

Schadenfreude: A Conceptual Review

Schadenfreude: Kavramsal Bir Derleme

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ABSTRACT

People can react differently to others' misfortune. Sometimes these reactions manifest as shared sadness, while at other times they appear as subtle or overt pleasure in others' distress. The German term "Schadenfreude" captures this latter type of reaction. Schadenfreude refers to a feeling of satisfaction or joy in response to someone else's failure, misfortune, or pain. This feeling represents a complex phenomenon that affects both internal psychological processes and external expressions, and a deeper understanding of schadenfreude calls for further research in the literature. This article's primary purpose is to contribute to the existing knowledge by offering both theoretical and practical perspectives on schadenfreude. The paper focuses on defining the concept of schadenfreude, its causes, the psychosocial variables related to it, and its impact on mental health. Schadenfreude emerges primarily due to three factors: individual characteristics, a sense of justice, and social comparison. The paper discusses how emotional and social factors, such as low empathy levels, jealousy, competitiveness, and social comparison, influence the emergence of schadenfreude. Additionally, studies on schadenfreude and the measurement tools used to assess it are examined. Finally, the need for further research on schadenfreude is emphasized.

Keywords: Schadenfreude, jealousy, envy, admiration, rejoicing in others' suffering, malicious joy

ÖZ

İnsanlar, başkalarının üzüntüsü karşısında farklı tepkiler verebilmektedir. Bu tepkiler kimi zaman üzüntüyü paylaşmak biçiminde kendini gösterirken kimi zaman da gizli ya da açık bir sevinme biçiminde de kendini gösterebilmektedir. Almanca kökenli bir kavram olan schadenfreude ise temelinde ikinci türden tepkilere karşılık gelen bir duygusal ifadedir. Schadenfreude, birinin başarısızlığı, kötü şans veya acısı karşısında içten içe duyulan memnuniyet ya da neşe durumunu ifade etmektedir. Schadenfreude duygusu, bireylerin içsel psikolojik süreçlerini ve dışa vurumlarını etkileyen karmaşık bir durumdur ve bu duygunun derinlemesine kavranması bakımından ilgili alanyazında daha fazla araştırma yapılmasına ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Bu bağlamda bu makalenin temel amacı schadenfreude ile ilgili hem teorik hem pratik bir bakış açısı sunarak alandaki bilgi birikimine katkı sağlamaktır. Makalede schadenfreude kavramının tanımı, nedenleri, ilgili olduğu psikososyal değişkenler ve ruh sağlığı üzerindeki etkilerine odaklanılmıştır. Schadenfreude, bireysel değişkenlerle ilgili, adalet arayışı ile ilgili ve karşılaştırma temelli bir olgu olmak üzere üç ana nedenle ortaya çıkmaktadır ve makalede empati düzeyinin düşüklüğü, kıskançlık, rekabetçilik ve sosyal karşılaştırma gibi duygusal ve sosyal faktörlerin, schadenfreude duygusunun ortaya çıkmasında etkisi tartışılmıştır. Ayrıca schadenfreude ile ilgili yapılan çalışmalar ve schadenfreudenin değerlendirilmesinde kullanılan ölçme araçları incelenmiştir. Son olarak schadenfreude ile ilgili daha fazla araştırma yapılmasının gereği vurgulanmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Schadenfreude, kıskançlık, haset, gıpta, başkasının üzüntüsüne sevinme

Introduction

Schadenfreude, defined as an important emotional state in human psychology, has a history dating back quite far and has retained its original German name because it lacks an exact equivalent in many languages. In recent years, it has attracted considerable attention from researchers. The term, composed of a compound phrase, can be expressed in English as a combination of the words "harm" and "joy" (Torun 2012). While some languages, such as Dutch (leed vermaak), Danish (skade fryd), Russian (zloradstvo), and French (joie maligne), have direct equivalents for the word, many others, including Turkish, lack an exact match (Kaynak 2021). Despite having equivalents in certain languages, these terms often fail to fully convey its meaning, prompting researchers to frequently use the German term schadenfreude for this emotion (Torun 2012).

This German-origin concept refers to the pleasure derived from others' failures, misfortunes, or suffering (Smith

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2008). Schadenfreude is a complex phenomenon that influences individuals' internal psychological processes and outward expressions. Numerous studies have been conducted to make this intricate emotion, which exists in human life, more comprehensible. This Manuscript aims to contribute to the understanding of schadenfreude by focusing on the definition of the concept, the psychosocial variables associated with it, and the possibilities for expressing it in Turkish.

An examination of the relevant literature reveals that, historically, there has not been an exact conceptual equivalent for schadenfreude in languages other than German. However, synonymous expressions have occasionally been used in its place in studies on the subject. For instance, the Arabic-derived term "şematet", defined in the Comparative Grand Turkish Dictionary as "to feel or express happiness at the distressing situations that befall someone else," serves as an example (Ayverdi 2005). Similarly, due to its complex structure, the literature indicates that no Turkish-origin word fully encapsulates the meaning of schadenfreude.

