



Case Report

Everything in moderation: The social effects of anger depend on its perceived intensity

Hajo Adam^{a,*}, Jeanne M. Brett^b^a Rice University, USA^b Northwestern University, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Anger
Emotion
Intensity
Negotiation
Subjective value

ABSTRACT

Research has documented the important influence of anger expressions on negotiation processes and outcomes. Surprisingly, however, it remains an open question if this influence depends on a core characteristic of anger displays—the intensity with which anger is expressed. Results from two negotiation studies ($N = 396$) using different operationalizations of anger intensity, different negotiation procedures, and different subject populations demonstrated a curvilinear relationship between the intensity of the anger expression and the negotiation counterpart's concessions. In particular, moderate-intensity anger led to larger concessions than no anger because the anger expresser was perceived as tough, and high-intensity anger led to smaller concessions than moderate-intensity anger because the anger expression was perceived as inappropriate. Furthermore, expressing anger, and, in particular, high-intensity anger, reduced anger perceivers' subjective value outcomes in the form of negative feelings about the relationship. Theoretical contributions to research on anger, emotion, and negotiation are discussed.

Anger is commonplace in negotiations (Allred, 1999; Barry, Fulmer, & Van Kleef, 2004). The perceived conflict inherent in negotiations can evoke intense feelings of anger and frustration, and expressing these feelings can influence how the negotiation unfolds (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2010). Research has documented that displays of anger typically elicit greater concessions from negotiation counterparts than remaining emotionally neutral or expressing other emotions like happiness (e.g., Adam & Shirako, 2013; Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Van Kleef et al., 2010; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004a). Although studies have started exploring factors that moderate this effect (see Adam & Brett, 2015 for a recent literature review), one factor that has been overlooked so far is the intensity with which anger is expressed. The current research addresses this oversight by examining how and why the intensity of anger expressions shapes key negotiation outcomes.

This examination makes three main contributions: First, it advances our understanding of the social effects of emotions. Intensity, or high vs. low arousal, is one of two core dimensions of emotions (the other being valence, or positive vs. negative affect) (Russell, 1980), and it has long been theorized that emotional intensity can influence social behaviors (Frijda, Ortony, Sonnemans, & Clore, 1992). If we neglect a factor so inherently linked to the basic conception of emotion, our capacity to predict and explain the effects of expressing emotions is likely to be

severely limited (Van Kleef, Homan, & Cheshin, 2012). Second, our research addresses competing theoretical perspectives as to whether the effect of anger intensity on concessions is linear or curvilinear and investigates multiple corresponding mechanisms related to the perceived toughness of the angry negotiator and the perceived inappropriateness of the anger expression. Third, our studies extend the scope of dependent variables from typically studied economic outcomes to a comprehensive assessment of non-economic outcomes.

1. The social effects of anger intensity in negotiations

Research on the social effects of emotions examines the effects of one person's expressed emotions on the responses of their interaction partners. It is informed by social-functional theorizing about emotions (Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Mesquita & Frijda, 1992; Oatley & Jenkins, 1992) and, in particular, the Emotions as Social Information (EASI) model (Van Kleef, 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2010). The EASI model posits that emotions serve social functions by triggering emotional reactions in others and by communicating information about feelings, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. Negotiation scholars have built on this model to examine the effects of emotional displays in negotiations. The most frequently studied emotion is anger, arguably the most common emotion in a conflict situation (Adam & Brett, 2015; Allred, 1999; Van

* Corresponding author at: 6100 Main Street, Houston, TX 77005, USA.
E-mail address: hajo.adam@rice.edu (H. Adam).

Kleef et al., 2004a, 2010). In general, studies have shown that expressing anger elicits larger concessions from negotiation counterparts than not expressing anger or expressing other emotions like happiness because angry negotiators are perceived as tough and threatening (Van Kleef et al., 2010). Anger thus serves as a warning signal that the conflict may escalate and the negotiation may end in an impasse unless the negotiation counterpart starts conceding more (Adam & Shirako, 2013; Sinaceur, Neale, Van Kleef, Adam, & Haag, 2011; Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Van Kleef et al., 2004a; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004b).

A key limitation of this research is that the intensity of the anger expression has been held constant. Most studies have either employed vignettes or used computer-mediated negotiations in which anger is communicated in clear, explicit, and moderately intense statements, such as “This offer makes me really angry” (e.g., Adam & Shirako, 2013; Filipowicz, Barsade, & Melwani, 2011; Lelieveld, Van Dijk, Van Beest, Steinel, & Van Kleef, 2011; Sinaceur, Adam, Van Kleef, & Galinsky, 2013; Steinel, Van Kleef, & Harinck, 2008; Van Kleef et al., 2004a, 2004b; Van Kleef & De Dreu, 2010; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2006; Wang, Northcraft, & Van Kleef, 2012). One exception is a study by Sinaceur and colleagues (Sinaceur et al., 2011; Study 1), which included two types of anger statements for an auxiliary analysis—one with exclamation marks and one without. Results indicated, however, that the exclamation marks did not influence the perceived intensity of the anger statements. Hence, the current research is the first substantive investigation into the possibility that the social effects of anger depend on the intensity of the anger expression.

