

**Gender Differences in the Experience and Expression of Moral Anger Regarding Femicide**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined the differences between men and women in the experience and expression of anger toward a person making immoral comments about femicide. It was expected that women would experience more anger than men regarding this topic, and that women would express more anger than men when a close friend made these comments, whereas men would express more anger than women when the comments were made by a stranger. This was investigated in a study manipulating relational costs (N= 177). In an experimental design, a manipulation was used in which the participants were assigned to a high or a low cost condition. The scores of men and women were compared.

We found that women experienced more anger than men when a stranger made immoral comments, but that there was no difference between men and women when a close friend did so. No significant result was found for the hypothesis that women were expected to express more anger than men when a close friend made the comments, and men were expected to express more anger than women when this was done by a stranger.

Limitations of this research are that the topic of femicide could be not anger-arousing enough and the sample size should have been bigger to get more reliable results. Future research could focus on topics that are less gender-related, to see whether it would lead to the same results and to replicate this study about femicide to check if it leads to the same results.

## **Gender Differences in the Experience and Expression of Moral Anger Regarding Femicide**

Violence is a frequent occurrence around the world. It is defined as the intentional use, threat or neglect of power or strength to harm individuals or groups (Englander, 2017). The harm can be physical, psychological, developmental or economic (Englander, 2017). A common manifestation of violence is the harm against women, which in some cases ends with femicide (Kayma & Baş, 2025). Femicide is described as the murder of women as the result of violence against them (Kayma & Baş, 2025). Research demonstrates that 85000 women were murdered in 2023 and that 60% of them were killed by either a member of the family or an intimate partner (UN women, 2024). Therefore, this data indicates that femicide remains a major issue within society.

When certain matters are perceived as immoral, as can also be thought in the case of femicide, making immoral remarks about them could lead to moral anger (Tangney et al., 2007). There appear to be gender differences in expressing anger, even though the felt emotion seems to be similar for both men and women (Fisher & Evers, 2010). Certain stereotypes surrounding anger seem to make it more difficult for women to express this emotion (Brody & Hall, 2010). In addition, the type of relationship that a person seems to have with the person who is making immoral comments plays a role in the expression of moral anger according to previous research (Fehr et al., 1999; Fehr, 1996; Lohr et al., 1988). Therefore, it could be expected that the type of relationship plays an important role in the expression of moral anger as a function of gender regarding femicide.

This research will investigate if immoral comments about femicide will result in different experiences of moral anger in men and women, and if the relationship to the person making these comments will play a role in the expression of anger.

## **Perspectives on Femicide, Morality and Moral emotions**

There are some different perspectives on femicide. According to the feminist perspective, men are using violence against women to exclude them and have some sense of control and thereby maintain their male power (Yodanis, 2004). This perspective indicates that femicide is a case of sexism, because sexism is a system of injustice based on gender, which is visible in culture, in institutional policies, in behavior and in the beliefs that individuals hold (Shorter-Gooden, 2004). Nevertheless, there are other perspectives on femicide. According to Felson (2006) femicide is not a case of sexism, but just a case of violence. He argues that men generally commit more violence than women do and therefore this is not a case of sexism, because this is just a form of violence (Felson, 2006). When people make remarks about femicide, which are viewed as immoral, it can result in the violation of a moral standard, although people could differ in the way they perceive things as immoral when it comes to violence with a sexual nature, according to multiple theories (Graham et al., 2009; Gray et al., 2022; Haidt, 2001). Morality can be understood as the framework of rules, norms and values that serve to regulate how people behave in society (Cevizci, 2009). Morality, and thus the moral standards that it holds, seem to develop during early childhood (Smetana, 2018). When a person's moral values are challenged by a specific circumstance, this can provoke moral outrage in the individual (Montada & Schneider, 1989). Moral outrage is defined as the emotional experience that arises when a person's moral standard is violated in a specific situation (Montada & Schneider, 1989). In this process, the person experiences moral emotions, such as anger. (Tangney et al., 2007). The moral emotion that the individual experiences, is the result of evaluations of the situation made by the individual (Montada & Schneider, 1989). At that point, a person is making a critical assessment of the situation to evaluate if the individual perceives it as

a case of inequity (Van de Vyver & Addams, 2015). In case moral emotions are triggered, they can motivate people to act in the interest of others or the greater good (Ramos-Vera et al., 2024). This implies that when a person makes immoral comments about femicide and when this evokes moral emotions, this person may prompt people to take action against those comments.

### **Gender Differences and Moral Anger**

A meta-analysis done by Ward and King (2018) has shown that women seem to experience moral emotions in a much more intense way than men do. Both men and women experience equally high levels of anger, but there seem to be differences between men and women in expressing this emotion (Fisher & Evers, 2010). There seems to be a disparity due to the fact that women tend to refrain their anger despite feeling it (Sasse et al, 2021). Sasse and colleagues (2021) referred to this disparity as the anger gap. This gap emerges from the concerns that women hold about the repercussions of expressing their anger (Sasse et al., 2021). One of those concerns is that they would violate a social role belief that involves the expectation that a woman is kind and caring, while anger is inconsistent with this belief (Eagly & Wood, 2016). People also seem to accept women's outbursts less often than men's (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008). Brescoll and Uhlmann (2008) write that men's outbursts are more often attributed to external circumstances, while women's outbursts are more often attributed to internal factors, which causes a woman's anger to be seen more frequently as part of her personality. As a result, expressing anger could harm the reputation of a woman (Brescoll and Uhlmann, 2008). Therefore, beliefs about how women should behave and about the reputation of a woman make it difficult for them to express their anger.

