

Anatomy, Social Underpinnings and Implications of Revenge Murder

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Abstract: Revenge murder phenomenon is a complex human emotion that has long existed in annals of history. It has intrigued psychologists, criminologists, and sociologists for centuries. The acts of revenges are often driven by deep-seated emotions such as rage, betrayal, and humiliation. However, the motivations behind its cyclicity are more intricate and multifaceted. This paper delves into the anatomy, social underpinnings and implications of revenge murder, exploring intricate web of emotions, attitudes, and social factors that contribute to this extreme form of violent human behavior.

Keywords: *Revenge Murder, Revenge Anatomy, Social Underpinnings, Social Implications.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Revenge murder is a deliberate and premeditated act of violence executed in response to a perceived injustice or offense. The phenomenon is inherently complex in nature. This paper is categorized into three themes: anatomy, social foundations, and implications. The anatomy of revenge primarily looks at the five elements of revenge killings. These components include the instigating occurrence, emotional reaction, planning, implementation, and the outcome.

Secondly, the social underpinnings concentrate on the catalysts of the phenomenon. Primary motivators of revenge encompass perceived injustice, humiliation, rage, and unresolved historical disputes. These triggers typically incite vengeance and perpetuate an interminable cycle.

Finally, the social ramifications of revenge murder, encompassing the individual, family, and societal levels, are examined. This includes, but is not limited to, a breakdown of social relationships, pervasive insecurity, limited freedom of movement, a decline in ethical morals, displacement, and diminished trust.

II. ANATOMY OF REVENGE MURDER

The anatomy of revenge murder consists of triggering events, emotional responses, a planning phase, execution, and aftermath, which typically initiate another cycle of retribution. In the preliminary phase, for revenge to occur, there must be prior incidents that invariably ignite the want for retribution. This encompasses, but is not restricted to perceived injustice, betrayal or prior harm. This phase establishes the groundwork for a rational emotional reaction,

marked by rage, resentment, pain, and a profound want for justice. The victim evaluates the psychological ramifications of the offense and decides if retribution is warranted.

Upon resolving to seek retribution, the prospective avenger proceeds to the planning stage. At this stage, they carefully contemplate and formulate strategies and means to wreak revenge. These techniques encompass information collection, pinpointing the perpetrator's vulnerabilities, and identifying the potential allies or resources the victim might seek. Subsequent to the successful planning, the act of revenge is carried out. Revenge execution may entail direct confrontation, deception, or sabotage.

Following acts of vengeance, both the victim and the offender invariably face emotional and physical repercussions. This includes the possibility of further conflict or a cycle of retribution, ethical issues, and the moral ramifications of the act of vengeance.

