sociometer theory maintains that self-esteem evolves according to the level of status given to an individual and his acceptance in his desired social group (Greenberg, 2008). Kuppens (2005) suggested that people's attitude towards others and others attitude towards them contribute to trait anger. It has been suggested that if the relationships are working well then it will not lead to anger but will further help in increasing or maintaining a stable self-esteem (Brody et al., 1999 as cited in Busch, 2009; Goldman & Haaga, 1995). Similarly Michael, Bruce and Lynda (1989) proposed that individuals with unstable high self-esteem would report especially high tendencies to experience anger and hostility and vice versa.

Considering the sample of present study, Rosenberg, Schoole and Schoenbach (1989) found that adolescents with high self-esteem are more likely to perform well in school and will not show socially non-acceptable behaviors like anger (as cited in McCullough, Ashbridge & Pegg, 1994).

The relationship between self-esteem and anger had been discussed in many historical perspectives, such as psychodynamic, cognitive and humanistic perspectives. Many cognitive psychologists have suggested that people who suffered from anger and depression were too sensitive that they could not bear the loss of anything or being rejected. After showing anger they had a guilt feeling which create the fear of losing their important relationships. Due to fear of losing relationship, they will suppress their anger and this will lead to their low self-esteem (Busch, 2009). Abraham (1911) gave the similar concept that anger causes resentment which further lowers self-esteem (as cited in Busch, 2009).

The psychodynamic theory (Freud, 1917) proposed that a person who is angry at someone will not show his angry reactions to that person but will start blaming own self and considers himself having low worth (as cited in Busch, 2009).

Humanistic approach proposed that self-esteem is a basic human need. Maslow (1987) explained two levels of needs and self-esteem is considered in higher level of needs without which an individual cannot grow or be satisfied with self.

In the light of existing literature and theories, the present study aimed to find the inter-relationship between anger and self-esteem in school boys and girls. For this purpose following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is a positive relationship between anger and self-esteem.
2. Boys and girls are likely to differ in anger and self-esteem.

Method

Participants

A sample of 200 students (n=100 boys; n=100 girls) was recruited from five different private English medium schools in Lahore. They were from educational level of 7th-10th grades and ranged in ages 13-19 years (M= 15, SD=.90).

Measures

Demographic information form. A demographic form was developed by the researcher to gather information about the participant's age, gender, grade, number of siblings, birth order, family system, general home environment, family income and any physical or psychological illness in family.

State trait anger expression inventory (STAXI; Spielberger, 1997). State Trait Anger Expression Inventory is a 44 item scale developed by Spielberger (1997). It is consisted of 5 subscales i.e. State Anger (10 items), Trait Anger (10 items), Trait Anger Temperament (4 items) & Trait Anger Reaction (4 items), Anger-in (8 items), Anger-out (8 items), and Anger Control (8 items). Trait anger was further divided into two subscales namely Trait Anger Temperament (4 items) and Trait Anger Reaction (4 items). It has three portions, part 1 measures a person's present feeling, part 2 measures his generally feelings and part 3 measures his feelings when angry or furious. Responses are recorded on 4 point likert scale, "Not at all" to "Very much so". The questionnaire is valid for age ranges of 13 to adulthood. The internal consistency of this scale for the current study was identified as .76.

The Offer Self Image Questionnaire for Adolescents-Revised (OSIQ-R; Offer et al., 1992). Offer Self Image Questionnaire Revised was developed by Offer, Ostrov, Howard and Dolan (1992) to measure self-image and adjustment in adolescents (13-19 years). This is comprised of 130 simple statements that tap 12 areas including Impulse Control, Family Functioning, Emotional Tone, Self-Confidence, Body Image, Vocational Attitudes, Social Functioning, Ethical Values, Self-Reliance, Mental Health, Sexuality and Idealism. The test approximately takes 30 minutes to complete. Responses are recorded on 6-point rating scale. The adolescent simply indicates how well each

statement describes him or her ("Describes me very well" to "does not describe me at all"). The internal consistency of this scale for the current study was identified as .63.

