



## Relationship of Revenge Motivation with Aggression among University Students in Faisalabad-Pakistan

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### Abstract

*Investigating the relationship of revenge motivation with aggression among university students was the prime purpose of the present research. And considering that purpose, it was hypothesized that revenge motivation would be significantly and positively related with aggression, physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility among students. Additionally, gender difference was also investigated in respect to all variables of the study. Participants were selected from two reputable universities of Faisalabad city via convenient sampling method. About seventy five males (n = 75) and seventy five females (n = 75) students were included in the study. The subscale of Revenge motivation of Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivation (McCullough et al., 2006) and full Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992) were used to measure revenge motivation and aggression. Bivariate analysis of the data has depicted a significant relationship of revenge motivation with aggression, physical aggression, anger and hostility among students. A non-significant relationship was found out between revenge motivation and verbal aggression. Additional analysis was done through Independent t-test that reveals a significant difference between male and female students in respect to physical aggression, anger and revenge motivation. Both groups of students did not significantly differ on aggression, verbal aggression and hostility.*

**Keywords:** Revenge motivation, Aggression, Students, University

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### I. Introduction

Revenge is a common theme of human behavior and interpersonal violence (McCullough, 2008). Generally, revenge refers to an action of hurting/harming someone in response of perceived hurt (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). In psychological terms, revenge is defined as an intention to make the offender suffered (Schumann & Ross, 2010). Motivation to take revenge from transgressor/offender is referred to as revenge motivation (McCullough et al., 1998).

Revenge is a personal response aiming to achieve payback after unfair treatment (Gollwitzer & Denzler, 2009). Revenge seeker endeavors to anguish those who are responsible for others suffering (Elster, 1990) with the aim of restoring equity (Tripp, Bies & Aquino, 2002). Motivation to give harm for harm has remained a culture and is a basic approach to handle perceived injustice (Black, 1998). Revenge is in the line of fifteen rudimentary human motivations (Reiss & Havercamp, 1998).

Albeit, revenge is a universal desire and a strong element of human passions (Frijda, 1994), in spite of that, it involves only cost and risk and no benefits at all. People with revenge desires are involved in further injuries in response of perceived injury. Therefore, revenge is considered as unhealthy behavior causing mental health problems (Jacoby, 1983). Revenge desires, if get prolong, then may lead to dysfunctional behavior and psychopathology (Grobbink, Derksen & Marle, 2015). Revenge has been observed as a motivation for aggression and a source of psychological distress (Stockless & Grandson, 1994). Revenge is an irrational act (Jacoby, 1983) and a sign of psychological dysfunction (Murphy 2003). It is inversely associated with physical and mental health indicators (Worthington et al., 2007). Revenge intentions were found to have significant impact on mental health (Akin, Ozdevecioglu & Unlu, 2012).

Numbers of empirical studies show a strong relationship of revenge motivation with psychological well-being (McCullough et al., 2001; Sadiq & Ali, 2012; Sadiq, 2013) and post-traumatic stress symptoms (Bayer et al. 2007). Revenge motivation predicts depression irrespective of gender (Rijavec, Jurcec & Mijocevic, 2010). People with revenge thoughts keep ruminating about bad experiences. Preoccupation of past hurtful/bad experiences could not heal the wounds resulting in sadness and frustration. Revenge seeking thoughts increase anger (DiGiuseppe & Froh, 2002). Revenge motivation is a barrier in restoring relationship (McCullough et al., 1998). Revenge is equated with destructive behaviors like aggression (Stockless & Grandson, 1992; Douglass & Martinko, 2001). Revenge desires cause aggression in distinct forms (Richard et al., 2003). Revenge seekers are either aggressive towards self or others. Indulgence in destructive activities, for them, is the source of pain for significant one. Or they might release their tension while giving harm to others. Sometimes, revenge seekers punish others at the expense of their own life. Scientific inquires also reveal a significant relationship of revenge intentions with suicide, theft, neglect of duty, sabotage and aggressive behaviours (Sommers & Vodanovich, 2000).

Both revenge and aggression have deleterious impact on human functioning and health. In the array of emotional, behavioral and academic issues of students, revenge and aggression may work as potent stimulating agents. Revenge is described as a reaction to prior aggressive act (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). Whereas, aggressive behavior serves as instrumental and hostile function (Shinar, 1998). According to Buss and Perry (1992), four dispositional traits constitute to aggression including physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility. They have described physical and verbal aggression as instrumental and motor components of behavior aiming to harm others. Anger has been described as emotional or affective component that refers to physiological arousal providing ground to be aggressive. And Hostility is defined as cognitive component of behavior and involves the feelings of ill will and injustice.

