The Vicious Cycle of Revenge and Counter revenge

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the Honours Degree of Bachelor of

Psychological Science (Honours)

School of Psychology

The University of Adelaide

September 2022

Word Count: 9,094.

Table of content

List of Table

Abstract

Individuals seek revenge to cause some form of harm to the perceived offender. Often, such acts of vengeance lead to a complete breakdown of the relationship between two individuals. Why would someone choose to hurt and destroy the relationship they are intimately involved with despite knowing the adverse outcome? This has been the focus of researchers in the field of romantic revenge. Numerous social-psychological theories are proposed to explain why an individual might seek revenge against their significant other. Some other studies have looked at potential personality traits such as psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and vengefulness that can increase the likelihood of seeking revenge, and others such as narcissism and agreeableness, which can decrease the likelihood of seeking revenge.

However, little is known about how the personality traits of both partners impact the likelihood of engaging in revenge. The current study looks at a potential trait-based explanation for romantic revenge. Furthermore, this study aims to examine if there would be an interaction between the traits and their partners' responses to their likelihood of seeking counter-revenge. This study recruited 200 participants from an online platform. Participants were then assigned to one of two groups: the control and experimental groups. They read a hypothetical scenario based on their group and completed the revenge and counter-revenge questionnaire along with three other personality questionnaires. The results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between Machiavellianism and vengefulness but not psychopathy. There was a negative correlation only with agreeableness but not with narcissism. There was no interaction, implying the presence of the current traits, and their partner's response did not make any further changes to their inclination to seek revenge.

Keywords: revenge, counter-revenge, Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy, vengefulness.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University, and, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published except where due reference is made. I give permission for the digital version of this thesis to be made available on the web via the University of Adelaide's digital thesis repository, the Library Search and through web search engines unless permission has been granted by the school to restrict access for a period of time.

Contribution

In writing this thesis, my supervisor, and I collaborated to generate the hypothesis of interest and design an appropriate methodology. I conducted the literature search and the design of the survey questions, completed the ethics application, and created the online survey. I ran all the analyses in SPSS and wrote up all aspects of the thesis.

1. Introduction

The Hatfield-McCoy Feud has been used to symbolise bitter rivalries. This was a feud between two families, both of which were ruled by patriarchs at the height of the feud. William Anderson Hatfield, also known as "Devil Anse", was a successful timber merchant who employed numerous workers, with the McCoys being some of his employees. Randolph McCoy, also known as "Old Ranel", owned some land and livestock. The decade-long feud between the families started with the murder of Randolph's brother, Asa. This was the beginning of the decade-long blood feud committed by each family to get revenge and counter-revenge before eventually reaching the boiling point in 1878. After several conflicts and deaths, both leaders soon receded to obscurity. Accounts suggest that both men continued to be haunted by the deaths until their death (Stewart, Bruce. E., 2013).

1.1 What is revenge, and how do we distinguish it

The Hatfield-McCoy feud led to devasting consequences for everyone involved. This has been hailed as one of the extreme cases of revenge and counter-revenge. Although the impacts of acts of revenge do not always lead to the loss of life, such vengeful acts are not unique or strange phenomena. Revenge is a common theme in accounts of human behaviour, with the common goal being to hurt another person (McCullough et al., 1998; Stillwell et al., 2008). A romantic relationship is one of the most crucial and enduring forms of adult relationships (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2006). Hence, it might be assumed that people in such relationships might refrain from enacting revenge against their partner. However, romantic revenge tends to be one of the most intense forms of revenge, wherein an individual employs various method to hurt their intimate partner (Chester & DeWall, 2017). The partners at the receiving ends of the vengeful act can respond by inflicting harm on the perpetrators (Sheppard & Boon, 2012). Understanding what revenge is and how we define it is crucial to

comprehend why individuals would undertake acts that lead to the end of fulling or satisfying relationships.

According to psychologists, revenge is defined as an action taken in retaliation for perceived wrongdoing by another person with the intent of causing harm, injury, or punishment (Aquino et al., 2001). Furthermore, revenge can be divided into two different types: active and passive revenge. Active revenge takes the form of directing harm towards another person, whereas passive revenge involves withholding support from others (Ferrari & Emmons, 1994). Occasionally, people tend to mix the meaning of self-defence with revenge. However, such retaliatory acts should not be confused with self-defence. Self-defence is an act that individuals use to protect themselves from foreseeable harm. In contrast, the primary objective of revenge is to cause harm to the assumed wrongdoer (Govier, 2002).

If asked to define what revenge is, there is the likely possibility that people might use the definitions of retribution and revenge interchangeably. This confusion can be attributed to the close connection between revenge and retributive punishment. However, retribution is not always an act of revenge. The intention or the motivation behind the retributive act distinguishes it. Gerber and Jackson (2013) divided retribution into two types: retribution as revenge and retribution as just deserts. The urge to seek revenge on the perceived offender by causing them harm is an essential aspect of retribution. On the other hand, retribution as just a desert includes the need to restore justice by allowing the perpetrator to compensate proportionally to harm done. Here the goal is not to cause suffering to the perceived offender. This, however, leaves the question of why we need to distinguish revenge from other acts, such as self-defence and retribution and what makes revenge wrong.

Frijda and Mesquita (1994) described two glaring issues associated with seeking revenge. First, revenge is frequently self-destructive to the person who does it. Second, revenge often works as a destabilising force rather than acting as a stabilising factor after the

initial damage. Despite such outcomes, why do people continue to seek revenge? This is somewhat of a puzzling question for researchers, as people are naturally aversive to aggression and confrontation (Cushman et al., 2012). Rarely does revenge result in the aggressor benefiting from it. In fact, in severe cases such as the Hatfield-McCoy feud, revenge may lead to the loss of one's or others' lives. Additionally, Carlsmith et al. (2008) noted that only within a few minutes after a vengeful act, aggressors begin to experience the feeling of regret, rumination, and negativity. Given these consequences, understanding why people tend to seek revenge becomes an insight into the human mind and behaviour.

1.2 Previous theories that explain revenge and counter revenge

Due to the interest in this area, researchers have proposed several different theories that attempt to answer this question. Theorists put forward that there is a cultural explanation for revenge-seeking. Cultural evolutionary theories suggest that internalised social norms exacerbate the tendency to seek revenge against others (Gavrilets & Richerson, 2017). They further elaborated that when people feel they have been the victim of a personal attack that goes against societal norms, they are more inclined to retaliate by engaging in acts of revenge (Fehr & Henrich, 2003). While the researchers agree that revenge is not adaptive for individuals, they put forward that such acts help maintain group hemostasia (Elster, 1990).

Another theory about revenge suggests that one of the primary goals of seeking revenge is to convey a message to the offenders. According to this theory, revenge is not just about paying back but also about making the offender realise that they have caused harm and did something wrong (French, 2001; Gollwitzer et al., 2010; Miller, 2001). Seeking revenge is only satisfying when the offenders understand that they are being punished or subjected to revenge because of their own actions. If the offender does not know why they are being subjected to such actions, the victims do not experience any sort of satisfaction (Gollwitzer et al., 2010).

A third theory and more extreme form of revenge revolves around the "pseudocommando". This term was coined by Dietz (1986) to describe someone whose primary method of exacting revenge is through murder. This type of offender tends to plan their actions "after long deliberation", and intense feelings of anger and resentment are the critical driving factors (Knoll, 2010). These people believe that "psedupower" is the only viable defence to protect themselves from the perceived harm they are experiencing. For a pseudo commando, revenge fantasies are crucial to self-preservation. These revenge fantasies serve a specific psychic function; they serve as perseveration of the self, defend against feelings of shame, loss and powerlessness, and finally, maintain their grandiose delusions (Knoll, 2010). It is when reality collides against these fantasies that the pseudo commando embarks down the path of murderous revenge.

Another theory proposes that revenge is used as equity restoration. According to the theory developed by Austin and Walster (1974), people are naturally motivated to maintain equity (fairness) in their social relationships, whether it comes to power or resources. As a result, a violation goes against widely held beliefs of how people should treat each other. Most transgressions breach a relationship's equity by causing harm or costs to the victim, ranging from material or financial loss to physical or mental anguish. This, in turn, motivates the victims to seek revenge against their aggressors. However, when the victims seek revenge against their perceived offenders, they unknowingly create new inequalities, escalating the original conflict (Tripp & Bies., 1997). The perpetrator then becomes the victim instead. This, in turn, motivates the recipient—who was also the initial offender—to seek revenge. Thus, continuing the cycle of revenge and counter revenge.

1.3 Lack of evidence and literature on counter revenge

When a victim gets revenge against the perceived offender, their actions cause the offender to become the victim if the original offender perceives the retaliation as

disproportionate to the actual harm (Stillwell et al., 2008). This motivates the offender-turned-victim to seek revenge, resulting in a vicious cycle of revenge and counter-revenge. In general, revenge literature has uncovered and proposed several theories seeking revenge, the triggers and how to resolve them. There have not been many attempts to continue this investigation by looking at counter-revenge. Unlike revenge, currently, there lacks a concrete definition of counter-revenge. Among the limited research into counter-revenge, Kim and Smith (1993) investigated conflict escalation, trying to uncover the circumstances that provoke counter-revenge.

