

The Psycho-social Determinants of Revenge and its Association with Feuds in Afridi tribe, Erstwhile FATA-Pakistan

Jan Alam¹, Farhat Ullah² & Sakeel Ahmad³

Abstract

Revenge is a powerful human emotion shaped by socio-cultural practices. It is done more for face-saving, i.e., “how others will think about me”. Keeping in view the prevailing practices of revenge, this study was designed to test the association of psycho-social determinants of revenge with feuds in the Afridi Tribe. Efforts were made to find the costs and benefits of revenge among the tribal people of Dara Adam Khel. The study findings are based on primary data collected through interviews and questionnaires. The population size of the study was 835 and a sample size of 214 *Maliks*⁴ was selected randomly from each subgroup according to the criteria mentioned by Sekaran and Bougie (2013). The study was quantitative and the relationship between the desirable variables was measured by using the Chi-Square test (χ^2). The study findings show that the forms of revenge may be small-scale feuds between persons/families as well as among tribes. Pakhtun cultural norms such as *Badal*/right of retaliation, *Tor*/social stigmatization, *Paighor*/Taunt, *Ghairat*/Chivalry, and *Nang*/heroism are those aspects of culture and customary laws which are significantly associated with feuds. It is recommended to avoid bullying and taunt, traditional antagonism may be overcome by educating the masses and the provision of sufficient economic resources and formation of the council at every village that will resolve the feuds at first hand and work to inculcate forgiveness among people.

Keywords: Revenge, aggression, feuds, quantitative research, Afridi tribe.

Introduction

¹ The author is a lecturer of Sociology at the Department of Social Work & Sociology, Kohat University of Science & Technology. He can be reached at janalam@kust.edu.pk

² The author is a lecturer of Social Work at the Department of Social Work & Sociology, Kohat University of Science & Technology. He can be reached at farhatullah@kust.edu.pk

³ The author is a lecturer of Sociology at the Department of Social Work & Sociology, Kohat University of Science & Technology. He can be reached at dr.shakeel@kust.edu.pk

⁴ The literal meaning of *Malik* is “Master” but in Pakhtun society *Malik* is a traditional authority associated with certain community welfare and knowledge of tribal customs. Besides; they have active participation in feud resolution.

Revenge is a negative reaction to any wrongdoing by a person or a group against another person or a group. In tribal areas, revenge is common and people avenge their enemy at every cost because they are unable to tolerate the actual loss or perceived loss. The roots of revenge are rooted in the socio-cultural system of tribal societies, where revenge is acceptable and tit for tat is allowed in case of any wrongdoing against anyone. A person who is unable to avenge is considered as weaker and a negative stereotyping called *Paighor* (in the local parlance) is attached to that person. In such a situation a person or his family is always looking to avenge his enemy by the cost of any means to washout that *Paighor*. The major sources associated with *Paighor* are family honor and property (Alam, 2021; Alam et al., 2014). Violation of any of these raises the issues of honor violation and thus the victim will think over days and nights to equalize or retaliate against the damage. A person who can avenge the enemy is considered a brave and powerful person and vice versa. Thus, revenge becomes a catalyst for feuds that last for a long period among families or tribes, resulting in economic, physical, social, and psychological damages. This research study has tested the association between psycho-social aspects of revenge and feuds in a specific tribal socio-cultural context. The major law is customary law called *Paktoonwali* and the local leaders are called *Maliks*. This research paper enables the reader to understand the psycho-social aspects and tribal grounds of revenge. The study used a quantitative method by testing the association of revenge with feuds to draw the results by applying the Chi-Square test. It is found from the field data, observations, and personal experiences (being a member of that tribe) that even though people know the future consequences of revenge and feuds but still they are highly motivated to avenge. Revenge leads to long-lasting and unresolved disputes, which have certain negative psychological outcomes such as depression, anxieties, mistrust, and repent.

Literature

The Poet John Milton said, “*Revenge at first is sweet, but it becomes bitter in the long run*” (Paradise Lost, Book IX, Line 171). Revenge exists both in contemporary and as well as traditional societies. Revenge arises in the response to compensate for the injury or to pay back, to equalize the wrongdoing, and thus, to justify justice for own self or the tribe (Alam and Ali, 2013; Grobbink et al., 2015). Therefore people are at peace unless they/their families are threatened socially, morally, psychologically, economically, and physically (McCullough, 2008).