In the context of sexism, women report stronger emotional reactions compared to men (Sasse et al, 2021). According to Sasse and colleagues (2021) it seems that sexism is less

emotionally significant for men. As femicide is a case of sexism, it could be expected that women would report stronger feelings of anger regarding femicide than men, which will be investigated during this research. It could however be the case that women are less likely to express their feelings regarding femicide despite feeling this moral anger, because of the anger gap. One factor that may influence this is the relationship to the person making the immoral comments about femicide

### **The Costs of a Situation in Combination with Anger**

There seem to be gender differences in expressing anger in so-called high and low cost situations. In this research, a high cost situation is considered a situation in which one hears a close friend or a family member say something immoral regarding femicide. A low cost situation is a situation in which one hears someone making an immoral comment, without knowing the person who is saying it. For example, this could be a stranger expressing immoral views in a bar or another public place.

In general, the costs of a situation seem to play a role in the expression and the experience of anger (Fehr et al., 1999). According to Averill (1982) anger seems to be greatest in high cost situations, because the emotion is an interpersonal emotion and therefore is most present in close relationships when someone loves or appreciates the person causing them to be angry. This means that in general the experience of anger is higher in the context of a close relationship rather than in the context of a stranger.

Research suggests that men tend to express their anger more often when a stranger is making them angry, while a woman tends to express her anger more frequently when someone they have a close relationship with is causing them to feel this emotion (Fehr, 1996; Lohr et al., 1988). This implies that men would express more moral anger regarding a low cost situation and

women would express more anger regarding a high cost situation. Women seem to value close relationships more highly because they consider the quality of a relationship as really important and want to acquire intimacy in a relationship (Fehr et al., 1999). They have the tendency to express their feelings about the caused harm (Fehr et al., 1999; Buss, 1989; Averill, 1983). According to this information, it could be expected that there are gender differences in expressing anger in high and low cost situations. Women would be expected to express more moral anger toward a good friend than men, while men would be expected to express more anger towards a stranger than women would. This research will as well focus on this interaction.

### **Current Research**

When considering all the mentioned theories and findings, it is to be expected that there are differences between men and women in how they experience moral anger regarding femicide, as well as how they express this anger. When expressing moral anger, there are likely to be differences between men and women depending on whether the situation involves high or low costs. Since femicide continues to play a significant role in society, it is relevant to examine how people respond when femicide is discussed in a way that the individual perceives as immoral. It is important to investigate how gender in relation to the people making these immoral statements influences this in order to gain a better understanding of moral anger and the expression of this emotion.

The research question that will be answered in this thesis is: Are there gender differences in experiencing moral anger regarding femicide when considering high and low cost situations?

The hypotheses that will be tested during this research are the following:

1. Women will *experience* more moral anger than men regarding femicide.

2. Women will *express* more moral anger than men in a high cost situation regarding femicide, while men will *express* more moral anger than women in a low cost situation.

These hypotheses were tested in a project that included several other hypotheses irrelevant to the current thesis. Therefore, although the complete method is described, only the results regarding these hypotheses are reported. In this case, the focus is not on the role of suppression, but on the experience and expression of anger. However, the method that follows will address all variables used in the overall study.

## **Method**

### **Participants and Design**

A total of 394 participants took part in this study, all of whom were residents of European countries and at least 18 years old. The participants were recruited through the online platform Prolific, and they received monetary compensation for their participation of £7.16. In line with preregistered criteria (<https://aspredicted.org/5yr2ra.pdf>), participants who did not provide consent to process their data ( $N = 34$ ), did not comply with the writing assignment ( $N = 6$ ), or provided a response that was extremely personal ( $N = 1$ ) were excluded from the study. After this exclusion, the final sample consisted of 353 participants. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 81, with a mean age of 39.27 and a standard deviation of 13.20. In terms of gender, 174 participants identified as female, 174 as male, 5 as other, or preferred not to say. Additionally, we asked participants about their political orientation, which resulted in a mean score of 4.59, indicating a middle to left-wing political orientation, based on a scale ranging from 1 (*extremely left*) to 10 (*extremely right*). According to a Monte Carlo analysis (Schoemann et al., 2017), a minimum of 334 participants was necessary to achieve a power of 80%. Thus, the final sample was sufficient to achieve the required statistical power.

This study was part of a group project and had a 2 (emotion regulation: anger suppression vs. control) by 2 (relational costs: high vs. low) experimental design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions. The main dependent measures were emotions and protest intentions. Moreover, we measured SES, empathy with femicide victims, and gender as potential moderators for different student projects. This study was approved by the BSS-Psychology Ethics Committee at the University of Groningen under ethical code PSY-2526-S-0064.

### **Procedure and Independent Variables**

This study used an online questionnaire to collect the data. Qualtrics, a survey software, was used to create the questionnaire. The questionnaire was then published through Prolific.

At first, the participants were shown a screen in which they could give their consent to participate in this research and to clarify that participating was completely voluntary and that stopping with the questionnaire was allowed at any time. The demographics of the participants were also asked: their age, gender identity (male, female, other, and prefer not to say), and political preference (1 = *extremely left*, 10 = *extremely right*).

Then, socioeconomic status was measured using a scale based on the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status ( $M = 5.45$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ,  $\alpha = .80$ ). A picture of a ladder, which represents a society with respect to people's socioeconomic background, was used, followed by two questions regarding socioeconomic status (e.g., "What is your position on the ladder?" and "What is the position of your family?").