There have been various suggestions for the Turkish equivalent of schadenfreude. One such proposal is "jealousy joy." Other terms such as "pleasure in bad feelings" or "enjoyment of another's misfortune" have also been suggested. However, further research is needed to develop a more specific and effective term for expressing the concept of schadenfreude in Turkish. A review of the literature shows that schadenfreude has been translated into Turkish using terms like "hasetsefa", derived from the combination of the Arabic words "haset" (envy) and "sefa" (pleasure), or expressions such as "bitter joy," "malicious joy," "pleasure in another's misfortune," "joy in bad luck," "malevolent happiness," "spiteful joy," and "malicious delight." However, these terms are often deemed inadequate in terms of content, leading to the continued use of the original term in texts. Moreover, in national literature, the concept has been translated into Turkish with phrases such as "Pleasure Derived from Another's Misfortune" (Watt Smith 2020), "Finding Joy in Another's Sorrow" (Sevinçli and Abayhan 2022), and "Rejoicing in Another's Loss" (Kartol and Söner 2023).

Schadenfreude refers to the feeling of inner satisfaction or joy experienced in response to another person's failure, misfortune, or suffering. This emotion is characterized by deriving pleasure from others' negative experiences and serves as a form of internal gratification that makes individuals feel better or superior (Feather and McKee 2020). Schadenfreude, or the enjoyment of another person's misfortune, is linked to a cognitive evaluation that the other person deserves their misfortune (Feather et al. 2013). The connection between schadenfreude and cognitive evaluation makes this emotion complex, complicating its definition and understanding.

Historically, the origins of schadenfreude can be traced back to pre-Medieval times and even appear in Aristotle's works. In "Nicomachean Ethics", Aristotle (2019) discusses a feeling that lies between righteous indignation, envy, and spitefulness. Schadenfreude often emerges alongside many other emotions. Spinoza (2011), in his work "Ethics," establishes a connection between schadenfreude and hatred. Watt Smith (2019), in "The Book of Human Emotions", defines schadenfreude as the unexpected thrill, a delicious and concealed human pleasure, derived from another person's misfortune. He also highlights the physical expressions associated with this "illegitimate joy," such as sparkling eyes and twitching corners of the mouth. Watt Smith (2020) notes that the term schadenfreude first appeared in English in 1853.

Van Dijk and Ouwerkerk (2014b) state that the term entered the Oxford English Dictionary in 1895, where it was defined as "malicious enjoyment derived from another's misfortune." They also indicate that it was first used in The New York Times on March 13, 1898. Additionally, in the July 24, 1926 issue of The Spectator, a comment stated, "There is no English word for schadenfreude because such a feeling does not exist here." To understand schadenfreude in depth, it is crucial to holistically examine its causes and the psychosocial variables associated with it. The following section provides information on these aspects.

Causes of Schadenfreude and Associated Psychosocial Variables

Schadenfreude refers to the inner satisfaction or joy experienced in response to another person's failure, misfortune, or suffering. Also known as deriving pleasure from another's harm, this emotion is closely linked to the socio-emotional structure of individuals. The term "socio-emotional structure" refers to how individuals manage their emotional responses and interactions in social relationships, their emotional regulation during these processes, and their reactions to experiences in social contexts. This structure is formed by the integration of social and emotional developmental processes and influences individuals' behavior in relationships and their interactions with the social world. Schadenfreude, the pleasure derived from others' misfortunes, is strongly tied to socio-emotional structure (Smith 2000b). Understanding how schadenfreude arises requires an examination

of socio-emotional structure, particularly its components, such as social competition, envy, and feelings of superiority.

Causes and Classification System

Researchers have categorized schadenfreude based on various frameworks. These explanations can be grouped into a tripartite classification: theories based on envy and competition, perspectives rooted in justice and morality, and those considering empathy and social context.

1. Theories Based on Envy and Competition

Smith (2000b) asserts that schadenfreude is closely related to feelings of envy and competition. When individuals approach others' successes with envy and derive pleasure from their misfortunes, it reflects the social competition component of socio-emotional structure. Van Dijk and Ouwerkerk (2014a) examine schadenfreude stemming from social comparison, where individuals evaluate themselves relative to others. According to social comparison theory, when a person feels superior to others, this sense of superiority can trigger schadenfreude.

2. Perspectives Rooted in Justice and Morality

Feather (2006) approaches schadenfreude from a justice perspective, suggesting that people experience this emotion when those who have unfairly benefited face a downfall. In this context, schadenfreude may arise in response to events that conflict with individuals' moral and justice principles. Leach and Spears (2008) emphasize that perceptions of injustice within group dynamics and instances of exclusion within groups can also trigger schadenfreude.

3. Empathy and Social Context

Singer et al. (2006) argue that a lack of empathy and the presence of social distance can increase schadenfreude. People tend to experience greater schadenfreude in situations involving individuals with whom empathy is difficult, such as competitors or strangers. Cikara and Fiske (2013a) propose that beyond low levels of empathy, feelings of group belonging and the need to protect the group's interests can also lead to schadenfreude. This tendency becomes more pronounced in contexts where group solidarity is strong. The details of this tripartite classification system are explained in the following sections.

