Schadenfreude in Working Women of Lahore: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

Human beings have been gifted with a diverse and wonderful set of emotions. They have the ability to not only experience their own feelings, but also empathize with the emotions of others, such as being happy for someone who has conceived. Unfortunately, humans are not always moral or kind. Some people truly take pleasure in others' misery, as opposed to feeling compassion for them. Schadenfreude is defined as a feeling of satisfaction, pleasure or happiness brought on by witnessing another person's sorrow or misfortune. The present study aimed to explore the lived experiences and coping strategies of schadenfreude in working women. The sample consisted of six female faculty members which were recruited through purposive sampling. Phenomenological research design was used in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six faculty members. The data was analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Two sets of themes emerged from data analysis. First set of themes was related to the lived experiences of schadenfreude. The superordinate themes included social factors, personality traits, biology and upbringing, psychological indicators and organizational influences. The other set of themes was regarding the coping strategies employed by faculty to overcome schadenfreude. The superordinate themes consisted of short-term and long-term coping strategies. The findings have long-term implications it will advance our knowledge of negative emotions and the effects of interpersonal conflict on job satisfaction, stress levels, and workers' general wellbeing and therefore help to promote teamwork and long-term prosperity for the organization.

Keywords: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Phenomenology, Schadenfreude, Semi-structured Interviews, Working Women

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Introduction

Human beings have been gifted with a diverse and wonderful set of emotions. They have the ability to not only experience their own feelings, but also empathize with the emotions of others, such as being happy for someone who has conceived. Essentially, humans possess the capacity to take on and understand the feelings of those around them. Unfortunately, humans are not always moral or kind. Some people truly take pleasure in others' misery, as opposed to feeling compassion for them. Schadenfreude is the term used to define such feelings.

Definition of Schadenfreude

Schadenfreude is described as a feeling of satisfaction, pleasure or happiness brought on by witnessing another person's sorrow or misfortune. This emotion typically appears as a sensation of contentment or gratification together with sentiments of superiority or vindication. For instance, some people could feel content or joyful when someone fails at something. They may even rejoice in the individual's failure

since it makes them feel superior (Cecconi et al., 2020).

Schadenfreude is a German word made up of the words *schaden*, which means "damage" or "harm," and *freude*, which means "joy". Despite being a typical human emotion, schadenfreude can sometimes be seen negatively because it can cause regret or humiliation, especially when the misfortune or suffering is severe or unjustified (Lindebaum et al., 2018). The phrase is frequently used to describe the joy or enjoyment people may feel when they see someone else fail or be shamed, particularly someone they are envious of or don't like. Moreover, Smith et al. (2009) has suggested that schadenfreude is an emotion that most people have probably experienced at some point in their life. Moreover, he further emphasized that Schadenfreude may not always be a conscious emotion. If an individual realizes that their contentment is tied to the pain or misfortune of others and they recognize this as morally inappropriate, they may try to suppress or ignore those feelings, pushing them out of their conscious awareness.

Types of Schadenfreude

Cecconi et al. (2020) defined the four distinct categories of Schadenfreude as aversion, compensation, injustice, and identification. Aversion is the act of enjoying someone's suffering that we find unpleasant or for whom we have a strong hate. Compensation is defined as finding joy in the misery of others who are experiencing the same suffering as us. Injustice constitues taking delight in the suffering of someone believed as deserving of punishment or revenge for their crimes. Lastly, identification involves deriving satisfaction or pleasure from the misfortunes of someone perceived as similar to ourselves.

Causes of Schadenfreude

A study conducted by Cikara and Fiske (2013) found that people experience schadenfreude when they perceive the victim of the misfortune as deserving of the harm. In other words, if an individual

believes that the person who is suffering brought it upon themselves, they are more likely to experience schadenfreude. This may be the reason why people often feel schadenfreude towards celebrities who have a public downfall or politicians who get caught in a scandal.

However, schadenfreude is not always linked to deservingness i.e., people can experience schadenfreude even when they do not believe that the victim deserved to suffer. This could be as a result of the tendency for people to compare their circumstances to those of others, and the way that when someone else suffers adversity, the observer may feel better about their own circumstances (Smith et al., 1996).

Furthermore, depending on the situation, schadenfreude might mean multiple things. For instance, schadenfreude may occasionally be used as a form of payback or revenge. In other circumstances, it might be a means of overcoming sentiments of envy or jealousy. One might have schadenfreude, for instance, if they are jealous of someone else's achievement when they suffer a setback (Cecconi et al., 2020).

Culture and Schadenfreude

Furthermore, cultural influences can also have an impact on schadenfreude. For instance, a study by Leach et al. (2003) discovered that individuals from individualistic cultures like America are more prone to engage in schadenfreude than those from collectivistic cultures like Japan. This might be the case because individualistic cultures tend to place more value on self-actualization and success; hence, witnessing others' failures can be interpreted as proof of one's own accomplishment.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Social Comparison

People are predisposed to judge themselves by contrasting their beliefs, skills, and characteristics with those of others. The purpose of this comparison, which might be upward (to those perceived as superior) or

downward (to those perceived as less fortunate), is to reduce uncertainty, shape one's self-concept, and influence behavior and attitudes. This theory emphasizes how critical social comparisons are to comprehending human interaction and motivation (Festinger 1954).

