

Exploring the Relationship Between Misogyny and Anger among Chinese Men: An Evolutionary Psychology Perspective

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Abstract:

Misogyny refers to the hatred or dislike of women, encompassing prejudice or discrimination against women. Misogyny is a kind of social phenomenon and social problem. Misogyny in China has a considerable scale, but the research on misogyny is still in an immature stage, and the causes and mechanisms behind this are still unclear. It is needed to study the mechanism behind misogyny. This study aims to explore the relationship between misogyny and anger from an evolutionary psychological perspective. If men receive signals from women that they are insulted, hurt, ignored, etc., which will increase their anger degree, they are more likely to express hatred and discrimination against women, and even express violent and harmful behaviors against women (Rottweiler & Gill, 2021). However, men with high levels of anger are not necessarily misogynistic. Therefore, this study aims to prove that there is a correlation between misogyny and anger, and that the correlation is non-linear growth. The study mainly adopts questionnaires to survey 500 Chinese adult men. The questionnaire is mainly divided into two parts. The first part measures the misogyny degree and anger degree of the participants to study whether there is a relationship between misogyny and anger. The second part is based on the Recalibration Theory of Anger to design three scenarios with different levels of anger for participants through text in the questionnaire, and the three scenarios are low anger, high anger and no anger, so as to explore whether the relationship between anger and misogyny is non-linear growth. This study provides a new research perspective for the future control of extreme violence, prejudice and discrimination caused by misogyny.

Keywords: Misogyny, Anger, Recalibration Theory of Anger, Evolutionary Psychology, Nonlinear Growth

1. Introduction

In contemporary society, misogyny is on the rise, particularly in countries such as China and India, where cultural factors intensify male favoritism and discrimination against women (Jayachandran, 2015). Misogyny is defined as a hatred or aversion toward women, encompassing prejudice and discriminatory practices that devalue women's worth, capabilities, and contributions. This devaluation can lead to aggressive attitudes and acts of violence against women. Moreover, frequent social movements, highly publicized incidents of violence against women, and the activities of extreme right-wing organizations are closely linked to the perpetuation of misogyny (Rottweiler & Gill, 2021).

A prime example is the 'involuntary celibate' (incel) movement, which centers around misogyny and expresses strong animosity towards women while advocating for violence against them. Despite the rise of feminist activities in China, people still show negative attitudes toward individuals fighting for women's benefits and rights and rarely support them. It may be because of a long-standing preference for sons in China. For Chinese women, feminism means equality and breaking free from the harsh, oppressive traditions that prevent them from being accepted as anything other than a wife and mother, but for the Chinese government, feminism means instability (Augustine, 2017). In China, the explicit (i.e., misogyny) form of sexism influence feminist attitudes and engagement in feminist activity (Chen & Zheng, 2023).

Misogyny has become a significant area of research in the social sciences in recent years. In the field of evolutionary psychology, it is generally understood that men do not inherently hate women; rather, their biases against women may arise from competition for resources and reproductive strategies aimed at maintaining dominance (Clutton-Brock & T. H., 2013). This perspective supports research exploring the relationship between misogyny and anger.

Evolutionary psychology suggests that men generally experience desires for women rather than harboring feelings of hate towards them. However, misogyny refers to the specific harm caused by men's prejudice against women during resource competition and reproductive strategies. Thus, there is a need for further investigation into the reasons and mechanisms underlying the existence of misogyny. In fact, research indicates a correlation between frustrated mating needs and the manifestation of hatred towards women, i.e., misogyny (Konutgan, 2020). Men who experience rejection may perceive their sense of power as being threatened, leading to feelings of anger and resentment towards women. In this context, misogyny can be viewed as a by-product of unmet needs and a struggle for

power. As more and more misogynists like incels couldn't find their mates, they may be less likely to reproduce. From this perspective, misogyny may be a new adaptation to the imbalance between the population and status of men and women in modern society.

Anger is a multifaceted emotion, which can be stimulated by various factors, including insults, negative reinforcement, neglect, anger expressed by others, lack of reciprocity, absence of praise, and disregard for one's accomplishments (Sell et al., 2009). When triggered, anger elicits a coordinated response involving physiological changes, facial expressions, vocal responses, shifts in visual attention, and an array of behavioral strategies, such as social rejection, verbal insults, arguments, and aggression (Sell et al., 2009).

Anger is thought to be an adaptation that influences another person's welfare tradeoff ratio (WTR) in relation to oneself (Sell, 2011). The concept of WTR refers to an internal threshold that individuals use to evaluate acceptable cost-benefit transactions. Specifically, WTR represents the point at which one person (Y) will receive a resource, while another person (X) will not, based on the perceived balance of costs and benefits. It is important to note that individuals may have different WTRs, leading to varying responses to perceived inequalities.