Procedure

Permissions from the respective authors of the tools were sought in the first step. Before starting the main study, the pilot study was conducted. It was found in the pilot study that the measuring instruments were easily comprehensible for the said population. Permissions were taken from the administration of five private sector English medium schools for collection of data. Before distributing the questionnaires, participants were informed about the general purpose and nature of the study. The data was collected through group administration in class room settings where almost 20-25 students completed the questionnaires at the same time. Written informed consent was from participants and they were informed that they had right to withdraw at any point of the study if they felt uncomfortable. Total of 19 schools were approached but data was collected from 7 schools only as the administration of other schools did not allow data collection. A total of 230 students were approached, out of which 19 refused to participate due to lack of interest in research; 11 forms were discarded as questionnaires were incomplete.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Demographic information reflected that mean age of the participant was 15 years (SD=0.90) with mean 10th grade qualification (SD=0.76). Majority of them were 2nd born residing in nuclear family system with monthly income within the range of PK Rs. 40,000-50,00.

Table 1

Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Subscales of Self Esteem and State Trait Anger Expression Inventory (N=200).

V	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	M	SD
1.SA	1	.46"	.48"	.31"	.26"	.29"	-.01	.08	-.10	-.01	.26"	.04	.25"	.24"	.33"	.09	.23"	.16"	17.99	6.78
2.TA		1	.82"	.81"	.18"	.42"	.01	.06	.01	-.01	.19"	-.01	.18"	.11	.15"	.13	.08	.13	23.32	6.32
3.TAT			1	.49"	.19"	.42"	.03	.08	.02	.07	.20"	-.04	.16"	.08	.20"	.05	.10	.14"	8.24	2.90
4.TAR				1	.18"	.23"	-.01	.07	-.01	-.05	.12	.01	.06	.06	.04	.13	-.06	.03	10.64	3.06
5.AI					1	.35"	.05	-.18"	-.15"	-.11	.14"	.03	.15"	.13	.05	.15"	.20"	.18"	18.11	4.40
6.AO						1	.11	-.04	-.12	.02	.12	-.05	.15"	.12	.10	.12	.21"	.02	17.95	4.64
7.IC							0	.33"	.26"	.34"	.01	.02	-.03	-.03	.07	-.12	.06	-.15"	29.67	7.77
8.ET								1	.49"	.53"	-.05	.13	-.14	-.19"	.06	-.29"	-.09	-.10	32.68	7.48
9.BI									1	.34	-.21"	-.18"	-.20"	-.27"	-.08	-.22"	-.08	-.04	31.75	6.99
10.SR										1	.04	.05	-.02	-.04	.09	-.29"	.03	.35"	29.31	5.77
11.Mo											1	.02	.48"	.42"	.40"	.32"	.40"	-.10	29.69	6.80
12.SA												1	.02	.08	.40"	.09	-.01	.32"	35.84	8.35
13.FR													1	.44"	-.04	.27"	.46"	.24"	53.05	12.55
14.Ma														1	.34"	.37"	.50"	.27"	29.37	7.36
15.VE															1	.42"	.19"	.52"	27.11	8.07
16.EH																1	.29"	.35"	42.46	9.31
17.SA																	1	1	40.37	9.51
18.I																		1	17.82	5.33

Note. SA=state anger; TA= trait anger; TAT=trait anger temperament; TAR=trait anger reaction; AI= anger-in; AO=anger-out; IC=impulse control; ET=emotional tone;