Schadenfreude and Faculty

In the past, women were confined to their homes and their main responsibility was to manage domestic duties. However, as economic pressures on families have intensified, these restrictions have been lifted. Nowadays, in many families, women are permitted to pursue higher education and work in paid jobs, albeit with certain limitations. The majority of employed women can be found in professions such as teaching, healthcare, education, office work, or other low-paying jobs that men generally avoid due to the limited scope for advancement and low salary scales (Tijdens & Van Klaveren, 2011).

Likewise, Teaching is a profession that attracts a high proportion of women, with many choosing it as a career path. It has traditionally attracted a higher proportion of women than men (Smith et al.,1996). A teacher is a person who facilitates learning by providing the appropriate educational environment, resources, guidance, and direction to meet the learning needs of individuals or groups (Tijdens & Van Klaverens, 2011). Effective teachers are perceived by students to be passionate and enthusiastic about their teaching, knowledgeable and skilled in their subject matter, and patient and empathetic towards their students (Ibrahim et al., 2020). Therefore, Schadenfreude by faculty members can result in unethical behavior and diminished empathy for students. Consequently, it is crucial to be aware of the variables that can affect schadenfreude and to work on cultivating more positive feelings in reaction to the suffering of others, such as compassion and thankfulness (Cikara & Fiske, 2013).

Rationale

This research seeks to explore the subjective experiences, and coping mechanisms of schadenfreude among female faculty who experience this emotion, focusing specifically on those who feel schadenfreude rather than those on whom this emotion is directed (victims). Schadenfreude is a common and complex emotion experienced by many individuals, including faculty members. Exploring the lived experiences of female faculty regarding Schadenfreude will assist in understanding the underlying factors that contribute to this feeling. Studying these underlying factors will in turn to minimize gender biases, same gender rivalry and competition. It will also help to promote teamwork and long-term prosperity for the organization. Additionally, this research will be helpful in identifying the possible implications of schadenfreude on teacher-student relationships and academic outcomes, and it will offer insights into mitigation or remediation measures. Additionally, studying how female faculty members experience schadenfreude will have larger effects on workplace relations and overall employee wellbeing. It will advance our knowledge of negative emotions and the effects of interpersonal conflict on job satisfaction, stress levels, and workers' general wellbeing.

Method

Research Design

The study's research design was phenomenology. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that focuses on understanding and describing individuals' subjective i.e., lived experiences of a particular phenomenon or situation (Ueda & Sakugawa, 2009).

Sample and Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from different universities of Lahore, Pakistan. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique used in qualitative research. It involves selecting participants based on their possession of desired characteristics for inclusion in the

sample (Nikolopoulou, 2022). The sample consisted of six female faculty members, with education at least MS or equivalent. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), the sample size for phenomenological study is 5 – 25.

Inclusion Criteria

Female permanent faculty members, both from private and public institutions, who work a minimum of 8 hours per day, possess a minimum of 2 years of experience, are married, hold at least a master's degree, and are currently employed were recruited.

Exclusion Criteria

Female faculty members who currently hold visiting faculty/adhoc/contract positions, male teachers, singles or divorced, and those suffering from any physical illness or diagnosed with psychological issues were excluded.

Data Collection

Basic Screening Questions

This section includes questions that are intended to screen potential participants for this study on lived experiences of schadenfreude. The aim is to gather in-depth insights and perspectives. As there was no screening tool available for our population, therefore we devised four questions from the subtypes of schadenfreude i.e., aversion, compensation, injustice and identification mentioned in literature. Participants who reported atleast one type of schadenfreude were recruited for the study.

Demographic Form

The demographic form includes information regarding gender, teaching experience, educational background, the name of the institute, whether it is private or public, current employment status, designation, marital status, and any physical or mental impairments that may be present.

Interview Guide

An interview guide is a structured set of open-ended questions and prompts that are used by the researcher to guide the conversation during a qualitative research interview (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The purpose of the interview guide is to ensure that all relevant topics are covered during the interview, while also allowing for flexibility to explore unexpected themes that may emerge during the conversation.

In-depth semi-structured interviews with six female faculty members who have experienced schadenfreude were employed in this study to gather data. A technique called in-depth interviews is used to collect comprehensive information on a person's experiences, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes. (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Participants received written informed consent and demographic consent forms before the interview. The average time for interviews was approximately one hour (Seidman, 2006). The participants gave consent for the interview audios to be recorded.