A probable cause of revenge escalation was the victim's subjective and often exaggerated assessments of the severity of the harm. When a victim's vengeance is an overreaction, it lays the framework for new injustice and elevates the original perpetrator to the victim's status. As a result, a new cause of conflict emerges, which may overshadow the issue that sparked the disagreement in the first place (Kim & Smith, 1993). Another reason for escalation and the ensuing cycle of revenge and counter-revenge is when both parties in a confrontation hold opposing viewpoints about the validity of the initial harm. By downplaying or minimising the victims' suffering, the aggressors strive to minimise their culpability for the harm they have caused (Kim & Smith, 1993). Although these factors may help explain what triggers the cycle of revenge and counter-revenge, whether these circumstances also dictate revenge and counter-revenge among intimate partners is an unanswered question.

1.4 Romantic revenge

Most theories of revenge point out that emotions of anger or frustration and the desire for "payback" are essential in enabling the individual to seek revenge against the perceived offender. Workplaces or organisations usually involve numerous individuals working together for long durations; such conditions may cause conflicts among team members. Due

to the conditions and situations within the workplace, research in this area provides a variety of descriptive bases on when and under what circumstances people seek revenge. Bordia et al., (2014) put forward three motivation goals: acting effectively, belonging and finally, self-enhancement. These goals drive co-workers to seek revenge against each other. The phenomenon of revenge is not foreign or strange in a workplace.

Conflicts are not an anomaly in a relationship. Romantic relationships provide similar conditions; that is, partners in a relationship spend a long duration of time together, guided by continuous interaction in different environments. The available research focuses on related areas, such as identifying revenge-type behaviours linked to the partners' restoring equity in their relationships (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006). Boon et al., (2009) conducted a study to measure events and actions that directly correlated with people seeking revenge against their partners. They discovered that if a partner perceives a rule breach in a relationship, especially one involving partner exclusivity, the partner is more inclined to seek revenge.

When seeking revenge against their partners, people frequently breach or disregard the unspoken rules that govern their partner's behaviour in the relationship. This threat to their social identity or the social reputation of their relationship is specific to romantic revenge. The importance of the rules is further recognised by examining the method of revenge. When faced with similar motivations for revenge, some partners are more willing than others to hurt their partners. The intensity of their acts of revenge might be higher than others. In such situations, generalised theories about evolution and social explanation might fail to answer why. Instead, a personality trait perspective finds to be essential in providing an answer to this question.

1.5 What are personality traits, and why are they important?

Currently, social-psychological theories dominate the field of revenge literature. According to social psychology, equity restoration is a crucial motivator for people seeking

revenge and counter-revenge. According to Austin and Walster (1974), people have an intrinsic desire to maintain equity or fairness. This is especially true in regard to maintaining power or resources in a relationship. When an individual violates this equity within a relationship, this leads to loss for the victim. The loss could be financial, physical or emotional. This loss motivates the victim to seek revenge and try to restore their loss (Tripp & Bies, 1997). This desire for restoration could be attributed to the difference in perspective of the victim and the perpetrator. The victim's focus on adverse outcomes while the perpetrators consider the incidence as a learning lesson. This difference provokes the victim to seek revenge.

However, there could be another potential explanation for this cycle of revenge and counter-revenge. A perspective that has yet to gain mainstream notoriety is the personality perspective. Personality traits influence an individual's appraisal of revenge. Using the HEXACO (Honest-Humility, Emotionality, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience) model of personality traits, Sheppard and Boon (2012) found that those who scored low on Honesty-Humility, tend to view romantic revenge as more desirable. Recent research has suggested that some traits might have a stronger correlation with seeking revenge and counter-revenge than others. It also revealed that low scores on agreeableness were more likely to view revenge as desirable. These findings about similar traits and low scores on positive traits pose the question of the effect of similar negative traits among partners in a relationship. Hence, it might be worth examining what happens when two partners with negative traits react to conflicts.

1.6 Traits and their correlation to revenge and counter revenge

As discussed above, research in the field of revenge and counter-revenge has put forward potential traits that are likely to be correlated with a greater inclination to engage in counter revenge, thereby continuing the cycle of counter revenge. People in a relationship

have the power to hurt their partner interpersonally. Consequently, their partners can retaliate by harming them (Boon et al., 2011; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2007). Researchers have found it fascinating that people are prepared to harm others, especially their romantic partners, despite the unpleasant and perhaps devasting repercussions of seeking retribution. This shroud of intrigue surrounding this field has pushed recent research to investigate the connection between broad personality traits and attitudes towards revenge. Traits such as psychopath, Machiavellianism and narcissism emerge as the primary motivators since these traits have become crucial for forecasting destructive behaviours such as revenge (Rasmussen, 2015). Another trait that has gained the attention of researchers within the field of romantic revenge is vengefulness. Due to its frequent implication with various forms of harm infliction, it appeared as another crucial motivator for engaging in revenge and counter revenge.

Based on the negative characteristics of these traits, the reason for considering these traits as the prime motivator was evident. However, knowing what motivators led to questions about traits that acted as inhibitors or traits that discouraged individuals from engaging in revenge. These questions lead researchers toward examining agreeableness. Based on the high levels of relationship satisfaction reported by the partners of those with high agreeableness, research findings indicated a negative link between agreeableness and the propensity to exact revenge. Due to recent findings, narcissism has been looked at as another potential inhibitor. While there is a growing body of research investigating the field of romantic revenge, another element of this field has so far been overlooked. As stated by Boon et al., (2011), in a relationship, if one person feels that their partner has wronged them, they have the option to take revenge. This tendency is known as counter-retribution, in which a person continues the cycle of revenge. Unlike revenge, there lacks an examination into the victim's response. Some of these victims tend to engage in counter-revenge, yet there is no study looking at the potential motivators for it. Due to the ignorance, there is a gap in the

literature, and preliminary research as only the perpetrators' motivations are measured, disregarding the victim's response.

The current study attempts to fill this gap in the literature and further expand the research into romantic revenge. The dark triad has been proposed as a potential trait that can start and maintain a cycle of revenge and counter-revenge. Coined by Paulhus and Williams (2002), 'the dark triad' refers to a collection of related aversive personalities that fall within the normal range of functioning. The three personality traits that make up the dark triad are psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism. While psychopathy and Machiavellianism have been proposed as motivating individuals to seek revenge, there have been contrasting results for narcissism. Research suggests that narcissists might not be likely to initiate and continue a cycle of revenge and counter-revenge. Additionally, vengefulness might also be a motivator. On the contrary, like narcissism, agreeableness might function as a potential inhibitor, thereby stopping the cycle of revenge and counter-revenge.

1.6.1 What is psychopathy

Psychopathy is a disorder that is characterised by an inadequate emotional response, lack of empathy and poor behavioural control. Psychopaths are more likely to engage in persistent antisocial and criminal behaviour (Anderson & Kiehl, 2014). The concept of psychopathy was first introduced by Hare (1980; Hare et al., 1991); he defined it as a developmental disorder that can be identified in childhood and adulthood (Hare, 1980, 1999; Frick et al., 1994). Psychopaths differ in terms of their emotions and behaviour components. People with high psychopathy experience a lack of empathy and experience high levels of impulsivity and risk-taking behaviours (Crysel et al., 2013). The evidence for this comes from examining and observing neurocognitive impairment in children and adults with psychopathic tendencies (Blair et al., 2006).

As stated, a key characteristic of psychopathy is the emotional component. This component and the behavioural component differentiate psychopathy from an antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) and conduct disorder (CD). Contrary to ASPD and CD, psychopathy is characterised by a pervasive pattern of behavioural (crime and usually violence) and emotional patterns (diminished empathy and guilt) (Frick et al., 1994).

Studies investigating the relations between psychopathy and revenge made novel discoveries. Clemente and Espinosa (2021) found that in the case of infidelity, psychopathy levels were correlated with a strong desire to seek revenge. Rasmussen and Boon (2014) put forward that their strong desire for revenge can be attributed to their inability to predict the consequences of their actions accurately. They have a propensity to overestimate positive effects and undervalue negative ones. Hence psychopathy would be adversely correlated with negative outcomes, such as the costliness or the negative impact on self and others and positively correlated with perceptions of its beneficial effects, i.e., effectiveness or how satisfied they would feel (Ferrigan et al., 2000).

This emotional element, combined with their increased risk-taking behaviours, makes them most likely to take revenge, despite the risks. Their desire for revenge could increase further depending on their partners' response. Even if their partners' retaliation is in response to the psychopaths' transgression, however, due to their inability to understand the negative consequences of their actions, they might exhibit indigitation towards their partner if they feel wronged (Book & Quinsey, 2004).

1.6.2 What is Machiavellianism

Coined by Christine and Gies (1970), Machiavellianism was defined as the personality construct consisting of a tendency to seek tangible goals via any means necessary. This trait had three distinct components associated with it: manipulative tendencies, amorality, and a cynical worldview. Over time, the definition has evolved; manipulative

tendencies, however, stay a defining feature. This can even include engaging in violence. However, it should be highlighted that Machiavellian people are not aggressive or violent (Jones & Neria, 2015).

Callousness and manipulation are common elements of Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism. If manipulation acts as a critical element, how is Machiavellianism different from psychopathy? The answer lies in the type of manipulation. Psychopathic individuals will engage in reckless manipulation, such as lying, cheating, or stealing for fun. On the contrary, Machiavellian manipulation is guided with caution and strategy; that is, they will manipulate as a method to achieve a goal (Bereczkei et al., 2015; Jones & De Roos, 2017). Machiavellian individuals manipulate what people regard as important to motivate them (Jones & De Roos, 2017).

