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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DESIRE FOR REVENGE, PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG CIVILIAN MEN

Abstract. In the course of the study, an analysis was conducted of the specific characteristics of the relationships between the desire for revenge and the individual psychological characteristics of civilian men, depending on the directionality of revenge. Particular attention was paid to defining the concept of «revenge» within the field of psychology. **The purpose** of the study is to determine the specific characteristics of the relationship between the desire for revenge and psychological resilience and psychological well-being among civilian men. The following empirical **research methods** were used in the study: the «Interpersonal Unforgiveness in Close Relationships» assessment procedure; the «Assessment of Individual Psychological Resilience» methodology; the Psychological Well-Being Scale; the research questionnaire «Assessment of Attitudes Toward Life»; the «Civic Identity» questionnaire; and the Collective Identity Questionnaire. **The scientific novelty** of the study lies in clarifying the specific characteristics of the relationships between the desire for revenge and the individual psychological characteristics of civilian men depending on the direction of revenge. The findings demonstrate that the desire for revenge toward the invaders/enemies of Ukraine is associated with higher levels of psychological resilience, national identity, and civic identity, whereas the desire for revenge in response to interpersonal offenses is associated with lower levels of psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and psychological resilience, as well as with lower levels of meaning in life and prosocial orientation of personality. **Conclusions.** The results of the analysis indicate that revenge is a multidimensional psychological phenomenon that emerges at the intersection of cognitive appraisals, emotional experiences, personality characteristics, and sociocultural factors. The desire for revenge may arise as a response to experienced injustice and violations of the sense of fairness; however, its enactment does not necessarily contribute to an individual's psychological recovery. It was established that the desire for revenge toward the invaders/enemies of Ukraine has significant positive correlations with psychological resilience, as well as with indicators of national and civic identity. Under conditions of threat and collective traumatization, the desire to oppose an external enemy may be associated with the activation of personal resilience resources and a stronger sense of belonging to the national community. Among civilian men, statistically significant negative correlations were found between the level of vengefulness in interpersonal interactions and indicators of psychological well-being, including subjective happiness, life satisfaction, family relationships, and relationships with other people. A negative association was also identified between the desire for revenge in interpersonal interactions and the ability to contribute to the good under any circumstances, the awareness of the significance of one's own activities, the understanding of one's life purpose, as well as the level of psychological resilience. An orientation toward revenge against an external enemy may serve the function of maintaining a sense of identity and mobilizing internal personal resources, whereas the desire for revenge in the interpersonal domain is associated with lower levels of psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and personal psychological resilience. The desire for revenge in interpersonal interactions is associated with a deterioration of individuals' adaptive resources.

Key words: revenge, desire for revenge, aggression, psychological resilience, psychological well-being, life satisfaction, interpersonal relationships.



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ЗВ'ЯЗОК ПРАГНЕННЯ ДО ПОМСТИ З ПСИХОЛОГІЧНОЮ ПРУЖНІСТЮ ТА ПСИХОЛОГІЧНИМ БЛАГОПОЛУЧЧЯМ ЦИВІЛЬНИХ ЧОЛОВІКІВ