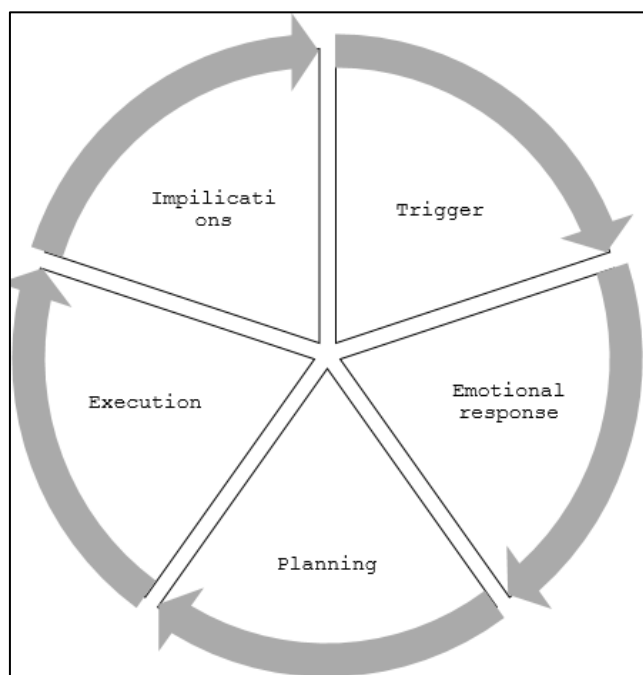


Fig 1 Phases of Revenge Murder

III. SOCIAL UNDERPINNINGS

Throughout history, societies have consistently engaged in feuds aimed at exacting revenge in order to address the perceived conventional and contemporary injustices. This notion largely regarded punishment for offenses as a manifestation of God's retribution against criminals, encompassing divine anger toward murder crimes. Across several eras, civilizations held the prevailing view that seeking revenge might overcome evil by performing acts of kindness or love, even if it involved criticizing those who were not yet capable of behaving morally. This included both legal retribution and divine punishment, whether encountered in the physical world or the spiritual realm. During a specific period in history, there was a significant moment where it appeared that revenge would prevail, bridging the gap between the need for retribution and the pursuit of regular justice. The escalation of vengeance and the decline of conventional means of pursuing retribution were distinct occurrences. Communities, whether stated directly or indirectly, portrayed the escalation of legal penalties as a deterrent to illegal acts of revenge. The conflict between the desire for retribution and the pursuit of conventional justice is a key aspect that defines Grotius' realism or Hobbes' constructivism in relation to the law of nations (Konstantinos, 2021; Taulbee & Von Glahn, 2022; Tognocchi, 2022). Grotius' political science reached this conclusion by proving that any act of retribution could lead to significant danger for what Hobbes referred to as a collective existence (Dumitrescu, M. 2020; Stone, J.2021).

From a sociological point of view, revenge is a behavioral adaptation that emerged as a result of its effectiveness in addressing significant social challenges, such as exploitation, violence, and hostility, which posed threats to the survival and reproductive success of our ancestors during the early stages of our evolution. Psychologically, it can be

understood as a response to the existential dread of being forgotten. Revenge is often fueled by the recollection of previous grievances and losses, exacerbated by the failure of those in positions of authority to acknowledge their wrongdoing and reconcile their conflicting emotions of affection and animosity. Additionally, revenge may be driven by a misguided belief that violence is a means to rectify the perceived injustices and restore order in the world (Sievers, B., & Mersky, R. R., 2006). The inherent hostility and annihilation that it possesses are frequently concealed inside social, political, and economic contexts through a discernible application of objectivity, justice, and competition.

Vengeance killings exhibit a multitude of underlying factors, which can be further compounded by a society's perception of honor and shame. These notions appear to play a pivotal role in shaping the societal standards that dictate the acceptability of certain actions within the affected groups. The occurrence of this phenomenon may be triggered by relatively minor transgressions such as theft and jesting, as well as by more serious offenses like killing. Ericksen and Horton (1992) claim that marriage contracts have the potential to escalate into blood feuds when disputes arise around the bride price. Individuals who experience feelings of being assaulted, mistreated, or socially rejected may exhibit retaliatory behaviors towards individuals whom they see as accountable for these adverse encounters. In accordance with the teachings of the Old Testament, the act of seeking retribution through the principle of "an eye for an eye" is perceived to facilitate a process of emotional release and resolution.

The inclination to seek retribution is often seen as an inherent tendency and a typical reaction in the face of personal harm caused by another individual's transgressions. Robert Merton, an eminent American sociologist, posited that although the inclination for revenge may be inherent and instinctual, it is not seen socially acceptable within our contemporary societal framework. According to the individual in question, the inclination towards seeking retribution ought to be repressed within a society that upholds principles of civility, as it fails to provide favorable outcomes and has the potential to engender further acts of aggression. Merton posited that the prevention of individuals from pursuing retribution was in the societal best interest.

Merton's theoretical framework additionally introduced the concept of a "self-fulfilling prophecy" as a means to elucidate the escalating nature of vengeful inclinations. The concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy suggests that individuals, when influenced to accept the veracity of a particular belief, tend to behave in a manner that ultimately brings about the anticipated outcome. Merton exemplified World War I as an illustrative scenario wherein individuals were compelled to pursue retribution against their adversaries, although this pursuit only resulted in escalated devastation and loss of life. The individual posits that the attainment of sustainable peace in the world is contingent upon persuading individuals to abstain from seeking retribution.

The manifestation of a desire for retribution through a blood feud can emerge from a variety of circumstances, encompassing acts of physical aggression, perceived affronts to personal dignity, conflicts over property ownership, and familial discord, among others. Blood feuds are protracted conflicts spanning multiple generations, characterized by the involvement of individuals who bear no direct responsibility for the original offense or act of violence. Despite their historical longevity, blood feuds continue to exert a detrimental impact on individuals in contemporary society. According to the research conducted by Dagnaw (2018), it was observed that within the Denbia District of the Amhara Region in Ethiopia, various forms of disagreements and conflicts, including but not limited to land conflicts, grudges, alcoholism, women-related issues, monetary disputes, theft, disclosure of confidential information, and other conflicts arising from daily interactions, consistently culminate in acts of blood vengeance killings. Land conflicts have emerged as a prominent issue, exerting a significant toll on human lives and societal well-being. These conflicts have been identified as the primary catalyst for fatalities and devastation, affecting both people and entire communities. They have been found to be the primary instigator of acts of homicide and widespread chaos inside familial units.

