

Anger and violence literature reviews examples

[Experience](#), [Anger](#)



Introduction

Anger is an emotion that enrages a mind, increases the blood pressure and makes heart beat faster sending adrenaline rush into the system. Anger mainly has three components; physical reactions, the cognitive experience of anger and behavior (PBS Online, 2011). The physical reactions of anger show in increased blood pressure and heart rate, muscle tightening and 'fight or flight' response. The cognitive experience of anger makes one feel angry because of a situation making him feel wronged and threatened. Behavior is the expression of anger that includes a wide range of behavioral reactions from slamming doors to raising voice and from turning red to committing a murder or an act of violence. Anger can be both positive and negative. If anger can be channelized in a positive way, it may influence and motivate one to stand up to wrong deeds and correct unfair situations whereas negatively channelized anger may spiral out of control leading one to commit violent acts (PBS Online, 2011).

Since anger and violence are correlated, in order to understand why a person develops violent behavior, we need to understand the source of anger. Alcohol abuse, domestic violence and violent neighborhood are some of the key reasons closely related to both anger as well as violence. This essay will discuss in detail four causes of anger and how that anger leads to aggression by exploring a series of literatures to examine the findings and the correlation between anger and violence.

The inability to control or restrain anger can unleash a series of violent behavioral reactions like aggression and hostility which may lead to deadly consequences. The control mechanisms are very important for anger

management. The control mechanisms in our brains are responsible for controlling our actions by bringing a sense of self-control within us. If the control mechanisms are non-functional, a mild anger can even lead to disruptive result. The control mechanisms of our brain are disrupted by different external factors like substance or alcohol abuse, family structures, neighborhood or peer influences and so on. Since by nature, our brains are susceptible to all kinds of influences, non-functional self-control or control mechanisms can trigger violent attributes in us (Greenemeier, 2011). For example, watching a violent movie or playing a violent video game may trigger violent reactions in people, and if they are unable to control the anger and violence brewing within them, it may lead to undesirable consequences. Furthermore, children growing up in disturbed households amidst a lot of exposure to violence and aggression find themselves unable to cope up with their anger, and resultantly, they resort to violent behavior. Few of such external and internal factors that make one fall prey to anger and violence are discussed below:

Anger and Video Games

Many studies have proven how aggression in children and adolescents is developed by constant exposure to video games. A group of researchers from Brock University conducted a study in 2011 on students aged between 17 and 19 years to see how exposure to violent and non-violent video games impacts the minds. Their study came up with the finding that the students, who were made to play highly competitive games, showed more anger than students, who played less competitive games, regardless of violent or non-violent content of the games (Polewski, 2013). These researchers believe

that the content of the video games does not matter much in terms of provoking anger. The players get agitated by the level of competition they encounter in the video games. Since losing is stressful, they feel frustrated when they lose a game, and that frustration breeds hopeless anger in them. On the other hand, there are researchers who believe that the violent content in video games develop in children a tendency towards aggression. The 10 most popular video games among young adults like Assassin Creed III, Borderlands 2, Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3, Call of Duty: Black Ops II, and Halo 4 are full of violence. According to Brad Bushman, a professor of psychology in Ohio, violent video games is the number one factor for aggression. Both experimental and non-experimental studies conducted on men and women have come up with the finding that violent video content increases aggression in children and young adults (Rozi and Muhyiddin, 2013). K. D. Williams (2007) in his study, conducted on 28 women and 32 men, found a correlation between the increased frustration level with video game difficulty and violent video games. His finding showed that difficult video games lead to frustration, and that frustration begets anger. The players, while playing difficult violent video games, often start swearing and yelling out of frustration and sometimes even resort to pushing, personal attack and property destruction (Rozi and Muhyiddin, 2013).

Another group of researchers believe that an active participation in violent video games results in the development of aggressive streaks in children and young adults. They believe that an array of homicides and school shooting incidents by teenage boys has been influenced by violent video games. For example, Steven Phillip Kazmierczak who shot five people dead

and injured numerous others at the Northern Illinois University shooting massacre in 2008 was an avid player of violent video games (Ferguson, 2008). A study, conducted upon on 227 juvenile offenders, by Iowa State researchers shows that the frequency of playing video games is correlated with violent behavioral streaks and an act of violence (Iowa State University, 2013). These researchers share the view that a player while playing a video game identifies himself with the violent character. If he plays the game in first person, then he himself becomes the visual image of the violent character whereas he takes the charge of controlling the actions of the violent character if the game is played in third person. Thus, he becomes actively involved in the virtual violence, and sometimes such virtual violence replicates itself in real life through school shooting incidents and other acts of violence committed by the juveniles.

