

Anger Expression and Resilience among College Students

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Considerable research has been conducted and identified that individuals can build resilience by identifying and resolving anger. Anger is an emotional and subjective experience (Gold, B., 2011), whereas resilience is the ability to adapt successfully in the face of stress and adversity (Wu et al., 2013). The present study was conducted to understand the relationship between expression of anger and resilience among college students among 100 male and 100 female college students aged 19 – 24 years. The study was a descriptive–correlative study. Ex post facto research design was used. Data was collected using State-Trait anger expression inventory – 2 (STAXI – 2) and 14–item resilience scale (RS-14). Pearson correlation coefficient revealed that there was a significant negative relationship between the expression of anger and resilience among college students ($p < 0.01$). Independent sample t-test revealed no significant difference in the expression of anger and resilience among male and female college students. These findings highlight the importance of anger control in maintaining resilience.

Keywords: Expression of anger, Resilience, Male college students, Female college students.

Emotion can be defined as the complex state of feeling which results in physiological and psychological changes that influences a person's thought and behaviour. According to APA (American Psychological Association, 2007), the type of emotion a person experiences is determined by the circumstances that triggers the emotion. The emotional experiences of college students play a pivotal role in shaping their overall well-being, academic performance, and interpersonal interactions. Among the array of emotions that individuals encounter, anger stands out as a potent force capable of influencing cognitive processes, behavior, and psychological outcomes.

Anger is one of the most essential and primary emotion among other basic emotions. Anger is recognized as a fundamental human emotion, encompasses

a range of affective and physiological responses triggered by perceived threats, injustices, or frustrations (Ekman, 2003). The nature of anger is often individualized, influenced by personal experiences, cultural norms, and socio-environmental contexts (Gold, B., 2011). College students, undergoing a phase of critical personal and academic development, are particularly susceptible to various stressors that might trigger anger. Understanding the mechanisms through which college students' express anger is pivotal to comprehending the broader impact of this emotion on students' overall mental health. The intensity and manner in which anger is expressed can significantly impact an individual's psychological state and social interactions. Generally, anger is considered to be a negative emotion because of its

consequences, but when handled in a right way it is one of the most powerful and positive emotion.

Simultaneously, the ability to resiliently navigate stressors and adversities is a hallmark of psychological adaptability that significantly contributes to individuals' capacity to thrive in challenging environments. Resilience, according to APA (American Psychological Association, 2007) is defined as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress. It denotes "bouncing back" from difficult experiences or moving forward in life despite experiencing difficulties, it can also involve profound personal growth. For college students, resilience not only facilitates successful adaptation to the demands of academic life but also contributes to broader personal growth. Each person differs in the level of resilience they possess because it is completely based on the life events they come across and their interaction with the environment. Becoming more resilient not only helps a person get through difficult circumstances, it also empowers them to grow and to improve their life along the way.

Anger and resilience are considered to be important, as well as opposite characteristics of humans, which various life events can influence. A person's balance between them, especially during the young adulthood stage, is important to be understood and focused upon, since it denotes their ability to adapt to stressful life events. By investigating how college students perceive, express, and manage their anger in the face of challenges and how this relates to their resilience levels, valuable insights can be gleaned regarding emotional well-being and psychological adaptation during this transformative phase of life. Therefore, the present study examined the relationship between anger expression and resilience among college students.

Objectives

- To examine the relationship between expression of anger and resilience among college students.
- To examine the relationship between expression of anger and resilience among male and female college students.
- To understand the difference in expression of anger and resilience among male and female college students.

Method

Research design

An ex-post facto research design was used in the study.

Sample

The study included a sample of 200 college students (100 males and 100 females) ranging from 19 to 24 years of age using purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria included college students pursuing UG and PG, those with access to social media, individuals from all birth orders, family types, and marital statuses, and those living in Chennai. Samples below 19 and above 24 years of age, those studying in distance education, and those living in other states and districts except Chennai were excluded from the study.

