

## Effect of revenge on sadism and schadenfreude in clinical and non-clinical adults: moderating role of misanthropic beliefs

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### Abstract

**Objective:** To investigate the concept of moderating effect of misanthropic beliefs in the relationship involving revenge tendencies, sadism and schadenfreude among clinical and non-clinical adults.

**Method:** The cross-sectional study was conducted at the Department of Psychology, University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan, over a period of one year from 2017 to 2018, and comprised adults aged 22-65 years in both clinical and non-clinical settings enrolled from the University of Sargodha, Punjab Institute of Mental Health and the Fountain House. Data was collected using Vengeance, Misanthropic, Short Sadistic Impulse and Perceived Schadenfreude scales. Data was analysed using SPSS 23.

**Results:** Of the 500 subjects, 250 (50%) each were in the clinical and non-clinical groups. Misanthropic beliefs were found to moderate the relationship involving revenge attitude, sadism and schadenfreude in both groups ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** Misanthropic beliefs moderated the relationship involving revenge attitude, schadenfreude and sadism.

**Keywords:** Revenge, Sadism, Schadenfreude, Misanthropic beliefs.

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### Introduction

Misanthropy is a term derived from the Greek words 'miso', which means dislike or hate, and 'anthropos' which means humans or people. Misanthropy is a lack of faith in others and a general dislike for people. Misanthropy is a source of negative attitudes toward others and characterised by a general dislike, disgust, distrust or hatred of humans, or disposition to dislike and distrust other people. It breaks down social cohesion by affecting the bonds between people and their communities. It is correlated with maladaptive behaviours, such as sexism, homophobia and ageism.<sup>1</sup>

According to the general theory of emotions and social life, hostility is the factor responsible for relationship involving revenge, sadism and misanthropy. Revenge is an urge and actions, and within the act of revenge, people react to a wrong by hurting the offender, and it also indicates the desire to pay back for the wrongs. These definitions recognise revenge from general hostility and aberrance and, in addition, outrage and hatred. As opposed to revenge, outrage and dislike are solely emotional instead of behavioural reactions to being hurt.<sup>2</sup> Sadist is a person who humiliates others, shows a longstanding pattern of cruel or demeaning behaviour towards others, or intentionally inflicts physical, sexual or psychological pain or suffering on others in order to assert power and dominance or for pleasure and enjoyment.<sup>3,4</sup> It is

suggested that persons having characteristic of hostility also have revenge seeking behaviour.<sup>5</sup> Misanthropic beliefs associate with negative feelings. Previous researches point out the link between initial negative feelings toward the suffering of a misfortune and schadenfreude, which is a passive emotional experience in which individual feels happiness on others' sufferings when someone else creates the misfortune.<sup>6</sup> Studies have revealed that schadenfreude is strongly determined by negative feelings of dislike,<sup>7</sup> anger or hatred<sup>8</sup> toward others.<sup>9,10</sup> It is clear that there is relationship between misanthropic beliefs and schadenfreude. Literature reveals that there is relationship between schadenfreude and revenge, and schadenfreude categories have also been mentioned, and one category explains revenge as people feeling pleasure with the suffering of those from whom they want to take revenge.<sup>11</sup> Schadenfreude acts as a form of imaginary revenge on the behalf of the opponent and it is acted upon by those who are not in a position to take revenge directly. Schadenfreude is imaginary revenge.<sup>12</sup>

The current study was planned to investigate the concept of moderating effect of misanthropic beliefs in the relationship involving revenge tendencies, sadism and schadenfreude.

### Subjects and Method

The cross-sectional study was conducted at the Department of Psychology, University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan, over a period of one year from 2017 to 2018, and comprised adults aged 22-65 years in both clinical and non-clinical settings enrolled from the University of Sargodha,