Revenge is a reciprocal process, the definite implementation of which is followed by negative social experiences, emotional disturbance, and even mental disorders. Behavioral scientists are of the idea that the implementation of revenge is unpleasant, negative emotions and the use of human potential in an undesirable way (Jaffe, 2011; Alam, 2021). The consequences of vengeance may be seen as a victim by the avenger and the avenged (Stillwell et al., 2008). But the implications are more severe for victims than perpetrators.

Loeber and Hay (1997) found that that aggression may be both transmitted through genes (biological) factors and learns from society. Violent behavior based on revenge is in the form of verbal aggression, taunting, duels, and homicide. The social environment that fosters revenge included poverty, violent neighborhood, deviant peers bad parenting, lack of social support, and inequality (Anderson et al., 2000; Bloom, 2001; Lamb, 2019).

Revenge according to many theorists is a label that is attached to the perceivers' attributes to do the act. Elster (1990) argued that any act which involves certain harm or risk mainly physical, social, or economic by the avenger, could be called revenge. Hence, revenge is both action as well as a desire. Revenge is considered to be a behavior that is based on motivation to harm someone, who might have done something wrong with the avenger. It may be associated with different factors like physical, social, and psychological. In which four factors such as the prevalence of anger, the perceived damage due to revenge, the violation of religious and cultural values and knowledge, and the ability of formal and informal external systems that may or may not retaliate the victims (Crombag et al., 2003; Cota-McKinley et al., 2001)

Psychological studies and behavioral sciences have revealed that people often mispredict their hedonic⁵ reactions to past as well as future events so they fail to predict positively about the things that happened in the past, which results in negative emotions (Schkade and Kahneman, 1998; Wilson and Gilbert, 2003). The desire for revenge is not normal on either it is accepted as it is considered dirty and dangerous. The desire to avenge is a powerful motivator of human destructiveness (McCullough, 2008).

Evolutionary psychologists believed that revenge entails three adaptive functions (McCullough, 2008). Firstly, it obstructs the potential convict or criminal to

⁵ It is the chemical reaction that occurs in brain towards a specific phenomenon.

harm someone because of retaliation, especially people who are famous for retaliation are less likely to be harmed due to such fear. Second, if someone is harmed, revenge could be a source hindrance to further harm by condemning or retaliating against the victim. Finally, revenge stimulates cooperation by restricting individuals from taking advantage of the weaknesses of others. Hence, revenge is moralized as a beneficial element for the restoration of justice. Similarly, the proponents of the Equity theory believed that a person may feel discomfort and dejection if he is treated in an unfair way (Adams, 1965; Walster et al., 1978). However, revenge in such a case may capacitate the victim to overcome his distress to retaliate against the wrongdoer (Donnerstein and Hatfield, 1982; Frijda, 1994).

However, revenge at all is darker for both the revenge recipient as well as the avenger (Bottom et al., 2002), the tit-for-tat strategies disrupt the normal relationships and induce aggression. Hence, the transgressor if avenged could also be motivated for counter-revenge, which leads to long-lasting feuds (Kim and Smith, 1993).

Revenge in the tribal context

Revenge has different implications for society. One of its implications is feud in tribal areas. The feud is mainly expressed by scholars in contemporary literature to demonstrate violence among individuals, families, and tribes (Lamb, 2019). Otterbein (2000) further classifies feuds as these may be in the form of house attacks, murder, ambushes, assault, gunfights, encounter battles, and arranged battles. McCallister (2007) believes that the major idea is “*Shame and Honor*” not “*hearts and minds*” which governs individual / group relationships and competition among tribal dwellers.

Revenge is perceived differently by different people in a society. In many cases, it is considered to be irrational and un-civilized (Elster, 1990; Jacoby, 1983), whereas some people render it as important, rational, and justifiable because it ensures justice. Different labels are attached to the victim, for example, the victim is considered weak or coward, which makes revenge to be mandatory (Cota-McKinley et al., 2001; Tripp et al., 2002).

Among tribal societies the main accelerator of feud and warfare is revenge. Revenge in its most extreme form is associated with violation of honor and killing of anyone's family member. The murderer/perpetrator or his family members is searched for years to erase the stigma of *Badal*/revenge. Revenge among tribal is based on

certain norms of *Pakhtunwali* (Berg et al., 2012; Alam et al, 2014). Bushman (2002) said that people become more aggressive when they are given a chance to avenge.

However, actions that are based on revenge and associated with feuds are mostly unresolved (Baumeister et al, 1990). Tribal conflicts are taking hundreds of lives every year and leaving many wounded. Revenge in the tribal belt is mainly due to ignorance which is due to lack of resources (especially education) that always push people to compete. As these areas are far behind the state's control therefore competition takes the form of duels in which violence is inevitable. Walster et al. (1978) reported that violence occurs because the individual wants to get/maintain equity (fairness) in terms of power and control over resources.