Van Dijk and Ouwerkerk (2014b) state that the feeling of schadenfreude is shaped by three distinct foundations: justice-based schadenfreude, comparison-based schadenfreude, and schadenfreude stemming from the sense of belonging to a group. Leach and Spears (2009), on the other hand, propose four fundamental sources of schadenfreude. The first is that when the group to which individuals belong experiences failure, group members may feel schadenfreude toward another group that has similarly failed or been defeated in the same context. Second, individuals may develop schadenfreude toward a reference group that they use as a benchmark for comparing their own group's success. The key motivation here is the activation of a self-affirmation response by rejoicing in the reference group's failure, thereby mitigating the negative feelings stemming from their own group's failure. The third cause, described by Leach and Spears (2009) as extremely malicious and dangerous, involves schadenfreude arising against a third group unrelated to the defeat or failure, particularly in parallel with feelings toward a successful group after its defeat. The fourth and final cause occurs when there is a negative evaluation of both the group to which the individual belongs and the opposing group (Leach and Spears 2009, Koç 2020).

Cikara and Fiske (2012a), who also emphasize three main causes of schadenfreude, argue that if an individual's misfortune leads to a benefit for the observer, the resulting gain will amplify the observer's sense of joy. The second cause involves the perception of whether the misfortune experienced was deserved or not. Finally, schadenfreude may stem from feelings of envy or admiration directed at the individual experiencing the misfortune.

According to Wang et al. (2019), who proposed a tripartite motivational model based on their research, the feeling of schadenfreude consists of three interrelated yet distinct subtypes: aggression, justice, and competition. Competition-based schadenfreude arises from concerns about social comparison and leads to tendencies toward exploitative behavior. This type of schadenfreude is "self-centered." Justice-based schadenfreude focuses on punishing those who violate social justice, shifting the focus toward the other person rather than oneself. Aggression-based schadenfreude, like competition-based schadenfreude, is self-centered and stems from concerns about social identity. It motivates behaviors such as exclusion of out-group members and displays of aggression in some contexts.

Related Psychosocial Variables

Schadenfreude has been associated with various psychosocial variables since its existence. Emotional and social factors such as low levels of empathy, jealousy, competitiveness, and social comparison can influence the emergence of schadenfreude (Van Dijk et al. 2006b). These variables are explained below under three main headings.

Individual Variables

As seen in the literature, a definitive judgment has not been reached regarding the causes of schadenfreude. This is due to the complex nature of schadenfreude and its relationship with many psychosocial variables. Since its emergence, schadenfreude has been linked to various psychosocial factors. Emotional and social factors such as low empathy levels, jealousy, competitiveness, and social comparison can contribute to the development of schadenfreude (Van Dijk et al. 2006b).

One of the psychosocial variables associated with the emotion of schadenfreude is empathy. While empathy is generally considered a positive social and emotional ability, low levels of empathy have been found to be linked with schadenfreude. Studies in the literature have supported the notion that individuals with low empathy tend to experience higher levels of schadenfreude in response to others' misfortunes. For instance, a neuropsychological study by Takahashi et al. (2009) shows that individuals with low empathy levels are more likely to take pleasure in the failures of others. Similarly, Van Dijk et al. (2006c) emphasize that low empathy levels increase schadenfreude. Low empathy refers to an individual's difficulty in understanding or empathizing with others' emotions. Individuals with a lack of empathy struggle to grasp others' emotional experiences and are often insensitive to their emotional responses or needs. This can result in a lack of understanding in social relationships and a decrease in empathetic responses (Davis et al. 1994). Individuals lacking empathy may find it difficult to understand others' emotions and may remain indifferent to their pain or failure. This indifference can facilitate the emergence of schadenfreude, as reduced empathy can lead to a tendency to take pleasure in others' misfortune (Cialdini et al. 1997). From a cognitive perspective, schadenfreude shares certain similarities with empathy (Van Dijk et al. 2006c, Takahashi et al. 2009), as it requires understanding the impact of misfortunes on individuals. Therefore, while schadenfreude may be cognitively similar to empathy, it seems to diverge emotionally, displaying contrasting characteristics. Similarly, various studies have shown that there is no relationship between empathy and schadenfreude (Greitemeyer et al. 2010), or that there is a moderate relationship between them (Black 2018).