After this, a short introduction to the topic 'femicide' was given. This was followed by a measure of *attitudes* toward femicide, which was measured by using statements created by the researchers of this project. Three statements were presented on this topic, and participants could

indicate the extent to which they agreed (e.g., “Efforts to combat issues such as gender equality and femicide should be top priorities in our society”). We created a variable which indicated that most participants held a negative attitude towards femicide ( $M = 5.03$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ,  $\alpha = .48$ ).

Then, *empathy* was measured using a Likert scale based on the Empathic Concern subscale of Davis’s Interpersonal Reactivity Index (M. H. Davis, 1980), which was adjusted to measure empathy specifically towards victims of femicide. Four statements were used. Three statements described a high score on empathy (e.g., “I have tender, concerned feelings for victims of femicide”), while one was reverse-coded because a high score on that statement indicated a low score on empathy (i.e., “Reports of femicide rarely affect me emotionally”). The results showed that participants tended towards the more empathic side ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = .24$ ,  $\alpha = .75$ ).

After this, the participants were asked to read a paragraph about a scenario in which a person called Matt made anger-arousing comments about femicide. The statement included sentences such as: “This whole so-called ‘femicide’ thing is the biggest joke I’ve ever heard“ and “Even if they killed them because they were women, maybe they did that because they deserved it”.

In this scenario, we manipulated emotion regulation and relational costs. *Relational costs* were manipulated by changing the social role of Matt. Specifically, in high-cost conditions, Matt was a good friend of the participant, while in low-cost conditions, Matt was a stranger to the participant. Furthermore, *emotion regulation* was manipulated by telling the participant how they were supposed to regulate their emotions after reading the anger-arousing statement. That is, in the anger suppression condition, the participants were told to imagine that they were really angry after reading the statement and that they needed to suppress this emotion, whereas in the control

condition, they were only told to imagine that they were really angry after reading Matt's story. After reading Matt's story, they were told to write a paragraph about how they would manage their emotions and how they would react in the situation, according to the condition the participants were in.

The manipulations of emotion regulation and relational costs were checked at the end of the questionnaire. The scale to check the manipulation of emotion regulation included four items (e.g., "I was not able to show my feelings openly") rated on a 7-point Likert scale ( $M = 3.93$ ,  $SD = 2.09$ ,  $\alpha = .95$ ). Two items were reverse-coded ("I could openly display my feelings" and "I could express my feelings freely"). The manipulation of relational costs was checked by asking participants if they remembered who Matt was ("No," "Yes, someone in a bar" or "Yes, your close friend"). Costs showed to be perceived differently in both conditions ( $\chi^2(2, 353) = 274.16$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

After the manipulations, the dependent variables were measured. Lastly, the participants were thanked for participating and were debriefed about the purposes of the study. They were asked if they had any remaining questions about the study and whether they still gave permission to use their data. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

### **Dependent Measures**

Several dependent variables were measured, as this research is part of a larger project. All measured variables were described below. The participants had to point out to what extent they agreed on a 7-point Likert scale, from absolutely agree/not at all to absolutely agree/very strongly, unless stated otherwise.

#### ***Emotions***

The emotions were measured, with the question, “At this moment, to what extent would you experience the following emotions?” This measure included 27 items, in which the following emotions were measured: anger ( $M = 5.07$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ,  $\alpha = .92$ ), fear ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ,  $\alpha = .80$ ), guilt ( $M = 2.26$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ), stress ( $M = 5.06$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ,  $\alpha = .77$ ), dissonance ( $M = 4.66$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ,  $\alpha = .37$ ), and other (filler) emotions which were not used in the study. Since the reliability for cognitive dissonance was low, the three items assessing dissonance (e.g. conflicted, confused, and comfortable [reversed]) were analysed separately, rather than combined into a single score. This scale was designed by the researchers of this paper.

### ***Future Protest Intentions***

To measure the extent to which participants would deliberately take action against femicide, we used seven statements, adapted from Cervone et al. (2023), Imhoff et al. (2021), and Tausch et al. (2011). The scale ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ,  $\alpha = .81$ ) included statements ranging from “I would sign a petition against femicide” to “I would verbally intimidate and harass people who question the existence of femicide on internet forums”. One of them (“I would do nothing special”) was reverse-coded.

### ***Immediate Protest Intentions***

To measure immediate protest intentions, six statements created by the researchers were used. Three of these described disagreement and urge to stand up (e.g., “I would confront Matt”), while the other three measured the opposite (“I would ignore what he said”). Those last three were reverse-coded to get a scale for immediate protest intentions. ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ,  $\alpha = .86$ ).

### ***Anger Expression***

One item from the immediate protest intentions scale was used to measure anger expression (“I would express anger to Matt”). This item was created by the researchers ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 1.94$ ).

### ***Felt Anger***

To measure the feeling of anger, two statements from the emotions scale were used (“I would feel angry” and “I would feel outraged”). This item was created by the researchers ( $M = 5.09$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ,  $\alpha = .91$ ).

### ***Perception of Moral Transgression***

This item measured how the participants perceived the person (Matt) described in the scenario. We used six statements to which the participants had to indicate to what extent they agreed with said statements (i.e., “What Matt said is strongly problematic”), ( $M = 5.50$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ,  $\alpha = .88$ ). Three of the statements were reverse-coded (e.g., “I think what he said is defensible”).

## **Results**

### **Preliminary Analysis**

This results section will focus only on the results of the statistical analyses that are relevant to the hypotheses tested in this paper. Therefore, results for the entire design are not reported, but only for the experience and expression of anger.

All statistical analyses were made in SPSS. The significance of the results were assessed with an alpha-level of .05. Descriptive statistics were calculated, including means, standard deviations and Cronbach’s alpha when a scale was made. This was done for anger experience ( $M$

= 5.08,  $SD = .12$ ,  $\alpha = .92$ ) and anger expression ( $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = .14$ ). This was done to get a better understanding of the data and the distribution of the values.