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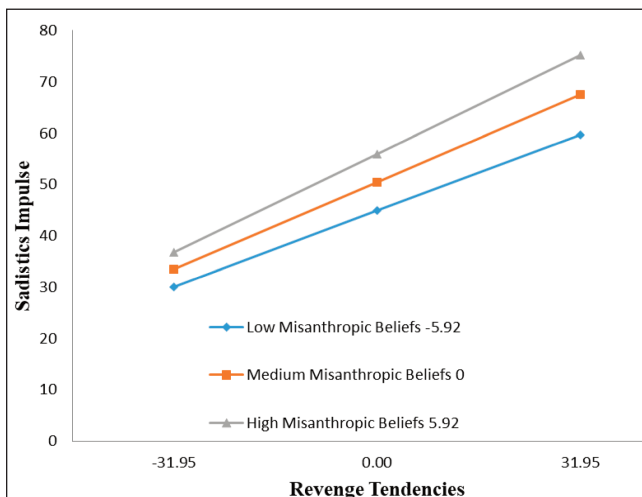
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Punjab Institute of Mental Health and the Fountain House. After permission was obtained from ethics review board of the University of Sargodha, the sample size was calculated using G\*Power sampling adequacy test.<sup>13</sup> The sample was raised using purposive sampling technique. Informed consent was obtained from all the individuals who were approached for the study, and those who refused to volunteer were excluded. Data was collected using a demographic sheet and four scales. Vengeance Scale (VS) consisted of 20 items measured on 7-point Likert scale<sup>14</sup> Misanthropic Scale (MS) contained 5 items designed to measure other dimensions, including ethical idealism, attitudes and misanthropic beliefs.<sup>15</sup> The Short Sadistic Impulse Scale (SSIS) contained 10 items rated on a five-point Likert scale.<sup>16</sup> The Perceived Schadenfreude Scale (PSS) contained 28 items marked on a 5-point Likert scale.<sup>17</sup> Data was analysed using SPSS 23, and was expressed as mode-graphs.

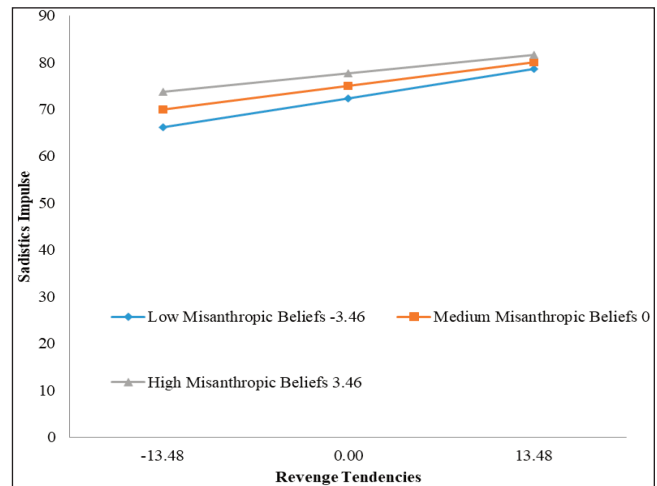
**Results**

Of the 500 subjects, 250(50%) each were in the clinical and non-clinical groups. Misanthropic beliefs moderated between revenge tendencies and sadistic impulse in both clinical and non-clinical groups (Figure 1). In the clinical group, the level of misanthropic beliefs was a significant moderator of the relationship between revenge tendencies and sadistic impulse (Figure 2). In the non-clinical groups, misanthropy had non-significant effect while revenge tendencies and misanthropic beliefs together had significant effect on sadistic impulse (Figure 3).

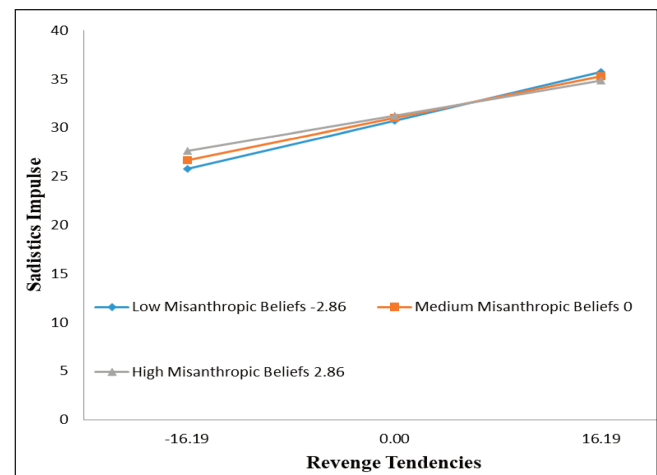
Low, medium and high levels of misanthropic beliefs significantly moderated the relationship between revenge tendencies and schadenfreude in both groups (Figure 4). In the clinical group, there was positive relationship



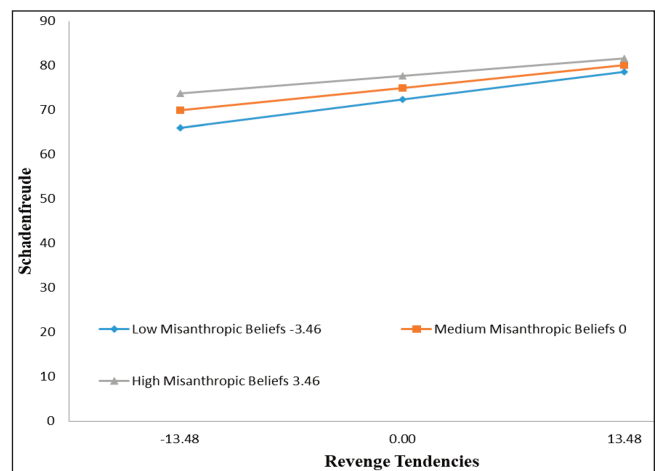
**Figure-1:** Mod-Graph showing moderating effects of Misanthropic Beliefs between Revenge tendencies and Sadistic Impulse among Clinical and Non-Clinical Samples.



