

ANGER AND WOMEN: EXPRESSION OR SUPPRESSION?

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Abstract: Many beliefs about emotions are gendered in the sense that they communicate ideas about feelings that are viewed as more usual, appropriate, or natural for one sex. Gender disparities, societal attribution, and suppression of anger are the main focus of this paper. This paper initially discusses what anger is. The relevant work on gender differences in anger is then reviewed, with an explanation of the gender prejudices associated with anger expression and experience. Then, it is discussed how suppressing emotions may be detrimental to one's mental and physical well-being. The paper concludes with suggestions for coping strategies to manage the suppression of anger and advice for busting the enduring myths regarding women's anger.

Index Terms - Women, anger, rage, society, gender, emotion, suppression.

I. INTRODUCTION

When you perceive you have been treated unfairly, anger is the mental spark of fire that arises. Perhaps a stranger pulled up into the parking spot you were going to use, or a slacker coworker gave you a thankless chore. Or maybe you have experienced a significant, painful betrayal by a loved one. Animals have the same fundamental neurological architecture as humans do, making anger among the most basic emotions we may experience. It ranges from moderate annoyance to outright rage, and the degree to which we experience it and how we respond to it is highly individual. This paper focuses on the question, "What does anger accomplish? Is there a difference in how men and women express it? How does society view a woman who is angry? Can suppressing our anger have an impact on our mental health?"

An additional question must be addressed before discussing any other questions: Anger—what is it?

Strong feelings of discontent, hatred, or violence are commonly used to define anger. We typically conceptualize it in terms of personal feelings and link such feelings to solitary actions that make us or others feel uneasy or afraid. Anger is a highly subjective emotion. What angers one individual may not bother others at all. Psychologists classify anger into three primary categories that represent distinct emotional states. The first reaction is a defense mechanism when we feel threatened or trapped. When we perceive events in a way that makes us think we are being intentionally hurt or maltreated, we react with the second type of anger that exists as a reaction. The final type of anger is irritable, sulky anger, which is more directly linked to personality than emotion. Which is it then? The answer depends, as with most things, on the situation and how you identify with those around you. The way our culture distributes emotion—often in regard to status and identity—influences how we feel about and react to it in others.

Anger is strongly related to masculinity and manhood from the first phases of socialization in childhood. According to a study (Bayet et al., 2015), by the age most kids are toddlers, they already link male faces with angry expressions. In males, "softer" emotions like empathy, fear, and grief are downplayed and even actively discouraged. These are frequently perceived as feminizing flaws, whereas anger is seen as a sign of masculinity. On the contrary, girls and women are implicitly urged to disregard anger and other "negative" emotions as unfeminine. Females are usually told not to express their emotions, talk about how they feel, or be overly demanding in a way that prioritizes their own needs.

Even while we want to pretend those gender roles are merely stereotypes, they nonetheless affect how we interact in a variety of settings, including the workplace and the playground. Men learn early on that only women display emotion; women grow up in a culture that supports emotional expression. In contrast to "angry," which is associated with men, "emotional" is linked with women. Anger and masculinity are related terms in the equation. Why is it that rage, which is frequently portrayed as being infantile and is the embodiment of the intense nature of emotion, is stereotyped as a sign of masculinity? When expressed or felt by adult males, is rage considered to be an emotion? The subject of emotion might be used to characterize it. What makes the emotion of violated entitlement unique in its stereotypical link with maleness if rage is concerned with violations of what one considers to be one's rights? However, as this paper will demonstrate, the majority of actual data does not confirm these claims. The literature on anger highlights the need to shift inquiries concerning gender disparities in emotion from the more general (e.g., do men and women vary?) to the more particular (e.g., under what situations and in the company of whom may men and women differ?) Differences in the feeling and expression of anger are influenced by factors other than gender, such as social environment, status, and gender role. (Kring, 2010)

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The research on anger emphasizes the need to move away from more broad questions about whether men and women experience emotions differently. To be more specific, how do the ways that men and women display their anger differ from one another? The following inquiries require an answer: What is anger good for? Does the way men and women express it differ? How does society perceive an enraged woman? Can controlling anger affect one's mental health?

