

The Mediating Role of Empathy on the Relationship Between Happiness and Schadenfreude

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Abstract

This study explored the mediating role of empathy in the link between happiness and schadenfreude. Schadenfreude arose from the pleasure from others' misfortune. This study aimed to examine how empathy influences the emotional interaction between happiness and schadenfreude in order to better understand the psychological mechanisms underlying emotional responses in the experience of schadenfreude. This study employed descriptive-causal research design using mediation analysis to measure the direct and indirect interactions of the variables. Findings of this study revealed that happiness does not directly influence schadenfreude, suggesting the complexity of happiness as a multidimensional state. The indirect relationship, however, highlights the significance of empathy. Happiness was found to significantly enhance empathy, fostering behaviors aligned with internal states and external experiences. Similarly, empathy showed a significant influence on schadenfreude. This implied that with heightened empathy allows individuals to better understand others' life situation, in this case, is the misfortune. Empathy mediated the relationship between happiness and schadenfreude by shaping the emotional interplay between these states. Empathy could either mitigate or alter the emotional response in schadenfreude. Ultimately, this study underscored the intricate role of empathy in moderating human responses, revealed how it bridges internal emotional states and social evaluations, thus further elaborating the existing understanding of the interconnectedness of happiness, empathy, and schadenfreude in human behavior.

Keywords: *Empathy, happiness, schadenfreude*

1.0 Introduction

Schadenfreude, a complex human emotional state, refers to the expression of a peculiar delight derived from witnessing another's misfortune. This paradoxical emotion often arises from social interactions and highlights the emotional response in successes and failures of the people around us. Though underexplored, this emotional state may

contribute to burnout and dissatisfaction (Jaen, 2023), potentially fostering malicious happiness and undermining motivation among college students (Chalmers, 2019).

This study examines two key variables that may influence *schadenfreude*: happiness and empathy. Happiness is often associated with subjective elated joy and life satisfaction (Ackerman, 2019), contrasts the darker pleasure of *schadenfreude*. While empathy encompasses the state of sincere listening and compassionate comprehension of others' emotions (Sinno, 2024). Limited studies about *schadenfreude* entailed the presence of pleasure to the misfortune of others among students (Smith and Van Dijk, 2022). This feeling of *schadenfreude* is heightened further when an individual gains from others' misfortune (Watanabe, 2019).

Through the exploration of factors, this study aims to provide insights into its social and psychological impacts of these emotional states. The study was conducted at St. Michael's College of Iligan City during the academic year of 2023-2024. This study formulated an intervention program entitled "Cognitive-Behavioral Empathy Enhancement Program" that cultivates happiness and enhanced empathy among college students in order to foster positive academic environment.

2.0 Theoretical and Empirical Background

In investigating the mediating role of empathy on the relationship of happiness and *schadenfreude*, various theories were employed to explain the concepts of each variable and how these theoretical frameworks relate with the problem of the study.

The concept of *schadenfreude* is explained by Deservingness Theory which posits that the feeling of pleasure from others' misfortune is a phenomenon that is driven by the feeling of justice. Proposes that one's negative consequence is deserved and others take pleasure in witnessing their misfortune as a perceived rightful comeuppance (Feather, 1989). *Schadenfreude* is an emotional state arising from the negative aspects associated with envy. Envy Theory posits two points of the concept that elucidates the emotional state of *schadenfreude* further. While envy often arises by comparing oneself to someone with superior capabilities leading to the feeling of inferiority. *Schadenfreude*, however, is opposite. The feeling of pleasure in others' misfortune arises from comparing oneself to someone with inferior capabilities leading to a sense of superiority. An envious person takes pleasure in the misfortune of their subject because it enhances the envious person's self-evaluation. By learning the misfortune of the subject of one's envy not only enhances self-evaluation but also alleviates the feeling of envy because the misfortune decreases the desirability value of a person in the eyes of an envious one. The diminish feeling of envy then gradually becomes a relieving state at the thought that one is in much worse situation than oneself (Smith et al., 1996).