One of the most fundamental emotions associated with schadenfreude is jealousy, which is a negative emotion toward others' possessions or successes (Smith 2000b, Feather and Nairn 2005, Smith and Kim 2007, Van de Ven et al. 2015). When a person experiences jealousy, they often perceive the successes or happiness of others as their own shortcomings, leading to emotional discomfort or anxiety regarding their lack or desire to have the same (Parrott and Smith 1993). Jealousy involves the tendency to perceive the achievements or happiness of others as a reflection of one's own inadequacies (Parrott and Smith 1993, Smith 2000b, Van de Ven et al. 2011). Consequently, individuals who feel jealous may take pleasure in others' failures or secretly rejoice in their negative experiences. Thus, jealousy can act as a trigger for the emotion of schadenfreude (Van Dijk et al. 2006a). When examining the relationship between schadenfreude and jealousy, inconsistency can be observed among studies. Some researchers note that one of the sources of schadenfreude is jealousy (Dvash and Shamay-Tsoory 2011, Piskorz and Piskorz 2009, Van De Ven 2014), while other researchers argue the opposite (Feather and Sherman 2002, Feather and Nairn 2005, Feather and McKee 2014). Research has observed that schadenfreude may not arise from jealousy, but rather from negative emotions and other painful factors (Feather and Sherman 2002, Feather and Nairn 2005). In a study by Sevinçli (2020), it was found that individuals experiencing unfortunate events who were seen as superior or more successful than observers significantly influenced the observers' experience of schadenfreude. Additionally, it was noted that observers tended to experience more schadenfreude when a person exhibiting behavior that disrupts social harmony encountered an unfortunate event.

Competitiveness is the desire or tendency to gain superiority or achieve success when compared to others (Tesser 1988). This tendency leads individuals to be motivated by comparing their own performance with that of others and often arises as a result of social comparisons (Garcia et al. 2006). Competitiveness becomes more pronounced in environments that encourage comparison among individuals and can trigger efforts to excel in order to boost self-esteem (Tesser 1988). Competitive individuals may take pleasure in the failures of others and focus on highlighting their own achievements or defeating their rivals. This can lead to potential competition and conflict in social relationships (Smith and Kim 2007).

Competitive individuals typically have the desire to achieve superiority or success by comparing themselves to others. This sense of competitiveness may lead them to evaluate others' failures or misfortunes in relation to their own success. Therefore, the feeling of competitiveness can contribute to the emergence of *schadenfreude* (Smith and Kim 2007). Two studies conducted by Ourwerkerk et al. (2018) analyzed the reactions of opposition party voters in the Netherlands to the downfall of the coalition government and the reactions of BlackBerry users to negative news about Apple's iPhone. They investigated the emotion of *schadenfreude* based on reactions to news in political and consumer contexts. The findings showed that emotional identification with the in-group increased *schadenfreude* reactions to news of the failure of out-groups, and this effect was more pronounced when the news concerned a domain of interest. Moreover, the results revealed that news about the failure of an out-group strengthened the intention to share such situations with others or engage in negative verbal communication.

Social comparison is the process by which an individual evaluates their own situation by comparing themselves with others. These comparisons are often related to others' achievements, material possessions, or social status. Social comparison plays an important role in an individual's process of positioning themselves and forming their identity (Festinger 1954). The social comparison process involves evaluating one's own situation by comparing it to others' situations, often concerning their achievements, material possessions, or social standing. People, regardless of features such as culture, religious orientation, education, or socioeconomic status, tend to compare themselves with others, either consciously or unconsciously, and then assess themselves as superior to others (Tatlıoğlu 2015). When an individual compares themselves to others and feels superior, they may be inclined to take pleasure in others' failures. This can encourage the emergence of *schadenfreude* (Feather and McKee 2020). A study by Torun (2012) showed that poor individuals tend to develop more envy toward wealthy individuals who support the poor and, conversely, develop more *schadenfreude* toward wealthy individuals who hold negative attitudes toward the poor. In terms of the type of misfortune experienced by wealthy individuals, it was found that individuals tend to feel more pleasure in response to negative events in work life compared to issues related to health or education.

Some studies suggest that there is a relationship between malicious joy (*schadenfreude*) and certain personality traits. In psychological literature, researchers have specifically investigated three personality traits associated with behaviors that violate norms and values. These traits were coined as the "Dark Triad" of personality by Paulhus and Williams (2002). They include narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (Jones and Paulhus 2014, Ferreiros and Clemente 2022). Narcissism encompasses behaviors such as self-centeredness, a sense of superiority, and arrogance, which negatively impact an individual's social relationships (Jonason and Middleton 2015). Individuals with narcissistic personality traits tend to seek attention, view themselves as superior in social contexts, and attribute these traits to others. Due to these characteristics, individuals with narcissistic traits may have a higher tendency for *schadenfreude* (Leach et al. 2003). Machiavellianism refers to the tendency of individuals to use any means necessary—whether positive or negative (such as manipulation, exploitation, deception, etc.) to achieve their goals (Zeigler-Hill and Marcus 2016). As a result, individuals with higher levels of Machiavellianism may be more prone to malicious joy (Barnett and Thompson 1985). Psychopathy, characterized by divisiveness in communication and antisocial behavior, has been found to be associated with an increased tendency for *schadenfreude* (Ostrovsky et al. 2019). Consequently, Porter et al. (2014) found that individuals with dark personality traits express higher levels of malicious joy. Additionally, according to the downward social comparison theory, individuals who are negatively affected by a situation may compare themselves to someone they perceive as less fortunate, which has a positive impact on their subjective well-being (Wills 1981). Similarly, a study by Van Dijk et al. (2009) revealed that witnessing others' misfortunes led to an increase in the self-esteem of observers. In a study conducted by Jung (2017), it was determined that individuals with higher self-esteem exhibited lower levels of malicious joy (Erzi 2019). Koç (2020) found that as the rate of watching matches increased, so did the feeling of *schadenfreude*. When examining the relationship between team identity and *schadenfreude*, it was found that fans with lower income levels experienced higher levels of *schadenfreude*. In gender-based research, male fans were found to develop *schadenfreude* to a greater extent than female fans.