III. OBJECTIVES

- To understand the concept of anger.
- To understand whether the expression of anger differs in men and women.
- To understand how society perceives women's anger.
- To discuss the detrimental effect of suppressing anger on one's mental and physical well-being.
- To suggest some coping strategies to manage suppressed anger.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Shields (2002) claims that the stereotype of emotionality is connected with women, whereas the stereotype of anger, a prototypical emotion, is associated with men.
- Fischer et al. (2004) corroborated the gender-specific pattern of women reporting more helpless feelings and men reporting more powerful emotions.
- According to Salerno et al. (2015) research, demonstrating rage may lead to males gaining influence, but women losing power over others, even when providing identical arguments or expressing the same attitude and emotion as the men.
- According to Cox et al. (2003), women who either try to conceal their anger or foolishly externalize and project their anger are more likely to feel anxiety, restlessness, tension, and panic attacks.
- Thomas (1993) observed three common origins of women's rage in her study.
- Women may have developed methods other than expressing their anger to get what they want because of cultural expectations that they conceal or disregard their anger (Cox, 2003)
- DiGiuseppe (2004) conducted research to create a new scale for measuring anger disorders. He discovered that there were no substantial differences between men and women in their overall levels of anger, he did discover disparities in how they experienced anger.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Various web databases, including Research Gate, Google Scholar, EBSCO, Crossref, PubMed, and Scopus, were searched for published research papers and articles on emotions, gender, women, and anger in order to review previous studies. Moreover, certain e-libraries and e-contents were appraised to obtain information.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Anger: an emotion or an impetus?

What if our partner accuses us of something we did not do? What happens when we get to a lane closure on the highway and a car cut in front of us just before the lane closes, forcing us to brake hard? What happens when we discover that a minor girl has been raped and brutally murdered? Anger is perhaps the most common emotion in these situations. It can be caused by people, things, events, circumstances, feelings, or any memory. For instance, a traffic jam, a demanding coworker, a damaged zipper, or the memory of an unpleasant statement can all make you upset.

According to scientists, evolution over thousands of years has programmed the brain with the ability to become angry. Our natural tendency is to repel predators, contend for resources, and uphold social standards. The brain's reward circuit is where anger originates. We are continuously considering what we anticipate will happen in every circumstance, frequently unconsciously. Our brain's reward circuit raises the alarm, and actions are sparked in a little amygdala-shaped brain region when there is a discrepancy between what we have learned to anticipate and the hand we are dealt.

Anger can start the fight-or-flight reaction in the body, which prepares us for physical aggression by releasing stress chemicals like adrenaline and testosterone from the adrenal glands. But a second brain region, the prefrontal cortex, which is in charge of making decisions and using logic, determines whether we actually wind up swearing, frowning, or even striking someone. This helps us understand why we are angry, reminds us to act in a way that is acceptable in society, and, for the majority of us, a lot of the time, controls our primordial inclinations.

Among the fundamental emotions, anger is classified as destructive and dangerous. It is considered harmful since it may incite further rage and escalate to harming the target (Ekman, 2003). Although Ekman (2003) agrees that the causes of anger may differ depending on the person's life history, he identifies several major sources of anger to be elicited, including frustration, psychological damage (e.g., insult or rejection by a loved one), physical threat, violation of moral values, failure to fulfill one's expectations, and another person's anger.

According to the American Psychological Association, anger is an emotion defined by hostility toward someone or something you believe has purposefully wronged you. Anger may be useful. It may assist you in releasing negative emotions or encourage you to find solutions to problems. However, extreme anger can be harmful. A rise in blood pressure and other physiological changes connected with anger make it harder to think clearly and affect your mental and physical health.

Anger-out, anger-in, and anger-control are the three ways that anger can be expressed. Anger-out refers to the inclination to express one's anger in a negative and violent manner, whereas anger-in refers to the tendency to suppress one's angry sentiments. Finally, anger-control refers to an angry person's calming and relaxing efforts. (Spielberger, 1988)

Anger, on the other hand, is a crucially important and beneficial emotion that, far from being isolated, is fundamentally social and socially formed. Anger alerts us as humans that something is not right and that needs to be changed. The human reaction to being challenged with injustice, bodily danger, humiliation, or indignity is anger. Anger drives us to demand accountability,

which is a strong force for political good. As a result, it frequently serves as the impetus for us to create dynamic, joyful, and creative groups.

Anger is a generally experienced and exhibited emotion, and in contrast to popular stereotypes and myths, both men and women become angry in certain situations. Indeed, the common opinion holds that anger is a "man" emotion, whereas women don't get angry, or if they do, they don't express it.