In-Depth Interviews Guides Verification Method

The interview guide was verified by at least three experts, and any peer review ideas were taken into consideration (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Member checking was also done in order to minimize the bias. It is a method employed to assess the credibility of findings. In this technique, participants are given the opportunity to review the data or results to confirm their accuracy and alignment with their personal experiences (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). Furthermore, the use of bracketing was also employed. Bracketing involves the act of temporarily suspending one's own beliefs and preconceived notions to prevent any distortion or misinterpretation of a subject's intended meaning, perception, or experience. By setting aside personal biases, one can ensure a more accurate representation of the subject's perspective (Tufford & Newman, 2012). All suggestions were incorporated before conducting interviews.

Procedure

First, approval was taken from the Institutional Review Board of the University. Then permissions were taken

from concerned institutes to collect data. After permissions, six female faculty members who expressed willingness to participate were recruited via purposive sampling based on screening criteria i.e., participants who reported atleast one type of schadenfreude were recruited for the study. Then, time and venue were decided according to the convenience off the participants (Guest et al., 2013). Movingforth, informed consent was obtained from each participant, outlining the study's purpose and assuring their confidentiality. Participants were informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time. Since personal information was not collected, participants' confidentiality and anonymity was not compromised. Participants were also informed about the audio recordings of their interviews in the informed consent. There were no anticipated risks associated with this study. Rapport building was done with participants whereever required. According to Martins (2023) establishing rapport involves creating a meaningful bond between yourself and another individual. Simply pretending to be interested is insufficient; instead, prioritize sincerity and transparency to foster a shared sense of trust. Likewise, probing technique was used to explore experiences wherever relevant (Bryman, 2004). Moreover, the order of questions was changed according to the flow of conversation throughout all the interviews. After conducting the interviews, data was transcribed as soon as possible (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). All the transcribed data was then translated into English.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique used was Interpretative Phenomenological Research (IPA). Smith and Fieldsend (2021) explained that IPA is used to explore and understand the subjective experiences of individuals. It involves six steps as follows:

- *Familiarization with the data*: The first step involves repeatedly reading and listening to the transcripts to become familiar with the

data. It also includes writing down the initial comments and reflections on the data, highlighting key points and issues that are salient and important.

- *Preliminary theme identification*: The second step involves identifying and labeling the recurring themes that emerge from the data. These themes are often expressed in the words and phrases used by the participants.

- *Search for theme interconnections*: The third step involves examining identified themes interconnected and how they relate to the research question. This involves looking for patterns, associations, and relationships between the themes.

- *Systematic table of themes*: The fourth step creating a table or matrix that systematically organizes and summarizes the themes, including their definitions, frequency, and relationship to other themes.

- *Analysis of further cases*: The fifth stage is the study of new instances, which entails using the same procedure on further cases or interviews to support and elaborate on the preliminary conclusions.

- *Writing up the analysis:* The sixth stage is writing up the analysis, which should include an explanation of the techniques employed, a list of the themes found, and an interpretation of the results in light of the research question.

Results

The research aimed to explore the lived experiences of schadenfreude among female faculty and their coping strategies. This research employed IPA to analyze the interviews.

The transcripts of the interviews were reviewed and reread repeatedly utilizing interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and initial comments and reflections were written down on the data, highlighting the key points and issues that were salient and important. Codes were generated through in-vivo coding. In-vivo coding is a technique for developing codes based on participants' literal words in order to apprehend their perspectives and subjectives experiences, helping to build

categories and themes (Mannings et al., 2017). Next step involved identifying and labeling the recurring themes that emerged from the codes. Similar themes were compiled into collections of themes named subordinate themes. Similar subordinate themes were compiled, resulting in two set of themes corresponding to each research question, respectively. These themes are named as superordinate themes.

The complete qualitative analysis explored a range of themes, the following categories were chosen to elaborate on the significant elements of participants ' lived experiences of schadenfreude and coping strategies incorporated. Table 1 includes superordinate themes related to lived experiences of schadenfreude, while Table 2 contains superordinate themes related to coping mechanisms employed by female faculty. The codebook describes each primary theme and its corresponding sub-themes that arose throughout studies as shown in figures 1 and 2.

Lived Experiences of Schadenfreude

The findings concluded five superordinate themes of lived experiences of schadenfreude among women namely; social factors, personality, biology and upbringing, psychological indicators and organizational influences. These superordinate themes were further divided into twelve subordinate themes namely; gender discrimination, social comparison, culture, positive personality traits, negative personality traits, age, parenting, religious and spiritual beliefs, emotions, motivation, power misuse, and organizational demands. Indicative quotes from interview transcripts are used to explicate these concepts in this section.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=6)

Demographics				Participants		
	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Years of experience in teaching	4	5	9	4	2	2
Education level	PhD scholar	M.Phil.	PhD scholar	M.Phil.	PhD scholar	M.Phil.
Name of institute for teaching	UCP	UCP	LGU	UMT	Comsats	UOL
Public or private	Private	Private	Private	Private	Public	Private
Current employment status	Employed	Employed	Employed	Employed	Employed	Employed
Permanent or visiting	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent
Designation	Lecturer	Lecturer	Sr. lecturer	Lecturer	Lecturer	Lecturer
Any physical or mental impairment	No	No	No	No	No	No
Marital status	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married