On the other hand, happiness, according to Subjected Well-being Theory, is a multidimensional construct with various subjected components of an individual's experience. The first component was the Life Satisfaction which encompasses the circumstance, lifestyle, and experiences of an individual. The second component, positive affect, considers the intensity and frequency of elation. Lastly, the negative affect, is the opposite of the positive affect. This component assesses the intensity and frequency of the negative emotions of an individual (Deiner, 1999). However, in the context of empathy, Mood-Management Theory posits that people engage in various activities for entertainment and mood enhancement. Individuals interacts with people that "matches" their energy. This "matching" feeling or state of selectivity is driven by the sense of relatedness that sends delight into their current mood (Zillmann, 1988).

3.0 Research Objectives

This study investigated the mediating role of empathy in the relationship between happiness and schadenfreude among students at Saint Maichael's College. By examining the psychological mechanisms underlying these emotions, the research aims to provide deeper insights into how empathy influences the experience of happiness and pleasure derived from others' misfortunes.

Specifically, this paper examined the following:

1. The respondents' level of happiness.
2. The respondents' level of empathy.
3. The respondents' level of schadenfreude.
4. The significant influence of happiness to schadenfreude.
5. The significant influence of happiness to empathy.
6. The significant influence of empathy to schadenfreude.
7. The mediating link of empathy on the relationship between happiness and schadenfreude.
8. The intervention program based on the findings of the study.

4.0 Methodology

The study employed descriptive – causal research design using mediation analysis. This quantitative approach was appropriate for the study to determine the effects of the independent variable to the dependent variable as well as the mediation link. The 344 randomly selected respondents of this study were undergraduate students currently enrolled in various undergraduate programs offered at St. Michael's College for the 1st semester of the Academic Year 2023-2024.

The respondents were asked to complete three standardized self-report measures that is in relation to the study. Oxford Happiness Inventory by Michael Argyle and Peter Hills (2002) is 29 item questionnaire which was employed to this study to assess the level of happiness among the respondents. While the 16 - item Toronto Empathy Questionnaire by Spreng, McKinnon, Mar and Levine (2009) were adopted into this study to measure the level of empathy among the respondents. Schadenfreude Trait Scale by Alison Baren (2016), on the other hand, consists of 24 statements was also adopted in this study assess the level of schadenfreude among the college students.

Mean and standard deviation was used to determine the average location, relationship of the variables and the suitable inferences in regards with the sample measurements. Subsequently, simple linear regression was used to validate the premise of mediation analysis. Lastly, Hayes Process Macro was employed to assess the mediation link of empathy on the relationship between happiness and schadenfreude. Furthermore, in accordance to ethical conduct on research studies, the data gathered was treated with utmost confidentiality and anonymity.

5.0 Results and Discussion

The results and findings of this study are presented in adherence to the research objectives.

Table 1.1
Level of Happiness of the College Students

	Indicators	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	QUALITATIVE INTERPRETATION
1.	I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am.	3.35	1.27	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
2.	I am intensely interested in other people.	3.61	1.33	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
3.	I feel that life is very rewarding.	4.43	1.36	<i>Somewhat Happy or Moderately Happy</i>
4.	I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone.	3.97	1.21	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
5.	I rarely wake up feeling rested.	3.77	1.29	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
6.	I am not particularly optimistic about the future.	3.39	1.35	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
7.	I find most things amusing.	4.12	1.11	<i>Somewhat Happy or Moderately Happy</i>
8.	I am always committed and involved.	3.92	1.20	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
9.	Life is good.	4.57	1.42	<i>Rather Happy; Pretty Happy</i>
10.	I do not think that the world is a good place.	3.35	1.41	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
11.	I laugh a lot.	4.47	1.28	<i>Somewhat Happy or Moderately Happy</i>
12.	I am well satisfied about everything in my life.	4.14	1.35	<i>Somewhat Happy or Moderately Happy</i>
13.	I don't think I look attractive.	3.71	1.48	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
14.	There is a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done.	3.75	1.34	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
15.	I am very happy.	4.26	1.40	<i>Somewhat Happy or Moderately Happy</i>
16.	I find beauty in some things.	4.62	1.12	<i>Rather Happy; Pretty Happy</i>
17.	I always have a cheerful effect on others.	4.18	1.27	<i>Somewhat Happy or Moderately Happy</i>
18.	I can fit in (find time for) everything I want to.	3.90	1.21	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
19.	I feel that I am not especially in control of my life.	3.63	1.27	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
20.	I feel able to take anything on.	3.68	1.16	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
21.	I feel fully mentally alert.	3.77	1.12	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
22.	I often experience joy and elation.	3.98	1.16	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
23.	I don't find it easy to make decisions.	4.14	1.37	<i>Somewhat Happy or Moderately Happy</i>
24.	I don't have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life.	3.32	1.43	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
25.	I feel I have a great deal of energy.	3.97	1.23	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
26.	I usually have a good influence on events.	3.75	1.21	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
27.	I don't have fun with other people.	2.73	1.34	<i>Somewhat Unhappy</i>
28.	I don't feel particularly healthy.	3.53	1.40	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
29.	I don't have particularly happy memories of the past.	2.90	1.59	<i>Somewhat Unhappy</i>