6.2 Is anger a gender-specific emotion?

The myth of gendered anger originates with toddlers as young as three or four years old. The idea that boys and males are "naturally" more angry than girls and females, and also that their anger is justified and aggressive, is commonly reflected and perpetuated in media and literature. According to a 2016 University of Massachusetts study titled "What's in a Face?" most people have a tendency to identify angry and unpleasant facial gestures with men and masculinity.

A popular heroic compliment to boys must have been heard as "He is an angry young man," whereas a girl is often complimented as young, caring, and beautiful. Has this ever been said about her? Even if it is said so, it is deemed unusual for society.

Anger's connection to masculinity and its use to exercise authority or control is a patriarchal privilege often refused to subaltern men who are effectively "feminized" as a means of oppression on the basis of their race, ethnicity, or class. This feminization can occasionally be attributed to fewer opportunities to vote, work, protect, or lead. Other times, it results from repressing anger in an effort to uphold one's honour, achieve justice, or defend oneself.

Female rage doesn't seem to be particularly pleasant unless it is restrained; instead of threatening to be uncontrolled, it seems to promise calm and collected. Boys are raised to be strong and independent from an early age since they will be the world's leaders (there's that terrible patriarchy again). On the other hand, girls are tacitly taught that fragility and weakness are desirable traits that can even be praised as being charming and elegantly melancholic. Smith et al. (1989) discovered that female individuals judge aggressive conduct as less suitable than male ones in research. Women feel driven to avoid showing anger since it apparently contradicts traditional prescriptions for women to be gentle, kind, and compassionate. Instead of emanating from a place of hurt, female rage is frequently interpreted as menacing and malicious. Furious men are viewed as strong, but angry women are viewed as nasty, domineering, or confrontational.

By adulthood, however, anger is typically connected with power by and for men and with helplessness by and for women within peer groups. This is so because male anger reinforces gender stereotypes and expectations, but female anger challenges them. While males perceive anger as "natural" and linked to masculine control, leadership, authority, and competence, women still view it as a symptom of mental or hormonal imbalance. The difference is actually one of status rather than gender. According to studies, men who act angry at work have more impact than their female counterparts.

Women frequently receive backlash that they are "inauthentic," "not charismatic," and vaguely "less appealing" due to their need to appear sensible, calm, and competent.

According to researchers studying anger in adults, women are typically less likely than men to exhibit negative emotions in the workplace, although status-related factors partly skew the results (Domagalski & Steelman, 2007).

According to Shields (2002), the stereotype of emotionality is associated with females, yet the stereotype of rage, a prototypical emotion, is associated with men. This fundamental dichotomy lies at the heart of the emotional female/unemotional man stereotype. Why is anger, which is frequently represented as being immature and at the core of the seemingly uncontrollable, irrational aspect of emotion, associated with men? Is there a distinction between the rage that causes adult tantrums and the fury that is more typical of men (conceptually or behaviorally)? Do adult men who express or experience anger qualify as emotional?

Plant et al. (2006) conducted research on gender stereotypes of emotions as well as the relationship between the interpretation of emotionally expressive behaviour and gender stereotypes. According to participants, women experience and express most of the 19 emotions analyzed (such as sadness, sympathy, and fear) more frequently than men. Men were thought to experience and display anger and pride more frequently than women. In another study (Plants et al., 2006) participants assessed photos of ambiguous anger/sadness facial expressions of adults in a stereotype-consistent fashion, with women rated as sadder and less angry than men. Even women's clear anger was regarded as a mix of anger and melancholy.

Men express more powerful emotions, for example, anger, whereas women express more weak emotions such as sadness and fear. Overall, the gender-specific trend of women reporting more powerless emotions and males reporting more powerful emotions was confirmed, with only a few interactions with the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) discovered. (Fischer et al., 2004)

Society's attribution toward women's anger: Some research studies have examined the connections between gender, anger, and status conferral. Males who displayed anger in a professional setting were accorded more prestige than men who expressed melancholy, according to previous studies. However, both male and female assessors assigned a lower rank to angry female professionals than to angry male professionals. This was true independent of the target's real professional position, thus both a female trainee and a female CEO were awarded lower status if they displayed anger than if they did not. The emotional reactions of women were attributed to internal dispositions, for example, "she is an angry person" or "she is out of control," but the emotional reactions of men were attributed to external situational characteristics, for example, "he must have gotten stressed due to an excessive workload." (Brescoll and Uhlmann, 2008)

According to research by Salerno et al. (2015), displaying anger may lead males to gain influence, but women to lose power over others, even when presenting identical arguments or expressing the same attitude and emotion as the man. Mediation analyses found that participants inferred different conclusions from male vs. female anger, resulting in a gender disparity in influence during group discussion. Because of these disparities, women may have less impact on societally significant decisions, such as jury judgments, than men.