Like psychopathy, Machiavellian individuals have a higher tendency to engage in acts of revenge (Brewer & Abell, 2015). Machiavellianism has a negative relationship with forgiveness and a positive relationship with emotional vengeance. Thus, Machiavellian individuals are more prone to exact revenge or avenge themselves against perceived injustice. These acts of revenge are unlikely to be violent; instead, they are usually indirect, preventing the victims from counterattacking. They also might be quite likely to engage in counter-revenge. Since in case the victims do retaliate, their lack of tendency to forgive and empathise, thereby understand**ing** their Machiavellian individual's wrongdoings, might make them likely to get revenge.

1.6.3 What is narcissism

Raskin and Hall (1979) suggested that grandiosity, entitlement, dominance and a sense of superiority as the defining features of narcissism. Narcissism can be distinguished into subclinical narcissism and a psychiatric diagnosis of narcissistic personality disorder (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010). The current study will focus on a subclinical definition. Sub-

clinical narcissism refers to the collection of personality traits (Krizan & Herlache, 2017; Miller et al., 2017). Researchers generally acknowledge antagonism and entitlement as distinguishing characteristics of narcissism (Campbell & Miller, 2013). There are also known and agreed-upon undesirable behaviours associated with different contexts, including being less committed in romantic relationships (Campbell & Foster, 2002).

Entitlement was the driving force behind the relationship between narcissism and aggression. This reflects a tendency for those high in entitlement to more readily have their expectations violated by being mistreated by others (Reidy et al., 2010). In terms of romantic relationships, while narcissists have an easier time establishing relationships, they tend not to last long (Brunell & Campbell, 2011). This might be due to their reluctance to maintain a long-term relationship or their negative qualities that tend to push their partners away (Campbell, 1999; Sundie et al., 2011). Often, individuals in a past long-term relationship with a narcissist report low satisfaction (Ye Lam et al., 2016).

Unlike psychopathy and Machiavellianism, some researchers have indicated that those with narcissism might not be inclined to seek revenge, suggesting that narcissistic individuals might be less likely to engage in revenge and counter revenge than psychopathic or Machiavellian individuals. Taking revenge might be viewed as other-oriented behaviours and feelings; this could turn narcissist away from engaging in acts that are not self-oriented (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996). These acts also do not help in self-advancement, which is a primary goal of a narcissist (Miller et al., 2017). These imply a negative correlation between narcissism and revenge and counter-revenge. A negative correlation between narcissism and revenge was found in studies such as Clemente and Espinosa (2021) and Rasmussen and Boon, (2014).

1.6.4 What is Vengefulness

Vengefulness predominates revenge theories. Vengefulness refers to a trait with unforgiveness being a primary characteristic. However, unforgiveness alone does not explain why some individuals are more vengeful than others. Additional defining features of highly vengeful people include having low self-control, high self-esteem, and persistent anger. Vengefulness and revenge are correlated (Wisnieski, 2010). The more vengeful an individual is, the more likely they are to engage in revenge or counter-revenge.

Based on McCullough et al., (2003) definition of vengefulness, individuals with this trait are likely to be more prone to regard revenge as an enticing course of action. This assumption was also of interest for research. Studies such as Cota-McKinley et al., (2001) examined vengefulness from the perspective of relationships and discovered that vengeful people frequently jeopardise their personal safety, reputation, and integrity in pursuit of vengeance. They went on to elaborate that vengeful individuals are more likely to find revenge to be a more attractive response to provocation and take longer to find it to be undesirable when weighing its costs and advantages.

When looking at the association between vengefulness and other traits such as forgiveness and rumination, it was uncovered that these individuals tend to be less forgiving and more ruminative. Additionally, they showed constant motivation to seek revenge against transgressors over time as opposed to those low on this trait. Vengeful people are significantly quicker to recognise the advantages of romantic revenge while also being quicker to minimise its drawbacks when they are in a romantic relationship (Berry et al., 2005). As a result, some people can be predisposed to seek revenge after a romantic partner commits a wrong. These traits might explain why some individuals or partners in a relationship are more prone to engaging in a cycle of revenge and counter revenge. However,

other partners might actively avoid harmful actions. Akin to motivators, there might be traits that act as inhibitors.

1.6.5 What is Agreeableness

There are different ways to define agreeableness. According to Goldberg (1992), the defining characteristics of agreeableness are sympathy, generosity, and helpfulness. According to Graziano and Eisenberg (1997), social motivation is a crucial aspect of agreeableness; individuals who exhibit high levels of agreeableness are driven to foster and sustain positive interpersonal relationships.

Based on past research, partners of people with high agreeableness reportedly experience higher levels of satisfaction in romantic relationships (Heller et al., 2004). High agreeableness also fosters the development of trust in a relationship. Trust has been described as one of the most crucial elements for a successful relationship (Simpson, 2007). People who trusted their romantic partners were more likely to make positive attributions for their actions and behaviours (Rempel et al., 2001).

Agreeableness has been negatively correlated with conflicts within the context of romantic relationships (Letzring & Noftle, 2010). This lack of conflict can be attributed to both the person and their partner; the highly agreeable individual is less likely to respond to anger destructively, and their partner, in turn, is unlikely to ascribe blame to their behaviour. Additionally, agreeable individuals actively seek methods or information to maintain positive relationships. Instead of being exposed to harmful or antisocial behaviours, agreeable people prefer to be exposed to prosocial or pleasant stimuli (Bresin & Robinson, 2015). These reasons suggest that highly agreeable people are less inclined to engage in revenge and counter revenge.

1.7 Hypothesis

Given that the previous research suggests that the traits mentioned above might have a link with revenge and counter revenge, the current study aims to determine the relationship between traits shared by both partners in a relationship and how they contribute to the continuation of the cycle of revenge and counter revenge.

This study employs an experimental design. The participants will read a hypothetical situation that asks them to imagine a situation where they cheated on their partner. Depending on which scenario they are assigned, they will have different endings. One is where their partner will forgive them after discovering the affair, and in another, the partner will get back at the participant's by cheating on them. Participants will then be asked to respond to personality measures. The study then goes on to examine the interaction of personality traits and the type of scenario they read with their likelihood of taking revenge. Against this background, the hypothesis includes:

Hypothesis 1: As the level of psychopathy, Machiavellianism and vengefulness increases, the likelihood of seeking revenge will also increase

Hypothesis 2: As the level of agreeableness and narcissism increases, the likelihood of seeking revenge will decrease

Hypothesis 3: Participants with high psychopathy, Machiavellianism and vengefulness scores assigned to the experimental condition will be more likely to seek revenge

Hypothesis 4: Participants with high agreeableness and narcissism scores assigned to the experimental conditions will be less likely to seek revenge.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Prolific, an online platform, was used to recruit participants. Several selection criteria were established for this study: the participants had to be single, they had not participated in a previous study by the supervisor, their approval ratings on prolific were 98% plus and finally that there was an equal number of male and female participants. At the beginning of the study, a participants' information sheet with the eligibility requirements, participants' rights, general project information, and details on how to file complaints were given out. An intended sample size of 175 was determined using Gpower analysis (Faul et al., 2007). The participants were aged between 18 to 74. A total number of 213 participants completed the study. A series of control questions were used in the study to detect participants answering the items without paying attention, thereby following procedures to screen careless responses. Additionally, it was expected that participants would answer all the questions. As a result, 13 participants had to be disqualified because it was believed that they were not paying attention when they responded or because they had not answered all questions. Hence, the final sample included 200 participants.

2.2 Procedure

After reading the brief description of the study, participants provided their informed consent. Key questions like "This question is to ensure that you are attentive to each topic" were used to ensure that the participants had read the questions and responded accordingly. Every question was required to be answered by the participants, and the data gathering did not allow for any missing answers. Their responses made it possible to determine their inclination to engage in revenge and counter-revenge and the trait manifestation level.

Prior to performing the investigation, permission was requested from the University of Adelaide Ethics Committee.

2.3 Instrument

2.3.1 Demographic questions

Prior to answering questions in the survey, participants answered demographic questions. This question included basic questions about their age and nationality. The information collected was kept confidential.

2.3.2 Revenge Scenario/Vignette

The survey was developed to measure the correlation between the inclination to seek revenge and counter-revenge with personality traits. Two scenarios were created for the study. In one of the scenarios, the reader was given a hypothetical where they had an external illicit affair, thereby cheating on their partner. After a while, the reader confesses about their affair to their partner. Although the reader is forgiven, their partner gives them the cold shoulder. In the other scenario, the reader is asked to imagine the same hypothetical, cheating on their partner. This time their partner retaliated by cheating on the reader and not confessing about it. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of the two scenarios. Manipulation questions following the scenarios helped determine to which scenario they were assigned.

Participants read either of the scenarios/vignettes intended to provoke a desire for revenge or counter-revenge. The only difference was that in one condition, the respondent's partner forgave them, while in the other, their partner got revenge. Participants who were assigned to the revenge or experimental condition read the following additional information:

"After two weeks, your close friend texts you that they have found your partner's profile on a dating app, and they provide you with screenshots of your partner's profile for further verification. You share this information with your partner. Your partner admits to you that they've gone on multiple dates but have only been physically intimate on a few

occasions. When you ask your partner for an explanation, your partner responds, "you are making a big deal out of nothing. Also, think of this as payback".

2.3.3 Likelihood of taking revenge

Participants responded to a measure that examined their inclination to take revenge and counter-revenge. The measure consisted of seven items: I would resume my secret relationship, I would change my behaviour and habits to appease my partner, I would do something else to hurt my parent's feelings, I would cheat my partner again, I would give my partner the silent treatment, I would mend our relationship, and I would try to earn back my partner's trust. They indicated their responses on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from extremely unlikely to extremely likely. The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .884.