Al Asar (2005) found that duels/feuds involve excessive use of fatal weapons and non-adherence of the tribal norms has severely inflicted pain to the marginalized groups such as women and children. Revenge killing stimulates the tribes, leaving them displaced from their area of origin. Blood revenge is believed as one of the fundamental factors of aggression, disputes, and feud in tribal societies (Alam and Ali, 2013; Chagnon, 1988).

Barfield (2003) found that revenge is anticipated as vengeance and it is allowed in *Pakhtunwali* but it is illegal and forbidden in the legal framework. Shinwari (2011) said that irrespective of the future outcomes, the customary tribal structure allows the insulted person the right of retaliation. Revenge or *Badalin* in some cases is taken by the victim or by the victim's family against the perpetrator himself or his family. Barfield (2003) stated that the local tradition set the frequency of revenge in terms of how and whom to be avenged.

Blood revenge is a common form of revenge which occurs sometimes due to the violation of honor because murder as well as the murder of any person in any form of feuds such as property or land dispute. In case of face-saving or regaining honor, it becomes the prime responsibility of each of the family members to avenge the person involved in honor violation (Strand, 2009; Berg et al., 2012). Ahmed (1975) found that revenge leads to homicidal tendencies among the tribal populations.

Furthermore, revenge also occurs when someone is socially stigmatized due to dishonoring by a person or his family the most severe form of which is murder or adultery which leads to blood revenge. When a person fails to defend his honor is always considered morally weak (Barfield, 2003) therefore avenging the enemy is

deemed to be a source of a final feud among the feuding parties (Human Development Report, 1998).

An important social fact⁶ behind the occurrence of revenge is the violation of honor which leads to low regulation and the outcome is a feud. Baumeister et al. (1990) found that one of the most extreme forms of revenge is a blood feud (Lamb, 2019). It occurs when a member/s of one group is assaulted or insulted by any member of another tribe or village. Tribal feuds based on revenge are open in tribal societies (Strand, 2009), which are followed by an assault or even a murder, therefore it becomes the responsibility of everyone to level the score, the main form is life for a life. Elsie (2001) found that the first selection for revenge is a murderer, the victim targets any of the male family members according to customary law, the feuds are concluded when the wrongdoer is killed (Elsie, 2001). But in contemporary society, such feuds are lowered due to the development of the economic and educational institutions in the study area (Field Survey, 2018).

Gohar and Yousufzai (2005) found although killing occurs to equalize the number of deaths, however, it is not the final solution in some cases. In tribal societies, some people also play their role to involve the feuding parties in a dialogue to resolve the dispute. For example, one important institution could be *Jirga*, in case of retaliation is done nothing else is left to score against the opponent party, such feuds can be resolved through *Jirga*. However, an unbalanced number of deaths or assaults is viewed as an enduring shame for Pakhtun or his family, therefore revenge becomes important.

Nang and Ghairat (i.e., Chivalry) central parts of tribal life. These are attached to a person or group dignity, valor, and heroism. A *Nangialay* is the Hero of the tribe who brings honor and reputation to his clan. A person who is unable to defend his *Nang* is called *Benanga* (shameless or humiliating), which is an extreme form of abuse therefore revenge becomes evident in such a case. One of the famous stories and role models of *Nang and Ghairat* is "Ajab Khan Afridi" of the study area who fought against the British Empire to regain his *Nang* therefore he is always remembered as *Nangialay* among the Afridi tribe (Glatzer, 1998).

⁶ Social Facts according to Durkheim (1895) are coercive to and external to individual.

According to Fletcher (2003) feuds, mainly blood feuds amongst feuding tribes and clans existed throughout history based on customary laws, which lasted for generations over a longer period. Such forms of feuds are prominent in Albania, India, Iraq, Turkey, Yemen, and many other countries (Majumdar, 2009; Lanchin, 2008; Schleifer, 2008; White, 2008; Raghaven, 2007; Rainsford, 2006; WuDunn, 1993). It is reported by Al-Shawtabi (2008) and White (2008) that nearly 10 thousand murders occurred due to revenge killings thousands in the last ten years. According to Kubrin and Weitzer (2003) U.S. Department of Justice (2006), revenge motivated killing was about 20% of the total murders during recent decades of the 20th century, which included workplace revenge among colleagues, among broken friends, among family members, and business opponents (Tripp et al., 2002; Aquino et al., 2001).