A manipulation check was done for costs which was analysed by using a crosstabulation in SPSS. This was done for the question 'Do you remember who Matt is?'. From the high-cost condition, 98.9% of the participants seemed to remember who Matt was and from the low-cost condition, 83.3% of the participants knew who Matt was. Both conditions were perceived differently by the participants according to the analyses of the results ( $\chi^2(2,180) = 130.680$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

For this research an ANOVA has been used. The data was checked for the assumptions for an ANOVA: the normality of the distributed scores in each group, simple random samples for each relevant population and homoscedasticity in each group. The normality was checked by making a QQ-plot of the dependent variable for each group. For this research, there is no evidence for a violation of the normality of the distributed scores in each group. At last, the homoscedasticity in each group was checked by checking the sample standard deviations. When the highest standard deviation wasn't equal to or greater than twice the lowest standard deviation, there would not be evidence for a violation of this assumption. In this case, there is no evidence for a violation of this assumption, because the lowest standard deviation ( $SD = 1.57$ ) is not twice as big as the highest standard deviation ( $SD = 1.66$ ).

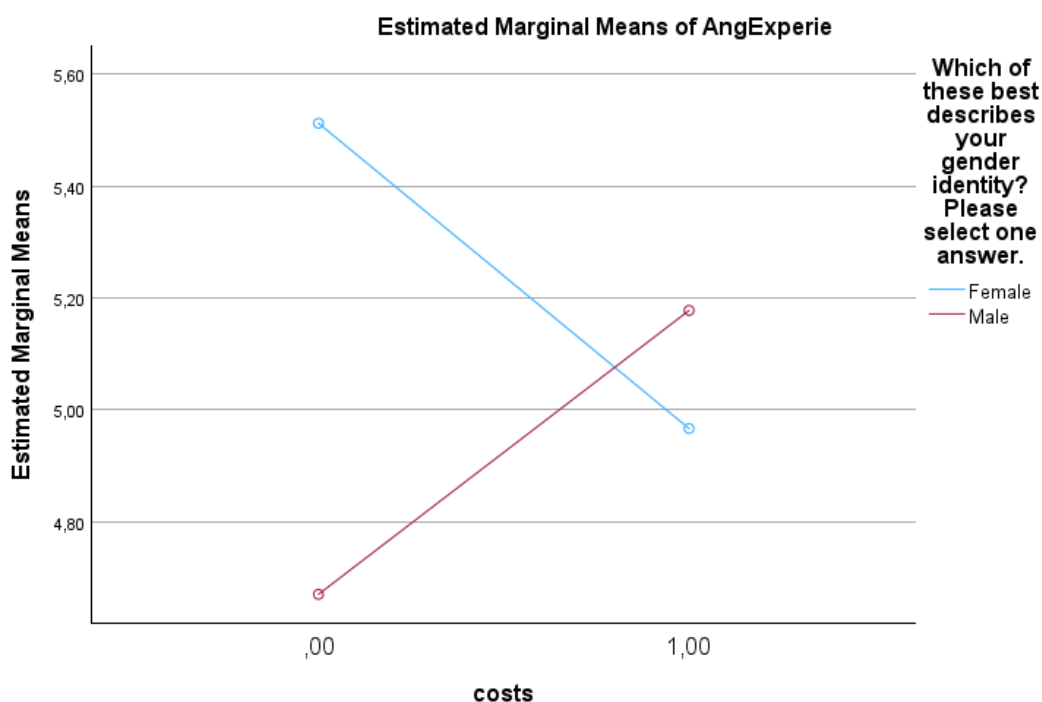
### **Main Analysis**

For the first hypothesis, women will *experience* more moral anger than men regarding femicide, a two-way ANOVA has been used. A statistically significant difference has not been found for this hypothesis,  $F(3,173) = 2.08$ ,  $p = .104$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ . There is no significant main effect for gender,  $F(1,173) = 1.68$ ,  $p = .197$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ , and there is no significant main effect for costs,

$F(1,173) = .01, p = .937, \eta_p^2 = .00$ . However, there is an interaction effect for gender and costs,  $F(1,173) = 4.68, p = .032, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . When checking the pairwise comparisons, women experienced more moral anger than men when costs are low,  $p = .017$ , but when the costs are high, men and women do not significantly differ from each other,  $p = .537$ . Thus, women do experience more anger than men, but only when costs are low (See figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Means plot for the interaction between anger experience and gender*



For the second hypothesis, women will *express* more moral anger than men in a high cost situation regarding femicide, while men will *express* more moral anger than women in a low cost situation, a two-way ANOVA has been done using a univariate general linear model in SPSS. This did not show a significant interaction,  $F(1, 173) = 1.80, p = .182, \eta^2 = .01$ . Neither were the main effects of gender,  $F(1,173) = 1.80, p = .182, \eta_p^2 = .01$ , and of costs,  $F(1,173) = .01, p = .904, \eta_p^2 = .00$ , significant. Pairwise comparisons showed women ( $M = 4.78; SD = .30$ ) did not

significantly express less anger than men ( $M = 4.00$ ;  $SD = .28$ ) in the low costs condition ( $p = .062$ ), and women ( $M = 4.42$ ;  $SD = .29$ ) did not significantly express more anger than men ( $M = 4.42$ ;  $SD = .29$ ) in the high costs condition ( $p = 1.000$ ). The pattern of means suggests women *express* more moral anger than men in the low cost condition and women and men *express* equal levels of moral anger in the high cost condition, but note that the differences are not reliable.