Анотація. У процесі дослідження здійснено аналіз специфіки взаємозв'язків між прагненням до помсти та індивідуально-психологічними характеристиками цивільних чоловіків залежно від спрямованості помсти. Особливу увагу приділено визначенню концепту «помста» у психології. **Мета** дослідження полягає у визначенні особливостей зв'язку прагнення до помсти з психологічною пружністю та психологічним благополуччям цивільних чоловіків. **Методологія.** У дослідженні застосовано такі методи емпіричного дослідження: методика «Діагностика міжособового неприємства в близьких стосунках»; методика «Діагностика психологічної пружності особистості»; шкала психологічного благополуччя; дослідницька анкета «Діагностика ставлення до життя»; опитувальник «Громадянська ідентичність»; опитувальник колективної ідентичності. **Наукова новизна** дослідження полягає в уточненні специфіки взаємозв'язків між прагненням до помсти та індивідуально-психологічними характеристиками цивільних чоловіків залежно від спрямованості помсти. Показано, що прагнення до помсти щодо загарбників/ворогів України пов'язане з вищими показниками психологічної пружності, національної та громадянської ідентичності, тоді як прагнення до помсти у відповідь на міжособистісну кривду пов'язано зі зниженням психологічного благополуччя, життєвої задоволеності, психологічної пружності, а також із нижчими показниками осмисленості життя та просоціальної спрямованості особистості. Обґрунтовано неоднорідність психологічної природи прагнення до помсти, яка визначається об'єктом її спрямованості та проявляється у відмінностях її психологічних корелятів. **Висновки.** Результати проведеного аналізу свідчать, що помста є багатовимірним психологічним феноменом, який формується на перетині когнітивних оцінок, емоційних переживань, особистісних характеристик і соціокультурних чинників. Прагнення до помсти може виникати як реакція на пережиту кривду та порушення відчуття справедливості, однак його реалізація не обов'язково сприяє психологічному відновленню особистості. Установлено, що прагнення до помсти щодо загарбників/ворогів України має прямі значущі кореляційні зв'язки з рівнем психологічної пружності, а також із показниками національної та громадянської ідентичності. В умовах загрози та переживання колективної травматизації прагнення до протидії зовнішньому ворогу може бути пов'язане з актуалізацією ресурсів психологічної пружності особистості та почуттям приналежності до національної спільноти. У цивільних чоловіків встановлено статистично значущі обернені кореляційні зв'язки між прагненням до помсти у міжособистісній взаємодії та показниками психологічного благополуччя, зокрема відчуттям щастя, задоволеністю життям, сімейними стосунками та взаєминами з іншими людьми. Виявлено зворотний зв'язок між прагненням до помсти у міжособистісній взаємодії та здатністю сприяти добру за будь-яких обставин, усвідомленням значущості власної діяльності, розумінням життєвого призначення, а також рівнем психологічної пружності. Орієнтація на помсту щодо зовнішнього ворога може виконувати функцію підтримання почуття ідентичності та мобілізації внутрішніх ресурсів особистості, тоді як прагнення до помсти у міжособистісній сфері пов'язане зі зниженням рівня психологічного благополуччя, життєвої задоволеності та особистісної психологічної пружності. Прагнення до помсти у контексті міжособистісної взаємодії пов'язане з погіршенням адаптаційних ресурсів особистості.

Ключові слова: помста, прагнення до помсти, агресія, психологічна пружність, психологічне благополуччя, задоволеність життям, міжособистісні стосунки.

Problem statement. Contemporary social and security challenges, particularly the consequences of armed conflicts, traumatic experiences, and violations of the sense of justice, have intensified the need to study the psychological mechanisms underlying individuals' responses to experienced losses, grievances, and situations of moral injury. One of the significant phenomena requiring comprehensive psychological analysis is the desire for revenge, understood as a complex emotional and cognitive construct that may serve the function of restoring a person's subjective

sense of justice while simultaneously being associated with adverse effects on psychological well-being. The study of this phenomenon is particularly relevant among civilian men, who, under conditions of prolonged stress, may demonstrate specific patterns of coping with traumatic experiences and adapting to challenging life circumstances.

An important scientific objective is to determine the relationship between the desire for revenge and such personal resource characteristics as psychological resilience

and psychological well-being. Psychological resilience is understood as an individual's ability to maintain adaptability, recover from stressful events, and sustain effective functioning under adverse circumstances. At the same time, psychological well-being reflects the overall level of positive psychological functioning, including life satisfaction, self-acceptance, and the ability to establish constructive relationships with the social environment. Examining the patterns of interaction among these phenomena will contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological factors underlying the development of both destructive and constructive strategies for coping with negative experiences.