Social inequality and its perpetuation continue to be the primary mechanism through which violence manifests, resulting in significant global suffering. In accordance with this viewpoint, a substantial body of data supports the notion that justice can be seen as a concept that is constructed by society. It lacks a tangible existence and is confined solely to the cognitive realm of individuals engaged in continuing interactions, groups, organizations, or societies. Previous research on procedural justice judgments has demonstrated that individuals must have the belief that the decision-making process was conducted in a fair manner in order for justice to have a meaningful impact (Tyler, 2000, pp. 117-118; Stewart, F., Barrón, M., Brown, G., & Hartwell, M., 2006). According to Tyler (2000, pp. 117-121), the perception of fairness is derived from four main sources. These sources include the presence of opportunities for individuals to express their opinions and provide suggestions, the impartiality demonstrated by the authorities and the forum, the level of trust in the motives of the authorities, and the extent to which all parties involved are treated with respect.

The global accessibility of firearms has also witnessed a rise, thereby facilitating individuals in seeking retribution against those who have caused them harm. The concept of the "wild west" which derives from the United States of America during the frontier era characterized by minimal regard for legal authority, serves as an illustrative instance, wherein the act of shooting an individual is deemed unlawful, while the act of exacting retribution through a killing is not classified as murder, given that the killing is seen justified. As a consequence of the implementation of legislation aimed at deterring such acts, along with the pervasive influence of media, the societal repercussions of this form of retaliatory homicide have diminished over time. While revenge killing is prevalent in many civilizations worldwide, it is important to acknowledge that this conduct is not universally accepted.

Implementing legal frameworks aimed at deterring revenge killing is a viable approach to discourage such acts. Modern societies have implemented legal frameworks to deter acts of retaliatory homicide. Nevertheless, contemporary civilizations continue to engage in acts of vengeance killings as a result of diverse cultural and theological convictions held by different groups.

IV. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Retaliatory homicides have significant and frequently catastrophic societal consequences, impacting individuals, families, and communities in a profound manner. The social ramifications extend beyond the direct individuals affected and those responsible, exerting an influence on the broader structure of society. The phenomenon of seeking retribution against individuals or groups that have inflicted unwarranted harm onto oneself, or one's affiliated community can be characterized as an impetuous, gratifying, merciless, and unquenchable impulse (Sievers & Mersky, 2006). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that in certain instances, the act of seeking retribution might result in the demise of the individual carrying out the vengeful actions while causing harm to others. Despite the prevailing acceptance of revenge killing in contemporary culture, it is imperative to acknowledge the manifold adverse social consequences associated with this practice.

Vengeance killings have been observed to have various societal effects, such as the erosion of social cohesion, restrictions on freedom of movement, a pervasive deterioration in moral values, diminished trust among individuals, and the emergence of irrational migration patterns due to heightened insecurity. The profound hostilities driven by retaliatory homicides can impede endeavors towards healing. Communities may exhibit reluctance to forgive and progress, so preserving a culture characterized by animosity and suspicion. The endangerment of public safety can also arise from retribution, which is fueled by violent cycles, societal disturbance, and persistent prejudice against the offender's families. Additionally, it is noteworthy that developmental attempts may be impeded as individuals tend to prioritize security measures, disregarding the fundamental issues and societal circumstances that serve as the primary catalysts for criminal activity. In addition to fostering the perpetration of human rights abuses and violations, vengeful circumstances also contribute to an escalation in instances of violent crime, social marginalization, and the displacement of the perpetrator's family. Communities impacted by retaliatory homicides may undergo internal displacement or become refugees, exacerbating the destabilization of social frameworks. Displaced populations frequently encounter difficulties in adjusting to unfamiliar surroundings and may bear the psychological burden of violence.

Additional ramifications encompass the proliferation of cultural stereotypes and heightened sentiments of wrath, frustration, and despair. Communities linked to retaliatory homicides may encounter stigmatization and discrimination. This might lead to social ostracism, rendering it arduous for

individuals to reconstruct their life and reintegrate into society. Retaliatory homicides frequently sustain a cycle of violence, as each act of revenge may trigger other reprisals. This recurring pattern might generate an environment of continuous strife, rendering it arduous for societies to recover and progress. The act of seeking vengeance invariably results in detrimental consequences for all parties engaged in a state of hostility. This scenario gives rise to a circumstance wherein the parties involved in the disagreement find themselves unable to resolve their issue through communicative means due to a loss of trust and confidence in each other. Also, individuals who lack direct awareness of the initial act of homicide or the perpetrator's underlying motives are also subjected to victimization.