### **Discussion**

The aim of the study was to gain insight into the relationship between gender and moral anger regarding femicide by examining the difference between high- and low-cost situations in which immoral comments were made about this topic. High-cost situations were situations in which a close friend was making immoral comments about femicide and low-cost situations were situations in which a stranger was making those comments. For the first hypothesis, *women will experience more moral anger than men regarding femicide*, we found no support. However, women experienced more moral anger than men in low-cost situations, while in high-cost situations no differences in anger were found between men and women.

According to our second hypothesis, *women will express more moral anger than men in a high cost situation regarding femicide*, while men will *express* more moral anger than women in a low cost situation. However, we found no differences in the expression of anger, so this hypothesis was not supported.

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

These results have several implications. First, women appear to experience more moral anger than men when they find themselves in a situation in which immoral comments are made by a stranger, while women experience equal levels of moral anger as men when a good friend is making these comments. According to other literature, it was expected that women would

experience higher levels of anger than men in both situations, high-costs as well as low-costs. A previous meta-analysis by Ward and King (2018) reported that, in general, women experience moral anger much more intensely than men. On top of that, femicide is a case of sexism, which seems to be less emotionally significant for men (Sasse et al, 2021). This makes it even more likely that women would experience higher levels of moral anger than men. However, this expectation only seemed to hold in the case of the situation in which a stranger was making immoral comments about femicide. This result may partly be explained by the ultimate attribution error (Pettigrew, 1979; Barden et al., 2013). The ultimate attribution error is described as a bias in which mistakes made by ingroup members are attributed to situational factors, whereas mistakes made by outgroup members are attributed to the person themselves (Pettigrew, 1979). In this case, the close friend would be seen as a member of the ingroup, while the stranger would be seen as someone from the outgroup. This could explain why women experience stronger feelings of moral anger in the case of the stranger than in the case of the close friend, as the stranger makes immoral comments that are attributed to him as a person, whereas the close friend makes immoral comments that could be explained by situational circumstances. According to the ultimate attribution error, this makes the situation involving the close friend more mitigating than the situation involving the stranger. This could explain why women, according to the obtained results, experience more moral anger toward the stranger than toward the close friend.

The reason why men experience not significantly different levels as women towards the good friend making the immoral comments about femicide remains speculative. It could be that for men it is more important what a close friend has to say than what a stranger says, causing immoral remarks to be experienced as more intense when they are made by a close friend, which

makes them more significant for men. However, this remains speculative, leaving room for further research into the experience of anger in the male gender.

Second, women did not appear to express more anger than men when a close friend made immoral remarks, nor did men express more anger than women when a stranger made such remarks. Prior to the study, it was expected that this would occur in both cases. According to Fehr (1996), men tend to express their anger more readily toward someone they do not know, whereas women are more likely to do so toward someone with whom they are close friends. Women are thought to do this more with a close friend because they value maintaining strong friendships and focusing on their quality (Fehr et al., 1999). However, this expectation was not supported by the data of the present study. Men and women did not differ significantly in their expression of anger in either the close-friend condition or the stranger condition. This finding may be explained as follows. Men find it easier to express anger toward someone of the same gender, but this becomes more difficult when expressing anger toward a woman (Allen & Haccoun, 1976). In the present study, the person making the immoral remarks was a man, which may have made it easier for male participants to express their anger than if the person had been a woman. It can be speculated that this effect might emerge if the same study were replicated with Matt being a woman. In that case, differences between men and women might be found in the close-friend condition, as was initially predicted in this study. The reason why men did not express more anger than women in the stranger condition may be related to the topic of “femicide” about which the remarks were made, which is inherently gender-related. The issue concerns the murder of women, which would logically evoke more anger in women than in men, as it directly affects women. This could be a reason why men did not score higher than women on anger expression in this condition. However, this remains speculative. This could be

examined in future research by using a topic that is not related to gender, to investigate whether the initial hypothesis might then still receive support.

The findings provide greater insight into the experience and expression of anger in both men and women. For the development of interventions, the role of context appears to be important to take into account. For both men and women, situations in which a close friend makes immoral remarks lead to similar levels of experienced anger, whereas situations involving a stranger seem to elicit higher levels of experienced anger among women than among men. In addition, no gender differences were found in the expression of anger in either the close friend or the stranger condition. These findings suggest that context plays a role in the experience of anger, which can be taken into consideration when developing appropriate interventions targeting anger and its potential regulation. Behavior in everyday life can be better understood, as there is knowledge about how men and women tend to respond to immoral situations.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Our study has both strengths and limitations. One of the strengths of the study is that the questionnaire we used contained reliable scales. Reliability was tested prior to the analyses, resulting in high reliability scores. In addition, the study was conducted in an ethically responsible manner, as informed consent was obtained, and it was approved by the BSS-Psychology Ethics Committee at the University of Groningen.

One of the limitations of this study may lie in Matt's story on the topic of "femicide" as an anger-inducing phenomenon. It is possible that this piece was not sufficiently anger-provoking, which may have prevented it from producing the desired results. Some participants in this study also wrote that they agreed with Matt and therefore did not feel any anger at all. When participants are instructed to imagine feeling anger, this can be difficult if they

do not actually experience that emotion. In such cases, suppressing the emotion also has no added value, because the emotion itself is not present. As a result, the findings may differ from what was expected in advance.

In addition, this study used only the control conditions for emotion regulation, which resulted in a smaller total number of participants than in the full study. Because this reduced the sample size, the statistical power of this study was lower, which may have led to reduced reliability. For this study, this implies that it is underpowered, which makes it important to be cautious when drawing conclusions.