2.3.4 Dark Triad Questionnaire

Participants responded to the Short Dark Triad (SD-3) scale, developed by Jones and Paulhus (2013). This SD-3 consists of 27 items in total. 9 items measure psychopathy, 9 other items measure narcissism, and the remaining 9 measure Machiavellianism. This study used the original English version for this study. Participants can indicate their responses using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). An example of an item from SD3 measuring Machiavellianism is: "It isn't smart to tell your secret". Psychopathy items from the scale include, "I like to get revenge on authorities". Narcissism items include, "people see me as a natural leader". According to Jones and Paulhus (2013), scores above 3.86, 3.68 and 3.40 for Machiavellianism, narcissism, and sympathy, respectively, are considered good indicators of the presence of the trait. The Cronbach's alpha for each of the subscales was .838, .796 and .773 for Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy, respectively.

2.3.5 Agreeableness Subscale

The participant responded to the agreeableness subscale derived from the Big Five Inventory (BFI) developed by John and Srivastava (1999). The subscale consists of 9 items in total. Example items include "Is generally trusting" and "Is considerate and kind to almost everyone". Participants indicated their responses using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly). A valid composite score representing each participant's level of agreement was calculated by averaging the responses to these questions. The Cronbach's alpha for this subscale was .669.

2.3.6 The Vengeance scale

Participants responded to the vengeance scale, developed by Stuckless and Goranson (1992). The scale consists of 22 items; 12 directly measure vengefulness, while the remaining 10 are reverse items. An example of a direct item includes, "it is important for me to get back at people who have hurt me"; a reverse item includes, "it is always better not to seek vengeance". Responses were then averaged to form a reliable composite score indicating each participant's vengefulness. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .924.

2.4 Statistical Analysis

Correlation analyses were used to establish whether personality traits, such as psychopathy, were predictive of the likelihood of engaging in revenge and counter-revenge. Pearson's correlations were conducted to find if there was a correlation between the answer measures, i.e., the likelihood of engaging in revenge and counter-revenge, with personality traits. Independent sample t-tests were conducted to uncover if there was a difference between the two groups: the controlled and the experimental condition. Another impendent sample t-test was conducted to determine the differences across the five personality traits.

Process by Andrew Hayes, version 4, was used to find the interactions; experimental condition and trait would have an impact on the likelihood. There were five interaction tests

conducted. It was assumed that as the levels of Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and vengefulness increase, those assigned to the experimental condition would report a higher likelihood of seeking revenge. On the other hand, it was assumed that as narcissism and agreeableness levels increase, those in the experimental condition would report an even lower likelihood of engaging in revenge.

3. Results

3.1 Effects of experimental manipulation

An independent sample t-test was conducted to determine if the type of conditions the participant was assigned, i.e., forgiveness or revenge, would lead to different levels for the likelihood ratings. Table 1 shows the scores for the likelihood of seeking revenge among both groups. The results from the t-test showed that participants in the experimental group (M=2.72, SD =.907) compared to those in the controlled group (M= 1.56, SD = .557) had significantly higher scores with p<.001 for revenge rating. This indicated that their partner seeking revenge was motivated to engage in counter-revenge. Additionally, the likelihood ratings for both groups were quite low. As expected for individuals in the controlled condition, when their partners forgave them, it was only 1.56. The ratings for those who participated in the controlled condition, in which the respondent's partners got revenge on them, were not very high, with the mean being 2.72. Results are shown in table 2.

Table 1.

Scores for Likelihood of Seeking Revenge for Both the Conditions

Likelihood of seeking revenge	Sig	t	df	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal Variance assumed	<0.001	10.869	198	-1.160	.107

Table 2.

Likelihood of Seeking Revenge Across both Conditions

Experimental condition	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Forgiveness	101	1.56	.557
Revenge	101	2.72	.907

To examine whether the participants were evenly distributed across the two conditions, an independent sample t-test was conducted. Table 1 shows the proportion of participants allocated to the controlled and experimental conditions. Additionally, the results indicated the extent to which the personality variables were equally distributed across the two conditions. Table 3 shows that participants were evenly allocated and that there was an equal mean difference across both conditions for each personality trait.

Table 3.

Distribution of Participants Across the Experimental Conditions

Personality trait	Significance	t	Df	Revenge Mean	Revenge Std.deviation	Forgiveness Mean	Forgiveness Std.deviation
Machiavellianism	.153	-.148	200	2.99	.785	2.97	.688
Psychopathy	.241	.143	200	2.10	.629	2.12	.685
Narcissism	.164	1.05	200	2.37	.658	2.47	.744
Vengefulness	.588	-.522	200	2.52	.743	2.47	.698
Agreeableness	.014	-1.56	200	3.11	.539	3.26	.403

The manipulation check consisted of questions specific to the scenarios, for example- "broke up with me immediately" and "got revenge on me". Two additional questions were included to separate the participants who had been attentive and provided accurate answers from those who might not have been attentive to the questions.

Results from an independent sample t-test showed that 97 picked the correct option, and only 4 chose the incorrect options that were not specified for either condition. For the experimental condition, out of 102 participants, 87 participants picked the correct options, and the remaining 15 chose the remaining three incorrect options. The results are presented in table 4. The participants that failed the check were included in the final result, as excluding them did not change the results.

Table 4.

Manipulation Check Scores

Question	Experimental Condition		
	Forgiveness	*Revenge*	*Total*
Was happy with my actions	*2*	*2*	*4*
Broke up with me immediately	*2*	*2*	*4*
Forgave me later one	*97*	*11*	*108*
Got revenge on me	*0*	*87*	*87*
Total	*101*	*102*	*203*

3.2 The relation between personality and counter-revenge

The first and second hypotheses examine the correlation between the traits and the likelihood of seeking revenge. It was hypothesised that as the scores for psychopathy, Machiavellianism and vengefulness increase, an individual's likelihood of engaging in revenge would also increase. Bivariate correlation analysis was conducted to check this. The results showed that Machiavellianism and vengefulness were positively correlated with a high likelihood of seeking revenge. The correlation between Machiavellianism and the

likelihood of seeking revenge was r = .147, n= 199 and p <0.05. The results found a positive

correlation between vengefulness and the likelihood of seeking revenge, r =.197, n =199 and

p <0.01. Although positive, they were weak to moderate correlations with 0.147 and 0.197

for Machiavellianism and Vengefulness each.

Like Machiavellianism and vengefulness, it was assumed there would be a correlation

between psychopathy and a high inclination towards seeking revenge. However, contrary to

assumptions, the results indicated otherwise. The results showed no significant correlation

between psychopathy scores and a higher likelihood of seeking revenge in the current

population, with p> 0.05.

Unlike the first hypothesis, the second hypothesis intended to find a negative

correlation between agreeableness, and narcissism with the likelihood of taking revenge, i.e.,

the higher the scores, the lower the tendency to seek revenge and counter revenge. The results

showed that the correlation between agreeableness and the likelihood of seeking revenge was

significant, r = -.288, n =199 and p < 0.01. However, the results for narcissism showed that

the correlation between high narcissism and low likelihood of seeking revenge was non-

significant, with p > 0.05. Results are shown in table 5.

Table 5.

Correlation Between the Individual's Personality Scores and Revenge Rating

	Revenge Scores	Machiavellianism	Psychopathy	Narcissism	Agreeableness	Vengefulness
Revenge Scores	1	.147*	.138	-.042	-.092	.197**
Machiavellianism	.147*	1	.538**	.361**	.489**	-.287**
Psychopathy	.138	.538**	1	.444**	.572**	-.559**
Narcissism	-.042	.	.361**			
Agreeableness	-.288**	-.319**	-.545**	-.123	1	-.661**
Vengefulness	.197**	.489**	.572**	.100	-.661**	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

3.3 The interaction between personality and revenge and counter-revenge

Process by Andrew Hayes was used to analyse the interactions. The process was version 4.1. It allows testing of interaction effects on the moderator, in line with the third and fourth hypotheses. This modelling tool can help estimate two-to-three-way interactions in moderation models, simple slopes, regions of significance for probing interactions, and conditional indirect effects. The third and fourth hypotheses examined the interaction. It was hypothesised that participants with high psychopathy, Machiavellianism and vengefulness scores who were in the experimental conditions would be more likely to seek revenge. The results showed that there was no significant interaction between the experimental condition and Machiavellianism on counter-revenge ($F_{(42.596)} = .0191$, $p > 0.05$), with R^2 of .395. Also, there was no significant interaction between experimental condition and Psychopathy on counter-revenge ($F_{(43.118)} = 0.713$, $p > 0.05$), $R^2 = .398$. Again, there was no significant interaction between experimental condition and Vengefulness on counter-revenge ($F_{(43.71)} = .009$, $p > 0.05$, $R^2 = .403$.

The fourth hypothesis assumed that high scores in agreeableness and narcissism and being assigned in the experimental condition would lower the likelihood of seeking revenge. The results showed that there was no significant interaction between experimental condition and Agreeableness on counter-revenge ($F_{(46.372)} = -.060$, $p > 0.05$, $R^2 = .416$. Finally, there was no interaction between experimental condition and Narcissism on counter-revenge ($F_{(39.045)} = -.0436$, $p > 0.05$), $R^2 = .375$.

These results suggest that despite being placed in the experimental condition, where the respondent's partners got revenge on them, being high or low on the relevant traits did not affect their overall inclination to seek revenge.