In numerous instances, the pursuit of retribution has been observed to incite heightened levels of violent confrontation, leading to the polarization of communities and an escalation in the overall number of fatalities. During instances of cyclical retribution, there is a consistent increase in criminal activity. This phenomenon occurs as a result of other social collectives seeking to exploit retributive measures in order to advance their illicit endeavors. During the periods of sectarian unrest in Iraq in 2012 and the Muslim Brotherhood violence in Egypt from 2013 to 2014, multiple armed organizations and criminal networks were implicated. Various armed factions seek to exploit the escalation of societal unrest in order to leverage vengeance as a means to acquire authority.

Revenge killings frequently result in trauma and psychological distress, which are prevalent social consequences. Those who are directly impacted by acts of revenge killings, as well as those who witness such violence and reside in areas affected by it, may undergo significant trauma and psychological distress. Widespread apprehension and sorrow might result in enduring impacts on one's psychological well-being. Retaliatory homicides can exert a long-lasting influence on subsequent generations. Children raised in violent situations may experience trauma, resulting in a cycle of enduring psychological and social difficulties that continue for generations. Revenge killings may also cause social upheaval in the field of education. It is possible that schools could be compelled to shut down, resulting in disruptions to students' studies, which could have lasting effects on both personal and societal progress.

Another significant consequence is the erosion of social solidarity. Retaliatory homicides have the potential to disrupt the cohesion of societal structures. Distrust can undermine relationships between neighbors, acquaintances, and even family members, resulting in heightened social isolation and a deterioration of communal connections. Revenge killings have the potential to strain or destroy families and relationships throughout communities. Fractured social networks might occur due to perceived allegiances or engagement in the conflict, resulting in divisions. Revenge killings can contribute to the normalization of violence and undermine society norms and values. An environment characterized by a desire for revenge and retaliation can

overshadow the value placed on human life and the pursuit of peaceful methods for resolving conflicts.

The practice of blood revenge can exert influence on individuals' marital experiences within certain cultural contexts. In the event where a close family member of one spouse is implicated in the homicide of a close family member of the other spouse, the couple may be eligible to pursue a divorce. Nevertheless, in certain cases, this issue can be remedied. In the context of Nuer culture, it is customary for the elders to deliberate upon cases where a close relative of one spouse is slain by a relative of the other spouse. In such situations, the elders possess the authority to determine the continuation or termination of the marriage. This practice is rooted in the belief that allowing a man and a woman to remain in a marital relationship tainted by bloodshed is deemed as an abhorrent transgression. Nevertheless, the persistence of the marriage connection may be allowed subject to specific circumstances. Typically, the killing of a cow in sacrifice is required in a ritual procedure aimed at fostering familial unity and preventing the occurrence of an undesirable event. This method denotes the performance of a bone-breaking ceremony. Consequently, with the breakage of the bone, the ethereal presence of a deceased family member ceases to afflict the living.

V. CONCLUSION

Retaliatory killing has inflicted considerable pain upon individuals and communities under the prevailing societal framework. There exists a subset of individuals who opt to contest the prevailing legal framework, a phenomenon that impedes the progress and harmony of society due to the incongruity or even antagonism between several social values and the law. When the existing social order and moral values fail to preserve legal norms, they compromise the efficacy of the rule of law. The adherence to the rule of law, as posited by social contract theory, is not a principle that finds widespread favor among contemporary cultures. Because retaliatory murder has negative effects on society, it is the job of formal institutions to address prevalent social concerns by prioritizing the implementation of stronger security measures. The primary purpose of establishing states was to ensure the provision of justice and security for the individuals inhabiting them. These tasks encompass the augmentation of law enforcement personnel and allocation of budgetary resources to enhance living conditions.

The implementation of stringent penalties for these offenses is perceived to enhance societal integration and ensure public welfare. However, if these penalties surpass the severity of those imposed for other criminal acts, the efficacy of the legal system in achieving its desired objectives may be compromised. While the prevailing consensus among philosophers is in favor of the right to self-defense, some scholars raise ethical concerns regarding the permissibility of employing disproportionate force that may result in the killing of an assailant. This group expresses their opposition to a life lacking in justice and asserts the imperative for the government to maintain social order by safeguarding the civil liberties of individuals.

To successfully combat the societal consequences of revenge killings, it is imperative to implement a holistic approach that includes trauma-informed care, community-based interventions, and activities aimed at fostering reconciliation and social cohesion. Restoring confidence and cultivating a feeling of safety are vital measures in minimizing the enduring societal repercussions of retaliatory homicides. Ultimately, it is essential to understand the anatomy, social underpinnings, and implications of revenge murder in order to prevent and address this vicious phenomenon.

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