For follow-up research, it is therefore recommended to use a topic that is sufficiently anger-arousing and to design a study that ensures that no participants, or as few as possible, are lost by using only a limited number of conditions. Since this study did not focus on the suppression of anger, future research could also focus solely on the two control conditions, so that all participants can be included in the data analysis. This means that suppression could be excluded out of consideration, which makes it easier to collect data from a larger group of participants. This would make the sample size larger when performing the research again in the future.

In addition, future research could further examine the role of gender differences and the experience or expression of moral anger, as this study found results that contradict the existing literature on these topics. Another idea for future research is to use a different topic, other than femicide, about which immoral comments are made. In this case, femicide is inherently a gender-related topic, which may have played a role in the differences between men and women in the experience and expression of anger that were found. Future research could examine whether the same effect can also be found within a non-gender-related topic.

## Conclusion

This study examined the role of gender in the experience and expression of moral anger when immoral remarks were made about femicide. The main research question of this study was: *'How does gender play a role in the experience and expression of moral anger toward femicide?'* It was found that women experience more moral anger than men when a stranger makes immoral comments and that men and women hardly differ from each other when the comments are made by a close friend. This finding contradicts existing literature, which suggests that women generally experience more anger than men.

Besides this, another unexpected result was found. Men did not express more anger than women in the situation involving a stranger, and women did not express more anger than men in the situation involving a close friend. Although the literature suggested otherwise, it was not supported by the findings of this study. The results therefore differ from what was expected, which opens up opportunities for further research within this topic.

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### **Attachment A**

I acknowledge the use of ChatGPT (OpenAI, <https://openai.com/chatgpt>) for translating some words and sentences from Dutch to English. An example from a prompt I used in ChatGPT is: "Translate this from Dutch to English" followed by the original Dutch text. The output is adjusted by me in the following ways: sentence structure, readability and format.

I also acknowledge the use of ChatGPT (OpenAI, <https://openai.com/chatgpt>) for finding synonyms I could use. An example from a prompt I used in ChatGPT is: 'Find a synonym for this word.' followed by an English word I wanted a synonym for.

## **Attachment B**

### **“Your reactions to opinions about Femicide”**

#### **Why do I receive this information?**

-You are being invited to participate in this research, because we are interested in how you think and feel about social issues, such as femicide, and how you react to other people expressing their views about this.

- This research involves bachelor students, Emma Bos, Elizabeth Postma, Aurora Fieni, Anastasia Filotei, Sophie Mensink, Tessa Ahmed and it is supervised by Dr Ernestine Gordijn and PhD student Hannah Lee, from the University of Groningen.

#### **Why this research?**

- In this research, we want to study what views participants have on several highly debated societal issues such as femicide, and how they respond to others expressing their thoughts about these issues.

- For this research, we are looking for participants who are older than 18.

#### **What do we ask of you during the research?**

- First, we will ask you for your consent to participate. When you agree to participate, you will be guided to the online questionnaire. In the questionnaire, you first answer some demographic questions (i.e., your age, gender, and socioeconomic status). Further, you will be asked to express your attitudes about societal issues concerning femicide. After this, you will read a passage about people talking about this topic and you will be asked about your reactions to this. After completing the questionnaire, you will receive more information on this research. If you decide to withdraw from the study but would like to receive more information, you can always ask for more information about this study by sending a message to the link provided in Prolific

#### **Do I have to participate in this research?**

- Participation in the research is voluntary. However, your consent is needed. Therefore, please read this information carefully. Ask all the questions you might have, for example, because you do not understand something. Only afterwards, you decide if you want to participate. If you decide not to participate, you do not need to explain why, and there will be no negative consequences for you. You have this right at all times, including after you have consented to participate in the research.

What are the consequences of participation?

- With our research, we hope to gain more understanding about people's attitude towards societal issues concerning femicide, and how they respond to societal debates about this. Thus, with your participation, you will contribute to this research. Your participation will also help a PhD student with her project as well as a group of Bachelor students with their thesis.

- We believe there are little to no risks associated with participating in this study. However, you may find some questions difficult to answer or would prefer not to answer them. Please remember that you may always withdraw from the study and/or skip questions you may not wish to answer, which does not have any negative consequences for you.

### **How will we treat your data?**

- Your data will be used to write a bachelor thesis project, and possibly to write an empirical article for a scientific peer-reviewed journal.

- Your data is confidential. Some information may act as identifiers when combined (e.g., gender, age, and your socioeconomic status). The data consists of your responses to the questions, which will be collected using an online questionnaire. We collect this data for scientific purposes.

- If the data is published, we will remove information that could be used to identify individual participants.

- When the study is finished, the data will be stored at a safe University of Groningen server and will be stored for 10 years.

### **What else do you need to know?**

- You may always ask questions about the research: now, during the research, and after the end of the research. You can do so by sending a message to the link provided in the study in Prolific

- Do you have questions/concerns about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of the research? You may also contact the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen: [ec-bss@rug.nl](mailto:ec-bss@rug.nl).
- Do you have questions or concerns regarding the handling of your personal data? You may also contact the University of Groningen Data Protection Officer: [privacy@rug.nl](mailto:privacy@rug.nl).
- Data processing takes place in Europe.
- As a research participant, you have the right to a copy of this research information (e.g., by making a screenshot).

**By consenting to participate in this study you understand the following:**

- \* I have the right to receive a copy of this informed consent form by taking a screenshot of this page or asking the researcher for a copy by sending a message through the provided link in Prolific.
- \* My participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw from this study at any moment without having to give a reason and without any negative consequences.
- \* I am allowed to refuse to answer any questions that I do not wish to answer. I do not have to provide any reason for this, and this does not have any negative consequences.
- \* My responses are confidential and will only be shared with anyone after being anonymized.
- \* All my responses will be securely stored and are only accessible to the researchers.
- \* After completing the questionnaire, I will receive more information on the purpose of this research.
- \* I approve that supervisors of this research can handle my personal data.