Human anger was designed by natural selection to regulate resource conflict. Similarly, misogyny may arise when men become embroiled in competition for mating opportunities. Both anger and misogyny can be seen as group adaptations, as groups that include individuals who are successful in resource acquisition or mating have a higher likelihood of survival compared to groups with individuals who engage in lethal fighting (Sell, 2011). Sell has also developed an equation to determine when it is beneficial for an individual to engage in a fight for resources.

$$v(X) > v(Y) * k(X)/k(Y)$$

In this equation, (v) represents the adaptive value of the contested resource to the organism, while (k(X) / k(Y)) denotes the relative Resource Holding Power (RHP) between two individuals, X and Y. A higher relative RHP indicates that Y is capable of inflicting more damage on X if both individuals compete for the resource. When the equation is satisfied, organism Y will be evolutionarily favored to yield the contested resource without engaging in a fight, whereas organism X will be selected to become angry and fight if Y does not relinquish the resource (Sell, 2011). The benefit of obtaining the resource is determined by its inherent value (the left side of the equation), while the cost of acquisition is influenced by the relative fighting abilities of the two organisms and the value of the resource to the competitor (the right side of the equation) (Sell, 2011).

Since misogyny comes from the conflict from which anger could come too, there may be a correlation between the two. This study aims to investigate the potential correlation between the mechanisms of misogyny and anger, and to demonstrate how misogyny mechanism relates to anger. Additionally, it seeks to explore the explanation of men's misogyny from an evolutionary psychology perspective, as well as suggest approaches to reduce anger and prejudice within misogynistic groups. The underlying assumption is that higher levels of misogyny are more likely to increase levels of misogyny through the expression of anger.

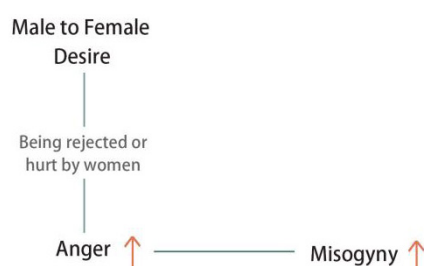


Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework of Misogyny and Anger

The participants in this study consist of Chinese adult men, who are divided into two groups based on their scores on Bettina Rottweiler and Paul Gill's Misogyny Scale: the misogyny group and the non-misogyny group. The study aims to investigate the potential correlation between the mechanisms of misogyny and anger, and to demonstrate the relationship between these mechanisms. Our research questions and hypothesis are as follow:

1. Is there a correlation between misogyny mechanisms and anger?

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no correlation between misogyny mechanisms and anger.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a correlation between misogyny mechanisms and anger.

2. Is the correlation between misogyny mechanisms and anger show a non-linear growth?

Null Hypothesis (H0): The correlation between misogyny mechanisms and anger show a non-linear growth.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): The correlation between misogyny mechanisms and anger doesn't show a non-linear growth.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the

explanation of men's misogyny from an evolutionary psychology perspective. Additionally, the study aims to propose strategies to decrease anger and prejudice within misogynistic groups.

2. Methods

This study utilizes a correlational research design to examine the association between levels of misogyny and levels of anger. A cross-sectional study design will be employed to collect data from both misogynistic and non-misogynistic men in China at a specific point in time. This approach allows for the analysis of relationships and variations within a defined framework.

2.1 Participants

Participants will be recruited via WeChat and Little Red Book by identifying individuals with potential misogynistic tendencies based on their comments and attitudes towards women on these social media platforms. The study aims to recruit 500 adult men in China, selected from those identified as potential misogynists, and from a control group of men without known mental illnesses. Each participant will complete a three-part questionnaire, which includes the Misogyny Scale, an anger scenario simulation, and the Anger scale and the Misogyny scale again. To ensure the sample is representative, participants will be randomly selected to minimize bias and better reflect the characteristics and views of misogynistic men.

2.2 Materials/Measures

2.2.1 Demographic variables

The questionnaire included the participants' age, place of birth, occupation and marital status

2.2.2 Misogyny Scale

The degree of misogyny will be measured using Bettina Rottweiler and Paul Gill's Misogyny Scale, a 10-item questionnaire rated on a 7-point scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". The scale measures attitudes related to the manipulative and exploitative nature of women, distrust of women, and devaluation of women (Rottweiler and Gill, 2021.) Participants scoring above the average are considered as misogynists, while those below are considered as non-misogynists.