4. General Discussion

4.1. Personality traits link with likelihood of seeking revenge

4.1.1. Correlation with motivators

It was assumed that personality traits would directly impact an individual's likelihood of seeking revenge. Furthermore, traits were divided between potential 'motivators' and 'inhibitors' towards the likelihood of seeking revenge. Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and vengefulness were put forward as possible motivators, whereas agreeableness and narcissism as possible inhibitors. A correlation analysis showed that vengefulness and Machiavellianism correlated with a higher inclination toward seeking revenge. The link between the Machiavellian and the higher tendency to seek revenge could be attributed to their low empathy levels. (Barlow et al., 2010) Machiavellian individuals can recognise when others, including their partners, experience emotions such as sadness (Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012). However, this recognition does not result in them responding empathetically. Instead, it is found that they tend to experience positive affect or emotions toward others' sad feelings (Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012), thus, being desensitised to others' suffering.

In a romantic relationship, when a Machiavellian individual's partner experience emotions such as sadness, which might directly impact the Machiavellian individual, they are not likely to feel remorse or guilt. This lack of empathy negatively impacts their ability to forgive. Machiavellian individuals were negatively associated with trait forgiveness and were more likely to make harsher decisions based on emotion (Giammarco et al., 2013). In this study, Machiavellian individuals react disproportionately regardless of how their partner reacts, whether they are forgiven, or their partner takes revenge. Their low levels of empathy and inclination toward emotional vengeance would motivate them to cause further suffering to their partner.

Like Machiavellianism, highly vengeful people are more likely to seek revenge and counter- revenge against their partner. This is supported by findings from similar studies such as McCullough et al. (2001). Vengeful individuals are naturally oriented towards seeking revenge following instances of interpersonal conflict. This natural tendency toward seeking revenge might be explained by their emphasis on benefits achieved from acts of revenge while downplaying its adverse effects (Berry et al., 2005). After the initial transgression, highly vengeful people are reported to have more intense rumination. This rumination thinking further motivates them to seek revenge against the perceived offender (McCullough et al., 1998). In the context of this study, they are more inclined to seek revenge or counter-revenge against their romantic partner because of their rumination and the perception of positive affect experienced after seeking revenge.

Unlike Machiavellianism and vengefulness, this study did not find a significant correlation between an increase in psychopathy scores and an increase in their inclination towards seeking revenge. These results contradict studies such as Clemente and Espinosa (2021). Yet, they align with the findings from studies such as Aharoni et al., (2011) that found that highly psychopathic individuals tend to be insensitive to retribution. Some research suggests that individuals with psychopathic traits might view fairness less important than those with other traits. Psychopathic individuals are less driven to punish for the sake of restoring justice and enhancing cooperation in society. Additionally, they put forward that highly psychopathic individuals are suggested to be more rationalistic in their thinking when presented with a third-party scenario (Aharoni et al., 2011). They might think more about the facts, as opposed to letting their emotions make a decision for them (Aharoni et al., 2007).

Like Machiavellians, psychopathic individuals demonstrate a deficit in empathy (Hare & Vertommen, 1991). When considered together, their insensitivity, rationalistic thinking, and low empathy might explain why this study found no correlation between psychopathy

and increased inclination for revenge. There was a disconnect as they were given a hypothetical scenario; they were given a common scenario rather than being asked to recall an instance from their own life. There was also the possibility that the scenario might not have resonated with their real-life experiences. This disconnect and insensitivity to the situation might have allowed them to make decisions more rationally, enabling them to opt-out of getting revenge. Studies such as Clemente and Espinosa (2021) instructed participants to describe events from their own life, which could further provide support for the non-significant correlation found in this study. Furthermore, psychopathic individuals tend to display proactive or instrumental aggression, which is plan or goal-oriented (Kingsbury et al., 1997). Psychopaths might utilise revenge to control an individual's behaviour for personal gains (Kingsbury et al., 1997). Although they could feel a sense of gratification from getting revenge on their partner, it did not serve to fulfil any goals or benefit to them, which could have further turned them away from seeking revenge.

4.1.2 Correlation with potential inhibitors

The second hypothesis looked at the inhibitors. This study assumed there would be a negative correlation between agreeableness, narcissism, and the likelihood of seeking revenge. The significant negative correlation between agreeableness and the likelihood of seeking revenge aligns with previous studies (Ashton & Lee, 2011). Highly agreeable individuals possess a high tolerance for transgression and provocation, rarely do they react in a destructive manner (Ashton & Lee, 2007). According to the HEXACO model of personality, highly agreeable individuals tend to be patient, tolerant and calm when faced with conflicts. Those with low scores on agreeableness are more likely to hold grudges against their perceived offenders (Ashton et al., 2004). Agreeableness is negatively correlated with the tendency to engage in destructive behaviours, which can also be seen in romantic relationships. Highly agreeable people are less likely to encounter conflicts and feel more

satisfied, especially in romantic relationships (Letzring & Noftle, 2010). Emotions play a

crucial role in how an individual reacts in conflict; agreeable people strive to control their

emotions. These characteristics could explain their lower inclination to seek revenge. When

faced with situations like those presented in this study's hypothetical scenario, they would not

react with anger. Instead, they would control any negative emotions and seek out positive

cognition (Meier et al., 2006). Furthermore, when they encounter situations that cause or can

cause conflicts, they will actively seek out information that will assist them in maintaining a

positive relationship (Bresin & Robinson, 2015).

Despite being a member of the dark triad, some research has suggested that narcissists

might not be as inclined to seek revenge as the other members. This assumption was

strengthened in studies such as Rasmussen and Boon (2014), which found that narcissists

were less likely to seek revenge. The rationale is that they see revenge as an other-oriented

act rather than a self-oriented act, with revenge being viewed as personally costly. The

current studies' results suggested that narcissism does not inhibit an individual from seeking

revenge. Researchers such as Baumeister et al. (1996) have indicated that narcissistic

individuals are likely to engage in retaliation when their ego is threatened. As an inflated ego

is an essential and vital feature of a narcissist, any threats to their ego result in reacting

destructively. Based on the results of the current study, their partner cheating on them could

be seen as a severe threat to their ego and reputation. This might motivate them to seek

revenge against their partner. This destructive reaction is essential for ensuring self-regulation

when their ego is threatened. Narcissists rely on strategies that help in building and

maintaining their grandiose self-view as a regulatory strategy (Sporer & Stucke, 2002).

Again, their partner's actions might have disrupted their regulatory process, and not

responding to their partner's actions could be seen as preserving this dysregulation. Even

when their actions might have triggered suffering or anger for their partner, narcissists are not likely to admit fault, instead choosing to victimise themselves (McCullough et al., 2003).

4.2. Interaction between personality traits and experimental conditions

It was hypothesised that the condition they were assigned to and their personality traits would impact their likelihood of seeking revenge. Those with undesirable traits such as Machiavellianism would experience further motivation to seek revenge, while those with desirable traits such as agreeableness would experience a lower inclination towards seeking revenge. The results from this study did not find any interactions between traits and experimental conditions with a tendency to seek revenge.

Although, currently, a personality explanation is not able to explain why individuals tend to differ in their extent of motivation to seek revenge, however, existing theories might be able to shed light on the results of this study. Psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and vengeful individuals assigned to the experimental condition in this study showed no further increase in their tendency to seek revenge. It was assumed that certain features of these traits, such as a lack of empathy, would further motivate them to counter-react after their partner gets revenge on them. However, this study got a different outcome as there were no significant interactions. Instead, the difference in their inclination could be answered by these individuals' perception of outcomes achieved from vengeful acts. To elicit a vengeful response, the relationship must violate equity (fairness), thereby creating a cost to the victim. This loss can range from material or financial loss to physical or emotional suffering (Tripp & Bies, 1997).

Like other studies conducted within this field, the current study employed a methodology to evoke emotions from the readers that enabled them to seek revenge. This study went further and examined their inclination towards seeking counter-revenge. As equity theory outlines, individuals should be able to identify a loss to seek vengeance. The scenario

used in this study did not outright acknowledge how their partner's action would cost them. Although this ambiguity allowed some participants to come up with their own analysis of the loss experienced, it might have hindered other participants from imagining any loss. This lack of perceived failure prevented them from wanting to restore equity by seeking revenge. Changing the survey, such as by making them recount their anecdotes, could have led to different results. Another essential element of this sample is their scores across the three undesirable traits. The mean scores for all three, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and vengefulness, were relatively low. The respondents provided answers on a 5-point Likert scale. Neither of the three traits saw a score above 2. This differs from other studies where the mean was above 3 (Boon et al., 2011). This difference in the mean implies a population low on the relevant traits.

The experimental condition and potential inhibitors, agreeableness, and narcissism did not impact the likelihood of seeking revenge either. Regarding narcissism, these results could again be explained by their key features. To act as an inhibitor, whatever actions they take should be aimed toward maintaining the relationship. However, narcissists lack the motivation to maintain long-term relationships (Campbell, 1999). In fact, according to their self-reports, they are repulsed when their partners indicate the intention to form emotionally intimate relationships with them (Campbell, 1999). This indifference towards their relationship and their lack of concern about engaging in behaviours that they perceive to be others-oriented explains the lack of interaction. Engaging in the act of revenge or reconciliation might not serve the person themselves or is not self-oriented. Such acts are directed toward other individuals and do not benefit or serve narcissists; hence, they might not be as likely to engage in such behaviours.

Agreeable individual's assigned experimental condition, did not show further reduction in inclination to seek revenge. Other prominent theories that might be able to

explain why this trait did not lower the likelihood of seeking revenge. It was assumed that the

highly agreeable people assigned to the experimental condition would try to devise ways to

mend their relationship or reconcile with their partners instead of seeking revenge. Another

prominent social psychological theory might explain this lack of interaction. For people to

truly forgive others or to attempt to negotiate with their partners, the individual not only

needs an emotional change but also behavioural (Morse & Metts, 2011). These changes can

only be brought about if specific conditions or circumstances are met.