Some studies suggest a relationship between *schadenfreude* and certain personality traits. For example, individuals with low self-esteem or narcissistic personality traits may exhibit a higher tendency for *schadenfreude* (Leach et al. 2003). Additionally, individuals with psychopathic traits have also been found to experience higher levels of *schadenfreude* (Ostrovsky et al. 2019). According to the downward social comparison theory, individuals who are negatively affected by a situation may compare themselves to someone they perceive as less fortunate, which has a positive impact on their subjective well-being (Wills 1981). Similarly, a study by Van Dijk et al. (2009) found that witnessing others' misfortunes led to an increase in the self-esteem of

observers. In a study conducted by Jung (2017), it was determined that individuals with higher self-esteem exhibited lower levels of schadenfreude (Erzi 2020b). Another study by Koç (2020) examined the behaviors of football fans and explored the relationships between sadism and narcissism, narcissism and schadenfreude, and schadenfreude and team identity. It was found that narcissism and schadenfreude were positively and significantly related to each other. A study by Kaynak (2021) revealed that as acute self-esteem decreased, schadenfreude increased, with envy mediating this relationship. Additionally, the study found that individuals who were perceived as undeserving of their success caused more schadenfreude when experiencing misfortunes, compared to individuals who were perceived as deserving of their success.

In the context of the existing literature, emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions. Some studies suggest that low levels of emotional intelligence may be associated with higher tendencies for schadenfreude (Wong and Law 2002, Bakker and Demerouti 2007, Jonason and Kroll 2015, Brinkman and Van der Meer 2019). Individuals with higher emotional intelligence may be better at understanding the pain of others and thus may be less likely to experience schadenfreude (Zaki and Ochsner 2012). In addition to emotional intelligence, there may also be a relationship between schadenfreude and moral values. For instance, individuals with high moral values have been found to be less inclined to take pleasure in the suffering of others (Cameron and Payne 2011). This suggests that schadenfreude may conflict with moral values, and these values may play an important role in shaping emotional responses. In a study conducted by Tatlıcioğlu (2015), the relationship between individuals' tendency to feel embarrassment on behalf of others and their enjoyment behavior in situations of shame, as well as their tendency for schadenfreude, was examined. The study found that as individuals' tendency to feel embarrassed on behalf of others increased, their experience of schadenfreude in response to shameful situations decreased significantly. Based on this finding, it can be hypothesized that schadenfreude may also be related to social relationships. For example, individuals who are socially isolated or receive low social support tend to take more pleasure in the failures of others (Feather 2006). Furthermore, it has been observed that schadenfreude increases in environments where it is socially accepted (Smith et al. 2020). In a study conducted by Akın (2023) with bank employees, it was found that individuals working in an egoistic climate did not develop significant levels of schadenfreude in response to the misfortunes of their colleagues. Additionally, there was no significant relationship between the participants' perceptions of a prosocial work environment and their tendency to develop schadenfreude. Another finding of the study was that the presence of an ethical climate in the workplace decreased the tendency for schadenfreude among employees. In the same study, the relationship between narcissism and schadenfreude was also explored, and it was found that as narcissistic tendencies increased, so did the tendency for schadenfreude.

Comparison-Based Variables

Difficulty in associating refers to a situation in which an individual experiences difficulty in identifying or associating negative situations in their own or others' lives. Research shows that there is an inverse relationship between difficulty in associating and schadenfreude (Tesser and Collins 1996, Cikara and Fiske 2012b). That is, individuals who experience difficulty in associating are less likely to take pleasure in others' failures or misfortunes (Kramer et al. 2018). Stress and anxiety are factors that affect an individual's ability to cope with negative emotional states. Some studies suggest that high levels of stress or anxiety are related to tendencies for schadenfreude (Smith 2000a, Cheng and Chartrand 2003, Cohen et al. 2007, Miller and Murdock 2007). In particular, it has been found that individuals under stress tend to show an increased tendency to enjoy others' bad situations (Smith and Turner 2018a). Stress is often accompanied by emotional burnout. Emotional burnout refers to the depletion of emotional resources due to intense workload, emotional demands, and stress. Individuals experiencing emotional burnout may exhibit reduced empathy and sensitivity, which may increase their tendency for schadenfreude. Specifically, it has been observed that health professionals with emotional burnout show higher levels of schadenfreude (Abraham and Plange Rhule 2016).

