

20.1: Angry Moods

Learning Objectives

- Ways to improve an angry mood: A look at gender and sports participation

Research conducted by

Emily Zitek and Mindy Ater, Rice University

Case study prepared by

Emily Zitek

Overview

People have different ways of improving their mood when angry. We have all seen people punch a wall when mad, and indeed, previous research has indicated that some people aggress to improve their mood (Bushman, Baumeister & Phillips, 2001). What do the top athletes do when angry? Striegel (1994) found that anger often hurts an athlete's performance and that capability to control anger is what makes good athletes even better. This study adds to the past research and examines the difference in ways to improve an angry mood by gender and sports participation.

The participants were 78 Rice University undergraduates, ages 17 to 23. Of these 78 participants, 48 were females and 30 were males and 25 were athletes and 53 were non-athletes. People who did not play a varsity or club sport were considered non-athletes. The 13 contact sport athletes played soccer, football, rugby, or basketball, and the 12 non-contact sport athletes participated in Ultimate Frisbee, baseball, tennis, swimming, volleyball, crew, or dance.

The participants were asked to respond to a questionnaire that asked about what they do to improve their mood when angry or furious. Then they filled out a demographics questionnaire.

Note

This study used the most recent version of the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI-2) (Spielberger, Sydeman, Owen & Marsh, 1999) which was modified to create an Angry Mood Improvement Inventory similar to that created by Bushman et al. (2001).

Questions to Answer

Do athletes and non-athletes deal with anger in the same way? Are there any gender differences? Specifically, are men more likely to believe that aggressive behavior can improve an angry mood?

Design Issues

This study has an extremely unbalanced design. There were a lot more non-athletes than athletes in the sample. In the future, more athletes should be used. This study originally wanted to look at contact and non-contact athletes separately, but there were not enough participants to do this. Future studies could look at this.

Descriptions of Variables

Table 20.1.1: Description of Variables. Note that the description of the items comes from Spielberger et al. (1999)

Variable	Description
Sports	1 = athletes, 2 = non-athletes
Gender	1 = males, 2 = females

Anger-Out (AO)	high scores demonstrate that people deal with anger by expressing it in a verbally or physically aggressive fashion
Anger-In (AI)	high scores demonstrate that people experience anger but do not express it (suppress their anger)
Control-Out (CO)	high scores demonstrate that people control the outward expression of angry feelings
Control-In (CI)	high scores demonstrate that people control angry feelings by calming down or cooling off
Expression (AE)	index of general anger expression: $(\text{Anger-Out}) + (\text{Anger-In}) - (\text{Control-Out}) - (\text{Control-In}) + 48$

Data files

angry_moods.xls

References

- Bushman, B.J., Baumeister, R.F. & Phillips, C.M. (2001). Do people aggress to improve their mood? Catharsis beliefs, affect regulation opportunity, and aggressive responding. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81(1), 17-32.
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- Striegel, D. (1994). Anger in tennis: Part 2. Effects of anger on performance, coping with anger, and using anger to one's benefit. *Journal of Performance Psychology*, 2, 56-92.

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