**Do you agree to participate in this study?**

- Yes, I consent to participate.
- No, I do not consent to participate.

**Consent to processing my personal data**





**What is  
the  
position of  
your  
family?**

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## Introduction

In the next part of this research, we are interested in how people think and feel about femicide. Femicide—the deliberate killing of women—is often rooted in gender inequality and control, and frequently involves sexual violence. According to UN Women (2024), around 140 women are killed every day by intimate partners or family members, adding up to more than 51,000 deaths each year. While 60% of female homicide victims are killed in their own homes, only 12% of murdered men die in similar circumstances. These figures highlight that femicide is not simply another form of homicide, but a distinct and devastating type of violence that demands recognition and action.

**First, we would like to know more about your thoughts and feelings regarding femicide and some related topics. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements (1=absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree):**

	Strongly disagree (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly agree (7)
<b>Efforts to combat issues such as gender equality and femicide should be top priorities in our society.</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The push for recognition of femicide is part of a larger cultural movement that goes too far.

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

I think femicide should be considered a crime apart from homicide.

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Please indicate to what extent the following statements describe you (1=does not describe me well; 5= describes me very well).

	Strongly disagree (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly agree (7)
I have tender, concerned feelings for victims of femicide.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
News about femicide deeply moves me.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Reports of  
femicide  
rarely affect  
me  
emotionally.

Please select  
3 (attention  
check)

I feel  
protective  
toward  
women who  
experience  
violence or  
injustice.

**Please imagine the following scenario (read carefully, questions will be asked about it afterwards):**

Imagine meeting your close friend Matt for dinner at your house. You were talking about the latest news concerning the murder of a young woman by her husband. You tell him that lately the news has been talking about femicide more frequently. This is how he responds:

*“This whole so-called ‘femicide’ thing is the biggest joke I’ve ever heard. Murder is murder — but now, because feminists need a new buzzword, we’ve gotta pretend that when a woman dies it’s somehow more special than when a man dies? Please. Do we call it ‘mascicide’ every time a guy gets stabbed in a bar fight? No. Because nobody cares when men are the victims — it doesn’t fit the narrative. But the second it’s a woman, suddenly it’s a national emergency, proof of ‘patriarchy’ and ‘toxic masculinity.’ Give me a break. People kill for money, jealousy, power — not because of some grand gender conspiracy. And even if they killed them because they were women, maybe they did that because they deserved it. But of course, the activists spin it to make men the villains, as if we’re all walking time bombs. And if you even question it, you’re labeled a misogynist. No thanks. I’m sick of the double standards, and I’m not going to sit here and nod along while they invent new victim categories just to push their agenda.”*

Immediately, you start feeling very frustrated because you can't believe how your good friend could say something like that. His comments really offend you and you start feeling more and more angry.

**Try to imagine you feel very angry; Please write a short paragraph about how you would react to this situation. Would you say and/or do (e.g. facial expression) something or not?**

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**Please imagine the following scenario (read carefully, questions will be asked about it afterwards):**

Imagine meeting your close friend Matt for dinner at your house. You were talking about the latest news concerning the murder of a young woman by her husband. You tell him that lately the news has been talking about femicide more frequently. This is how he responds:

*“This whole so-called ‘femicide’ thing is the biggest joke I’ve ever heard. Murder is murder — but now, because feminists need a new buzzword, we’ve gotta pretend that when a woman dies it’s somehow more special than when a man dies? Please. Do we call it ‘mascicide’ every time a guy gets stabbed in a bar fight? No. Because nobody cares when men are the victims — it doesn’t fit the narrative. But the second it’s a woman, suddenly it’s a national emergency, proof of ‘patriarchy’ and ‘toxic masculinity.’ Give me a break. People kill for money, jealousy, power — not because of some grand gender conspiracy. And even if they killed them because they were women, maybe they did that because they deserved it. But of course, the activists spin it to make men the villains, as if we’re all walking time bombs. And if you even question it, you’re labeled a*

*misogynist. No thanks. I'm sick of the double standards, and I'm not going to sit here and nod along while they invent new victim categories just to push their agenda."*

Immediately, you start feeling very frustrated because you can't believe how your good friend could say something like that. His comments really offend you and you start feeling more and more angry.

You are torn between speaking up or letting it go. You know that if you decide to confront him your relationship might not be the same and your night will be ruined. On the other hand, this is something you feel strong about and it's important for you to be surrounded by people with the same mindset as you, especially on such a relevant topic. After taking a deep breath, you decide to suppress your anger, put on a smile and move on from the conversation with a different topic.

**Try to imagine you feel very angry, but that you do not want to express your feelings in this situation. Please write a short paragraph about how you would handle this situation: How would you suppress your anger? What would you say and/or do in this situation (e.g. facial expression)?**

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**Please imagine the following scenario (read carefully, questions will be asked about it afterwards):**

Imagine that you are visiting a friend who lives in another city. You go to a bar for some drinks and meet a group of new people. You were talking about the latest news concerning the murder of a young woman by her husband. You tell them that lately the news has been talking about femicide more frequently. Then, a guy called Matt says this:

*“This whole so-called ‘femicide’ thing is the biggest joke I’ve ever heard. Murder is murder — but now, because feminists need a new buzzword, we’ve gotta pretend that when a woman dies it’s somehow more special than when a man dies? Please. Do we call it ‘mascicide’ every time a guy gets stabbed in a bar fight? No. Because nobody cares when men are the victims — it doesn’t fit the narrative. But the second it’s a woman, suddenly it’s a national emergency, proof of ‘patriarchy’ and ‘toxic masculinity.’ Give me a break. People kill for money, jealousy, power — not because of some grand gender conspiracy. And even if they killed them because they were women, maybe they did that because they deserved it. But of course, the activists spin it to make men the villains, as if we’re all walking time bombs. And if you even question it, you’re labeled a misogynist. No thanks. I’m sick of the double standards, and I’m not going to sit here and nod along while they invent new victim categories just to push their agenda.”*

Immediately, you start feeling very frustrated because you can’t believe any person could say something like that. His comments really offend you and you start feeling more and more angry.