Previous empirical endeavors also have shown the association among revenge, aggression, frustration and anger (Baumeister & Boden, 1998). Students with hidden revenge desires and thoughts, anger, frustration and aggressive tendencies cannot adequately function in personal and academic life. Thus, keeping in view the devastating nature of revenge and aggression, the current study has been designed to testify the following assumption:

1. Revenge motivation would be significantly and positively related with aggression (physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility) among university students.
2. There would be a significant difference among male and female university students in respect to revenge motivation, aggression, physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility.

## II. Method

### **Sample**

The sample of presents study was one hundred and fifty ( $n = 150$ ) students. Among them, seventy five ( $n = 75$ ) were males and seventy five ( $n = 75$ ) were females who were selected from various departments of Govt. College University and Govt. College Women University, Faisalabad. All of them were recruited in the current study through convenient sampling technique. Students with single marital status, who reported a significant transgression, with physical disability, broken families or living in hostels were excluded from the study

### **Measures**

Demographic Information Form was administered to obtain personal information of the participants such as; age, gender, educational level, socio-economic status, marital status, position, department, university,

Revenge motivation among participants was examined through the measure of Revenge Motivation (RM), a subscale of Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivation Inventory (TRIM-18) that was developed by McCullough et al. (2006). It consisted of five items which are scored on 5-point likert scale (Strongly disagree-1, Agree-2, Neutral-3, Agree-4, strongly agree-5). Cronbach' alpha for revenge motivation is 0.90.

Aggression among participants was measured through Aggression Questionnaire (AQ). The scale was developed by Buss and Perry (1992). It comprised of 4 subscales (Physical aggression, Verbal aggression, Anger and Hostility). Items of Physical aggression are 9; of Verbal aggression are 5; of Anger are 7; of Hostility are 8 and of full scale are 29. Internal consistency of the subscale of Physical aggression is 0.85; for Verbal aggression is 0.72; for Anger is 0.83; for Hostility is 0.77; for full scale is 0.89.

### **Procedure**

The present study was done with institutional approval. Then, permission from the authors of research tools used in the study was taken. Participants of the study were recruited conveniently from the two different institutions. Objectives of the study and research ethics were briefed to students (participants) in order to have written consent from them. Data collection was initiated with demographic information forms which were filled out the participant. Then, participants were instructed to report a significant transgression and to describe its duration, transgressor and their own reactions after being hurt. Having information related to transgression, subscale of Revenge Motivation was administered and afterwards Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) was administered on participants in individual setting. All participants were paid immense thanks in response of their cooperation and trust they have shown while providing significant information of their life.

### **Statistical analysis**

Statistical test of Pearson Correlation Coefficient was computed to analyze the relationship between revenge motivation and aggression. Additional analysis, gender difference in relation to both revenge motivation and aggression, was done by applying independent t-test through SPSS, Version, 17.0.

### III. Results

Variables	Revenge Motivation		
	n	r	p
Aggression	150	.265	.001
Physical Aggression	150	.269	.000
Verbal Aggression	150	.076	.178
Anger	150	.299	.000
Hostility	150	.181	.013

**Table: 1-** *Pearson Correlation Coefficient reveals relationship of revenge motivation with aggression and with components of aggression*

Results (**Table: 1**) proved the significant and positive relationship of revenge motivation with aggression ( $r = .265$ ,  $n = 150$ ,  $p = .001$ ), with physical aggression ( $r = .269$ ,  $n = 150$ ,  $p = .000$ ), with anger ( $r = .299$ ,  $n = 150$ ,  $p = .000$ ), with hostility ( $r = .181$ ,  $n = 150$ ,  $p = .013$ ). A non-significant relationship was appeared between revenge motivation and verbal aggression ( $r = .076$ ,  $n = 150$ ,  $p = .178$ ).

Variables	Males		Females		df	t	Sig
	M	SD	M	SD			
<b>Revenge Motivation</b>	13.73	4.43370	11.54	4.50313	148	2.997	.003
<b>Aggression</b>	83.2667	12.79921	78.90	16.89248	148	1.782	.077
<b>Physical aggression</b>	25.18	4.74397	23.18	5.64895	148	2.348	.020
<b>Verbal aggression</b>	15.28	4.34822	14.97	4.98911	148	.401	.689
<b>Anger</b>	20.73	4.25324	18.24	5.59401	148	3.073	.003
<b>Hostility</b>	22.29	3.91385	22.54	5.93044	148	.309	.758

**Table: 2** *Independent t-test showing difference among male ( $n = 75$ ) and female ( $n = 75$ ) students in respect to revenge motivation, aggression and components of aggression*

Results (**Table: 2**) depicted a significant difference between males and females in respect to revenge motivation ( $t = 2.997$ ,  $n = 148$ ,  $p = .003$ ), to physical aggression ( $t = 2.348$ ,  $n = 148$ ,  $p = .020$ ) and to anger ( $t = 3.073$ ,  $n = 148$ ,  $p = .003$ ). A non-significant difference between males and females in respect to aggression ( $t = 1.782$ ,  $n = 148$ ,  $p = .077$ ), to verbal aggression ( $t = .401$ ,  $n = 148$ ,  $p = .689$ ) and to hostility ( $t = .309$ ,  $n = 148$ ,  $p = .758$ ).