Women's experiences with gender discrimination and feminist protests against a modern backlash against women represent women's inroads into traditionally masculine realms, particularly their efforts to gain access to high-paying, male-dominated jobs or high status that are thought to require characteristics stereotypically ascribed to men. (Eagly and Mladinic, 1994)

Indeed, men's anger is often regarded as "masculine"—it is regarded as "manly" when men participate in fistfights or act out their anger violently. Girls are not encouraged to act out in this manner. Women are typically taught that anger is not pleasant and is unfeminine. As a result, how do women express their anger?

6.3 Gender Differences in Anger Expression

Research repeatedly demonstrates that while they both experience the same degree of anger, men and women express their anger differently. Despite the fact that it appears they may experience anger in different ways, both men and women frequently feel ashamed of their rage. Men and women may react differently to anger depending on their gender socialization.

It appears that women may be forceful in a variety of ways. Women may feel more powerful if they selectively express their displeasure to others. Women may have developed methods other than expressing their anger to get what they want because of cultural expectations that they conceal or disregard their anger (Cox, 2003). According to a study by academics at Southwest Missouri State University (2000), men and women experience and manage feelings of rage and frustration in different ways because they interpret anger in different ways. Men appear to embrace their rage and channel it for their own benefit, whereas women regard anger as counterproductive. However, the researchers found that in everyday interactions, women appeared to use their rage just as frequently as men.

Women are more inclined to adopt an indirect tactic, such as cutting someone out of their lives, whereas men are more likely to be confrontational and impetuous in their expressions of anger. In comparison to men, women typically express their anger more subtly and verbally. When talking about a problem with someone they are angry with, they are more proactive and employ more problem-solving techniques.

DiGiuseppe (2004) conducted research to create a new scale for measuring anger disorders. He discovered that although there were no substantial differences between men and women in their overall levels of anger, he did discover disparities in how they experienced anger. Men performed better in the areas of physical violence, passive aggression, and experiences with impulsive anger management. Additionally, they scored significantly higher on coercing others and expressed their anger with a more frequent desire for retribution.

Women frequently display passive-aggressive behaviour and other indirect forms of rage expression. A lady may become angry with someone indirectly rather than directly. On the surface, passive-aggressive behaviour may seem benign, but anger is actually flowing beneath the surface. Women frequently have to use the back door to express their rage, and popular methods include sarcasm, mockery, abuse in silence, and crimes that go unreported. Women usually employ nonverbal cues, particularly the grin, to lessen the sharp edge of conflict and rage. She feels the urge to overcome her rage as if she were sick because she cannot risk jeopardizing her femininity. Women are expected to be great negotiators and peacemakers; they are not supposed to upset the status quo. They may seem friendly, but she is actually enraged. They are reducing the stress of expressing and experiencing rage by being friendly.

In a patriarchal society like India, girls are urged to smile more, speak in a polite manner, and hide their own emotions out of consideration for the pleasure of others. It is now known that many "women's ailments," such as various types of disordered eating, autoimmune disorders, chronic fatigue, and pain, are influenced by suppressed, repressed, misdirected, and disregarded anger.

6.4 Suppression of anger

People react to anger in various ways. Some individuals exhibit their anger vocally by shouting, arguing, swearing, fighting, or yelling, while others express it violently, such as by breaking objects, throwing things, hitting walls, or beating someone. Some people, on the other hand, opt to suppress their anger rather than show it.

According to Cox et al. (2003), women who either try to disguise their anger or externalize and project their anger recklessly are more likely to experience anxiety, restlessness, stress, and panic attacks. According to other research, women express their anger less than they experience it (Swim et al., 2010). The suppression of anger is what women do mostly so as to avoid conflict in families and look correct according to societal norms.