In their study, Leach and colleagues (2015) explored the conceptual differences between "schadenfreude" and "gloating," the differences in intrinsic motivational sources, and behavioral indicator distinctions. According to them, in the case of schadenfreude, competition is indirect and at a moderate level, whereas in gloating, competition is direct and at a high level. This shows that gloating reflects a more overt competitive situation. In both cases, self-comparison with others is moderate, indicating that both emotions require a specific comparison situation. In terms of self-benefit, schadenfreude is indirect and moderate, while gloating is direct and high, more clearly showcasing the individual's self-benefit. Additionally, schadenfreude occurs from a passive observer perspective, whereas gloating involves an active actor/perpetrator perspective, indicating that gloating is a more participatory experience.

According to Leach and colleagues (2015), schadenfreude arises from an external factor, while gloating arises

from an internal factor, and schadenfreude is more dependent on external influences. Gloating enables the individual to feel powerful, while schadenfreude creates a more passive state of power. In terms of status, schadenfreude is associated with a moderate level of status, while gloating is linked to a high level of status. In both cases, performance is at a moderate level; however, when it comes to gloating behavior, gloating may be associated with a higher perceived performance. From an experience perspective, the enjoyment level in schadenfreude is moderate, while in gloating, it is high, indicating that gloating is a more active and vivid experience. In terms of exhibitionism, schadenfreude varies from low to moderate, while gloating is high. This suggests that gloating reflects a stronger desire to display and boast to others (Leach et al. 2015). In general, gloating manifests itself as a more overt and direct satisfaction and display of power, while schadenfreude is associated with a passive observer perspective and is considered an indirect source of enjoyment.

Variables Related to the Search for Justice

Another determinant of schadenfreude is the perception that the person experiencing misfortune deserves it (Feather 2006). Researchers suggest that the more a misfortune is perceived as deserved, the stronger the emotional response of schadenfreude (Heider 1958, Ortony et al. 1988, Portmann 1999, Ben-Ze'ev 2000, Van Dijk et al. 2005, Feather 2006). Just as a person is considered deserving of positive outcomes for which they are responsible, similarly, a person who is responsible for their own misfortune is perceived as deserving of it. From this perspective, it can be stated that schadenfreude arises because the individual is believed to have deserved the misfortune (Van Dijk et al. 2005). Experimental research by Van Dijk and colleagues (2005) supports these views. In a study by Yeniay (2012), it was found that individuals showed more schadenfreude in a situation where they thought a member of a different group deserved a misfortune, compared to a situation where the misfortune was perceived as undeserved. The emotion of rejoicing over the misfortune of an out-group member did not change in the context of gender similarity. It was found that women were more likely to feel schadenfreude when the social identity of the person involved in the negative event was identifiable and they believed the misfortune was deserved, whereas men were more likely to show schadenfreude when the social identity of the person was unclear and the misfortune was believed to be deserved.

Another emotion associated with schadenfreude is envy. Envy refers to the tendency to resent others for their successes or blessings and to feel discomfort about their possessions. This emotion can arise as a negative reaction to others' happiness or success and is often rooted in an individual's lack of self-esteem (Smith and Kim 2007). In situations where social comparisons can be made, a study by Van Dijk et al. (2006a) found a positive relationship between envy and schadenfreude. When the relationship between gender and schadenfreude was examined, men were found to show more schadenfreude compared to women. Additionally, women tended to show more envy and schadenfreude towards other women, while men exhibited more envy and schadenfreude towards other men (Torun 2012). An interesting study by De Jong and colleagues (2021) demonstrated the effect of intra-group and inter-group dynamics on the emergence of schadenfreude and empathy. In the study, teams consisting of human-human and robot-human were competed in a virtual environment, and schadenfreude and empathy were examined. It was observed that people showed more empathy towards in-group members than out-group members, regardless of whether the other party was a human or a robot, and experienced more schadenfreude towards out-group members. People reported experiencing similar levels of empathy and schadenfreude towards both human and robot players. This research is important for examining human-robot interactions in various sectors where humans and robots work together. It also shows that the nature of the intermediary between empathy and schadenfreude is not dependent on its form.

Developmental Aspects of Schadenfreude

According to Heider (1958), when one person's misfortune causes another's joy, this emotion creates a sense of incompatibility. Thus, schadenfreude is also considered an incompatible emotion that can harm social relationships (Watanabe 2018). Investigating the emotion of schadenfreude is crucial for understanding its place and effects in an individual's life. Examining schadenfreude from a developmental perspective is important as it allows for an assessment that is free from the positive or negative effects typically associated with adulthood. Additionally, findings related to the experience of this emotion during childhood will guide preventive efforts concerning this maladaptive emotion.