Alcohol Abuse

Violence and anger are often triggered by alcohol abuse. The result of a research study that involves examining facial expressions, published in the June 2003 issue of *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research*, shows that alcohol abuse makes people prone to anger and aggression. A group of researchers from the National Institute on Drug Abuse in their study have also found out that alcoholics, because of their addiction and lowered inhibitions due to the effect of alcohol, express their anger in an aggressive and violent way resulting in deadly consequences (NIDA, 2007). Robert O. Pihl, who is a professor of psychiatry and psychology at McGill University, has stated that half of all the murders, rapes and sexual assaults are committed under the influence of alcohol. A cluster of published studies indicate that

about 37% of assault offenders, 87% of murderers, 60% of rapists, 57% of men and 27% of women involved in marital violence and 13% of child abusers were under the influence of alcohol when the crime was committed (NIH, 1997). Various studies show that alcohol abuse or substance abuse and anger can lead to dangerous consequences. Alcohol consumption can exacerbate or encourage anger and aggression by disturbing the normal function of brain. The different brain mechanisms, responsible for restraining anger and impulsive behavior, are weakened by the alcohol consumption, and therefore, anger and aggression under the influence of alcohol may lead a person to commit violent acts (NIDA, 2007). Since alcohol affects the good judgment of people, drinkers particularly with a predisposition to be angry become aggressive under provocation and vent anger violently.

Anger and Violence: Neighborhood/ Household effects

Violence is an outburst of anger. Anger is something developed inside the minds of people based on the circumstances or the environment around them. We have seen so far how video games and alcohol abuse contribute to anger and violence; another big factor that influences a person's anger is the neighborhood. There is substantial empirical evidence to showcase how anger resides in people living in disturbed neighborhoods (Medina, Margolin and Gordis, 2011).

Children while growing up mainly face two types of issues that lead to anger and violent behavior in later part of their lives. The first thing that millions of children observe while growing up is violence at home. Even violence at home can be of different types. The most common types of violence children face is direct violence. Almost 12 in every 1, 000 children in the United

States are directly affected by violence (Medina, Margolin and Gordis, 2011). There are many children who grow up seeing either their brother or sisters facing violence from parents or the partners of parents. Finally, there are almost 10 million children who grow up seeing their parents fight against each other or one of the parents abusing the other (Medina, Margolin and Gordis, 2011). These types of effects are called the household effects of violence on children. Facing or seeing this kind of violence at home on a regular basis can contribute to adverse effects on children. The most common side effect of facing violence is disturbances in cognitive functioning (Hannon and DeFina, 2005). Emotional difficulties and depression are some other effects on people who see violence at home during their childhood. These people also have difficulty to deal with peers and colleagues at work. They often show extreme behavioral problems. Either they are introverts or they are extreme extroverts. Anna Medina in her research touched upon the anger-violence cycle (Medina, Margolin and Gordis, 2011). She found out that those exposed to violence during their childhood develop feelings of frustration and anger inside them. Although that anger may heal in the later part of life for many people with proper counselling and help, for others devoid of any therapeutic help or healing influence, the pent up anger may turn into another cycle of violence for the next generation as the victims become abusers as adults. Anna studied families with a history of violence for few generations to establish this anger-violence cycle. On the contrary, a NYU child study center found no such evidence related to the anger violence cycle (NYU, 2012). They found that violence in the family may lead to cognitive problems and depression among

children. However, their study found that children, especially women, who face violence in their childhood, are less likely to do violence to their children (NYU, 2012). In fact, they care for their children more than the average mothers.

Anger-violence cycle can only sustain if the neighborhood or the whole environment around a person supports it. For example, the average rate of violence in the African American neighborhood is higher than a neighborhood dominated by white Americans (Sampson, Raudenbush and Earl, 1997). Also, in African American neighborhood, the percentage of domestic violence on the female is very high. If a child grows up in such neighborhood and continues to live there, then there is a high chance for him to develop the same violent behavior. Such children also have high chances of beating their partners as adults than others who are not from a violent neighborhood (Sampson, Raudenbush and Earl, 1997). However, this observation is debatable. In fact, there are empirical studies that show no correlation between growing up in a violent neighborhood and becoming a violent person later in life. Some other study shows that there are other factors to influence the violent behavior. It is seen that the factors, many a time, come as a group. For example, there is a strong correlation between a Latino male child growing up in a poor neighborhood with very high crime rate and his chances of doing violent actions later in life (Hannon and DeFina, 2005).