Tools

Profile sheet

A profile sheet was developed for the study to collect various demographic details of the samples such as age, gender, birth order, educational qualification, family type and marital status.

State – Trait anger expression inventory – 2 (STAXI – 2) by Charles Spielberg (1996)

The State – Trait anger expression inventory – 2 (STAXI -2) is a 57 item, self -

reporting instrument which provides concise measures of the experience and expression of anger. The instrument consists of six scales and five subscales such as state anger (S-Ang) – feeling angry (S-Ang/F), feel like expressing anger verbally (S-Ang/V), feel like expressing anger physically (S-Ang/P); trait anger (T-Ang) – angry temperament (T-Ang/T), angry reaction (T-Ang/R); anger expression – out (AX-O), anger expression – in (AX-I), anger control – out (AC-O) & anger control – in (AC-I). Items are rated on a four – point Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much). The psychometric properties include high alpha coefficients (0.92 – 0.95) for internal reliability for all subscales except Angry reaction (0.73 – 0.76). Concurrent validity of the original STAXI is strongly presented with correlations with the Multiphasic Inventory (hostility and over hostility scales), Buss – Durkee Hostility Inventory, and the Eysenck questionnaire (psychoticism and neuroticism).

14 – Item resilience scale (RS-14) by Wagnild & Young (2009)

The 14-item resilience scale (RS-14) measures components of resilience in different domains of young peoples' lives, ranging from planning and thinking ahead to level of independence. RS-14 is the 7-point Likert type scale and scores range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Higher score denotes high level of resilience in a person. The resilience scale (RS-14) has been proven to have good reliability (Cronbach's α of 0.91) and good content, construct and concurrent validity.

Procedure

The data was collected offline and online with the help of questionnaires and Google Forms. The purpose of the research was thoroughly explained. Informed consent was obtained and confidentiality was guaranteed to the participants. Demographic information such as age, gender, birth order, educational

qualification, family type, marital status etc, was collected.

Results

Table 1. Descriptive Data of Total Samples (100 males, 100 females)

Personal details	Groups	N = 200	(%)
Birth order	First	68	34%
	Middle	49	24.50%
	Last	40	20%
	Only	43	21.50%
Educational	UG	113	56.50%
Qualification	PG	87	43.50%
Age	19	20	10%
	20	33	16.50%
	21	66	33%
	22	37	18.50%
	23	14	7%
	24	30	15%
Family type	Nuclear	70	35%
	Joint	130	65%
Occupational status	Student	69	35%
	Part time worker	131	65%
Marital status	Single	163	81.50%
	Married	37	18.50%

Among 200 samples (100 males and 100 females) 34% are first born, 24.50% are middle born, 20% are last born and 21.50% are singletons. More than half (56.50%) of the respondents were UG students, while 43.50% were PG students, followed by age where 10% aged 19, 16.50% aged 20, 33% aged 21, 18.50% aged 22, 7% aged 23 and 15% aged 24. About 35% belonged to nuclear family and 65% belonged to joint family. Around 65% were full time students

whereas 35% were part time workers. Majority of the respondents were unmarried (81.50%), while 18.50% were married.

Table 2. Pearson's product-moment correlation between expression of anger, its scales and subscales, and resilience among college student

Variables	Correlating variable	N	Correlation Coefficient (r)
AX Index	Resilience	200	-0.472**
S-Ang	Resilience	200	-0.114 NS
S-Ang/F	Resilience	200	-0.017 NS
S-Ang/V	Resilience	200	-0.210**
S-Ang/P	Resilience	200	-0.177*
T-Ang	Resilience	200	-0.136 NS
T-Ang/T	Resilience	200	-0.177*
T-Ang/R	Resilience	200	-0.065 NS
AX-O	Resilience	200	-0.186**
AX-I	Resilience	200	-0.018 NS
AC-O	Resilience	200	0.431**
AC-I	Resilience	200	0.471**

NS – Not Significant, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

Table 2 represents the correlation between expression of anger and resilience among college students. It is found that expression of anger is significantly negatively correlated to resilience ($r(200) = -0.472$, $p<0.01$). This indicates that individuals with higher levels of anger tend to have lower levels of resilience. The results also conclude that, there is a significant negative relationship between “feel like expressing anger verbally ($p<0.01$), feel like expressing anger physically ($p<0.05$), angry temperament ($p<0.05$), anger expression – out ($p<0.01$) and resilience” among college students. There is a significant positive relationship between “anger control – out ($p<0.01$), anger control – in ($p<0.01$) and resilience” among college students.

