

Impact of Personality Types on Sadism and Schadenfreude in Adults

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Abstract

Objective: The study examined the impact of personality types on sadism and schadenfreude in adults.

Study type, settings & duration: This descriptive study was conducted at Sargodha District from October 2019 to December 2020.

Methodology: New Five Factors Inventory, short sadistic Impulse Scale and schadenfreude scale were used for data collection from university students (N = 300).

Results: Findings revealed that neuroticism has positive correlation with sadism and schadenfreude while extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness have negative correlation with sadism and schadenfreude. Openness to experience as a personality trait was not significantly correlated with sadism and schadenfreude. Additionally, regression analyses revealed that neuroticism and conscientiousness significantly predicted sadism while only agreeableness come out as a significant predictor of schadenfreude.

Conclusion: The findings have important implications in the field of personality and human relations. The findings can be used for understating the nature of different personalities having tendencies of negative emotions of sadism and schadenfreude.

Key words: Personality types, neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness, sadism, schadenfreude.

Introduction

The study is being conducted on the association of personality traits with two negative emotions including schadenfreude and sadism. Schadenfreude refers to the feeling of pleasure at the miseries of others. On the other hand, sadism is the pleasure people seek while creating troubles for others. In personality psychology, theory of Big Five Factors is dominant model.¹ These are generally categorized openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

Sadistic inclinations can be observed in regular humans although traditionally sadism regarded as sexual sickness that are exceptional to criminals.² Everyday sadism embarrasses others, demonstrates a longstanding example of brutal or disparaging conduct to others, or deliberately perpetrates physical, sexual or mental agony or enduring on others with a specific end goal to affirm power and predominance or for delight and happiness.³

Schadenfreude is an emotion that adjusts the situation, the expressions of various people when facing schadenfreude as well as their reactions in situations that produce schadenfreude. People differ in terms of enjoying the misfortunes of others. Referring to Smith,⁴ schadenfreude is a natural emotion, but that does not mean that this can be tolerated, especially as it is known that schadenfreude can lead to actions that hurt others. Interestingly, people feel more schadenfreude if a suffering other is deserving of their misfortune,⁵ suggesting that schadenfreude may be related to feeling that justice has been served. Definitely schadenfreude should be investigated further as an emotion that is present among regular people but to a greater extent among those with pronounced sadistic tendencies.

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Authors Contribution

ML, MNR & HY conceptualized the project did the literature search and statistical analysis. Data collection, drafting, revision & writing of manuscript were done by ML & MNR.

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Personality is usually considered as collection of thoughts, feelings and behavior that describe a unique pattern of adaptation of a person. So personality is actually a trait and characteristics that relatively constant over time. Every individual has a unique personality in which every person is different from others. Development of Five-Factor model has been attributed to increasing empirical interest in personality. These factors are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism.⁶ Five-Factor personality model of Costa and McCrae's is a most comprehensive model.⁷

Openness to experience involve as the depth and complexity of an individual's mental life and reports.⁷ It's also every now and then known as mind or creativeness. People who are high in conscientiousness are efficient and well-organized. They are dutiful, self-discipline and behave in organized and in planned manner. They are purposeful and punctual. Energetic and outgoing people are high on extraversion. They mostly enjoy company of other people and have positive emotions. They are cheerful, lively and sociable. Highly agreeable individuals are friendly and compassionate. These are characterized by trust, modesty and compassion. People high in neuroticism are sensitive and anxious. They are more to irritated, vulnerable, show much anger and depression.⁸ People with tremendous emotional have a tendency to be fearful, annoying, depressed, and insecure.⁹

There is a significant correlation between sadism and personality types. Neurotic people will be high on negative emotions.¹⁰ Neurotic people have lower self-esteem and are more impulsive. Due to high level of pessimism, neurotic people will have sadistic tendencies.¹¹ People with high neuroticism enjoy by hearting others. They are very impulsive and react quickly.¹²

Individual with higher level of neuroticism will be more likely to perform high on envy and frustration.¹³ Due to increase level of frustration, neurotic people will heart others mentally or physically. They are frequently jealous and have higher level of anxiety. They consider minor situation more threatening and hopelessly difficult.