Table 1.1 presents the respondents' level of happiness. The results of the study reveals that the statement *"I find beauty in some things"* has a highest mean value of 4.62 with a standard deviation of 1.12, indicating that a significant number of respondents find beauty in certain aspects of their lives. The findings shows that individual experiences and perspectives impacts the shaping of the happiness on oneself. Factors such as health, relationships, academic performance and life satisfaction determines the students' level of happiness. By prioritizing these factors cultivates a positive affect or elation among undergraduate students which impacts to their productivity and academic performance (Jiang et al., 2022). The results emphasizes that the more the students are able to appreciate the beauty around them, the more they are to be happy and contented with life (Fingarson, 2023).

On the other hand, the statement *"I don't have fun with other people"* received the lowest mean score of 2.73 and standard deviation of 1.34, which indicates that the large proportion of the respondents disagrees with the statement. This result implies that socializing is generally viewed as a positive practice by the majority of the students. This may be due to the happiness and life satisfaction are emotional state that can be impacted by the internal and external factors such as the circle of friends or the organization they belong to (Diener, 2024).

Table 1.2
Level of the Respondent's Happiness

Scoring Scale	Happiness			
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	QI
5.00-6.00	4	1.16	5.06	<i>Very Happy; Too Happy</i>
4.50-4.99	30	8.72	4.67	<i>Rather Happy; Pretty Happy</i>
4.00-4.49	101	29.36	4.23	<i>Somewhat Happy or Moderately Happy</i>
3.00-3.99	193	56.10	3.57	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>
2.00-2.99	14	4.07	2.80	<i>Somewhat Unhappy</i>
1.00-1.99	2	0.58	1.67	<i>Unhappy</i>
Total	344	100	3.82	<i>Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy</i>

Table 1.2 presents the summary of the level of happiness among the respondents. The majority of the sample population has fall on the category of *"Not Particularly Happy or Unhappy"* with a mean score of 3.57. This suggests that the majority of the respondents do not particularly feel happy or unhappy. This may imply that the respondents do not feel the need to identify or label their feelings or that they may feel apathy on their current state. This implication might be concerning as this could be an indication of lower well-being and more physical symptoms of stress (Greco, 2019). It was not long before COVID-

19 hit Philippines. People were forced into isolation and students were not an exception. During these times, undergraduate students were found to have less happiness due to the stress from the pandemic, isolation, and heavy academic workloads (Gumasing et al., 2022). And the remnants of the pandemic are still affecting the students up until today. The academic stress and pressure adding from the previous case of isolation and disengagement from other people induces the feeling of apathy or the indifference of the students towards their own states (Student-Centered World, 2024).