Table 2
Lived Experiences of Schadenfreude (N=6)

Super-ordinate Themes	Sub-ordinate Themes	Example Quotes
Social factors	Gender Discrimination	If there is a task of management, it will be given to the male faculty. Because they think males are more capable of doing the things that involve...you know the tasks like going out and looking at the management things.
	Social Comparison	I do compare myself with others in terms of achievement. I think that I am deserving for all the achievements. I am deserving for all the promotions.
	Culture	I am saying….that the collectivistic aspect becomes an issue…if you support and live in a supporting environment, so it will create enough problems too. If you keep your work to yourself and work in an individualistic way and would not get involved in someone's leg pulling or interfere in anyone's matter, then you might not have these problems.
Personality	Positive Personality traits	I am a very positive person otherwise as well and I am thankful to Allah for blessing me with that.
	Negative Personality traits	If someone gets promoted, I'll get jealous of them.
Biology and Upbringing	Age	Women particularly compare themselves with other women in terms of age, in terms of children, in terms of the years that they got married. I mean, they look at that age a lot. So, I think age is a very big factor
	Parenting	I feel like how you have raised your kids and the kind of environment they have gotten....it matters a lot.
	Religious and Spiritual Beliefs	I believe that my spirituality has eaten away all the negativity and negative emotions in my life.
Psychological indicators	Emotions	It creates negative emotions in your mind. You can't see the positivity around you. You are always into negativity. You are thinking negative, you are doing negative
	Motivation	It makes you feel motivated about your goals. That I have to achieve this thing. If my colleague is achieving this, I have to achieve more than him or her
Organizational Influences	Power misuse	In private sectors, you can do whatever you want to do, define the policies however you want to….so in policy making, I would say that this organization is not really honest to their employees, that they update the policies whenever and however they want to..

Organizational demands	Private sector demands a lot from you…so you have to keep yourself up-to-date socially….regarding education, regarding personality, regarding information, regarding spoken, regarding style and there are many other factors.

Theme 1: Social Factors

All female faculty members mentioned multiple dimensions of social factors that contribute to the development and exhibition of the emotion 'schadenfreude'. Gender discrimination, cultural factors, and social comparison such as superiority and inferiority complexes were the major driving forces that add to stress and lead to unhealthy competition. Following are three subordinate themes of social factors.

a) Gender Discrimination

A societal phenomena known as gender inequality or gender-based power imbalance occurs when one gender (usually males) has a disproportionate amount of power, influence, and resources in comparison to the other gender (often women). This gender discrimination leads to feelings of enviousness and jealousy among women as participant 6 added:

"If there is a task of management, it will be given to the male faculty. Because they think males are more capable of doing the things that involve...you know the tasks like going out and looking at the management things."

Moreover, participant 5 narrated:

"There was a teacher of ours.....Who did not even complete his MPhil....and... He was a permanent lecturer."

She further added:

"I feel like women are a minority in our culture. It is obviously a patriarchal society. And women do not get their rights much. So, women who get this opportunity to get out from their homes and to work, I think this thing comes between them because it is very important to them....It is very close to their heart because there are very few women who get this opportunity in our culture, to be honest. Even to study.

Work comes later. So, I feel like this is the reason."

b) Social Comparison

Social comparison involves comparing one's own skills, traits, beliefs, or accomplishments to those of others in order to evaluate oneself. However, an unhealthy comparison can be a leading factor to induce negative feelings in oneself. Social comparison is one of the contributing factors to the emotion 'schadenfreude'. Participant 6 described social comparison in terms of achievement as:

"I do compare myself with others in terms of achievement. I think that I am deserving for all the achievements. I am deserving for all the promotions. Because I have put so much efforts in my knowledge and skills."

Participant 4 stated:

"uhhh..yeah there is this one thing in which I compare myself alot and I curse myself…...For example, my colleague friend, she wrote a book on poetry 5 years back....she got it published...And I have been writing for almost 3 years now. And I am not doing anything about it. Sometimes I read it, sometimes I look at it after a month. So I feel very bad about that. I blame myself a lot."

Furthermore, superiority and inferiority complexes lead to the feelings of envy, competition, and comparison as stated by some participants. Participant 1 reported:

"I believe no one is as competent as me [laughs]"

Likewise, Participant 6 responded:

"I am deserving of everything good in this world (laughs) I feel like that I am superior to everybody because I look good, I have skills, I have knowledge. And I put my heart into everything I do. So yes, I am

more deserving than all of the people around me.”

c) Culture

Different cultural dynamics such as individualistic and collectivistic cultures also play a major role. Collectivistic cultures prioritize social harmony, helping others, working together, interdependence whereas individualistic cultures prioritize autonomy, independence, personal achievement. Pakistan is a collectivistic culture and it induces interdependence as well as unrealistic expectations as participant 3 stated:

“I am saying….that the collectivistic aspect becomes an issue…if you support and live in a supporting environment, so it will create enough problems too. If you keep your work to yourself and work in an individualistic way and would not get involved in someone's leg pulling or interfere in anyone's matter, then you might not have these problems.”