2.2.3 The State-Trait Anger Scale

The State-Trait Anger Scale, which includes three factors—experience of anger/hostility (state items), arousal of anger (seven trait items), and situational anger when devalued (three trait items)—will be used to measure participants' levels of anger (Kroner, D. G. & Reddon, J.

R., 1992). This scale will help assess the degree of anger experienced by participants and investigate whether misogyny increases in response to heightened anger.

The study is designed to investigate the relationship between the mechanism of misogyny and anger. Participants will initially complete the Misogyny Scale to assess their initial level of misogyny. They will then be presented with various scenarios involving women, such as simulated videos or text. After the scenarios, participants will complete the Misogyny Scale and the State-Trait Anger Scale to assess any changes in their misogyny scores and to analyze the relationship between these scores and levels of anger.

In the no-anger scenario, the atmosphere will be peaceful and friendly to create a baseline. Building upon this, the anger scenario will incorporate slight annoyances and deliberately provoke significant anger by incorporating elements like neglect and the imposition of additional costs. Both scenarios will remain consistent in all other aspects, except for the experimental component.

The anger factor control in the scenario mainly refers to

the Recalibration Theory of Anger, and the two groups of scenario experiments were evaluated by pre-study in advance.

3. Results and Discussion

During the experiment, if the mean anger score of the misogynistic group is found to be significantly higher than that of the non-misogynistic group, the first null hypothesis (H_0) will be rejected. This rejection would suggest a correlation between misogyny mechanisms and anger, providing evidence for a relationship between the two variables.

As a control group, there should be no significant increase in misogyny between the two groups after exposure to the no-anger scenario.

If with the increase of anger value, the growth rate of misogyny level is accelerated in a range, that is, the slope goes up, the second null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, demonstrating that anger accumulation will lead to faster rise of misogyny.

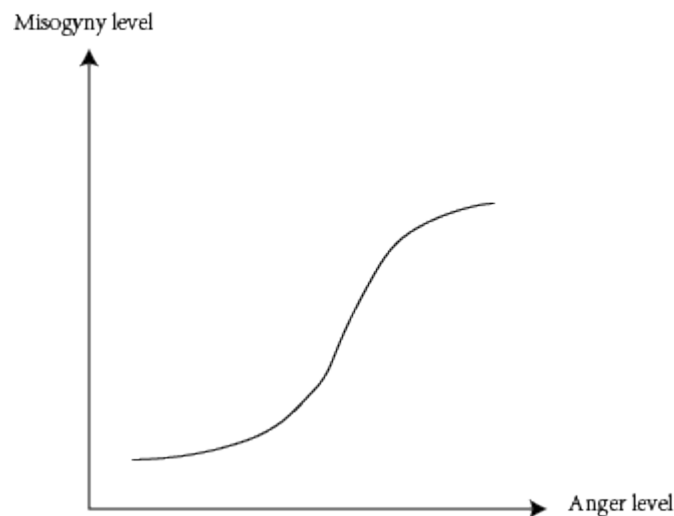


Figure 2. Predicted Levels of Misogyny in Relation to Levels of Anger

If with the increase of anger value, the growth rate of misogyny level slow down in a range, that is, the slope goes down, the second null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, demonstrating that anger accumulation will lead to slower rise of misogyny.

If with the increase of anger value, the growth rate of misogyny level isn't accelerated, that is, the slope doesn't change, the second null hypothesis (H_0) isn't rejected, demonstrating that anger accumulation will not change the rise speed of misogyny.

We predict that initially, misogyny will increase more rapidly with rising levels of anger. However, once misogyny reaches a certain threshold, further increases in anger will

have a diminishing effect on misogyny levels. As shown in Figure 2, the relationship between misogyny and anger resembles an S-shaped curve.

4. Limitations and Implications

Without an initial measurement, finding some extreme misogynist and non-misogynist may pose a challenge. Any significant imbalance in the numbers of participants would undermine the credibility of subsequent experiments.

The hypothesis may not be supported due to the difficulty of controlling for specific factors in the scenario experiments, as participants may encounter multiple influences

simultaneously. Administering the Misogyny Scale twice might lead to participant fatigue. Additionally, text and video scenarios may lack the immersion needed to effectively alter participants' emotions and attitudes.

Differentiating between sadness and anger can be challenging, as various factors may cause some men to experience sadness while others feel anger. The relationship between misogyny and sadness remains to be studied. It is possible that the presence of sadness could influence the results of the study.

From a humanitarian perspective, conducting an experiment that intentionally increases participants' levels of misogyny is likely considered ethically impermissible. Instead, it is hoped that this study can provide inspiration for future research to design more ethical and effective experiments in this area.

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