Table 3. Pearson's product-moment correlation between expression of anger, its scales and subscales, and resilience among male college students

Variables	Correlating variable	N	Correlation Coefficient (r)
AX Index	Resilience	100	-0.396**
S-Ang	Resilience	100	-0.101 NS
S-Ang/F	Resilience	100	-0.027 NS
S-Ang/V	Resilience	100	-0.229*
S-Ang/P	Resilience	100	-0.182 NS
T-Ang	Resilience	100	-0.202*
T-Ang/T	Resilience	100	-0.252*
T-Ang/R	Resilience	100	-0.143 NS
AX-O	Resilience	100	-0.162 NS
AX-I	Resilience	100	-0.026 NS
AC-O	Resilience	100	0.365**
AC-I	Resilience	100	0.421**

NS – Not Significant, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

Table 3 shows the correlation between expression of anger and resilience among male college students. It is evident that expression of anger is significantly negatively correlated to resilience ($r(100) = -0.396$, $p<0.01$). This indicates that individuals with higher levels of anger tend to have lower levels of resilience. The results also shows that there is a significant negative relationship between “feel like expressing anger verbally ($p<0.05$), trait anger ($p<0.05$), angry temperament ($p<0.05$) and resilience” and significant positive relationship between “anger control – out ($p<0.01$), anger control – in ($p<0.01$) and resilience”.

Table 4. Pearson's product-moment correlation between expression of anger, its scales and subscales, and resilience among female college students

Variables	Correlating variable	N	Correlation Coefficient (r)
AX Index	Resilience	100	-0.554**
S-Ang	Resilience	100	-0.122 NS
S-Ang/F	Resilience	100	-0.001 NS
S-Ang/V	Resilience	100	-0.174 NS
S-Ang/P	Resilience	100	-0.169 NS
T-Ang	Resilience	100	-0.060 NS
T-Ang/T	Resilience	100	-0.076 NS
T-Ang/R	Resilience	100	-0.011 NS
AX-O	Resilience	100	-0.206*
AX-I	Resilience	100	-0.021 NS
AC-O	Resilience	100	0.498**
AC-I	Resilience	100	0.424**

NS – Not Significant, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 4 indicates the correlation between Expression of anger and resilience among female college students. It is clear that expression of anger is significantly negatively correlated to resilience ($r(100) = -0.554$,

$p < 0.01$). This indicates that individuals with higher levels of anger tend to have lower levels of resilience. The results also revealed that there is a significant negative relationship between “trait anger ($p < 0.05$), anger expression – out ($p < 0.05$) and resilience” and a significant positive relationship in “anger control – out ($p < 0.01$), anger control – in ($p < 0.01$) and resilience”.

Table 5 shows the gender difference in the expression of anger and resilience. It is evident that though there is no significant difference, the mean anger score and mean resilience score of female college students are higher than that of males. Considering the subscales, there was a significant difference in the subscale “feel like expressing anger verbally and angry reaction” which is reflected by higher mean scores of males compared to females. There was no significant difference in “state anger, feeling angry, feel like expressing anger physically, angry temperament, anger expression – out, anger expression – in, anger control – out” though empirically the mean scores obtained by the males is significantly higher than females. There was no significant difference in “trait anger and anger control – in” but females seem to have higher mean score than males.