The practical significance of the study lies in the potential application of the findings for the development of psychological support and prevention programs aimed at reducing the negative consequences of traumatic experiences among the civilian population. Identifying the relationships between the desire for revenge, psychological resilience, and psychological well-being may contribute to the development of effective psychological interventions focused on restoring emotional balance, enhancing social adaptation, and fostering constructive coping with adverse life experiences.

Analysis of recent research and publications. An individual's attitude toward experienced wrongdoing and their willingness to resort to retaliation may vary significantly depending on personal characteristics, life experiences, and the way the situation is interpreted. Some individuals tend to accept the situation or seek constructive ways of overcoming it, whereas others may perceive revenge as an acceptable means of responding to offense, humiliation, rejection, or other manifestations of hostile attitudes.

In the context of coping with negative emotional experiences, revenge represents one possible form of response. In the scientific literature, it is often described as «an aggressive, and frequently violent, response to the intentional infliction of harm upon an individual or their loved ones» [16]. For a person who has experienced wrongdoing, the desire for revenge may acquire the meaning of a means to restore a violated sense of justice or to reduce the emotional distress associated with a traumatic experience.

According to S. Reiss and S. M. Havercamp [14], the desire for revenge represents one of the fundamental human motives. The researchers emphasize that the phenomenon of retaliation possesses considerable social and psychological significance and manifests itself across diverse cultural contexts. Therefore, the desire to punish an offender is regarded as a universal human response that is not limited by the characteristics of particular societies or historical periods [8].

An analysis of psychological concepts of revenge allows for the conclusion that most scholars primarily view it as a response to subjectively perceived injustice, offense, or harm inflicted by another person. In this context, revenge is not merely an isolated act but rather a behavioral response shaped by emotional experiences and the individual's evaluation of another person's actions. E. Echeburúa and P. J. Amor [4] define revenge as an act that may be accompanied by a sense of satisfaction on the part of the individual who carries it out, as it is associated with the desire to compensate for the experienced feelings of hurt and resentment caused by the offender's behavior.

Another approach was proposed by S. D. Boon and S. M. Yoshimura [3], who conceptualize revenge as a complex communicative and socio-psychological process. Within this framework, the focus is placed not only on the act of retaliatory behavior itself but also on how the participants in the interaction attribute meaning to events, evaluate each other's actions, and develop their own motives for subsequent responses.

Scientific research also distinguishes between revenge as an actual behavioral act and revenge as an internal desire or intention to retaliate [15]. At the same time, some scholars equate or closely associate the concepts of revenge and punishment. Within this perspective, revenge is viewed as a response to a perceived violation of norms or inflicted harm, aimed at imposing certain negative consequences on the person considered responsible for the wrongdoing [1].

A distinct line of research on the phenomenon of revenge is represented by M. E. McCullough's evolutionary approach [12]. According to the scholar, the desire for revenge is a result of human evolutionary development and emerged as a mechanism that may have contributed to survival and the protection of personal interests in the past.

This perspective is supported by other researchers who point to the existence of biological, evolutionary, and instinctive foundations of revenge associated with basic mechanisms of self-protection and defensive responses [6].

M. E. McCullough and C. V. Witvliet [13] emphasize that the desire for revenge is shaped by a combination of factors, including biological characteristics of the individual, psychological processes, and cultural norms. The researchers suggest that revenge should be understood not as an isolated act but as an element of interaction between parties involved in a conflict, in which the harmed individual seeks to respond to a previous wrongdoing inflicted by another party.

A similar perspective can be observed in the concept proposed by J. Elster [5], who describes revenge as a deliberate desire to inflict harm on the person responsible for one's experienced suffering, even when such behavior involves certain risks for the individual seeking revenge. S. Uniacke [17], in turn, defines revenge as a specific form of retaliation aimed at restoring a sense of control through a response to experienced humiliation, offense, or psychological harm.