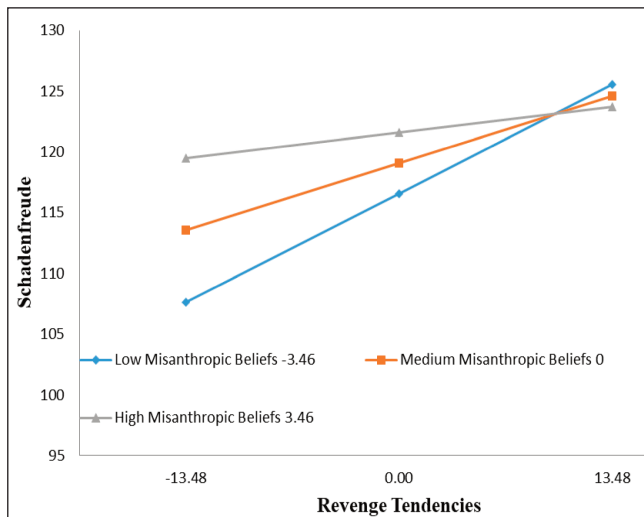
**Figure-2:** Mod-Graph showing moderating effects of Misanthropic Beliefs between Revenge tendencies and Sadistic Impulse among Clinical Samples.



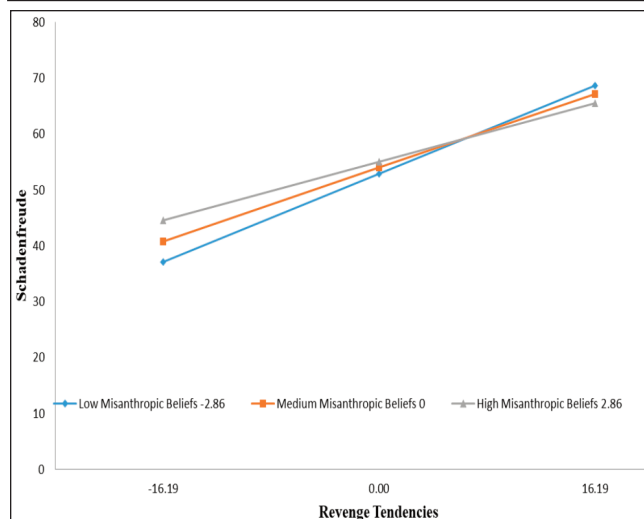
**Figure-3:** Mod-Graph showing moderating effects of Misanthropic Beliefs between Revenge tendencies and Sadistic Impulse among Non-Clinical Samples.



**Figure-4:** Mod-Graph showing moderating effects of Misanthropic Beliefs between Revenge tendencies and Schadenfreude among Clinical and Non-Clinical Samples.



**Figure-5:** Mod-Graph showing moderating effects of Misanthropic Beliefs between Revenge tendencies and Schadenfreude among Clinical Samples.



**Figure-6:** Mod-Graph showing moderating effects of Misanthropic Beliefs between Revenge tendencies and Schadenfreude among Non-Clinical Samples.

between revenge tendencies and schadenfreude strengthened in case of low, medium and high misanthropic beliefs, which explained the significant increase in variance in schadenfreude (Figure 5). The same parameters were checked in the non-clinical group as well (Figure 6).

## Discussion

As per the findings, the combined effect of misanthropic beliefs and revenge attitude had a strong effect on sadism, and revenge attitude and sadism together were the consequences of misanthropic beliefs. In line with the findings of the current study, literature and empirical evidence, when misanthropic behaviour increases, the strength of relation between revenge and sadism also increases.<sup>5</sup>

The current study also confirmed the moderating role of misanthropic beliefs between revenge attitude and schadenfreude in both clinical and non-clinical groups. Empirical evidence and literature support the findings.<sup>7-12</sup>

The current study has some limitations, including the self-reporting nature of data collected through single source by using scales. Also, the common method variance may be a plausible threat to the accuracy of inference drawn through this study. Lastly, the study's data came from from a specific culture and is not representative of the entire country. Despite the limitations, however, the study is a worthy attempt to understand the interactive effect of misanthropic beliefs on schadenfreude and sadism through revenge among adults from clinical and non-clinical samples.

## Conclusion

Misanthropic beliefs moderated the relationship involving revenge attitude, schadenfreude and sadism.

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