BI=body image; SR=social relationships; M=morals; SA=sexual attitude; FR=family relations; M=mastery; G=vocational and educational goals; EH=emotional health, SA=superior adjustment, I=idealism, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 1 showed that state anger depicted inverse relationship with the domains of self-esteem i.e. impulse control, body image and social relationships but positive relationship with morals, family relations, mastery, vocational and educational goals, superior adjustment and idealism. Moreover, trait anger had negative relationship with social relations and sexual attitude but significant positive relationship with morals, family relations and vocational and educational goals where as positive relationship with other domains of self-esteem. Trait anger temperament showed negative relationship with sexual attitude while significant positive relationship with morals, family relations, vocational and educational goals and idealism. Trait anger reaction had negative relationship with impulse control, body image, superior adjustment while positive relationship with all remaining domains of self-esteem. Anger-in showed negative relationship with emotional tone, body image and social relations but significant positive relationships with remaining domains of self-esteem i.e. moral, vocational and educational goals, emotional tone and superior adjustment. Lastly, anger-out depicted negative relationship with impulse control, body image and superior adjustment but positive relationship with remaining domains of self esteem.

Table 2
Gender Differences in State Trait Anger (N=200).

Subscales	Boys (n=100)		Girls (n=100)		t	p	cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
State anger	1.57	.49	1.45	.50	1.70*	.09	.24
Trait Anger	1.00	.72	1.05	.70	.45	.62	.07
TAT	1.11	.72	1.09	.72	.19	.84	.02
TAR	.98	.72	1.14	.71	1.57	.12	.22
Anger-in	1.10	.55	1.17	.66	1.83	.07	.11
Anger-out	1.19	.73	1.26	.71	.68	.45	.09

Note: * $p < .05$, TAT=Trait Anger Temperament, TAR= Trait Anger Reaction

The table 2 shows no significant gender differences in reference to different types of anger while mean values depict significant difference in state anger, trait anger reaction, anger-in and anger-out between boys and girls. Boys had significantly higher state anger than girls.

Table 3
Gender Differences in Self Esteem (N=200).

Subscales	Boys (n=100)		Girls (n=100)		t	p	cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Impulse Control	29.57	6.37	29.77	8.98	.18	.85	0.03
Emotional Tone	32.75	7.65	32.62	7.35	.12	.90	0.02
Body image	30.00	7.09	33.40	6.50	3.46	.00	0.61
Social relationships	29.91	5.81	28.72	5.70	1.4	.14	0.21
Morals	31.14	7.32	28.78	6.05	2.48	.01	0.35
Sexual attitudes	33.42	9.03	38.27	6.84	4.27	.00	0.61
Family relationships	56.35	11.95	49.67	12.32	3.83	.00	0.55
Mastery	29.66	7.59	29.08	7.15	.55	.58	0.08
Voc and edu	28.01	7.10	26.22	8.88	1.51	.11	0.22
Emotional health	42.34	9.54	42.58	9.11	.18	.85	0.03
Superior adjustment	42.08	10.22	38.66	8.44	2.57	.01	0.36
Idealism	8.37	4.85	17.27	5.75	1.46	.14	1.67

Note: Voc and edu= Vocational and education

The table 3 shows significant gender differences in self-esteem i.e. body image, morals, sexual attitude, family relations and superior adjustment. Results revealed that girls were more concerned about their body image and sexual attitude whereas boys were more concerned about morals, family relations and superior adjustment.

Discussion

It was hypothesized that there will be a positive relationship between anger and self-esteem. In the present study, a significant positive relationship was found between family relationships, morals and adjustment with state anger. These findings are in line with the past researches as Arslan and Coşkun (2009) identified a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and the social support received from family and teachers. They also proposed that poor social support may be the cause of high state anger. Barkley, Fischer, Edelbrock and Smallish, (2006) suggested that conflict with family members may lead to higher state anger. Hence it could be inferred that as the family relations and adjustment gets disturbed the anger temperament and anger-out increases.

Furthermore, a positive relationship was found between emotional health, adjustment, family relations and anger-out. Wiggins (2009) in his study found that having low self-esteem is a cause of poor emotional health which leads to anger, depression and fear. Kernis, Michael, Grannemann, Bruce, Barclay and Lynda (1989) found that individuals with unstable high self-esteem would report especially high tendencies to experience anger and hostility than individuals with stable high self-

esteem.