Some researchers consider revenge not only as a behavioral act but also as a symbolic message associated with the interpretation of the meaning of a particular situation. Thus, S. D. Boon and S. M. Yoshimura [3] conceptualize revenge as a process of meaning exchange, within which not only the actions of the participants involved in the interaction are important, but also their perceptions, emotional responses, motives, goals, and previous experiences.

F. D. Fincham [7] emphasizes that the likelihood of revenge increases when an individual perceives another person's actions as a threat to their positive self-image and as a violation of moral norms. In this context, the primary motives underlying retaliatory behavior include the desire to restore equality, justice, and reciprocity. The findings of empirical studies confirm that feelings of injustice are positively associated both with the desire for revenge and with fantasies about carrying it out [18]. It has been established that the experience of injustice may mediate the relationship between the number of traumatic events experienced by an individual and the intensity of revenge-related tendencies or revenge fantasies [9].

Cultural norms, social expectations, and widely shared societal perceptions of justice have a significant influence on the content and manifestations of revenge. R. Von Sinner and E. R. Westphal [19] emphasize that the perception of revenge as acceptable or effective depends on the characteristics of the individual making the evaluation, as well as on the specific cultural and situational context.

M. E. McCullough and C. V. Witvliet [13] view the tendency toward revenge as psychologically associated with the norm of reciprocity. According to this approach, individuals tend to respond to inflicted harm with actions perceived as an equivalent response to the experienced violation. Such a reaction may be driven by the desire to restore a balance between one's own losses and the actions of the offender.

At the same time, revenge may have significant and unpredictable negative consequences. For a long period, psychological literature was dominated by the view that a pronounced desire for revenge could serve as an indicator of psychological dysfunction. Acts of revenge may take different forms depending on whether they are carried out by an individual or by a group of people. It is important to note that revenge is considered one of the factors that may underlie various forms of unlawful behavior, including violent crimes, stalking, and manifestations of discriminatory behavior.

M. E. McCullough [11] identifies three main functions that may sustain retaliatory actions. First, revenge may be viewed as a means of restoring balance between the parties involved in a conflict, when an individual perceives it as a morally justified response to the harm inflicted. Second, it may serve a normative function by acting as a form of signal to the offender and the social environment regarding the unacceptability of certain behaviors. Third, revenge may be aimed at demonstrating one's personal values, dignity, and the need for respect.

Overall, the ultimate goal of a retaliatory act is often the desire to restore justice: an individual who has experienced harm seeks to obtain some form of compensation or retribution for the suffering endured. The desire for revenge may be associated with the need to regain a sense of control over the situation and one's own position following an experience of wrongdoing.

Thus, revenge can be viewed as a complex psychological phenomenon that combines emotional experiences, cognitive appraisal of the situation, and a behavioral response to perceived injustice. It may serve the function of restoring a subjective sense of justice, regaining control over the situation, or attempting to influence the offender by imposing negative consequences.

The aim of the study is to determine the characteristics of the relationship between the desire for revenge, psychological resilience, and psychological well-being among civilian men.

Presentation of the main research findings. The empirical study was conducted during 2023–2026. It involved civilian men (264 male participants: 136 young adults and 128 middle-aged adults). The empirical study was conducted online, with participants completing a questionnaire via Google Forms.

The following empirical research methods were employed: the «Interpersonal Unforgiveness in Close Relationships» Diagnostic Scale (developed by M. E. McCullough, K. K. Rachal, S. J. Sandage, E. L. Worthington, S. V. Brown, T. L. Hight; Ukrainian-language adaptation by S. L. Kravchuk); the «Diagnostic Assessment of Individual Psychological Resilience» Methodology (developed by S. L. Kravchuk); the Psychological Well-Being Scale (developed by C. Ryff; Ukrainian-language adaptation by S. Karskanova); the research questionnaire «Assessment of Attitudes Toward Life»

(developed by S. L. Kravchuk); the «Civic Identity» Questionnaire (developed by I. Petrovska); and the Collective Identity Questionnaire (developed by R. Luhtanen and J. Crocker; Ukrainian-language adaptation by A. V. Hafiatulina).

