

# Study suggests negative actions cascade to third parties

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

When individuals suffer a loss of resources due to the actions of others, they often aim to recoup these resources directly from those responsible.

A University of Tsukuba study delves into this [behavior](#), revealing that such negative behaviors do not just affect the immediate victim. Often,

the person suffering the loss may also retaliate against an unrelated third party to compensate for their [losses](#). The study is published in the journal *PLOS ONE*.

Humans are known for their remarkable propensity for cooperation compared with other species. They engage in direct reciprocity, wherein they return kindness when it is shown to them. Additionally, there is the practice of "sharing," wherein a beneficiary of [cooperation](#) pays it forward to a third party who was not involved initially.

Conversely, when one faces loss due to negative behavior from another person, retaliation is a common response. However, there has not been much quantitative analysis to measure how such [negative behavior](#) spills over to unrelated third parties when direct retaliation is not an option.

This study fills that void with a comprehensive quantitative approach. The results indicate that when individuals face resource loss, they are inclined to seek compensation not only from the immediate offender but also from unrelated third parties. This holds true irrespective of whether the loss was caused intentionally or accidentally.

Previously, this research group had underscored the importance of intentions in cooperative behavior involving third parties. The current study, however, highlights that negative actions, especially those that result in losses, can ripple out to third parties regardless of the initial intent.

Gaining insights into these behavioral dynamics is vital for nurturing a harmonious and cooperative societal framework.

**More information:** Ryohei Umetani et al, Individuals reciprocate negative actions revealing negative upstream reciprocity, *PLOS ONE* (2023). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0288019](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0288019)

Provided by University of Tsukuba

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