Research Methodology

This section explains the population of the study, sampling technique, tools of data collection, and data analysis. This was a quantitative study that tested the association between a dependent variable i.e., feuds and, an independent variable revenge. The study was undertaken as per the following methods and procedures.

Study Area

The study is conducted in Dara Adam Khel, an Afridi Tribe Frontier Region (FR) Kohat which was called “Gun City” by Ullah (2010)). The majority of the dwellers here are Afridi (Zaman, 2011). The main source of regulation in the study area is based on tribal customs and traditions that control and regulate the actions of the tribal people. The area under study consists of 5 Sub-sections/*Qoms*⁷, which included Akhorwal, Zarghon Khel, Bosti Khel, Shiraki, and Torchapar.

Sampling Procedure

According to Kothari (2004) sample size of the study must be optimum that represent a given population in which a researcher is interested. As per the record of the office of Political Agent (now Assistant Commissioner), there were 835 *Maliks* of Dara Adam Khel⁸ in 2018. A sample size of 214 was taken as per the criteria mentioned by Sekaran and Bougie (2013). The respondents were approached randomly.

⁷ A subsection of the tribe.

⁸ A section of FR Kohat.

Table no. 1: Distribution of population and sample size

S.no	Subtribe(Qom)	Population Size	Sample size
1	Zarghon Khel	400	102
2	Torchapar	70	18
3	Sheraki	75	18
4	Bosti Khel	90	23
5	Akhorwal	200	51
Total		835	214

Data Collection

Data was collected through a comprehensive interview schedule checked through pre-testing to address the ambiguities before the final stage of data collection. The data collection was carried out by using a questionnaire and interviews, constructed by using the Likert Scale. Interviews were conducted with those respondents who were unable to read and write. All questions were simple and unbiased, translated in Urdu and Pashto languages.

Data Analysis

The bi-variate analysis method is used to find out the association between dependent (Feud) and independent variables (Revenge) by using Chi-Square (χ^2) test. According to Kothari (2004) Chi-Square (χ^2) test is a useful tool for testing the association between the dependent and independent variables. Chi-Square (χ^2) test is used while adopting the procedure outlined by McCall and Robert (1975).

Table 2: Relationship between revenge and feud

Revenge	Response	Feud			Total	Test Statistics
		Positive	Negative	Undecided		
Violation of Honor/ <i>Namoos</i>	Agree	143(66.5)	51(23.7)	0(0.0)	194(90.2)	$\chi^2=9.220(.004)$
	Disagree	17(7.9)	4(1.9)	0(0.0)	21(9.8)	
	Undecided	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	
Social stigma/ <i>Tor</i>	Agree	131(60.9)	35(16.3)	0(0.0)	166(77.2)	$\chi^2=11.76(.003)$
	Disagree	27(12.6)	15(7.0)	0(0.0)	42(19.5)	
	Undecided	2(0.9)	5(2.3)	0(0.0)	7(3.3)	
Right of retaliation/ <i>Badal</i>	Agree	93(43.3)	22(10.2)	0(0.0)	115(53.5)	$\chi^2=10.466(.001)$
	Disagree	49(22.8)	27(12.6)	0(0.0)	76(35.3)	
	Undecided	18(8.4)	6(2.8)	0(0.0)	24(11.2)	
Aggressive Peer	Agree	132(61.4)	46(21.4)	0(0.0)	178(82.8)	$\chi^2=4.296(.117)$
	Disagree	18(8.4)	9(4.2)	0(0.0)	27(12.6)	
	Undecided	10(4.7)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	10(4.7)	
Chivalry/ <i>Ghairat</i>	Agree	71(33.0)	24(11.2)	0(0.0)	95(44.2)	$\chi^2=9.640(.005)$
	Disagree	73(34.0)	26(12.1)	0(0.0)	99(46.0)	
	Undecided	16(7.4)	5(2.3)	0(0.0)	21(9.8)	
Collective responsibility to avenge	Agree	71(33.3)	21(9.8)	0(0.0)	92(42.8)	$\chi^2=1.640(.440)$
	Disagree	77(35.8)	27(12.6)	0(0.0)	104(48.4)	
	Undecided	12(5.6)	7(3.3)	0(0.0)	19(8.8)	
Heroism/ <i>Nang</i>	Agree	66(30.7)	22(10.2)	0(0.0)	88(40.9)	$\chi^2=11.351(.001)$
	Disagree	64(29.8)	22(10.2)	0(0.0)	86(40.0)	
	Undecided	30(14.0)	11(5.1)	0(0.0)	41(19.1)	
Unresolved Duels	Agree	57(26.5)	16(7.4)	0(0.0)	73(34.0)	$\chi^2=2.163(.339)$
	Disagree	69(32.1)	30(14.0)	0(0.0)	99(46.0)	
	Undecided	34(15.8)	9(4.2)	0(0.0)	43(20.0)	

**Value in the table presents frequency while values in the parenthesis represent the percentages proportion of the respondents (Source: Field Survey, 2018).*

Explanation

Revenge is the term used for “tit for tat” and denotes retaliation of the loss/insult caused by a person or group against another one. Revenge occurs when somebody feels that he has been treated in a way that is undesirable or deviant which is perceived as socially, morally, and psychologically illicit that is forbidden by customary law.