Theme 2: Personality

Our personalities develop over the course of time and are shaped by different experiences that we go through everyday as humans. Female faculty members develop positive or negative traits that has a major contribution to how they act in certain unfortunate situations. There are two subordinate themes of personality as follows:

a) Positive Personality Traits

Certain positive personality traits, nature, self fulfillment, self- esteem, confidence, and acceptance are helpful as participant 2 stated:

“I am a very positive person otherwise as well and I am thankful to Allah for blessing me with that.”

b) Negative personality traits

Personality traits such as narcissim, hypocracy, backbiting induce negativity. Participant 6 stated:

“If someone gets promoted, I'll get jealous of them.”

Moreover, participant 1 described her need for comparison as:

“I have a little bit of narcissim too[laughs] no one is as worthy as I am [laughs]”.

Theme 3: Biology and Upbringing

Biology and upbringing play equal roles in importance. An individual's mental health can be influenced by their early experiences, parenting methods, and age. A loving and supportive upbringing can promote emotional resilience whereas childhood trauma can cause the development of unpleasant emotions. Religious beliefs also play a major part when it comes to developing certain positive and negative emotions. The participants that experienced schadenfreude seem to have their biology and upbringing as a major factor. Following three are the subordinate themes of biology and upbringing:

a) Age

The factor of age contributed to the fact that the participants had been experiencing schadenfreude. As participant 5 reported:

“Women particularly compare themselves with other women in terms of age, in terms of children, in terms of the years that they got married. I mean, they look at that age a lot. So, I think age is a very big factor.”

b) Parenting

Participant 5 indicated the role of parenting as:

“I feel like how you have raised your kids and the kind of environment they have gotten....it matters a lot.”

Participant 3 added:

“When a person's personality is developing, the first and foremost role is of a family. That's where things start for you. So, definitely, it's about family.”

c) Religious and spiritual beliefs

Most of the participants suggested that religion played a crucial part in shaping a person's perception about emotional expression. Participant 4 revealed why she does not experience envy as:

“I believe that my spirituality has eaten away all the negativity and negative emotions in my life.”

Moreover, participant 5 described it as:

"My religious foundations are very strong.…so I feel like if someone is doing really bad to me…that person will definitely experience the same they did to me….and when that happens….when that KARMA happens, I feel satisfied."

Participant 2 emphasized on the religious teachings as:

"Our religion clearly forbids us to be envious of anybody because what religion tells us is that it consumes you instead of, you know, it consumes you, it eats your own good away, like a fire eats away the whole forest."

Theme 4: Psychological Indicators

Our mental and psychological processes interfere with the experiences of schadenfreude. While interviewing different faculty members, it was quite obvious that all of them went through some kind of emotional changes throughout their experiences. Two subordinate themes were marked which are as follows:

a) Emotions

Participant 6 expressed her feelings towards someone whom she felt envious about as follows:

"It creates negative emotions in your mind. You can't see the positivity around you. You are always into negativity. You are thinking negative, you are doing negative"

She added her comments further as:

"Yes, I wanted to harm her....(takes a pause, then laughs)…Yes, I wanted to kill her."

Likewise, participant 5 revealed:

"Someone actually....uh...they mistreated me. And....That hurt me a lot. Because it was the first time. And I was really upset. Because of that. And after that. What happened was. After a couple of days or something....somethinng really bad happened to them...Which was a robbery kind of stuff. And that actually. Made me feel satisfied....hahaha...To some extent. Yeah. So that happened. And I don't feel guilty about it."

b) Motivation

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation may take on two different forms, and both motives are crucial in deciding whether someone engages in healthy or unhealthy competition. There is another factor to take into account in addition to these motives: schadenfreude, which can also serve as a motivator. Intrinsic motivation, which originates from inside and pushes people to compete for their own satisfaction and personal improvement, frequently results in healthier competition. Extrinsic drive is influenced by outside variables such as incentives or recognition and can occasionally result in unfavorable competitive dynamics. Participant 6 shared her views on how unhealthy competition motivates her:

"It makes you feel motivated about your goals. That I have to achieve this thing. If my colleague is achieving this, I have to achieve more than him or her".

However, participant 1 emphasized on the significance of internal and external rewards as a motivator to exploit others:

"if you are competing for an internal reward, the competition will be with your old self, with yourself….but if you are competing for an external reward, you will compete with other people."

She later on outlined a logic for schadenfreude as:

"obviously, a person who is extrinsic, they can't help it, in a way they're also justified, in their envy."

Theme 5: Organizational Influences

Organization's environment, rules and policies, demands, power dynamic, and the kind of organization are also one of the substantial factors of schadenfreude. Participants argued on how the prevalence of schadenfreude varies among public and private sectors. Three subordinate themes were classified as follows:

a) Power misuse

Participant 1 set forth the misuse of power in private sectors as follows:

"In private sectors, you can do whatever you want to do, define the policies

however you want to….so in policy making, I would say that this organization is not really honest to their employees, that they update the policies whenever and however they want to..”