In contrast to neuroticism, extroverts experience positive emotion and behave in a positive manner.¹⁴ Extrovert people are very energetic and outgoing. These people have positive emotions and they are able to enjoy company of others. Extroverts are cheerful and lively.⁸ Research shows that extroverts are high on sadism whereas people with high openness love to meet with new people. Such individuals manifest spirituality in their

self, with their family and peers. They are mostly spiritual and mostly avoid creating harm to others. They experience variety of emotions and enjoy arts.¹⁴

Agreeableness will be negatively correlated with sadism. Individual with higher level of agreeableness is highly motivated to develop and maintain positive relations with others.¹⁵ These persons are friendly and compassionate. They not often observed via cruelty, ruthlessness, or selfishness. They do not hurt other individuals. They are more genuinely concerned about others. Individuals excessive in agreeableness are probably to have many pricey pals and an excellent dating with circle of relative's contributors.¹⁶

Conscientiousness will be negativity correlated with sadism. Individuals high in Conscientiousness are efficient and well organized.¹⁴ They are dutiful and are well-disciplined. Excessive conscious man or woman is responsible, prepared, reliable, and persistent. High scores on conscientiousness also are likely to fee order, obligation, achievement, and willpower, and consciously exercise deliberation and work closer to expanded competence¹⁵. They do not interfere in the life of others. Such individuals focus on their own happiness which is gained through the success and achievement of their own life.¹⁷

Numerous studies verified the relation of five personality developments to schadenfreude. The big five includes the character developments extraversion (talkative, assertive, gregarious), neuroticism (emotionally unstable, demanding, worrisome, insecure), agreeableness (good natured, forgiving, tolerant) conscientiousness (careful, thorough, organized, reliable) and openness to enjoy (innovative, curious, creative).¹⁸ The big five personality trends have been related to schadenfreude in each expected and surprising ways. Schadenfreude is reported to be linked with neuroticism, and unrelated to agreeableness and conscientiousness.¹⁹

Openness to experience individuals is very sensitive.²⁰ They want to explore new things.²¹ Open to experience individuals are spiritually high and do not find pleasure and happiness by seeing others in difficult situation. Agreeable people are very friendly and cooperative. They mostly show genuine concern for the welfare of other. They mostly form stable relationship with other. These individuals are very low on schadenfreude tendency. Individual high on conscientiousness is well-organized and disciplined.⁷ They are concern about their own life. They are dutiful and goal directed.²² They are purposeful. Such Individuals do not concern about others. They are low on schadenfreude.

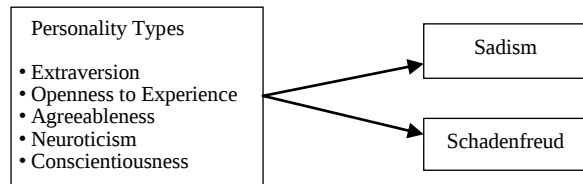


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Sample of the present study consisted of adults (N = 300) with age ranged from 18 to 30 years (M = 21.21, SD = 1.87). Both men (n = 97, 32.3%) and women (n = 203, 67.7%) participated in the study. Residents of rural areas (n = 177, 59%) and urban areas (n = 123, 41%) participated in the study. The education of the participants was BS (n = 232, 77.3%), M. Sc. (n = 61, 20.3%) and M. Phil (n = 7, 2.3%). Data was collected from Sargodha District.

Neo-Five Factors Personality Inventory²³ consisted of 60 items and 5 subscales including extroversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Each subscale consisted of 12 items. The scale is based on 5-point rating scale. Minimum score on subscale can be 12 and maximum can be 60. There are low and high scores in the scale and no cut of scores. The reliability of the subscales ranges from .60 to .86. The authors validated this inventory and established its five factors structure through factor analysis. Short Sadistic Impulse scale¹¹ contains 10 items that measure a dispositional tendency to enjoy hurting others. Items rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*agree at somewhat*) to 5 (*disagree at somewhat*). The high score on the scale is 50 and low score is 10. There are low and high scores in the scale and no cut off scores. The scale reliability is .86. Factorial and construct validity of the scale was established by the authors of the scale. Schadenfreude scale²⁴ contains 28 items. Participants responded to the statements on a 5-point Likert scale. All the items are negatively worded and there is no reverse item in the scale. Sample item is "on the loss of the people to whom you get jealous of". The high score is 140 and low score 28 on the scale. There are low and high scores in the scale and no cut of scores. The scale alpha reliability is .91 and it is a construct valid scale.

In the present study, participants were approached in their respective departments by researchers to collect data. After taking permission, administrative heads were requested to provide the written permission to collect the information from the

immediate participants. A brief introduction regarding importance, implications and objective of the study was provided by researchers those who are willing to participate in the study, were requested to sign the inform consent. During the completion of questionnaires, the researchers remained physically present and vigilant. The researchers requested the participants to provide the information in the respective section of the questionnaire, in case if any question was left blank. The response rate was 99% as out of 300 questionnaires, 3 were remain blank or incomplete. About 20 to 25 minutes were consumed in the completion of the scales. Overall, response of the participants was encouraging. The researchers paid special thanks to the participants at the end because of their voluntarily participation in the study without taking any tangible incentive.