1.1. Anger intensity and concessions

The literature on the social effects of anger offers competing predictions as to whether the effect of expressing anger on concessions is linear (i.e., high-intensity anger leads to larger concessions than moderate-intensity anger) or curvilinear (i.e., high-intensity anger leads to smaller concessions than moderate-intensity anger). On the one hand, as mentioned above, research has demonstrated the positive effects of expressing anger on concessions because it is perceived as a signal that the angry negotiator is tough and threatening (e.g., Adam & Shirako, 2013; Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Van Kleef et al., 2010). In line with the EASI model, anger communicates higher standards for the worst deal that a negotiator is willing to accept (Van Kleef et al., 2004a); it is intimidating (Clark, Pataki, & Carver, 1996); and it conveys that negative consequences may occur unless behavioral adjustments are made (Morris & Keltner, 2000). Anger thus signals a threat that incentivizes the anger perceiver to behave in a more conciliatory manner (Averill, 1982; Sinaceur et al., 2011).

It therefore stands to reason that if negotiators express anger with very high intensity, they will convey even more clearly and effectively a sense of strength and toughness. In fact, if negotiators lose all constraint and display high-intensity anger, their counterparts may perceive a more genuine threat that anything can happen and the conflict will escalate unless they start conceding more. Rooted in the EASI model, this *signal strength perspective* thus suggests a linear relationship between anger intensity and concessions—that is, high-intensity anger should have a stronger signaling value that the anger expresser is tough and threatening and therefore lead to larger concessions than moderate-intensity anger.

On the other hand, there is reason to believe that high-intensity anger may lead to smaller concessions than moderate-intensity anger. In particular, the dual threshold model of anger proposes that anger expressed with high intensity crosses the “impropriety threshold”, meaning it is viewed as inappropriate because it violates what is considered normative behavior and therefore generates more aversive reactions from interaction partners than anger expressed with moderate intensity (Geddes & Callister, 2007). In support of this theory, research shows that inappropriate and unfair treatment of others leads to a host

of negative reactions, including hostility, aggression, and retaliatory behaviors (e.g., Barclay, Skarlicki, & Pugh, 2005; Nowak, Page, & Sigmund, 2000; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997).

This effect extends to anger in negotiations: When explicit display rules make expressions of anger unjustified, angry negotiators tend to elicit smaller concessions than non-angry negotiators (Van Kleef & Côté, 2007). Similarly, expressing anger backfires in negotiations with East Asian counterparts because they deem expressions of anger non-normative and offensive (Adam, Shirako, & Maddux, 2010). Rooted in the dual threshold model of anger, this *inappropriateness perspective* thus points to a curvilinear relationship between anger intensity and concessions—that is, high-intensity anger should be perceived as less appropriate and therefore lead to smaller concessions than moderate-intensity anger. Consequently, one key purpose of the current research is to test whether and why the relationship between the anger intensity and concessions is linear (as dictated by the signal strength perspective) or curvilinear (as dictated by the inappropriateness perspective).

1.2. Anger intensity and subjective value

Besides neglecting the role of intensity, research on the social effects of anger in negotiations is also limited in its almost exclusive focus on economic outcomes, such as value-claiming and concession-making (Adam & Brett, 2015; Van Kleef et al., 2010). The few studies that have explored non-economic outcomes have focused on very specific and narrowly defined variables. For instance, one study shows that negotiators are less willing to interact again with an angry than with a non-angry counterpart (Van Kleef et al., 2004b). Hence, another purpose of the current research is to investigate the effects of expressing anger on a comprehensive measure of non-economic outcomes—the subjective value inventory, a framework specifically designed to assess the range of qualitative, social psychological outcomes that negotiators experience (Curhan, Elfenbein, & Xu, 2006).

The subjective value inventory contains four sub-constructs: feelings about the instrumental outcome, the self, the process, and the relationship. These outcomes have been shown to be better predictors of future negotiation decisions as well as job-related attitudes than economic negotiation outcomes (Curhan et al., 2006; Curhan, Elfenbein, & Kilduff, 2009). It is possible that anger may influence all four aspects of the subjective value inventory, especially if anger is explicitly targeted at one of these aspects. For example, if a negotiator expresses anger about the outcome and complains that the agreement is unfavorable, it would likely affect the counterpart's perceptions about the instrumental outcome. However, when anger is expressed in a straightforward way without an explicit target, the basic nature of anger should make it have the strongest impact on one specific aspect of the subjective value inventory: the counterpart's feelings about the relationship. Indeed, anger is considered a particularly confrontational and socially disengaging emotion and is perhaps the emotion that most strongly conflicts with social harmony and establishing interpersonal connections (Adam et al., 2010; Kitayama, Mesquita, & Karasawa, 2006). We therefore hypothesize that the relationship between anger intensity and negative feelings about the relationship is linear such that the higher the intensity, the greater the harm to the bond between negotiators.

2. Overview of studies

We tested our hypotheses across two studies. We determined sample sizes in advance based on prior similar studies in the literature, and we report all measures, manipulations, and exclusions. The purpose of the first study was to discern whether the relationship between anger intensity and concessions is linear or curvilinear in a realistic face-to-face negotiation in which we measured rather than manipulated anger intensity. The purpose of the second study was not only to replicate a test of this relationship in a controlled computer-mediated negotiation in which we carefully manipulated rather than measured anger intensity,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7324207>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7324207>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)