Participant 5 when asked about her experiences in both public and private sectors, revealed:

"there is no politics or stuff like that in private sectors...In government sectors, the environment is like this....People are power hungry. They want that chair because there are more benefits, as compared to any other university.”

b) Organizational demands

Few participants blamed organizational demands as the reasons behind the feelings of enviousness, injustice and schadenfreude. Participant 3 uttered:

"Private sector demands a lot from you…so you have to keep yourself up-to-date socially….regarding education, regarding personality, regarding information, regarding spoken, regarding style and there are many other factors.”

Coping Strategies

The second set of themes were regarding coping strategies. It consisted of two superordinate themes namely constructive and destructive coping strategies. The superordinate theme of short-term coping strategies was further divided into four subordinate themes namely; avoidance, suppression, internal locus of control, and external locus of control. The superordinate theme of long-term coping strategies also consisted of four subordinate themes such as religious and spiritual coping, rationalization, dissembling and tolerance. This section explains these ideas with the help of representative quotes from interview transcripts.

Table 3
Coping Strategies (N=6)

Super-ordinate Themes	Sub-ordinate Themes	Example Quotes
Short-term	Avoidance	I even unsubscribe or let's say unfollow certain celebrities or all those that will give me anxiety.
	Suppression	I completely forgot…if something like this had ever happened.
	Internal Locus of Control	There must be something wrong with me.
	External Locus of Control	I always blame biology.
Long-term	Religious and spiritual coping	Whenever I feel envy, I feel like I am committing some sin. So I instantly have a reflex and I say 'Apart from Allah, there is no power or might.' and I say 'Whatever Allah wills'.
	Rationalization	After a few days, like two to three days, after that I rationalized that….no…that is not my way of thinking…this is how other people perceive…not me.
	Dissembling	If there is a colleague of mine and I am getting jealous of her, I will make her my friend.
	Tolerance	When you are quiet, and when you try to tolerate this thing in a very cool way, then usually, you get control and victory.

Theme 1: Short-term

All the faculty members had their own ways to react and cope with the negativity that came within experiencing schadenfreude. Most of them used short-term coping strategies in order to deal with this emotion. These coping strategies helped them overcome or deal with schadenfreude for a shorter period of time, however, they had long-term impacts on their mental health. Four subordinate themes emerged from the data:

a) Avoidance

Avoidance is defined as deliberately avoiding or disregarding events, thoughts, feelings, or memories that one perceives to be upsetting or anxiety-provoking. Avoidance is a coping mechanism individuals use to manage or lessen emotional discomfort, stress, or anxiety. Although avoiding something might make one feel better immediately, it often results in limitations and long-term consequences. However, multiple participants used avoidance as a coping strategy such as participant 2 examplified:

"I even unsubscribe or let's say unfollow certain celebrities or all those that will give me anxiety."

Participant 3 added:

"So, I did not even try to confront that person."

She stated later:

"I always try to set back or avoid the situation rather than confronting or finding a solution to that problem."

b) Suppression

  Supression is a deliberate action to prevent something from becoming conscious or expressing itself. It can help for a limited period of time however, over time, relying on suppression can lead to psychological stress and may hinder emotional growth and self-awareness. Participant 1 started crying while stating the following statement:

  "I completely forgot…if something like this had ever happened (started crying)."

c) Internal locus of control

  Internal locus of control is defined as a cognitive orientation where an individual believes that they have complete control over their life circumstances, outcomes, and emotional responses to external events. However, individuals with an extreme internal locus of control may tend to blame themselves excessively for negative outcomes, even when external factors are primarily responsible. Some participants experienced such a profound degree of self-criticism when they experienced schadenfreude that they began to internalize this emotion. As participant 1 expressed:

"There must be something wrong with me"
She further stated:

  "I am extremely dissatisfied with myself all the time [laughs]….I give myself a very hard time"
Moreover, participant 4 reported:
"I hold myself accountable."

d) External locus of control

  External locus of control constitutes that an individual has no control on their life events; everything is determined by nature, biology, fate, luck and the actions of others. This extreme external locus of control might lead to feelings of powerlessness, resignation, and a lack of motivation to take initiative or make decisions. Blaming on external factors was also one of the ways used by participant to justify and cope with their expression of schadenfreude as participant 5 disclosed:

"I always blame biology"
She further added:

  "Of course, there are biological differences. Women are more sensitive and women feel emotions more."
Participant 2 stated:
"It's their problem not mine."
Participant 6 expressed:

  "She was the one who got promoted. So all of my jealousy and all of my anger was on her….not on the authority."