Table 2.1
Level of Empathy of the College Students

	Indicators	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	QUALITATIVE INTERPRETATION
1.	When someone else is feeling excited, I tend to get excited too.	2.62	0.93	<i>Moderate Empathy</i>
2.	Other people's misfortunes do not disturb me a great deal.	1.86	0.94	<i>Low Empathy</i>
3.	It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully.	3.22	0.98	<i>High Empathy</i>
4.	I remain unaffected when someone close to me is happy.	1.80	1.17	<i>Low Empathy</i>
5.	I enjoy making other people feel better.	3.09	0.94	<i>High Empathy</i>
6.	I have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.	2.79	1.07	<i>Moderate Empathy</i>
7.	When a friend starts to talk about his/her problems, I try to steer the conversation towards something else.	1.34	1.20	<i>Low Empathy</i>
8.	I can tell when others are sad even when they do not say anything.	2.66	1.05	<i>Moderate Empathy</i>
9.	I find that I am "in tune" with other people's moods.	2.11	0.97	<i>Moderate Empathy</i>
10.	I do not feel sympathy for people who cause their own serious illnesses.	1.19	1.14	<i>Low Empathy</i>
11.	I become irritated when someone cries.	1.24	1.05	<i>Low Empathy</i>
12.	I am not really interested in how other people feel.	1.28	1.10	<i>Low Empathy</i>
13.	I get a strong urge to help when I see someone who is upset.	2.42	1.10	<i>Moderate Empathy</i>
14.	When I see someone treated unfairly, I do not feel very much pity for them.	1.06	1.11	<i>Low Empathy</i>
15.	I find it silly for people to cry out of happiness.	1.24	1.14	<i>Low Empathy</i>
16.	When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards him/her.	2.79	1.07	<i>Moderate Empathy</i>

Table 2.1 presents the respondents' level of empathy. The statement "*It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully*" has the highest mean value of 3.22 with a standard deviation of 0.68. The results reveal that majority of the respondents are able to empathize with others, most of which in from of observation. The statement reflects the sense of concern and desire to alleviate others' distress. Empathy has two perceptual routes: the cognitive empathy and the affective empathy. Cognitive empathy encompasses the sense of understanding other's emotional states. While the affective

empathy refers to the sense of emotional connectedness where one could feel another's feelings (Genzer et. al., 2023).

On the other hand, the lowest mean score was 1.06 belonging to the statement *"When I see someone treated unfairly, I do not feel very much pity for them"*. The statement also receives a standard deviation of 1.11. The results suggest that majority of the respondents disagrees with the statement. This implies that most of the students' have the capacity to empathize with others. It is often said that humans have an innate sense of compassion and empathy towards others. This innate empathy is crucial role for interpersonal relationships. Empathy helps adolescents understand others better by seeing a situation on another's perspective and to have awareness of social situations. Empathy fosters healthier social interactions and better emotional competency with their peers (Centeno and Fernandez, 2020).

Table 2.2
Level of the Respondents' Empathy

Scoring Scale	Empathy			
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	QI
4.00-4.99	0	0.00	0.00	<i>Very High Empathy</i>
3.00-3.99	12	3.49	3.21	<i>High Empathy</i>
2.00-2.99	179	52.03	2.27	<i>Moderate Empathy</i>
1.00-1.99	151	43.90	1.70	<i>Low Empathy</i>
0.00-0.99	2	0.58	0.56	<i>Very Low Empathy</i>
Total	344	100	2.05	<i>Moderate Empathy</i>

Table 2.2 depicts the summary of the level of the respondents' empathy. The results show that majority of the respondents fall into *"Moderate Empathy"* category with a mean score of 2.27. This suggests that most of the students exhibits a fair amount of empathy, not too excessive. While there was no indication of very high empathy, the majority fall into high or moderate empathy which indicates a general trend towards empathy among the population. This finding implies that baseline level of empathy among the respondents can influence their social interaction and behavior with peers. Empathy is an emotional state that encompasses the emotional intelligence and connection. It is a sense of understanding other's perspective and emotional responses, and recognizing facial expressions. Empathy happens not only in conscious state of mind but is also an unconscious emotional response to one's surroundings (Gaspar and Esteves, 2020).