      The levels of satisfaction within the relationship are one of the critical conditions that

play a significant role in an individual decision to reconcile. How an individual interprets the

situations also contributes toward their likelihood of reconciliation. This interpretation varies

among people. The same events might have different variations for people (Finkel et al.,

2002). Although all participants read the same scenario, they are likely to have interpreted it

differently. As satisfaction is crucial to forgiveness and reconciliation, the lack of information

about relational history might have prevented them from trying to reconcile. Furthermore, the

method in which this transgression is revealed also makes a difference; reconciliation is more

likely to happen if the transgressor shows it themselves, as opposed to getting caught through

third-party disclosure (Afifi et al., 2001). In the given hypothetical, their partner did not

disclose their affair themselves, leading to feelings of animosity, which blocked them from

seeking reconciliation.

5. Limitations and Practical Implications

      The "undesirable" qualities, such as psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and

vengefulness, were low for the current study sample. This implied that the study was not able

to accurately gather information from true Machiavellian, psychopathy, and vengeful

individuals or those who were high on this trait. The use of self-report in this study might

make respondents susceptible to social desirability bias. (Zerbe & Paulhus, 1987). The current study did not check for this bias, which might have impacted the result.

The participants were also provided with a common scenario, which differed from other similar studies that employed methods such as asking the participants themselves to write events from their life. Such changes might have impacted the results. Situations warranting revenge also occur infrequently and are the kind of behaviour whose occurrence is difficult to anticipate. Furthermore, as the participants were asked to imagine having an affair, it could be difficult for respondents to imagine engaging in acts that go against societal norms.

It is, however, not easy to generate a common scenario that can evoke the same emotion and interpretation among everyone. The rationale behind using this survey method comes from other studies employing similar methods. It must be noted revenge is one of those phenomena that are difficult to investigate using methods other than self-report.

Future researchers can utilise different methods to examine if they impact the results. Participants can be asked to provide an example from their personal life when they were motivated to seek revenge against their partner. Then they can be asked to complete a revenge survey. For counter-revenge, they could be asked to describe a situation when their partner retaliated against them and then asked to complete the counter-revenge survey and personality questions. This study recruited participants who were not in a relationship; future studies can recruit participants already in a relationship. Furthermore, couples in a relationship could be recruited and asked to describe the conflicts and then asked to complete the revenge and counter-revenge questions along with personality questionnaires.

Partners in a relationship might be more likely to seek revenge and counter-revenge if they are high on traits such as Machiavellianism and vengefulness. Those high on agreeableness instead would be likely to stop a cycle of revenge and counter-revenge.

Surprisingly, this study found no correlation between psychopathy and revenge. Narcissism did not have the expected negative correlation with revenge. Their partners' retaliatory response did not further impact their likelihood of seeking revenge and counter-revenge. These findings suggest possible challenges associated with methodology and the importance of sample recruiting. The findings and the limitations provide direction for future research.

References

Afifi, W., Falato, W., & Weiner, J. (2001). Identity Concerns Following a Severe Relational

Transgression: The Role of Discovery Method for the Relational Outcomes of

Infidelity. *Journal Of Social and Personal Relationships*, *18*(2), 291-308.

Aharoni, E., Antonenko, O., & Kiehl, K. (2011). Disparities in the moral intuitions of

criminal offenders: The role of psychopathy. *Journal Of Research in Personality*,

45(3), 322-327.

Aharoni, E., Weintraub, L., & Fridlund, A. (2007). No skin off my back: retribution deficits

in psychopathic motives for punishment. *Behavioral Sciences &Amp; The Law*, *25*(6),

869-889.

Anderson, N. E., & Kiehl, K. A. (2014). Psychopathy: Developmental perspectives and their

implications for treatment. *Restorative Neurology and Neuroscience, 32*(1), 103-117.

https://doi.org/10.3233/rnn-139001 [DOI] | [CR]

Aquino, K., Tripp, T., & Bies, R. (2001). How employees respond to personal offense: The

effects of blame attribution, victim status, and offender status on revenge and

reconciliation in the workplace. *Journal Of Applied Psychology, 86*(1), 52-59.

Ashton, M., & Lee, K. (2007). Empirical, Theoretical, and Practical Advantages of the

HEXACO Model of Personality Structure. *Personality And Social Psychology

Review*, *11*(2), 150-166.

Ashton, M., & Lee, K. (2011). Getting mad and getting even: Agreeableness and Honesty-

Humility as predictors of revenge intentions. *Personality And Individual Differences*,

52(5), 596-600.

Ashton, M., Lee, K., Perugini, M., Szarota, P., de Vries, R., & Di Blas, L. (2004). A Six-

Factor Structure of Personality-Descriptive Adjectives: Solutions from Psycholexical

Studies in Seven Languages. *Journal Of Personality and Social Psychology*, *86*(2), 356-366.

Austin, W., & Walster, E. (1974). Reactions to confirmations and disconfirmations of expectancies of equity and inequity. *Journal Of Personality and Social Psychology*, *30*(2), 208-216. - for both 3 and 4 (changed in text to Williams & Waslter)

Bachman, G., & Guerrero, L. (2006). Forgiveness, Apology, and Communicative Responses to Hurtful Events. Communication Reports, 19(1), 45-56.

Barlow, A., Qualter, P., & Stylianou, M. (2010). Relationships between Machiavellianism, emotional intelligence and theory of mind in children. *Personality And Individual Differences*, *48*(1), 78-82.

Baumeister, R., Smart, L., & Boden, J. (1996). Relation of threatened egotism to violence and aggression: The dark side of high self-esteem. *Psychological Review*, *103*(1), 5-33.

Bereczkei, T., Szabo, Z., & Czibor, A. (2015). Abusing Good Intentions. SAGE Open, 5(2).

Berry, J., Worthington, E., O'Connor, L., Parrott, L., & Wade, N. (2005). Forgivingness, Vengeful Rumination, and Affective Traits. *Journal Of Personality,* 73(1), 183-226.

Blair, R., Peschardt, K., Budhani, S., Mitchell, D., & Pine, D. (2006). The development of psychopathy. *Journal Of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 47(3-4), 262-276.

Book, A., & Quinsey, V. (2004). Psychopaths: cheaters or warrior-hawks? *Personality And Individual Differences*, *36*(1), 33-45.

Boon, S., Alibhai, A., & Deveau, V. (2011). Reflections on the costs and benefits of exacting revenge in romantic relationships. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 43(2), 128-137.

Boon, S., Deveau, V., & Alibhai, A. (2009). Payback: The parameters of revenge in romantic relationships. *Journal Of Social and Personal Relationships,* 26(6-7), 747-768.

Bordia, P., Kiazad, K., Restubog, S., DiFonzo, N., Stenson, N., & Tang, R. (2014). Rumour as Revenge in the Workplace.

Bresin, K., & Robinson, M. (2015). You Are What You See and Choose: Agreeableness and Situation Selection. *Journal Of Personality,* 83(4), 452-463.

Brewer, G., & Abell, L. (2015). Machiavellianism and sexual behavior: Motivations, deception and infidelity. *Personality And Individual Differences*, 74, 186-191.

Brunell, A., & Campbell, W. (2011). Narcissism and Romantic Relationships. The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder, 344-350.

Campbell, W. (1999). Narcissism and romantic attraction. *Journal Of Personality and Social Psychology,* 77(6), 1254-1270.

Campbell, W., & Foster, C. (2002). Narcissism and Commitment in Romantic Relationships: An Investment Model Analysis. *Personality And Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28(4), 484-495.

Campbell, W., & Miller, J. (2013). Narcissistic personality disorder and the five-factor model: Delineating narcissistic personality disorder, grandiose narcissism, and vulnerable narcissism. Personality Disorders and The Five-Factor Model of Personality (3[Rd] Ed.)., 133-145.

Carlsmith, K., Wilson, T., & Gilbert, D. (2008). The paradoxical consequences of revenge.

Chester, D. S., & DeWall, C. N. (2017). Combating the sting of rejection with the pleasure of revenge: A new look at how emotion shapes aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 112*(3), 413-430.

Christine, R., & Gies, F. (1970). *Studies in Machiavellianism*(1st ed).

Clemente, M., & Espinosa, P. (2021). Revenge in Couple Relationships and Their Relation to the Dark Triad. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(14), 7653.

Cota-McKinley, A., Woody, W., & Bell, P. (2001). Vengeance: Effects of gender, age, and religious background. Aggressive Behavior, 27(5), 343-350

Crysel, L., Crosier, B., & Webster, G. (2013). The Dark Triad and risk behavior. *Personality and Individual Differences,* 54(1), 35-40.

Cupach, W., & Spitzberg, B. (2007). The dark side of relationship pursuit.

Cushman, F., Durwin, A., & Lively, C. (2012). Revenge without responsibility? Judgments about collective punishment in baseball.

Dietz, P. (1986). 'Mass, Serial and Sensational Homicides'. *Rsearchgate,* 62(5), 477-91.

Elster, J. (1990). Norms of Revenge. Ethics, 100(4), 862-885.

Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Lang, A., & Buchner, A. (2007). G*Power 3: A flexible statistical power analysis program for the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences. *Behavior Research Methods*, *39*(2), 175-191.

Fehr, E., & Henrich, J. (2003). Is Strong Reciprocity a Maladaptation? On the Evolutionary Foundations of Human Altruism. SSRN Electronic Journal.