A review of the literature reveals that there are very few studies that examine schadenfreude from a developmental perspective (Erzi 2020). According to Hoffman (2000), babies can recognize the distress of others starting from the 24th month. Batson and Powell (2003) also suggest that the development of the ability to understand the distress of others is related to the ability to identify with people in need, understand them, and

feel empathy towards them. Therefore, understanding the distress of others is not only necessary for sympathy but also for *schadenfreude* (Erzi 2020). Because *schadenfreude* requires a basic level of complex cognitive structures, such as the ability to distinguish right from wrong, it is believed that 36-month-old babies who can differentiate right from wrong are capable of feeling *schadenfreude* (Erzi 2020). However, research by Shamay-Tsoory et al. (2014) observed signs of *schadenfreude* even in the youngest children in their sample, who were 24 months old, supporting hypotheses related to the early evolutionary origins of avoidance of inequality and suggesting that *schadenfreude* may have evolved as a response to the unfair distribution of resources.

According to Piaget, during the preoperational stage, children approve of any form of punishment, even if arbitrary, in response to a mistake. At this stage, children interpret an accident following a bad behavior as a form of punishment for that behavior (Dreek et al. 2019). Some studies in the relevant literature show that the emotional responses adults give to the experiences of others are influenced by moral selectivity (Wang et al. 2023). Some adults take pleasure in the misfortunes of antisocial individuals (Brambilla and Riva 2017, Berndsen and Tiggemann 2020, Rodriguez-Gomez et al. 2020), while others show less empathy or sympathy (Brambilla and Riva 2017, Rodriguez-Gomez et al. 2020, Yu et al. 2023). In this context, a study by Wang et al. (2024) explored whether the emotional responses children give to the events others experience are influenced by moral selectivity. In the study, emotional responses of children aged 4-8 to the physical pain and pleasure of puppets who showed either positive social behavior or antisocial behavior were compared. The children expressed unhappiness in response to the puppets' pain but were less unhappy when it was the antisocial puppet. Similarly, the children expressed happiness in response to the puppets' pleasure but were less happy when the puppet was antisocial. While the study demonstrated the influence of moral selectivity on children's emotional responses to others' experiences, it was noted that children did not exhibit *schadenfreude* or *gluckschmerz* (displeasure at others' joy). Schulz et al. (2013), in their study of children aged 4-8, observed that children developed *schadenfreude* in response to misfortunes faced by individuals who displayed morally negative behaviors. In contrast, sympathy emerged in response to misfortunes of individuals exhibiting morally positive behaviors. Schulz and colleagues (2013) suggest that the emergence of this emotion in children is linked to their concept of justice. Similarly, Schindler et al. (2015), in their study with children aged 3-8, reported that parents believed that physical misfortunes, competitive situations, and misunderstandings played a significant role in the emergence of children's first experiences with *schadenfreude* (Erzi 2020a).

In Piaget's concrete operations stage, which spans ages 7-12, games take on a competitive nature, and justice becomes more important. During this period, children's interests are more pragmatic (Dreek et al. 2019). Steinbeis and Singer (2013), studying children aged 7 to 13 from a social comparison perspective, found that when children were provided with information about the performance of their competitors, they showed more *schadenfreude* upon their defeat compared to when they were only given information about their own performance. They also noted that *schadenfreude* and jealousy were more intense when the children themselves failed. According to Schindler et al. (2015), *schadenfreude* and jealousy tend to decrease in intensity with age. As children grow older, social norms may have more influence on their ability to regulate and control emotions, but research in this area is still insufficient. Roulin et al. (2012) suggest that in environments with limited resources, social comparisons can create a competitive situation that triggers *schadenfreude* and jealousy. Particularly in family settings and among siblings, the division of parents' limited resources can foster *schadenfreude*.

According to Erikson, during adolescence, the fundamental conflict is between a sense of identity and identity confusion. Erikson sees peer relationships as a key factor in the formation of identity (Pekşen Süslü 2002). Therefore, research on socialization and self-esteem in adolescents is gaining importance. In his research on adolescents, Watanabe (2018) suggests that sharing *schadenfreude* emotions can lead to socialization. Watanabe (2018), who examined the relationship between *schadenfreude* and self-esteem, notes that self-esteem increases with social acceptance, and therefore, when others also share the emotion of *schadenfreude*, it leads to an increase in self-esteem. Feather (2014) states that *schadenfreude*, in response to harm believed to be deserved, is more socially acceptable in social environments. On the other hand, individuals with low self-esteem tend to feel more *schadenfreude* when they encounter those with high achievements. When various variables are involved, the sharing and expression of *schadenfreude* emotions among adolescents can lead to different results. While expressing *schadenfreude* does not lead to an increase in self-esteem, if others also share the belief that the person experiencing misfortune deserved it, sharing *schadenfreude* can lead to an increase in self-esteem (Erzi 2020b).

Schadenfreude is thought to be classified both as a self-awareness emotion and as a moral emotion (Rudolph and Tscharaktschiew 2014, Erzi 2020b). Therefore, since a specific cognitive structure is required to feel *schadenfreude*, it is suggested that it can be observed in children from as early as 36 months, with the concept

of justice also being influential in this process. Although the intensity of *schadenfreude* decreases with age, various studies support the idea that variables such as self-esteem, social acceptance, and social comparison are particularly influential in the emergence and expression of this emotion during adolescence.