Table 3.1
Level of Schadenfreude of the Respondents

	Indicators	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	QUALITATIVE INTERPRETATION
1.	I can't help but feel good when a fellow classmate doesn't do well on an exam.	2.66	1.62	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
2.	I feel good after learning of a celebrity who experiences a downfall.	2.66	1.58	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
3.	I often feel joy from witnessing others' misfortunes.	2.39	1.51	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
4.	I feel satisfied when a coworker fails to get a promotion.	2.15	1.45	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
5.	I perk up when I find out someone has failed an exam.	2.50	1.61	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
6.	My attitude improves when someone I know gains weight.	2.54	1.56	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
7.	I feel satisfied when other people experience a downfall.	2.07	1.36	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
8.	I daydream about ways people I know could fail.	2.10	1.41	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
9.	I can't help but smile when I see someone step in a puddle.	2.69	1.59	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
10.	It makes me laugh to watch people run after the bus.	2.42	1.55	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
11.	I seek out gossip.	3.23	1.89	<i>Moderately Low Schadenfreude</i>
12.	I remember and share details about other people's misfortunes.	2.66	1.48	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
13.	I am more likely to read news articles about a political scandal than a political success.	3.13	1.82	<i>Moderately Low Schadenfreude</i>
14.	Gossip is more fun when the person I'm talking about has been negatively affected.	2.83	1.61	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
15.	I am more likely to click on a news article about a celebrity's scandal than her charity work.	2.94	1.81	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
16.	My mindset is improved when I hear a rumor.	3.31	1.79	<i>Moderately Low Schadenfreude</i>
17.	When someone I know or follow-on social media gets an unflattering hair cut, I get pleasure out of talking to others about it.	2.66	1.47	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
18.	When I see a person with a black eye, I think he must have deserved it in some way.	2.47	1.50	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
19.	It's funny to see people who have casts or who are on crutches.	1.96	1.27	<i>Very Low Schadenfreude</i>
20.	I like to see car accidents on the side of the road.	1.81	1.32	<i>Very Low Schadenfreude</i>
21.	When someone I know has lost something important to them, I laugh to myself.	2.02	1.35	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>
22.	If someone didn't get into college, that would be kind of funny.	1.82	1.29	<i>Very Low Schadenfreude</i>
23.	When someone throws a part and hardly anyone comes, that's amusing and hardly anyone comes, that's amusing.	2.40	1.57	<i>Low Schadenfreude</i>

Table 3.1 displays the mean values and standard deviations of various statements related to schadenfreude. The findings reveals that the statement “*My mindset is improved*

when I hear a rumor” has the highest mean value of 3.31, with a standard deviation of 1.79. This suggests that the majority of the respondents find their mental state improved when hearing a rumor. To some participants, hearing rumors about others might serve as a form of self-satisfaction, social engagement, entertainment, or even a motivation, leading to an improved mindset. These varying degrees of enjoyment derived from witnessing others’ misfortune displays a common form of schadenfreude among Filipinos. Schadenfreude, in the culture of Filipinos, is not a blatant or apparent display but rather in a form of sly smiles and piece of gossips to fill the void of mundane daily routines (Jaluage and Sanares, 2022). Even among the competitive nature of sports, players are found to exhibit form of contentment or satisfaction upon hearing a misfortune rumor befallen upon their rivals (Johannson and Rosenberg, 2023).

The lowest mean value scores 1.81 and a standard deviation of 1.32 belonging to the statement *“I like to see car accidents on the side of the road”*. This entails that the majority of the population of the respondents disagrees with the statement implying that misfortunes with actual harmful effects directed to others are unwelcome sight. This aligns with societal norms and ethical considerations. This shows that misfortune involving actual incidents with direct harmful effects are discomforting others to witness or hear. In fact, witnessing actual car accidents posed a psychological distress that might turn into a more serious mental illness such post-traumatic stress disorder (Mestayer, 2023).

Table 3.2

Level of the Respondent’s Schadenfreude

Scoring Scale	Schadenfreude			
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	QI
6.50-7.00	1	0.29	6.52	Very High
5.50-6.49	2	0.58	5.87	High
4.50-5.49	14	4.07	4.77	Moderately High
4.00-4.49	25	7.27	4.22	Average
3.00-3.99	64	18.60	3.46	Moderately Low
2.00-2.99	109	31.69	2.39	Low
1.00-1.99	129	37.50	1.44	Very Low
Total	344	100	2.5	Low

Table 3.2 presents the summary of the level of schadenfreude among the respondents. The findings reveal that the majority of the population fall on the category of *“Low”* schadenfreude with a percentage of 31.69, a frequency of 109 and a mean score of 2.39. The low level of schadenfreude present among college students reflects the positive social value among the respondents. This might imply that group engagement

minimizes the experience of schadenfreude. As stated by Sun and colleagues (2024), social interaction minimizes the competitiveness among ingroup dynamics but this is not applied for the outgroup members. Nonetheless, heightened schadenfreude for outgroup members does not necessarily imply hostility. But this reflects the innate human emotional response to emotionally align with their ingroup members, reinforcing relatedness and group identity.