Theme 2: Long-term

  Long-term strategies are approaches and methods that can assist individuals in achieving their goals and improving their overall well-being over an extended period of time. Some participants used coping strategies that were helpful in long-term. Four subordinate themes emerged which are as follows:

a) Religious and spiritual coping

  Religious and spiritual coping was a frequent and remarkable coping used by almost all the participants. All the participants had strong religious and spiritual connection so whenever, they experienced schadenfreude, they used religious or spiritual coping as a way to deal with the negativity coming with schadenfreude. Participant 4 stated:

  "Whenever I feel envy, I feel like I am committing some sin. So I instantly have a reflex and I say 'Apart from Allah, there is no power or might.' and I say 'Whatever Allah wills'."

  Participant 5 underlined the significance of the presence of gratitude:

  "If there is a comparison.....Then it's in the phase of gratitude."

  Participant 3 used the belief of makafat-e-amal (karma) to cope:

  "I have a strong belief, that this world is makafat e amal….So, you do negativity, you do these things, you feel pain, and what do you get? Ultimately, when Allah has kept you with Him, the time that has to come with Him, how do you cover it?"

b) Rationalization

Most of the participants used rationalization and justification as a coping technique to tame down the negativity that comes with schadenfreude.

Participant 3 narrated that:

"After few days, like two to three days, after that I rationalized that….no…that is not my way of thinking…this is how other people perceive…not me".

Likewise, participant 1 revealed:

"So, I justify this thing a lot that whatever happened; however it happened….if that person is feeling something negative because of that right now, whatever he is feeling, its very shaking and I don't want anyone to feel that way."

c) Dissembling

Some participants indicated that acting opposite to how they actually felt about someone was a helpful coping strategy for them. Participant 6 elicited:

"If there is a colleague of mine and I am getting jealous of her, I will make her my friend."

She furthed added:

"I took it as motivation that I'll perform better next time. So that I will be the one who gets promoted."

Participant 4 reported:

"If someone does something bad, I will feel good about it. I will do something good to them."

d) Tolerance

Tolerance usually comprises of keeping emotions and actions in control so that one does not act out immediately in dangerous circumstances. Participant 2 explained how she reacts while experiencing schadenfreude:

"When you are quiet, and when you try to tolerate this thing in a very cool way, then usually, you get control and victory."

Discussion

The research questions of the present study include "What are the lived experiences of female faculty who have been subjected to schadenfreude?" and "What coping

mechanisms are used by female faculty to deal with schadenfreude?". Considering the objectives of the research, most of the findings are consistent with the existing literature studies. However, the literature studies on Schadenfreude and coping strategies were conducted outside Pakistan. In this study, the female faculty reported that Schadenfreude occurred due to Social factors, personality, religious and spiritual beliefs are psychological indicators and organizational influences. Furthermore, the female faculty suggested certain coping mechanisms in order to cope with Schadenfreude. Some of the strategies used by the female faculty were helpful for limited period of time but left long-lasting imprints on their mental health, however, others were helpful in long-term.

The first set of themes was regarding social factors contributing to lived experiences of schadenfreude. It consisted of the first subordinate theme; gender discrimination. A historical and strongly ingrained gender hierarchy exists in Pakistan. In a number of areas of life, such as politics, education, job, and family decision-making, men have historically had more power and control and they still do. This discrimination leads to social comparison triggering envy and schadenfreude. Multiple studies including Wert and Salovey (2004) highlighted the role of social comparison and powerlessness in experiencing envy, jealousy and resentment. Another study by Moran and Schweitzer (2008) confirms that envy naturally arises from social comparisons. The subordinate theme of social comparison relates to the research of Buunk and Gibbons (2007). Moreover, Cohen-Charash and Mueller (2007) also confirmed the same findings. Both studies concluded that Employees frequently compare their accomplishments, assets, and treatment from the company with that of their coworkers, hence leading to the feelings of envy.

Personality plays a role in developing the feelings of jealousy, envy, and schadenfreude. Different personality traits

including, narcissism, hypocricy etc, induce the feelings of hostility, agression and unhealthy comparison towards people. Pakistani culture is wired in a way where people tend to exhibit a substantial degree of involvement in one another's lives. People tend to be more agressive and assertive in terms of achievement, power, and control over everything. Therefore, when they witness another individual achieving more than them, they cannot with-hold their negative feelings such as jealousy, social comparison and schadenfreude. Hence, the theme of personality traits was consistent with previous studies. A study conducted by Erzi (2022) confirmed that schadefreude is influenced by negative personality traits such as narcissim, machiaviallenism and agression.

The parenting practices in Pakistani culture are mostly on their extremes; they are either authoritarian where all the control is held by the parents and children are subjected to be involved in unhealthy social comparison or they are permissive (elite-class families) where children are not held accountable for anything therefore they might develop a sense of selfishness (Baumrind, 1971). A study conducted by Shamay-Tsoory et al. (2014) theorized that schadenfreude has developed as a reaction to unfairness and that it has an early evolutionary history. They revealed that children as young as 24 months old exhibit schadenfreude once an unfair situation is encountered.