The second hypothesis stated that there would be gender differences in anger and self-esteem among participants of the study. The present study revealed that boys had low self-esteem on the following scales of Offer Self Image Questionnaire namely family relations, emotional health, sexual attitudes and superior adjustment. Boys had high ratings on anger scales of state anger and trait anger temperament. Boys had low scores on the self-esteem subscales of family relationships, emotional health, sexual attitudes and adjustment which may be the leading cause of their state anger. In the present study, on anger scales boys had more state anger, which depicts that boys tend to react more on a particular situations. Similar results were also evident from another research which revealed that during late adolescence men are more aggressive than women (Riaz, Iqbal & Qureshi, 2006)

The present study also revealed that boys have higher score on trait anger temperament than girls. Correctional Service of Canada (2007) suggested that mostly girls suppress their anger as they are trained not to express their angry feelings because anger is considered as an unacceptable emotion for them. In Pakistani culture, male family members or boys are usually in dominating roles at homes as they are the only bread winners in family. They usually take all important decisions of the family which others have to follow. This may be a reason that the trait anger is observed more in boys than the girls.

Also it is evident from results that boys had more conflict with their family members which may lead to higher trait anger temperament. Results from the present research revealed that girls had high self-esteem than boys. These results are consistent with the research findings of study conducted by Maharjan (2008) who reported that female adolescents have slightly higher scores on self-esteem than male adolescents.

Rosenberg, Schooler, and Schoenbach (1989) revealed that adolescents with high self-esteem were more likely to perform well in school and will show socially acceptable behaviors (as cited in McCullough, Ashbridge & Pegg, 1994). If the relationships are working well then it will not lead to anger which will further help in increasing or maintaining stable self-esteem (as cited in Busch, 2009). The same results were revealed from present study that girls were well adjusted in family as they have more stable self-esteem.

The above stated results depicted more anger-in in girls as compared to boys which is also supported by past researchers. As Jana and Susan (1999) revealed that women respond with anger-in responses. Lamb, Puskar, Sereika, Patterson and Kaufmann (2003) also reported higher internal anger expression in girls.

Limitations & Suggestions

Permissions were not granted by a few schools due to their strict policies. Data from various schools could enhance the generalizability of the results. The questionnaires were lengthy which could have fatigued students at some point during data collection.

Conclusion

The present study showed that anger domains have significantly positive relationship with self-esteem domains specifically morals, family relations, idealism, superior adjustment, impulse control and body image. Moreover, significant gender differences were found with respect to sexual attitude, family relations, body image and idealism where no significant gender differences were found for different domains.

References

- Arslan, C., & Coskun, T. (2009). Anger, self-esteem, and perceived social support in adolescence. *Social Behavior and Personality: An international journal*, 37(4), 555-564. doi : 10.2224/sbp.2009.37.4.555.
- Barkley, R. A., Fischer, M., Edelbrock, C., & Smallish, L. (2006). The adolescent outcome of hyperactive children diagnosed by research criteria—III. mother-child interactions, family conflicts and maternal psychopathology. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 32(2), 233–255. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-7610.1991.tb00304.x
- Boman, P., Pelling, N., & Yates, G. C. R. (2003). Gender differences in the affective, behavioural, and cognitive components of anger. *International Educational Journal*, 42(2), 71-77.
- Baumeister, R. F., Laura, S., & Joseph, B. M. (1996). Relation of threatened egotism to violence and aggression: The dark side of high self-esteem. *Psychological Review*, 103(1), 5-33. doi: 10.1037/0033-295X.103.1.5.
- Braden, H. (1969). Self-esteem. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-esteem#cite_note-Branden-7.
- Busch, F. N. (2009). Anger and depression. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 15, 271-278.
- Correctional service of Canada. (2007). Women Offender Programs and Issues: Literature Review on Women's Anger and Other Emotions. Retrieved from <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/prgrm/fsw/fsw22/fsw22e04-eng.shtml>.
- Ellis, A., & Maclaren, C. (1998). *Rational emotive behavior therapy. A therapist guide*. USA: Impact Publishers. Inc.