Table 4

The Influence of Happiness on Schadenfreude

Variables/Effect	B	SE	p-value	Remarks
Happiness → Schadenfreude	0.131	0.114	0.252	Not Significant

B – Unstandardized Regression Coefficient; SE – Standard Error

Table 4 shows the regression analysis of happiness to schadenfreude. The findings reveal that the direct effect of happiness to schadenfreude has a p-value of 0.252, suggesting that happiness has no significant influence to schadenfreude. This may be due to varying factors that affected the study. This could also be that the schadenfreude boots their own self-esteem or sense of superiority regardless of their own level of happiness (Lin and Liang, 2021). Nonetheless, the absence of the influence of happiness to schadenfreude rejects the grounds for partial mediation.

Table 5

The Influence of Happiness on Empathy

Path	Variables/Effect	B	SE	p-value	Remarks
<i>a</i>	Happiness → Empathy	0.292	0.041	< 0.001	Significant

B – Unstandardized Regression Coefficient; SE – Standard Error

Table 5 display the regression analysis of the influence of happiness to empathy. The results show that the p-value is < 0.001 which indicates a significant influence of happiness to empathy. This implies that individuals with high level of happiness may exhibit high level of empathy as a consequence. Happiness is a crucial role in fostering empathy as an individual and for the society. People are led to believe that the complexity of happiness encompasses their flexible connectedness to empathy (Dhami and Joshi, 2021). Individuals that were foster in an accepting and caring environment are found to exhibit empathetic attitude to others and responding kindly while exhibiting emotional intelligence (Inam et al., 2021).

Table 6

The Influence of Empathy on Schadenfreude

Variables/Effect	B	SE	p-value	Remarks
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Empathy → Schadenfreude	0.445	0.138	0.001	<i>Significant</i>
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B – Unstandardized Regression Coefficient; **SE** – Standard Error

Table 6 presents the regression analysis on empathy to schadenfreude. The findings reveal that empathy significantly influence schadenfreude with a p-value of 0.001. This suggests a complex connection between the emotional states. Though, schadenfreude is often seen as a lack of empathy but in fact, this emotional state actually relies on empathy. Empathy entails the understanding and connection with what other feels including their pain upon a misfortune. This understanding of other's pain revolves into a sense of relief then ultimately, a sense of gratitude that they are not the one on a unfortunate shoes (Sear, 2021).

Table 7

Mediation Analysis of Empathy on the link between Happiness and Schadenfreude

Path	Variables/Effect	B	SE	p-value	Remarks
<i>c</i>	Happiness → Schadenfreude	-0.0230	0.1178	0.8454	<i>Not Significant</i>
<i>a</i>	Happiness → Empathy	0.2665	0.0418	< 0.001	<i>Significant</i>
<i>b</i>	Happiness → Empathy → Schadenfreude	0.4611	0.1448	0.0016	<i>Significant</i>
<u>Effects</u>					
	Direct Effect	-0.0230	0.1178	0.8454	<i>Not Significant</i>
	Indirect Effect	0.1229	0.0470	0.004	<i>Significant</i>
	Total Effect	0.0999	0.1128	0.3765	<i>Not Significant</i>
	Percentage Mediated	123.023%			

B – Unstandardized Regression Coefficient; **SE** – Standard Error

Table 7 depicts the mediating link between happiness and schadenfreude through empathy. The indirect effect exhibits a p-value of 0.004, which indicated a significant indirect effect of the mediation link. This concludes that empathy fully mediated the link between happiness and schadenfreude. The results implies that respondents with high levels of happiness may not directly exhibit schadenfreude unless empathy steps in and interfere the emotional dynamic. This may suggest that a presence of a strong empathy response of an individual may mitigate or alter their experience and expression of schadenfreude. It could be that the manifestation of high empathy increases the discernment to other people's misfortune. This discernment provides a sense of "empathetic responses" to seeing others in pain (Yanyan et al., 2020). Moreover, the manifestation of unfortunate event to an individual may provide a twisted sense of comfort or relief to others. A misfortune could be considered as a form or proof of a

human being's imperfect life path and imperfection or the presence of flaws is appealing to others. Perfection among humans is not non-existent but as well as considered mundane or boring (Chalmers, 2019). Additionally, one of the points suggested by Envy Theory (Smith et al., 1996), the discovery of other's misfortune decreases their desirability value in the eyes of an envious person. Which then alleviates the satisfaction induced by the feeling of schadenfreude and ultimately turn into a pleasant feeling of relief.