Descriptive statistics, alpha reliability analysis and normality analysis was computed for all variables. Pearson correlation examined the relationship among constructs. Multiple Regression analysis was computed to examine the effect of personality types on sadism and schadenfreude among adults.

The Ethical approval was obtained from Board of Studies and Research of University of Lahore, Lahore.

Results

Among all 67% were females and 59% were rural residents (Table-1).

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of participants.

Demographic Variables		f	%
Gender	Men	97	32.3%
	Women	203	67.7%
Residence	Rural	123	59%
	Urban	177	41%
Class	BS	232	77.3%
	M. Sc.	61	20.3%
	M. Phil	7	2.3%

Table-2 shows all scales have satisfactory alpha coefficients ($\alpha > .70$). The values of skewness and kurtosis for all scales and subscales were less than $+/- 1$, which revealed that data is normally distributed. The alpha reliability of the subscales of NEO Five Factor Inventory, Sadistic Impulse scale and Schadenfreude scale was computed by using alpha reliability analysis which

confirms that scales were reliable and data was internally consistent on these scales. After ensuring the reliability construct, validity of the scales were ensured by computing Pearson correlation among response and predictor variables and the relationship among variables indicated that they were theoretically consistent, desirable and which confirms that the scales were convergent valid and construct valid.

Table 3(a) shows the value of .10 indicates that personality types explained 10% variance in the sadism with $F(5, 294) = 6.30, p < .001$. The findings indicated that neuroticism negatively predicted sadism ($\beta = -.13, p < .05$) whereas conscientiousness ($\beta = .18, p < .01$) positively predicted sadism. Remaining personality types have not-significant effect on sadism.

Table 3(b) shows that the value of .10 indicates that personality types explained 10% variance in the schadenfreude with $F(5, 294) = 6.41, p < .001$. The findings indicated that agreeableness negatively predicted schadenfreude ($\beta = -.18, p < .01$). Remaining personality types have not-significant effect on sadism. The value of the Tolerance ranged from .71 to .95 and the values of Variance inflation Factor (VIF) ranged from 1.05 to 1.39 which revealed that multicollinearity is not an issue in the Regression model.

Discussion

The study was carried out to examine the effect of personality types on two human emotions

including sadism and schadenfreude in adults. The present study is conducted on Big Five Model of Personality which has generated a good deal of research in the field on psychology in general and personality psychology in particular.²² This well-researched model has found a consistent research support.²⁵ Big Five Model is investigated with traits (locus of control), states (emotions), trait like (resilience) and state like (anxiety) variables.²⁶ Despite numerous studies on Big Five Model, limited empirical evidences are available on their association with some suitable emotions like sadism and schadenfreude.

The first hypothesis revealed that neuroticism will positively predict sadism and schadenfreude among adults. The positive relationship of neuroticism with sadism and schadenfreude confirmed that neuroticism increases the level of these negative emotions in adults. The neuroticism trait in Big Five Theory is marked with heightened susceptibility to negative emotions. One reason of this negativity can be related to their false interpretation and overestimation of threats in real life situations.¹⁰ These individuals are very pessimistic and manifest set of negative thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. Consequently, due to the pessimistic ideas, such individuals have in sadistic impulses and feel pleasure on the sufferings of others. Involvement in sadism and schadenfreude is also linked with deficiency of emotions-linked skills and problems in emotion regulation.¹²

Table 2: Psychometric properties and correlations in variables.

Variables	M	SD	α	Potential	Actual	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Neuroticism	34.90	4.77	.73	12-60	21-48	-.30	.01	-.24***	-.14*	-.33***	-.08	.19**		.14*
Extraversion	38.10	5.66	.73	12-60	24-56	.32	-.04	-	-.02	.28***	.47***	-.20***		-.23***
Openness to experience	36.38	3.93	.73	12-60	24-51	-.23	.76			-.16*	-.09	-.06		-.04
Agreeableness	38.86	5.19	.72	12-60	22-55	.15	.39				.21***	-.19**		-.25***
Conscientiousness	39.14	5.90	.70	12-60	24-52	-.18	-.47					-.23***		-.20***
Sadism	36.38	5.87	.70	10-50	16-50	-.69	.77							.31***
Schadenfreude	58.19	19.91	.94	28-140	28-112	.37	-.61							-

Table 3: Multiple regression analysis showing effect of personality types on sadism and schadenfreude in adults.