### IV. Discussions

Almost, every one of us wants to be understood by others and expects fairness and justice in daily matters. When people perceive injustice, mistreatment or harm in surroundings, they experience negative emotions such as; anger, sadness and humiliation (Bies & Tripp, 1996, as cited in Bloom, 2001). In response of perceived harm or injustice, usually people stab to find the way to get even with those who are responsible for injustice. If they cannot get even, they keep cultivating the revenge desires which may promulgate various psychosocial problems. The present research findings are also consonant with the previous evidences proving the significant and positive relation of revenge motivation with aggression, physical aggression, anger and hostility among university students.

Participants of the present study encountered transgression/offense that generated hurt feelings related to the mistreatment. When people feel they have been mistreated, they harbor negative

thoughts and revenge desires towards the perpetrator. They urge to express their distress and frustration so that they could get even with the wrongdoer. Revenge based on the perception of being mistreated by others that motivates the people to exhibit aggressive behavior (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). Violent men were found to be responding to disrespect/offense by indulging in revengeful violence (Toch, 1992). Even, minor interpersonal conflicts may increase physical violence [Barber, 1997]. However, aggression is exhibited in different forms such as; physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility. Students, in the present study, reported revenge motivation also reported aggression in forms of physical aggression, anger and hostility. The aim of physically aggressive person is to cause damage to body by kicking, harassing, pushing and torturing (Sameer & Jamia, 2007); therefore, physical aggression is considered as hostile form of aggression.

Usually, aggression is a response behavior to frustration released to harm another person (Berkowitz 1989). Frustrated feelings result in aggressive behaviors in traumatic situations. Offense gives pain to offended person, and sometimes, that pain damages one's self-control, consequently, person gets easily aggressive. Self-control failure predicts aggressive behavior (Denson, DeWall & Finkel, 2012). Moreover, self-control played the role as a moderator between revenge cognitions and deviant acts. Among people with high self-control, a weak relationship was found out between revenge and deviance (Bordia, Restubog & Tang, 2008). It seemed that revenge might weaken the control over self that resulted in physical aggression among students. It also has been proven in the previous study that lack of positive and supportive social environment escalates aggression and problematic behavior (Woodward & Ferguson, 2001). Transgression creates atmosphere just like a negative social environment that produced frustration and hatred emotions among students, eventually, they were willing to take revenge to release their frustration in form of aggression.

Anger and hostility are two other components of aggression that found to be associated with revenge in the present research. Previous literature also support that revenge motivation has robust relationship with anger and hostility (Sadiq & Ali, 2012). The situations, in which rules and norms are violated, unfair, below expectation or unreasonable treatment is given, provoke anger among people (Greenberger & Padesky, 1995). Transgression perpetuated by others seemed to students as unfair or unreasonable treatment that provoked anger among them. Sometimes, people conclude whole situation or person negatively based on past experiences. Hostility refers to evaluate the persons and things negatively (Buss, 1991). Two important factors that constitute to hostility are cynicism (believing that people hold selfish motives) and mistrust (expecting the provoking and hurtful occurrence from others). Hostile people make negative evaluation regarding others. Students encountering transgression might have drawn negative inference from overall situation. Negative evaluation of transgression and transgression is a motivating factor for taking revenge from the offender.

Desires for revenge are influenced by anger, resentment and degree of blame also (Bies & Tripp 2005). Revenge contains resentment, hatred emotions which are expressed in negative way. Forgiving others, in place of taking revenge from others, heals wounds and reduce emotional pain. It is the forgiveness not revenge that removes the dark clouds of hatred, resentment and anger developed in response to perceived harm. Researches have proved forgiveness equating with anger and hostility (Gisi & Amato, 2000), predicting anger and hostility (Sadiq, 2013) and indeed reducing anger (Thompson, Jason & Neufeld, 2005). Whereas, revengeful aggression leads to regressive ego and superego functioning resulting in overwhelming rages, combat slaughters and post-combat problems in form of hostility and aggression (Fox, 1974).

Previous literature also revealed a strong association among revenge, humiliation and rejection (Baumeister, 1997). Transgression or offense might inflict the pain of humiliation and rejection. In such situation, revenge seemed to them a way to get even. Continuously cultivating revenge thoughts increase anger and hostility for the offender until the revenge is taken. Thus, striving for retaliation constantly engaged them in stress. It further resulted in rumination regarding the person who hurt

them and how he or she hurt them. A study carried out among pupils in three London schools has shown that male street gangs with angry rumination were more likely to displace their aggression towards innocent people (Vasquez et al., 2012). Rumination keeps engaging people in planning and fantasizing to seek revenge. Consequently, revenge motivation is more likely to be maintained and prolonged resulting in extended aggressive tendencies.