Cognitive-Behavioral Empathy Enhancement Program (CBEEP)

Areas of Concern	Objectives	Activities/Strategies	People Involved	Timeframe	Budget	Monitoring Schemes	Success Indicator
Improved identification of feelings and increase of happiness.	To discuss and further elaborate the difference and connection between happiness, empathy, and schadenfreude.	Group Discussion/Symposium	Guidance Counselor, Facility, Resource Speaker, and Students	First week of October	15,000 PHP	Before and after activity evaluation.	80%-100% of the students' output of the attended; evaluation report of the activity.
	To explore and understand one's emotions by acknowledging them and finding something to be grateful of, fostering self-awareness and emotional balance.	Inside Out Journaling: Five Emotions, Five Gratitude	Guidance Counselor, Facility, Resource Speaker, and Students	First week of October			
	To enhance affective empathy by training the students to recognize and match others' emotional states.	Mirror Neuron Practice: Matching Moods	Guidance Counselor, Facility, and Students	First week of October			
Induce positive empathetic responses.	To reminisce of memories that made people laugh while building and fostering connection with others.	Humor Hour: Group Sharing	Guidance Counselor, Facility, and Students	Second week of October	15,000 PHP	Before and after activity evaluation.	80%-100% of the students' output of the attended; evaluation report of the activity.
	To foster positive empathy and understanding by imagining the experiences and feelings of others.	"Walk in Their Shoes" Exercise	Guidance Counselor and Students	Third week of October			
	To deepen the understanding of self and other people while deriving motivation from the experiences.	Empathy Mapping	Guidance Counselor and Students	Fourth week of October			

Table 8 depicts the outline of the intervention program. Cognitive-Behavioral Empathy Enhancement Program aims to address the neutral level of happiness and enhance the empathy among college students. The researchers believe that the ability to distinguish or label emotional states will cultivate positive outlook and environment for the respondents. While enhancing the empathy fosters stronger social bonds, reduces interpersonal conflicts while enriching better mental wellness. Through these nurturing activities, participants will not only immerse cognitively but also learn and adapt behavioral reinforcement necessary for better academic environment.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explores how empathy mediates the relationship between happiness and schadenfreude. The researchers found that happiness does not directly impact schadenfreude, likely due to the complexity of happiness being multidimensional. However, happiness does influence empathy, as individuals are more likely to exhibit behaviors that align with their mood. Additionally, empathy plays a significant role in influencing schadenfreude, as heightened empathy can amplify emotional responses to others' misfortunes. Empathy also affects the perception of whether someone deserves their misfortune, which can intensify or mitigate the experience of schadenfreude. Envy is another factor that can contribute to the feeling of schadenfreude, and the interplay of empathy and envy can either reduce or induce this feeling. Overall, empathy plays a complex yet significant role in mediating the link between happiness and schadenfreude, shaping emotional responses and behaviors. This study highlights the intricate dynamics between empathy, happiness, and schadenfreude, shedding light on human behavior and attitudes.

Given the scope of this study, including the research setting, the selected participants, and the overall approach used, the researcher suggests the following enhancements for the existing programs aimed at these specific groups. These recommendations are intended to boost the credibility and relevance of future replications of this study.

Researchers suggest that programs should cater to specific groups to improve the validity of future studies. Schools can promote empathy through initiatives like peer groups and service projects. Counselors should offer resources and workshops on empathy building. Students can develop empathy by connecting with emotions, volunteering, and active listening. Future studies should explore empathy's role between happiness and schadenfreude, as well as self-awareness. They should use larger, diverse samples and interventions' impact on reducing schadenfreude.

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