Ferrari, J., & Emmons, R. (1994). Procrastination as revenge: Do people report using delays as a strategy for vengeance? *Personality And Individual Differences*, 17(4), 539-544.

Ferrigan, M., Valentiner, D., & Berman, M. (2000). Psychopathy dimensions and awareness

of negative and positive consequences of aggressive behavior in a nonforensic sample.

Personality And Individual Differences, 28(3), 527-538.

Finkel, E. J., Rusbult, C. E., Kumashiro, M., & Hannon, P. A. (2002). Dealing with betrayal

in close relationships: Does commitment promote forgiveness? *Journal of Personality

and Social Psychology, 82*(6), 956–974.

French, P. (2001). *The virtues of vengeance*. University Press of Kansas.

Frick, P. J., O'Brien, B. S., Wootton, J. M., & McBurnett, K. (1994). Psychopathy and conduct

problems in children. *Journal of abnormal psychology*, *103*(4), 700–707. - 5 and 6.

Frijda, N., & Mesquita, B. (1994). The social roles and functions of emotions. Emotion And

Culture: Empirical Studies of Mutual Influence., 51-87.

Gavrilets, S., & Richerson, P. (2017). Collective action and the evolution of social norm

internalization. Proceedings Of the National Academy of Sciences, 114(23), 6068-

6073.

Gerber, M., & Jackson, J. (2013). Retribution as Revenge and Retribution as Just Deserts.

Social Justice Research, 26(1), 61-80.

Giammarco, E., Atkinson, B., Baughman, H., Veselka, L., & Vernon, P. (2013). The relation

between antisocial personality and the perceived ability to deceive. *Personality And

Individual Differences*, *54*(2), 246-250.

Goldberg, L. (1992). The development of markers for the Big-Five factor structure.

Psychological Assessment, 4(1), 26-42.

Gollwitzer, M., Meder, M., & Schmitt, M. (2010). What gives victims satisfaction when they

seek revenge? *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 41(3), 364-374

Govier, T. (2002). *Forgiveness and Revenge* (1st ed). Elsevier

Graziano, W., & Eisenberg, N. (1997). Agreeableness. Handbook Of Personality Psychology, 795-824.

Hare, R. (1980). A research scale for the assessment of psychopathy in criminal populations. *Personality And Individual Differences*, 1(2), 111-119.

Hare, R. (1999). Psychopathy as a Risk Factor for Violence, *Psychiatr,* 70, 181–197.

Hare, R., Hart, S., & Harpur, T. (1991). Psychopathy and the DSM-IV criteria for antisocial personality disorder. *Journal Of Abnormal Psychology*, 100(3), 391-398.

Hare, R. D., & Vertommen, H. (1991). The Hare psychopathy checklist revised.

Heller, D., Watson, D., & Ilies, R. (2004). The Role of Person Versus Situation in Life Satisfaction: A Critical Examination. Psychological Bulletin, 130(4), 574-600.

John, O. P., & Srivastava, S. (1999). The Big Five Trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and theoretical perspectives. In L. A. Pervin & O. P. John (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (pp. 102–138). Guilford Press

Jones, D., & De Roos, M. (2017). Machiavellian flexibility in negative mate retention. Personal Relationships, 24(2), 265-279.

Jones, D., & Neria, A. (2015). The Dark Triad and dispositional aggression. *Personality And Individual Differences,* 86, 360-364.

Jones, D., & Paulhus, D. (2013). Introducing the Short Dark Triad (SD3). *Assessment*, *21*(1), 28-41.

Kim, S., & Smith, R. (1993). Revenge and Conflict Escalation. *Negotiation Journal*, 9(1), 37-43.

Kingsbury, S., Lambert, M., & Hendrickse, W. (1997). A Two-Factor Model of Aggression. *Psychiatry*, *60*(3), 224-232.

Knoll, J. L., IV. (2010). The "pseudocommando" mass murderer: Part 1: The psychology of revenge and obliteration. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law,* 38(1), 87–94.

Krizan, Z., & Herlache, A. (2017). The Narcissism Spectrum Model: A Synthetic View of Narcissistic Personality. Personality And Social Psychology Review, 22(1), 3-31.

Letzring, T., & Noftle, E. (2010). Predicting relationship quality from self-verification of broad personality traits among romantic couples. *Journal Of Research In Personality*, 44(3), 353-362.

Lewicki, R., & Bunker, B. (1996). Developing and Maintaining Trust in Work Relationships. Trust In Organizations: Frontiers of Theory and Research, 114-139.

McCullough, M., Bellah, C., Kilpatrick, S., & Johnson, J. (2001). Vengefulness: Relationships with Forgiveness, Rumination, Well-Being, and the Big Five. *Personality And Social Psychology Bulletin*, *27*(5), 601-610.

McCullough, M., Emmons, R., Kilpatrick, S., & Mooney, C. (2003). Narcissists as "Victims": The Role of Narcissism in the Perception of Transgressions. Personality And Social Psychology Bulletin, 29(7), 885-893.

McCullough, M., Rachal, K., Sandage, S., Worthington, E., Brown, S., & Hight, T. (1998). Interpersonal forgiving in close relationships: II. Theoretical elaboration and measurement. *Journal Of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75(6), 1586-1603.

Meier, B., Robinson, M., & Wilkowski, B. (2006). Turning the Other Cheek. *Psychological Science*, *17*(2), 136-142.

Miller, D. (2001). Disrespect and the Experience of Injustice. Annual Review of Psychology, 52(1), 527-553.

Miller, J., Lynam, D., Hyatt, C., & Campbell, W. (2017). Controversies in Narcissism. Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, 13(1), 291-315.

Morse, C., & Metts, S. (2011). Situational and Communicative Predictors of Forgiveness Following a Relational Transgression. *Western Journal of Communication*, *75*(3), 239-258.

Paulhus, D., & Williams, K. (2002). The Dark Triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. *Journal Of Research in Personality*, 36(6), 556-563.

Pincus, A., & Lukowitsky, M. (2010). Pathological Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, 6(1), 421-446.

Raskin, R., & Hall, C. (1979). A Narcissistic Personality Inventory. Psychological Reports, 45(2), 590-590.

Rasmussen, K. (2015). Entitled vengeance: A meta-analysis relating narcissism to provoked aggression. Aggressive Behavior, 42(4), 362-379.

Rasmussen, K., & Boon, S. (2014). Romantic revenge and the Dark Triad: A model of impellance and inhibition. *Personality And Individual Differences*, *56*, 51-56.

Reidy, D., Foster, J., & Zeichner, A. (2010). Narcissism and unprovoked aggression. Aggressive Behavior, 36(6), 414-422.

Rempel, J., Ross, M., & Holmes, J. (2001). Trust and communicated attributions in close relationships. *Journal Of Personality and Social Psychology,* 81(1), 57-64.

Shaver, P., & Mikulincer, M. (2006). Attachment Theory, Individual Psychodynamics, and Relationship Functioning. The Cambridge Handbook of Personal Relationships, 251-272.

Sheppard, E., & Boon, S. (2012). Predicting appraisals of romantic revenge: The roles of Honesty–Humility, Agreeableness, and vengefulness. *Personality And Individual Differences,* 52(2), 128-132.

Simpson, J. (2007). Psychological Foundations of Trust. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 16(5), 264-268.

Sporer, S., & Stucke, T. (2002). When a Grandiose Self-Image Is Threatened: Narcissism and Self-Concept Clarity as Predictors of Negative Emotions and Aggression Following Ego-Threat. *Journal Of Personality*, *70*(4), 509-532.

Stewart, Bruce. E. (2013). Blood Feud: The Hatfields and the McCoys: The Epic Story of Murder and Vengeance. *Journal of Southern History*, 79(3)

Stillwell, A., Baumeister, R., & Del Priore, R. (2008). We're All Victims Here: Toward a Psychology of Revenge. Basic And Applied Social Psychology, 30(3), 253-263.

Stuckless, N., & Goranson, R. (1992). The Vengeance Scale: Development of a measure of attitudes toward revenge. *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality, 7*(1), 25–42.

Sundie, J., Kenrick, D., Griskevicius, V., Tybur, J., Vohs, K., & Beal, D. (2011). Peacocks, Porsches, and Thorstein Veblen: Conspicuous consumption as a sexual signaling system. *Journal Of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100(4), 664-680.

Tripp, T. M., & Bies, R. J. (1997). What's good about revenge? The avenger's perspective. In R. J. Lewicki, R. J. Bies, & B. H. Sheppard (Eds.), *Research on negotiation in organizations,* Vol. 6, pp. 145–160). Elsevier Science/JAI Press.

Wai, M., & Tiliopoulos, N. (2012). The affective and cognitive empathic nature of the dark triad of personality. *Personality And Individual Differences*, *52*(7), 794-799.

Wisnieski, S. (2010). An Eye for an Eye: Examining Personality-Based Predictors of Trait Vengefulness. *Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research*, 15(2), 97-105.

Ye, S., Lam, Z., Ma, Z., & Ng, T. (2016). Differential relations of narcissism and self-esteem to romantic relationships: The mediating role of perception discrepancy. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology,* 19(4), 374-384.

Zerbe, W., & Paulhus, D. (1987). Socially Desirable Responding in Organizational Behavior: A Reconception. *Academy Of Management Review*, *12*(2), 250-264.

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire items

Revenge and counter revenge

Start of Block: Demographic

Q.1

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a study concerned with how people respond to unexpected situations. You will read a hypothetical scenario and answer questions about your responses to that scenario and complete some personality measures. The scenario will require you to imagine you cheating on your partner. If you believe this could be upsetting for you, please do not participate in the study.