**Try to imagine you feel very angry; Please write a short paragraph about how you would react to this situation. Would you say and/or do (e.g. facial expression) something or not?**

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**Please imagine the following scenario (read carefully, questions will be asked about it afterwards):**

Imagine that you are visiting a friend who lives in another city. You go to a bar for some drinks and meet a group of new people. You were talking about the latest news concerning the murder of a young woman by her husband. You tell them that lately the news has been talking about femicide more frequently. Then, a guy called Matt says this:

*“This whole so-called ‘femicide’ thing is the biggest joke I’ve ever heard. Murder is murder — but now, because feminists need a new buzzword, we’ve gotta pretend that when a woman dies it’s somehow more special than when a man dies? Please. Do we call it ‘mascicide’ every time a guy gets stabbed in a bar fight? No. Because nobody cares when men are the victims — it doesn’t fit the narrative. But the second it’s a woman, suddenly it’s a national emergency, proof of ‘patriarchy’ and ‘toxic masculinity.’ Give me a break. People kill for money, jealousy, power — not because of some grand gender conspiracy. And even if they killed them because they were women, maybe they did that because they deserved it. But of course, the activists spin it to make men the villains, as if we’re all walking time bombs. And if you even question it, you’re labeled a misogynist. No thanks. I’m sick of the double standards, and I’m not going to sit here and nod along while they invent new victim categories just to push their agenda.”*

Immediately, you start feeling very frustrated because you can’t believe any person could say something like that. His comments really offend you and you start feeling more and more angry. You are torn between speaking up or letting it go. On the one hand, you could easily speak up to this person, you don’t know this person so you don’t have anything to lose. On the other hand, you feel like speaking up would not make a difference, and this person is not worth your time and effort. You decide to suppress your anger, put on a smile and move on from the conversation with a different topic.

**Try to imagine you feel very angry, but that you do not want to express your feelings in this situation. Please write a short paragraph about how you would handle this situation: How would you suppress your anger? What would you say and/or do in this situation (e.g. facial expression)?**

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Now we would like to know how you would feel after this.

At this stage, I would feel...

	1 (Not at all)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (Very strongly)
<b>Angry</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Tense</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Conflicted (between speaking up and not speaking up)</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Guilty</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Select very strongly (attention check)</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Contempt</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Shocked</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Afraid of society</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Now we would like to know how you would feel after this.

At this stage, I would feel...

	1 (Not at all)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (Very strongly)
<b>Outraged</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Indifferent</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Ashamed</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Threatened by the fact that someone would express these opinions in such circumstances.</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Upset</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Stressed</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Comfortable</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Confused</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Now we would like to know how you would feel after this.

At this stage, I would feel...

	1 (Not at all)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (Very strongly)
<b>Afraid about my personal safety in such a situation.</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Sad</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Touched</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Calm</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Unmoved</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Appeled</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Surprised</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Next, we are interested in what you would do or not. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:







defendable

I think it is unacceptable to say what Matt said.

Please reflect on your reaction to Matt's statement. What were you told to imagine?

	Strongly disagree (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly agree (7)
I was not able to show my feelings openly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could openly display my feelings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had to suppress my feelings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could express my feelings freely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you remember who Matt is?

No

Yes, someone in a bar

Yes, your close friend

**This was the final question. Do you have any comments about the study?**

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### **Debriefing**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!

This research investigated how people respond to controversial opinions about femicide and how the suppression of such emotions influences people's intention to take collective action against those opinions about femicide. The study also investigated whether the cost of speaking up (for example, risking ruining a friendship versus talking to a stranger) can affect people's reactions.

During the study you were instructed to imagine yourself in the scenarios narrated and based on which condition you were in: You could have been asked to suppress your anger towards the negative comments about femicide, or you were not asked to regulate your anger in any way. It is important to note that those scenarios are hypothetical and designed for this research purpose. We also want to note that the opinions exposed in the scenario's statements do not reflect opinions and beliefs of the researchers.

We understand that reading about sexist statements about femicide can have elicited negative feelings. However, we believe it is important to study these kinds of situations to understand how people regulate their emotions in response to perceived injustice, and to gain insight into how emotion regulation influences people's willingness to protest against the perceived injustice.

If this study has left you with negative feelings or thoughts about your own experiences and you require psychological support, you can find a list of helplines in 46 European countries at the link: <https://www.improve-horizon.eu/helplines>

We want to emphasize that this study was purely academic in nature, and your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Your participation was completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Thank you once again for your valuable participation, we appreciate your help in furthering our understanding on these important issues. If you have any further questions, complaints or if you would like to know more about the results of the study, please contact us via the provided link in Prolific.

**Now that you have read all the information about the purposes of the study, do you still agree with the use and processing of your data?**

- Yes, I consent to the use and processing of my data.
- No, I do not consent to the use and processing of my data, and my data should be permanently deleted.

**We are very grateful for your participation!**