Domestic Violence

Family structure is another contributing factor that triggers violence.

Children from disturbed families are often found to be socially reclusive (Fischbach & Herbert, 1997). They often suffer from suppressed form of rage

against the society and against their family, which if uncontrolled, can lead to deadly consequences. Literature shows that children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to suffer from behavioral problems than their peers. Because of the circumstances they are thrown in and because of the abusive relationships they witness unfolding in front of their eyes, they develop psychotic fears, depression, anxiety and an intense form of rage. If these conditions remain unattended, these children may exhibit anti-social behavior and aggression later in their lives when they grow up (Fischbach & Herbert, 1997). In fact, children, exposed to domestic violence every day, themselves become the perpetrators of domestic violence as adults, if they are not provided counselling and therapeutic help on time.

The victims of domestic violence are mostly women. As per the statistics provided by the National Coalition against Domestic Violence (NCADV), 85% victims of domestic violence are women. Anne and Evan, in their book “Women at Risk”, showed some empirical evidences that a majority of the significant injuries caused to women is perpetrated by men, and it happens within the boundaries of the house (Stark and Flitcraft, 1996). Nancy Freeman a high school teacher from Seattle murdered her husband by stabbing him twenty one times and then hitting him with a hatchet 15 times (ABC News, 2004). The cause of the violence was pent-up anger. It was later discovered that her husband Robert Seaman used to abuse her. For any small reason, he used to beat her or behave very violently to the extent that Nancy had to be hospitalized couple of times. However, having been raised in a conservative religious family, she never complained as she was a strong believer in the sanctity of marriage, but with every passing year and every

incident of domestic violence by her husband made her seethe with anger from inside (ABC News, 2004). Finally, after twenty one years of abuse, her anger boiled over and she resorted to violence by killing her husband.

There are several effects of domestic violence. The most visible effect is the physical injuries. However, often the main after effect of domestic violence is psychological or mental. Women who suffer domestic violence often develop arthritis, hypertension and heart diseases (Perron, 1992). Laceration, bruises, head injuries, broken bones and internal bleeding are some of the very common and immediate effects of domestic violence. However, among all the victims of domestic violence, 60% of the victims have a high risk of developing depression (Barnett, 2000). 25% of the women show suicidal tendencies with a large percentage actually attempting suicide (Fischbach & Herbert, 1997). Often domestic violence leads to job loss. As many need to take long leaves after the domestic violence, absenteeism and illness due to violence result in job loss (Kurz, 1989). Almost 33% of the children who watch their mother getting battered by their partners often demonstrate significant emotional and psychological problems (Kurz, 1989). Many develop stuttering, anxiety, sleep disruption and school problems. Many other male children, who grow up seeing violence at home, may become violent themselves when they grow up. On the other hand, girl children who grow up seeing their mothers as victims of domestic violence often become victim of violence themselves as they develop a tolerance towards violent behavior (Hotaling and Sugarman, 1986).

Conclusion

Anger and violence are highly correlated. As per the common definition, anger is nothing but the emotion that enrages a mind, increases the blood pressure and makes heart beat faster sending adrenaline rush into the system. Violence is just a physical behavioral response of anger. In other words, we can say that anger almost always precedes violence. Sometimes it may seem that there are people committing violent behavior in cold blood, but if we dig deep into their mind, we will find some sort of pent-up anger as trigger of an act of violence. There are several reasons for a person to develop anger and ultimately act in a violent way. Alcohol abuse is one reason that influences people to become violent. In fact, under the influence of alcohol, many people due to lowered inhibitions and disrupted control mechanisms get easily provoked and resort to violence. Video games, domestic violence and growing up in disturbed neighborhoods also influence the cognitive behavior of people. Often these people develop many psychological and mental illnesses. Sometimes those psychological frustrations erupt into violent behavior later in life. Anger and violence is highly correlated. To control violence, we first need to understand the trigger points of anger in our minds. Once we can understand the influential sources of anger and take care of them, proper interventions can be carried out to reduce violent behavior drastically.

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