The information you provide will remain confidential and anonymous. The only identifying data collected will be age, gender, and nationality. We will ask for your Prolific ID so you can get paid, but this will be removed from the final data set.   Data will be publicly available for future learning and research upon publication, but you will not be individually identifiable.

 Please indicate your consent below to continue with the study.

◯ I have read the above information and consent to participate in the study (1)

Page Break

Q.2 What is your PROLIFIC ID?

_____

Q.3 What is your age (in numerals only, e.g., 21)?

_____

Q.4 What is your gender?

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

○ Non-binary / third gender (3)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

Q.5 What is your nationality?

_____

End of Block: Demographic

Start of Block: Situation 1

Q.6 **Please read the following scenario**

You and your partner have been together for six months. After a particularly stressful week, you want to go to a bar on Saturday and invite your partner to go with you. However, your partner declined, stating, " I actually had a long week, and I would rather spend time indoors; you should do the same instead of doing whatever you are planning". You then call your friends, who all agree to go out with you. After a couple of hours of drinking, most of your friends decide to go home. Now it's just you and another friend. You have not known this friend for long, so you suspect it might be awkward to spend too much time with them. Before you decide to head home, the friend asks you a question; this leads to a long conversation between the two of you. Surprisingly, this conversation turns out to be very intriguing, and you spend an hour talking with them. You tell them about your stressful week. Towards the end of the conversation, your friend leans in, and you decide to go for it and kiss. However, you choose to stop it at that and go back.

Your friend texts you the next day to meet up for a coffee, and you agree. Over coffee, you both express that you found each other's company to be highly exciting, could feel a strong physical attraction and plan to start a secretive relationship, with the mutual understanding that this would be a temporary affair. After a few meetings, guilt-ridden, you decide to meet your partner and tell them about your secret relationship; you also admit that you had been intimate with them and disclose that you intend to end your secret relationship. Your partner looks upset, and you think you see tears welling up in their eyes. You ask them if they are

okay, but your partner gets up and leaves without saying anything. You try to call your partner, but they keep declining your calls. After two days, your partner calls you back and says, "look, I thought about it and accept your apology. I can forgive your actions but don't publicly embarrass me by sharing this with others". The next time you meet your partner, they keep insisting that they do not care about it and remind you not to bring this up again.

End of Block: Situation 1

Start of Block: Situation 2

Q.6 **Please read the following scenario**

You and your partner have been together for six months. After a particularly stressful week, you want to go to a bar on Saturday and invite your partner to go with you. However, your partner declined, stating, " I actually had a long week, and I would rather spend time indoors; you should do the same instead of doing whatever you are planning". You then call your friends, who all agree to go out with you. After a couple of hours of drinking, most of your friends decide to go home. Now it's just you and another friend. You have not known this friend for long, so you suspect it might be awkward to spend too much time with them. Before you decide to head home, the friend asks you a question; this leads to a long conversation between the two of you. Surprisingly, this conversation turns out to be very intriguing, and you spend an hour talking with them. You tell them about your stressful week. Towards the end of the conversation, your friend leans in, and you decide to go for it and kiss. However, you choose to stop it at that and go back.

Your friend texts you the next day to meet up for a coffee, and you agree. Over coffee, you both express that you found each other's company to be highly exciting, could feel a strong physical attraction and plan to start a secretive relationship, with the mutual understanding that this would be a temporary affair. After a few meetings, guilt-ridden, you decide to meet your partner and tell them about your secret relationship; you also admit that you had been intimate with them and disclose that you intend to end your secret relationship. Your partner looks upset, and you think you see tears welling up in their eyes. You ask them if they are okay, but your partner gets up and leaves without saying anything. You try to call your partner, but they keep declining your calls. After two days, your partner calls you back and says, "look, I thought about it and accept your apology. I can forgive your actions but don't publicly embarrass me by sharing this with others". The next time you meet your partner, they keep insisting that they do not care about it and remind you not to bring this up again.

After two weeks, your close friend texts you that they have found your partner's profile on a dating app, and they provide you with screenshots of your partner's profile for further verification. You share this information with your partner. Your partner admits to you that they've gone on multiple dates but have only been physically intimate on a few occasions. When you ask your partner for an explanation, your partner responds, "you are making a big deal out of nothing. Also, think of this as payback".

End of Block: Situation 2

Start of Block: Check

Q.7 This question is about your ability to be attentive. Please pick the option that best describes the situation you read. In the scenario my partner...

○ Was happy with my actions (1)

○ broke up with me immediately (2)

○ forgave me later on (3)

○ got revenge on me (4)

End of Block: Check

Start of Block: Revenge DV

Q.8 Please continue to try and vividly imagine that you are in this situation. How likely do you think you would be to engage in the following behaviours?

	Extremely unlikely (1)	Somewhat unlikely (2)	Neither likely nor unlikely (3)	Somewhat likely (4)	Extremely likely (5)
I would resume my secret relationship (1)	○	○	○	○	○
I would change my behaviour and habits to appease my partner (2)	○	○	○	○	○
I would do something else to hurt my	○	○	○	○	○

partner's feelings (3)					
I would cheat on my partner again (4)	○	○	○	○	○
I would give my partner the silent treatment. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
I would try to mend our relationship. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
I would try to earn back my partner's trust. (7)	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Revenge DV

Start of Block: SD-3

Q.9 Please indicate your agreement with the following statements

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
1. It's not wise to tell your secrets. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
2. I like to use clever manipulation to get my way. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
3. Whatever it takes, you must get the important people on your side. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
4. Avoid direct conflict with others because they may be useful in the future. (4)	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
5. It's wise to keep track of information that you can use against people later. (5)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
6. You should wait for the right time to get back at people. (6)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
7. There are things you should hide from other people because they don't need to know. (7)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
8. Make sure your plans benefit you, not others. (8)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
9. Most people can be manipulated. (9)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
10. People see me as a natural leader. (10)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
11. I hate being the center of attention. (11)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
12. Many group activities tend to be dull without me. (12)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Page Break

Q.10 Please indicate your agreement with the following statements

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)

13. I know that I am special because everyone keeps telling me so. (13)	○	○	○	○	○
14. I like to get acquainted with important people. (14)	○	○	○	○	○
15. I feel embarrassed if someone compliments me. (15)	○	○	○	○	○
16. I have been compared to famous people. (16)	○	○	○	○	○
17. I am an average person. (17)	○	○	○	○	○
18. I insist on getting the respect I deserve. (18)	○	○	○	○	○
19. I like to get revenge on authorities. (19)	○	○	○	○	○
20. I avoid dangerous situations. (20)	○	○	○	○	○
21. Payback needs to be quick and nasty. (21)	○	○	○	○	○
22. People often say I'm out of control. (22)	○	○	○	○	○
23. It's true that I can be mean to others. (23)	○	○	○	○	○
24. People who mess with me always regret it. (24)	○	○	○	○	○

25. I have never gotten into trouble with the law. (25)	○	○	○	○	○
26. I enjoy having sex with people I hardly know (26)	○	○	○	○	○
27. I'll say anything to get what I want. (27)	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: SD-3

Start of Block: Agreeableness sub-scale

Q.11 Please indicate your agreement with the following statements

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
28. I Notice other people's weak points (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. I am helpful and not selfish with others (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. I start arguments with others (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. I forgive others easily (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32. I am paying attention to this survey. Please select strongly disagree (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33. I usually trust people (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34. I can be cold and	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
distant with others (7)					
35. I am kind and considerate to almost everyone (8)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36. I can sometimes be rude to others (9)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37. I like to cooperate; goes along with others (10)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

End of Block: Agreeableness sub-scale

Start of Block: Vengefulness

Q.12 Please indicate your agreement with the following statements

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
38. It's not worth my time or effort to pay back someone who has wronged me (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
39. It is important for me to get back at people who have hurt me (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
40. I try to even the score with anyone who hurts me (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
41. It is always better not to seek vengeance (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

42. I live by the motto "Let bygones be bygones" (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
43. There is nothing wrong with getting back at someone who has hurt you (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
44. I don't just get mad, I get even (7)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
45. I find it easy to forgive those who hurt me (8)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
46. I am not a vengeful person (9)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
47. I believe in the motto "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" (10)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
48. Revenge is morally wrong (11)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Break

Q.13 Please indicate your agreement with the following statements

	Click to write Scale Point 1 (1)	Click to write Scale Point 2 (2)	Click to write Scale Point 3 (3)
49. If someone causes me trouble, I'll find a way to make them regret it (1)	○	○	○
50. People who insist on getting revenge are disgusting (2)	○	○	○

51. If I am wronged, I can't live with myself unless I get revenge (3)	○	○	○
52. Honour requires that you get back at people who hurt you (4)	○	○	○
53. It is usually better to show mercy than to take revenge (5)	○	○	○
54. Anyone who provokes me deserves the punishment that I give them (6)	○	○	○
55. It is always better to "turn the other cheek" (7)	○	○	○
56. To have a desire for vengeance would make me feel ashamed (8)	○	○	○
57. Revenge is sweet (9)	○	○	○

End of Block: Vengefulness

Start of Block: final page

Thank you for your participation.

If you experienced distress while completing this study, you are encouraged to talk to someone. Lifeline Australia on: 13 11 14 (AUS) National Suicide Prevention Lifeline on 1-800-273-8255 (USA) National Suicide Prevention Helpline on 0800 689 5652 (UK).

If you wish to raise any ethical concerns with the conduct of this study please contact the supervising researcher and/or the University of Adelaide Chair of the School of Psychology human research ethics committee.

Please click next to be taken back to Prolific for payment.
End of Block: final page