Table 5. Independent t-test showing the mean, SD, t value, df, and p value of expression of anger, its scales and subscales and resilience among male and female college students

Variable	Sample	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p value
AX Index	Male	100	42.68	10.15	-0.256 NS	198	0.798
	Female	100	43.04	9.69			
Resilience	Male	100	72.56	12.34	-0.838 NS	198	0.403
	Female	100	74.05	12.80			
S-Ang	Male	100	22.22	8.32	1.55 NS	198	0.122
	Female	100	20.64	5.36			
S-Ang/F	Male	100	7.90	3.15	0.702 NS	198	0.484
	Female	100	7.61	2.67			

S-Ang/V	Male	100	7.20	2.70	2.78**	198	0.006
	Female	100	6.29	1.84			
S-Ang/P	Male	100	6.29	2.72	0.594 NS	198	0.553
	Female	100	6.71	2.55			
T-Ang	Male	100	19.10	5.89	0.013 NS	198	0.990
	Female	100	19.11	4.78			
T-Ang/T	Male	100	7.20	2.60	1.42 NS	198	0.155
	Female	100	6.73	2.00			
T-Ang/R	Male	100	8.37	3.04	-2.35*	198	0.020
	Female	100	9.37	2.97			
AX-O	Male	100	17.18	4.84	1.27 NS	198	0.205
	Female	100	16.37	4.12			
AX-I	Male	100	17.77	3.37	-1.05 NS	198	0.292
	Female	100	16.37	4.20			
AC-O	Male	100	20.46	4.34	0.416 NS	198	0.678
	Female	100	20.20	4.48			
AC-I	Male	100	19.39	4.03	-0.170 NS	198	0.866
	Female	100	19.50	5.08			

NS – Not Significant, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

Discussion

The results shows that expression of anger and few of its subscales were negatively correlated with resilience. This suggest that anger expression and resilience are in inverse relationship, i.e., those with higher level of expression of anger are more likely to have lower level of resilience, which is consistent with the result of a study done by Mojrian et al., 2020 on university students. This enables us to understand that individuals who express anger overtly might struggle with managing their emotions effectively, potentially hindering their ability to cope with challenges and setbacks. On the other hand, individuals who possess higher levels of resilience might demonstrate greater emotional regulation skills, allowing

them to respond constructively to stressors without resorting to intense expressions of anger.

Also, there is no significant difference in expression of anger among male and female college students, which is similar to the result of the study conducted by Naseem & Munaf, 2020 among early adults. Among gender, there is a significant difference in the subscales “feel like expressing anger verbally and angry reaction” where males scored more than females. This shows that, though the overall anger expression might not differ significantly, males tend to exhibit stronger inclinations towards certain aspects of anger expression. The socio-cultural norms and expectations surrounding masculinity and emotional expression could

play a role in shaping these gender-specific patterns.

The results also revealed that there is no significant difference in resilience among male and female college students. This was supported by a study done by Gomez-Molinero et al., 2018 on university students and Aman, 2020 among college students. The lack of gender-based variation in resilience could be indicative of the evolving social landscape and changing gender roles, where young adults, regardless of gender, are exposed to similar challenges and opportunities for personal growth. Additionally, educational institutions and societal changes might contribute to cultivating resilience as an essential skill for navigating the transitional phase of college life.

Limitations and Suggestions for further research

The sample was limited to Chennai city college students only. A sample of only 200 participants were included. The study was limited to individuals from age group 19 – 24 years. All the participants were from urban areas. The research can be conducted on a large number of samples. The research can include special population, samples from different geographic areas and other age group members.

Conclusion

Findings from this research advance a deeper understanding of the relationships between college students' gender disparities in anger expression and resilience. It is observed that resilience has been negatively related to anger expression; thereby, emotional regulation and adaptability are critical for overcoming both personal and academic challenges. The absence of significant gender differences in overall anger expression and resilience, along with the gender differences in specific anger

expression subscales provides greater understanding about the relationship between social expectations and their impact on emotional expression in relation to psychological resilience in complex college-setting. Further research can build upon these findings to unravel the underlying mechanisms and potential interventions for promoting emotional well-being and resilience among college students. Mental health professionals can identify, devise and implement modules, awareness programs that can assist individuals to manage their anger expression in an acceptable way and enhance resilience.

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