The subordinate theme of age sheds light on the role of age in decreasing the likelihood of schadenfreude in female faculty. It is congruent with the study of Steinbeis and Singer (2013) who found out that age led to a decline in levels of Schadenfreude and envy. However, a contradiction was found in themes that suggested that the generation before us had higher levels of schadenfreude as compared to today's generation. Culture plays a crucial role to that as a few decades ago, women were only subjected to stay at their homes and limited to household (Zaman, 2013). This in turn

led to a feeling of envy, jealousy and unhealthy social comparison which eventuallty contributed to higher levels of schadenfreude. Likewise, the superordinate theme of psychological indicators had consistent results with previous literature as one of the studies found out that people with insecurities could make it harder for them to implicitly form a more positive and healthier self-concept hence leading to unhealthy comparisons as well as development of schadenfreude (Gao et al., 2014).

The first superordinate theme of coping strategies used by people who experience schadenfreude had congruent findings in litertature. Salovey and Rodin (1988) found out that using self-reliance and selective ignoring worked as effective coping strategies to deal with the feelings of envy and jealousy.

Long-term coping consists of religious and spiritual coping, rationalization, dissembling and tolerance. The subordinate theme; religious and spiritual coping is evident in most of the female faculty as most of them had strong ties to their religious beliefs and all of them were Muslims. Islam is widely practiced in Pakistan, and its teachings place a strong emphasis on compassion, empathy, and aiding those in need (Zaman, 2013). People employ religious coping mechanisms to keep these values in mind and make an effort to conform their conduct to them (Achour et al., 2016). This can act as an antidote to schadenfreude. Moreover, many Muslims find comfort in their religious and spiritual beliefs. People who are suffering schadenfreude usually turn to religion to ask for forgiveness for any cruel thoughts and for advice on how to deal with their emotions more effectively which helps them in long-term as they stick to their religious beliefs.

Culture Specific Discussion

Some of the cultural findings suggest that religious and spiritual beliefs play a vital role in the development of schadenfreude among Pakistani working women. Not

many researches have been conducted to explore this phenomenon among Pakistani population. Many families in Pakistan impart religious and spiritual values to their children from an early age. These teachings often emphasize empathy, compassion, and helping others in need (Zaman, 2013). Religious beliefs can serve as a counterbalance to schadenfreude by encouraging individuals to act with kindness and forgiveness instead of taking pleasure in the suffering of others. Organizational demands is another culture-specific finding not supported by previous literature. In a patriarchal nation like Pakistan, gender inequality still exists and power dynamics frequently favor men specifically in the workplace (Hadi, 2017). Women witnessing this imbalance of power experience schadenfreude towards those misusing power. Another important point to note is the liberty provided to those in public sectors in the sense of resources and job security, and the amount of freedom the policymakers have in private sectors as no one can question them (Islam, 2004). Moreover, Pakistan is a third-world country with limited resources. Both of these factors induce high levels of schadenfreude in those who are victims of organizational authorities and power misuse.

Moreover, dissembling is another subordinte theme that emerged as a constructive coping strategy from data analysis. Dissembling in this research refers to acting opposite to how an individual actually feels. It includes the subconscious transformation of undesirable or socially unacceptable feelings or thoughts into their complete opposites. In essence, someone could act in a way that is powerful, exaggerated, or even excessive, contrary to how they truly feel or what they are thinking within. Social harmony and avoiding conflict is frequently prioritized in Pakistani culture. Openly expressing schadenfreude may cause social tension and result in rejection or condemnation from others. Therefore, even if women feel schadenfreude, they might mask their emotions or act opposite.

Limitations

The limited sample size of qualitative research is a major limitation because it prevents generalization. The time-schedules of the female faculty were quite hectic and they could not be accessed easily which was another limitation of this research. The emotion 'schadenfreude' is viewed as a taboo and it is perceived as a negative emotion (Atiq et al., 2023). Consequently, it became a limitation as it was really difficult to recruit faculty who were willing to accept that they experience this particular emotion.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the current study examined how female faculty members dealt with schadenfreude in their daily lives and shed light upon different coping strategies used by them. Two sets of themes emerged from data analysis. First set of themes was related to the lived experiences of schadenfreude which further included the superordinate themes. It was concluded that social factors such as gender discrimination, social comparison and culture contribute to schadenfreude. Likewise, certain negative personality traits including narcissim, hypocracy and backbiting induce negativity. biology and upbringing, psychological indicators and organizational influences. Upbringing factors consisting of Age, Parenting style and Religious and Spiritual Beliefs also contribute to schadenfreude. Psychological factors and certain Organizational Influences are also among the contributing elements of schadenfreude. The findings also highlighted the Short-term and long term coping strategies utilized by faculty to deal with schadenfreude. The implications of the present study are multifold including helping to promote teamwork by resolving interpersonal conflicts such as gender biases, same gender rivalry and competition.at workplace, increasing job satisfaction and workers' general wellbeing which in turn will bring prosperity for the

organization. This research would also prove beneficial for improving teacher-student relationships.

Contribution of Authors
Iqra Muhammad Ali: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft
Amber Baseer: Methodology, Writing - Reviewing & Editing, Supervision
Mahnoor Ali: Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Writing - Reviewing & Editing

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