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated statistically significant deviations of the distributions of the studied variables from the normal distribution. Therefore, a non-parametric method – Spearman's rank correlation coefficient – was selected to analyze the relationships between the variables. The results of the empirical study are presented in Table 1.

The results of the study demonstrated the presence of significant positive correlations among civilian men between the desire for revenge against the occupiers/enemies of Ukraine and such psychological factors as psychological resilience ($\rho = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$), national identity ($\rho = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$), and civic identity ($\rho = 0.33$, $p < 0.001$).

In addition, statistically significant associations were found between the desire for revenge in response to experienced interpersonal injustice and a range of individual psychological characteristics of personality. Within the group of civilian men, a number of negative correlations were identified between the level of revenge motivation in interpersonal interactions and the following indicators: the tendency to promote good under all circumstances ($\rho = -0.45$, $p < 0.001$), the sense of

Table 1

Significant correlations between revenge motivation and psychological characteristics among civilian men

Type of revenge motivation	Psychological characteristic	Spearman's ρ	p (sig)
Desire for revenge against the occupiers/enemies of Ukraine	Psychological resilience	0.38	< 0.001
	National identity	0.34	< 0.001
	Civic identity	0.33	< 0.001
Desire for revenge in response to interpersonal injustice	Tendency to promote good under all circumstances	-0.45	< 0.001
	Sense of happiness	-0.43	< 0.001
	Satisfaction with family life	-0.39	< 0.001
	Awareness of the significance of one's own activities in life	-0.37	< 0.001
	Psychological well-being	-0.36	< 0.001
	Psychological resilience	-0.35	< 0.001
	Understanding of one's own life purpose	-0.34	< 0.01
	Recent life satisfaction	-0.31	< 0.001
	Satisfaction with relationships with other people	-0.29	< 0.001

happiness ($\rho = -0.43$, $p < 0.001$), satisfaction with family life ($\rho = -0.39$, $p < 0.001$), psychological well-being ($\rho = -0.36$, $p < 0.001$), awareness of the significance of one's own activities in life ($\rho = -0.37$, $p < 0.001$), psychological resilience ($\rho = -0.35$, $p < 0.001$), understanding of one's own life purpose ($\rho = -0.34$, $p < 0.01$), recent life satisfaction ($\rho = -0.31$, $p < 0.001$), as well as satisfaction with relationships with other people ($\rho = -0.29$, $p < 0.001$).

The obtained results indicate that, among civilian men, negative associations were identified between the desire for revenge in response to experienced interpersonal injustice and indicators of psychological well-being and psychological resilience.

These findings are consistent with the results of a number of international studies that have established a negative relationship between vindictiveness and indicators of mental health and psychological well-being. In particular, empirical research has demonstrated that a pronounced desire for revenge is associated with lower levels of psychological well-being and deterioration of an individual's mental state [21]. A number of scientific studies have revealed associations between vindictiveness and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder [18], as well as somatic consequences, including cardiovascular disorders [20].

It was also found that individuals who tend to avoid social interactions or engage in retaliatory behaviors are more likely to demonstrate increased self-criticism and negative self-attitudes, which are associated with more pronounced depressive symptoms [2]. The findings of the study [10] showed that revenge motivation positively correlates with depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, and avoidance of closeness with God. At the same time, excessive self-criticism intensifies psychological distress, whereas a kind and supportive attitude toward oneself and others contributes to the reduction of depressive symptoms [2].

It should be noted that it is precisely the provocative nature of revenge that distinguishes it from the broader phenomenon of aggression. Although experienced injustice may provoke an aggressive reaction, revenge always presupposes the existence of a prior act that an individual interprets as offensive, humiliating, or unjust. In

psychological science, revenge is considered a specific form of aggressive behavior that emerges when an individual perceives themselves as the injured party and believes that a response to the inflicted harm is necessary. Thus, revenge can be defined as an action or an emotion-motivational process involving an aggressive response to subjectively perceived aggression from another person. At the same time, in the absence of prior provocation, an aggressive act may be regarded as aggression but not necessarily as revenge.