Predictors	Model <i>B</i>	[a] Outcome: Sadism		[b] Outcome: Schadenfreude		Tolerance	VIF
		95%CI [<i>LL</i> , <i>UL</i>]	Model <i>B</i>	95%CI [<i>LL</i> , <i>UL</i>]			
(Constant)	26.16***	[14.81, 37.52]	110.89***	[72.37, 149.39]			
Neuroticism	.16*	[-.30, -.01]	.17	[-.32, .66]	.86		1.17
Extraversion	.07	[-.07, .20]	-.41	[-.86, .04]	.72		1.39
Openness to Experience	.07	[-.10, .24]	-.06	[-.63, .51]	.95		1.05
Agreeableness	.10	[-.04, .23]	-.68**	[-1.14, -.22]	.82		1.22
Conscientiousness	-.17**	[.05, .29]	-.36	[-.78, .06]	.76		1.32
<i>R</i> ²	.10		.10				
<i>F</i>	6.30***		6.41***				

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Contrary to neuroticism, extroverts experience positive emotions.⁶ The second hypothesis revealed that extroversion will negatively predict sadism and schadenfreude among adults. The hypothesis was supported as extroversion was inversely associated with sadism and schadenfreude. Extroverts develop constructive larger social networks and enjoy social relationships by developing more and more contacts.²⁷ Instead of gaining pleasure from others' miseries or by creating troubles for others, extroverts enjoy their positive mood states. Thus, sadistic impulse and feelings of schadenfreude are unrelated to the positive nature of extroverts.

The hypothesis revealed that "openness to experience will negatively predict with sadism and schadenfreude among adults" was not supported as openness has non-significant association with both of the negative emotions i.e. sadism and schadenfreude. As compared to other personality traits, openness to experience is a relatively distinct personality trait which is found to be only related to extroversion in the past research and this factor of personality is considered an independent factor of Big Five Model which is unconventional.¹⁴

The hypothesis revealed that "agreeableness will negatively predict with sadism and schadenfreude among adults" was in line with the theoretical assumptions. Individuals with agreeableness are altruistic and they are highly motivated to develop and maintain positive relationship with others.¹⁶ Such individuals are not aggressive, never get irritated by disagreement with others and they know how to establish good relationships. Individuals having such qualities are obviously not expected to be sadistic. They are socially adjusted people who are cooperative and have friendly thoughts.²⁸ The hypothesis revealed that "conscientiousness will negatively predict with sadism and schadenfreude among adults" was consist with the theoretical assumptions. The positive association of conscientiousness with sadism and schadenfreude supported the hypothesis. These individuals are very professional minded who set long-term goals in life instead of engaging in minor issues.²⁹

The study examined the impact of personality types on sadism and schadenfreude among adults. The findings revealed the role of personality traits in negative emotions like sadism and schadenfreude. Discovering the correlates of subtle negative emotions has long been interest of researchers. More specifically why people feel pleasure while creating troubles for others or why they feel pleasure when others suffer from miseries. The study has revealed how different personality

traits predispose human negative emotions and malicious pleasures like sadism and schadenfreude. Thus, feeling of pleasure at others' miseries is not a situational response rather it is deep rooted in human natures. Thus, adults are by natures designed to feel pleasure at others sufferings. The study has important addition of knowledge in the field of personal psychology and human relations.

Adults provided information on three scales, which were self-reported. Thus, the possibility of social desirability cannot be ruled out. In future research, this matter should be taken into consideration because the personality related variables have direct relevance with the personal life of adults and therefore it is obvious that they be scared of providing such sensitive information. Likewise, the information regarding schadenfreude and sadism was also very sensitive. The data were collected from a single district, which limited the generalizability of data. Therefore, in future research, the external validity of the research should be enhanced by collecting large-scale information.

A good deal of research has been conducted on the six universal emotions, their antecedents and consequences. Relatively less literature is available on more subtle emotions like schadenfreude, for which the scale was developed in the current decade. This the present study is valuable addition in the existing body of scientific knowledge in terms of the role of personality traits in predicting these subtle human emotions.

Emotions are traditionally taken as situational responses to some emotion-arousing stimuli. But the present study has taken a unique perspective to anticipate emotions from the deep-rooted human natures. Thus, the study has uncovered that fact that these subtle emotions of feeling pleasure at others' sufferings and gaining pleasure by creating troubles for others, are in fact reflection of the human natures, rather than simple response to environmental stimuli. Thus, the personality-emotions dichotomy is established to explain these complex but important relationships. It is applied research, which shares empirical evidences to know that which type of people have which sort of negative emotions.

Conflict of interest: None declared.

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