- Forgays, D. G., Forgays, D. K., & Spielberger, C. D. (1997). Factor structure of the state-trait anger expression inventory. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 69, 497-507.
- Greenberg, J. (2008). Understanding the vital human quest for self-esteem. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 3, 48-55.
- Jana, S., & Susan, L. T. (1999). Angry boy and the passive girl: The role of gender and self-esteem on anger expression. *The Social Behavior and Personality*, 27(2), 145-154. doi: 10.2224/sbp.1999.27.2.145.
- Jayaram, V. (2009). Low Self-Esteem. Retrieved from <http://www.hinduwebsite.com/selfdevt/selfesteem.asp>
- Kernis, M. H., Grannemann, B. D., & Barclay, L. C. (1989). Stability of self-esteem and level of self-esteem as predictors of dispositional tendencies to experience anger and hostility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56(6), 1013-1022.
- Kuppens, P. (2005). Interpersonal determinants of trait anger: low agreeableness, perceived low social esteem, and the amplifying role of the importance attached to social relationships. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 38(1), 13-23. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2004.03.006.
- Lamb, J. M., Puskar, R. K., Sereika, S., Patterson, M. K., & Kaufmann, J. A. (2003). Anger assessment in rural high school students. *The Journal of School Nursing*, 19(1), 30-40.
- Laukkanen, E., Halonen, P., & Viinamaki, H. (1999). Stability and internal consistency of the offer self-image questionnaire: a study of Finnish students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 28(1), 71-77. doi: 10.1023/A:1021672524936.
- Maharjan, S. (2008). Self-esteem of rural and urban adolescents from rupandehi and Kathmandu districts. A term paper of Adolescent Psychology. (Psy. 305) submitted to Department of Psychology, Tri Chandra College.
- Maslow, A. H. (1987). *Motivation and Personality* (3rd ed.). New York: Harper & Row.
- Mathes, E. W., Adams, H. E., Davies, R. M. (1985). Jealousy: loss of relationship rewards, loss of self esteem, depression, anxiety & anger. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 48(6), 1552-1561. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.48.6.1552.
- Mazhar, U. (2004). Self-Esteem. Retrieved from <http://www.yespakistan.com/wellness/self-esteem.asp>

- Michael, K. H., Bruce, G.D., & Lynda, B. C. (1989). Stability and level of self-esteem as predictors of anger arousal and hostility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56(6), 1013-1022. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.56.6.1013.
- Mental Health Organization (2008). Anger Statistics Mental Health Organisation: *Boiling Point Report 2008*. Retrieved from <http://www.angermanage.co.uk/data.html>.
- O'Neill, H. (1999). *Managing anger*. London: Whurr Publishers, Ltd.
- Riaz, Z., Iqbal, S., & Qureshi, R. H. (2006). Gender differences in anger expression during late adolescence. *Pakistan Journal of Psychology*, 37(1), 43-52.
- Spielberger, C. D. (1998). *State-trait anger expression inventory*. USA: Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.
- Spielberger, C. D. (1988). *Manual for the state-trait anger expression inventory (STAXI)*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Spielberger, C. D., Jacobs, G. A., Russell, S., & Crane, R. S. (1983). Assessment of anger: The state-trait anger scale. In J.N. Butcher, C.D. Spielberger (Eds). *Advances in Personality Assessment*, 2 Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Todd, C. R. (2008). *Anger and low self-esteem*. Retrieved from <http://angeronmymind.wordpress.com/2008/07/23/anger-and-low-self-esteem/>
- Valencia, C. (2009). *Learn to deal with anger control problems*. Retrieved from <http://www.selfesteemawareness.com/anger-management.htm>.
- Zanna, M. P. (2000). The nature and function of self-esteem: Sociometer theory. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 32, 1-62.