A significant ($p < 0.004$) relationship is calculated between revenge as necessary tradition and feud, which highlights that avenging the perpetrator brings psycho-social satisfaction to the victim. It is considered as a sort of loan which must be returned. There are many aspects of tribal culture which are traditionally seemed as inculcators of revenge. One important idea could begin keeping a gun at home. Every household keeps a gun at home and has a small fortress at one corner of his home.

A significant ($p < 0.003$) relationship was found between the social stigma of *Badal* and feuds which reveals that all murders (i.e. Humiliations) are avenged in tribal areas. Humiliation is unacceptable in the Afridi tribe, it is deeply rooted in some cultural practices as it is called *Badal* in local literature. A person who failed to avenge is considered weak and dishonored.

The peer effects on individual thinking and conduct prevail that its relation is no significant with feud which suggests that feuds are based on customs. Peer and close friends mostly advocate peace and prefer peaceful resolution of feuds. Poverty and inequality are also significantly associated ($p < 0.004$) with feuds. Conflict for getting more resources is natural. It is found that there exist feuds based on land resources, coal, and other benefits given by the Government. Furthermore, there is no proper mechanism for the distribution of these resources. Some land is not distributed and left as Common Lands (*Shamellat*) which are the main source of feuds in the study area.

Similarly, a nonsignificant ($p < 0.440$) relation was explored between there exist collective responsibility to take revenge and feud, which indicates the feud of one person of the tribe was considered as antagonism against the whole tribe. With the passage of time increased awareness and experiences of greater losses, revenge became individual. Further, social cohesion and solidarity are not as much stronger as it was. A significant ($p < 0.001$) relationship was delineated between Heroism and feuds which indicates that the concept of heroism exists throughout every society. It is found that the element of heroism is associated with chivalry (*Nang*) in tribal areas. The victim is pressurized to take revenge and to live a life of so-called respect, dignity, and honor.

Similarly a nonsignificant ($p < 0.339$) relation was found between unresolved duels feuds, which suggests that with the increase in population and subsequent increase in social-economic interaction and dealing with individual issues and controversies whenever arises, the tribe do not own it, hence it does not take the shape of revenge phenomenon as such.

Conclusion

The study was conducted in the Afridi Tribe of Dara Adam Khel Fr Kohat. The study aimed to find the psycho-social determinants of revenge and its association with feuds. The study shows revenge is common instead of forgiveness because revenge entails social justice. Moreover, honor killing is done in the same way to save one's face, even when there is no solid evidence. Revenge, functionally speaking, keeps social order; sort of balance of terror. Revenge is common in those places where judicial institutions are weak and corrupt. Tribal areas are more governed by customary laws and traditions rather than any other rules regulations; hence it provides an arena for revenge due to different cultural norms and values which are directly linked with revenge. As per customary law, a person who cannot avenge is considered weak by his group, therefore revenge is a source of success and satisfaction for the victim. The study highlights five major psycho-social agents that motivated a person to avenge. These include violation of honor/*Namus*, right of retaliation/*Badal*; social stigmatization/*Tor*, Taunt/*Paighor*, heroism/*Nang*, Chivalry/*Ghairat*, are significantly associated with feuds.

Recommendations

It is some time difficult to overthrow revenge but some recommendations may be helping to reduce it.

- 1) People may be socializing in a way to reduce their aggressive feeling. Steps may be taken to end bullying and taunting in and outside the family.
- 2) Traditional antagonism may be overcome by educating the masses and providing them with sufficient economic resources.
- 3) A council of elders at every village may be formed that will work to bring forgiveness and end the duels.
- 4) The idea of win-win instead of win-lose can be fruitful in controlling or eliminating revenge-based hatred. It may be disseminated among the masses through families, mosques, media, social media, and schools.

- 5) Equality in terms of the distribution of resources may end the conflicts over natural resources and may increase the satisfaction that will end the gaps between different subsections/clans of the study area.

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