Results of the current study have shown a non-significant relationship of revenge motivation with verbal aggression among students (**Table: 1**). Items of verbal aggression, subscale of aggression questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992), are limited to arguments, quarrel and argumentative discussion, disagreements rather than calling names or using abusive language. It measures the tendency of a person to what extent he or she is verbally argumentative (For instance; I can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me) Participants of the present study were students who openly like to be involved in arguments, disagreeing with others based on their knowledge and exposure, whether somebody has severely hurt them or not. This behavior might have been considered as normal. Or it can say that merely verbal arguments or disagreeing with others do not lessen their desires to take revenge, until they express their aggression in physical acts and showing extreme irritation. According to Neuman and Baron (1998), physical aggression is more dramatic as compare to verbal aggression.

Additional analysis depicted a significant difference among male and female students in respect to revenge motivation, physical aggression, and anger. In previous studies, men were found to be reporting more physical aggression (Archer, 2004), revenge motivation (Rijavec, Jurcec & Mijocevic, 2010) and anger (Mushtaq & Najam, 2014) than women. The current findings are in the same line proving that male students reported more revenge motivation, physical aggression and anger than female students. Gender role, societal norms and stereotypes can best describe the reason of obtaining significant difference among male and female students on three variables. In fact, women, almost all over the world, are socially care oriented (Gilligan, 1982, as cited in Muuss, 1988), are good in managing the disagreements and show greater tendency to forgive others (Asher et al., 1996), as has been mentioned in Hussain (2006). Women harbor empathy and have greater propensity to reduce interpersonal conflict. Intimacy seems to be threatening for men but women perceive threat from separation (Prakash & Flores, 1985). Moreover, societal role and gender norms encourage and discourage different forms of aggression among men and women. For example; men are stereotypically aggressive, whereas women avoid aggression, specifically physical harm (Eagly & Steffen, 1986). Similarly, both men and women experience anger but women seemed to be showing passive anger (Biaggio, 1989).

Regarding gender difference, a non-significant difference between male and female students was emerged in relation to verbal aggression (**Table: 2**). Previous research showed a non-significant difference among both sexes on verbal aggression (Reinisch & Sanders, 1986; Schreiner, 2001). The bigger ratio was obtained on gender difference in physical aggression as compare to verbal aggression (Archer, 2004). Though, aggression is commonly seen among males than females but in the current era, females are also emerging as expressive and risk taking creatures. As mentioned earlier that, in the current study verbal aggression has not been measured in terms of calling names, using abusive language or teasing but in terms of being argumentative and disagreeing with others. Today, females are easily get indulge in argumentative discussions and expressed their view without bothering that other agree with them or not.

A variable of hostility was also equally observed among both sexes in the present study (**Table: 2**). Some researchers have found women reporting more hostility than men (Robinson, Brower & Gomberg, 2001). Somewhere, males appeared to be reporting greater hostility as compare to women (Sarason, 1961; Biaggio, 1980; Ramirez, 1991). Albeit, negative thoughts, cynicism, mistrust and suspiciousness are involved in hostility (Buss & Perry, 1992), and all of these symptoms might have equally developed among both males and females students after encountering transgression.

On aggression, it was seen that both male and female did not significantly differ (**Table: 2**). It was also supported with the study of Sameer and Jamia (2007), as cited in Ahsan (2015), in which a non-significant gender difference in aggression. Researches also reveal that females are more likely to involve in indirect aggression and males are more likely to involve in direct aggression (Bjorkqvist, Lagerspatz, & Kaukainen, 1994). But the present participants were related to the similar environment with same exposure, and would have been indulged in, not exactly same, but analogous activities. This might have influenced their way of expression in daily lives. People also learn from each other through observation and modeling (Bandura,1977 ). Though, female did not directly exhibit aggression like males, as observed in physical aggression, but they were experiencing aggression in other forms like hostility and verbal aggression.

The present research findings advocate that revenge motivation has significant and positive relationship with aggression and its three components (physical aggression, anger and hostility) but a non-significant association with verbal aggression. Both revenge motivation and aggression are perilous for students' health and can increase the probability for developing severe psychopathologies in future. The present findings have implications for students, parents and community members like teachers and religious preachers.

#### **V. Limitations and Recommendations**

The present study focused on transgression that varied among participants. Intensity and frequency of transgression also determine revenge and aggression. Future research must explore revenge and aggression while focusing on specific or single transgression, its frequency and severity as well. Role of socio-economic status, age, education and family functioning in determining revenge motivation and aggression should be investigated.

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