- Some replace anger with other emotions. Instead of being angry, they may feel sad, anxious, depressed, guilty, or humiliated.
- Some may choose the denial mechanism for their anger to the point of feeling numb or shutting down completely.
- Some try to avoid feeling angry in order to prevent conflict and keep the peace. They may, however, engage in passive-aggressive behaviour instead.
- Some eventually explode and have a tremendous outburst of anger after hiding their emotions for too long.

Suppressing emotions may be detrimental to one's mental and physical well-being.

- **Stresses the Body:** Frequently repressing anger may place the body in a protracted state of stress, which can lead to health problems such as hypertension. In this state, your blood pressure and heart rate rise, and your body releases hormones that give you a burst of energy.
- **Mental Health Issues:** Suppressing anger and the difficulties that generated it can lead to additional mental health concerns such as sadness, anxiety, depression or even controlling behaviours associated with habits, food, and substances, among other things.
- **Emotional Processing is hindered:** Ignoring or repressing emotions can lead to problems in which people do not learn how to express themselves appropriately in important situations or when emotions are perceived with higher intensity than normal. Suppressing anger can make it difficult for people to regulate, analyze, and express their emotions effectively.
- **Relationships suffer:** Personal relationships might also suffer as a result of suppressed anger. It can drive one to act in ways that are inconsistent with one's own beliefs, affecting her boundaries and capacity to be true and authentic with others.

6.5 Managing Suppressed Anger

If someone prefers to suppress anger rather than express it in a healthy way, seeing a mental healthcare expert who can help manage it may be beneficial. Some therapy techniques that may be useful are listed below:

Emotional management: Learning emotional management skills, such as educating oneself about emotions, understanding how emotions manifest in daily life, and detecting emotional triggers, can be beneficial.

Mindful monitoring: Mindfulness may be a good way of creating awareness of when one is experiencing an emotion. Mindfully monitoring what causes anger and how she typically responds when angry might help her express emotions more effectively.

Cognitive behavioural therapy: Using cognitive behavioural therapy concepts, such as learning to replace problematic thinking patterns with rational or helpful ones, as well as practicing skills and techniques for controlling high emotions when they arise, can also be beneficial. According to research, cognitive behavioural therapy strategies can successfully manage anger and aggression.

Pen it down: Keeping a notebook or diary in which one writes down things that make her angry, how they make her feel, and what she did at the time might be beneficial. This might help one become more emotionally aware.

6.6 Anger as a force for social change

Why is it necessary to suppress anger when anger is thought to be the catalyst for the formation of vibrant, cheerful, and creative groups and it tells us that something is wrong and needs to be changed? The authors of a study on brain lateralization (Harmon-Jones & Allen, 1993) imply that anger stimulates behaviour to deal with blocked goals or perceived societal injustice, which is evidence that anger can play a positive role in our lives. Our ability to rally for action or combat dread is fueled by our anger. It is healthy and acceptable to feel angry; if you never do, it indicates that you lack limits or refuse to acknowledge them, which can lead to despair (Nelson, 2018). This motivating perspective on rage supports the idea that anger is a potentially positive emotion that shouldn't be hidden or controlled.

Gender is a distinguishing trait, but it also plays a part in the complex web of circumstance, social standing, and perception. Throughout recent years, which have been marked by significant technical, social, and political volatility and instability, anger has been a defining feature of our culture. Women have a tendency to express their displeasure aggressively and openly, which increases during times of social unrest and typically decreases after things calm down.

VII. CONCLUSION

So, there is plenty of research literature suggesting the fact that the stereotype of anger is a prototypical situation that is linked to men and masculinity, whereas women are expected to restrain it. But research also suggests that while men and women both experience the same amount of anger, there's a difference in how they express it. Anger is a common human emotion, but it's crucial to find appropriate outlets for it so that we don't alienate those around us. It is also crucial for your mental health to express your anger in a healthy way. Gender prejudices regarding anger must be challenged. In the extreme, neither promoting male anger nor suppressing female anger is healthy. Both men and women must be upfront and frank when they are angry, and they must use problem-solving strategies to cope with their anger. Conflict will always exist where there are relationships. Lack of effective conflict resolution skills among women can lead to expensive issues including low morale, low retention, and dysfunctional teams. Women can improve their dispute-resolution skills and learn more useful responses.

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