Conclusions of this study and prospects for further research in this area. Despite the substantial body of theoretical and empirical research, contemporary psychology continues to debate the conceptual content and definition of the phenomenon of revenge. The psychological basis of revenge is the experience of injustice, which arises from the evaluation of another person's actions as morally wrong, offensive, or unjustified. In this context, revenge may be viewed as a form of retaliation for a perceived violation of justice, as well as one of the motives that may underlie aggressive and violent behavior. Revenge largely depends on the process of interpreting another person's behavior and assigning specific symbolic meaning to it. Not all negative events or interpersonal conflicts lead to the emergence of vengeful intentions. A decisive factor is the subjective appraisal of a situation as humiliating, provocative, unjust, or threatening to a positive self-image. It is precisely the perception of another person's actions as an intentional offense or moral violation that may activate anger and contribute to the development of revenge motivation.

Revenge may be viewed as a specific form of aggressive response that emerges when an individual experiences themselves as a victim of unjust treatment or provocation. Its specificity lies not only in the act of causing harm to another person but also in the presence of a prior experience of injustice and a subjective belief in the necessity of restoring justice.

An important factor in the formation of revenge reactions is the cultural context. Social norms, values, and expectations determine the extent to which a particular form of revenge may be perceived as acceptable, justified, or even necessary. Therefore, manifestations of revenge cannot be considered outside the specific cultural and social

environment in which systems of beliefs regarding honor, justice, punishment, and reciprocity are formed. One of the key emotional factors associated with revenge is anger. The experience of anger often serves as a trigger for revenge intentions, as it is directed toward overcoming feelings of offense, humiliation, or injustice.

Thus, the results of the conducted analysis indicate that revenge is a multidimensional psychological phenomenon formed at the intersection of cognitive appraisals, emotional experiences, personality characteristics, and sociocultural factors. The desire for revenge may arise as a response to experienced injustice and a perceived violation of the sense of justice; however, its enactment does not necessarily contribute to an individual's psychological recovery. On the contrary, numerous studies indicate that vengeful tendencies may be associated with decreased psychological well-being, increased negative emotional states, and difficulties in interpersonal interactions.

The obtained research findings demonstrated the presence of specific associations between the desire for revenge and a number of psychological characteristics of civilian men. It was established that the desire for revenge toward the occupiers/enemies of Ukraine has significant positive correlations with the level of psychological resilience, as well as with indicators of national and civic identity. This may indicate that, under conditions of threat and collective traumatization, the desire to oppose an external enemy may be associated with the activation of personal resilience resources and a sense of belonging to the national community.

At the same time, the desire for revenge in response to experienced interpersonal injustice was found to be associated with a number of negative psychological characteristics. Among civilian men, statistically significant negative correlations were identified between the level of vindictiveness in interpersonal interactions and indicators of psychological well-being, including the sense of happiness, life satisfaction, satisfaction with family relationships, and satisfaction with relationships with other people. In addition, an inverse relationship was found between the desire for revenge and the ability to promote good under all circumstances, awareness of the significance of one's own activities, understanding of one's life purpose, as well as the level of psychological resilience.

Thus, the findings of the study indicate differences in the psychological nature of the desire for revenge depending on its direction. An orientation toward revenge against an external enemy may serve the function of maintaining a sense of identity and mobilizing internal personal resources, whereas the desire for revenge in the interpersonal domain is associated with decreased psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and personal resilience. Therefore, vindictiveness in the context of personal injustice may be considered a psychological factor associated with the deterioration of an individual's adaptive resources.

In future research, we plan to examine how the desire for revenge changes depending on the time elapsed after a traumatic event and how these changes are related to the restoration of psychological well-being.

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