Behavior is an active process, and to understand it, the underlying causes need to be investigated rather than just the external manifestations (Geçtan 1997). Emotion is one of the factors that influence behavior (Türkçapar 2014). In light of this, examining the behavioral indicators of *schadenfreude* is crucial to understanding it in depth. The following section provides information on the behavioral indicators of *schadenfreude*.

Behavioral Indicators of Schadenfreude

Schadenfreude is an emotion that refers to the pleasure derived from the misfortunes of others (Hickman and Ward, 2007, Pancer and Ashworth 2009). Like in many areas of life, this emotion also manifests in the realm of consumption, arising from comparisons between consumers (Brigham et al. 1997, Pancer and Ashworth 2009). A situation involving failure related to a product in consumption can occur in an isolated environment and can create this emotion in individuals. A study conducted with university students found that students might experience *schadenfreude* due to envy of high-status products (Sundie et al. 2009), while another study showed that higher product status increased *schadenfreude* and that perceived lack of deservedness regarding the product influenced *schadenfreude* based on perceptions of envy and deservingness (Pancer et al. 2017).

When examining *schadenfreude* from a behavioral perspective, it can be categorized into three main areas: observation, humor, and laughter (Leach et al. 2003, Smith et al. 2009). First, it is useful to explain observation. *Schadenfreude*, which means to rejoice in others' misfortunes, can appear uncontrollably in places where other emotions are also expressed, such as on social media. For many social media users, what they enjoy most is not seeing others' happiness but observing their unhappiness. The basic reasons for this can be found in social comparison (Festinger 1954) and ideal self-concept. Social media platforms are places where people are inclined to showcase the positive aspects of their lives. However, negative experiences, failures, and disappointments are sometimes shared on these platforms as well. These shares can be evaluated by other users as part of the social comparison process, generating a feeling of "being in a better situation." Seeing others' unhappiness, especially in the competitive nature of social media, can be a source of personal satisfaction for some users (Johnson and Knobloch-Westerwick 2014). Research has shown that people on social media tend to engage more with content related to others' failures. For instance, Krasnova et al. (2013) pointed out that social media users may enjoy others' misfortunes. This phenomenon has made today's social media almost like the balcony of heaven, as described by Tertullian (Aydın Sevim 2022). Tertullian, one of the early Christian theologians, depicted a heavenly balcony from which the sufferings of those in hell could be observed with pleasure (De Waal 2020). This unusual depiction of heaven by Tertullian is a rather frightening image. As expressed by Frans de Waal (2020), for many people, watching others' pain is more disturbing than experiencing their own suffering, making Tertullian's heaven as terrifying as hell. Watt Smith (2020) interprets Tertullian's *schadenfreude* as part of the punishment of sinners, where the fascinating aspect is that this punishment turns into a particular pleasure for others.

Humor is another behavioral indicator of *schadenfreude*. Humor has been seen as another form of hostility by Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, and Rousseau. On the other hand, they suggested that individuals who appear disabled or unattractive create humor by mocking others and laughing at them. Plato pointed out that humor focuses on flaws, while Aristotle and Hobbes argued that excessive laughter, due to its focus on something inferior, is not compatible with a good life and may harm human character (Yerlikaya 2007). According to Ludovici, laughter is defined as a way of proving one's superiority over another event (Morreall 1997). Proverbs and idioms shape societal culture, and when these phenomena are examined, it can be said that humor can lead to negative situations. For instance, the idiom "laughing wickedly" expresses the mocking side of humor, while the proverb "laugh and misfortune will come to you" indicates both the use of laughter to belittle others and the situation that should be avoided for one's health and happiness (Altinkurt and Yılmaz 2011). While humor today is perceived positively, not long ago, the idea prevailed that humor and laughter reflected humanity's bad nature (Taşkıran 2011). Social media allows *schadenfreude* in limited circles to spread to a wider audience. After traumatic events such as earthquakes, sarcastic comments based on humor or laughter on social media show that social media can be a factor that supports *schadenfreude* (Bushman and Anderson 2009, Berger and Milkman 2012, Tandoc et al. 2015). Humor is increasingly becoming an effective tool for *schadenfreude* (Sakki and Martikainen 2021).

According to some studies (Glenn 2003, Hempelmann 2017, Trouvain and Truong 2017), laughter, the final

behavioral indicator of *Schadenfreude*, is an indispensable component of human interaction in healthy conditions. It is shown through smiling with a combination of sound, facial expressions, and body movement such as body shaking. Laughter is multifaceted and can be perceived both auditorily and visually (Glenn 2003). Partington (2006) emphasizes that laughter and smiling are generally related, although individuals can laugh with different emotions in different situations (joy, compassion, fun, happiness, surprise, irritability, sadness, shame, fear, aggression, anger, victory, mockery, or enjoyment from others' unhappiness) (Askenasy 1987, Mowrer et al. 1987, Chapman 1996, Provine 1996, Ruch and Ekman 2001, Partington 2006, Szameitat et al. 2009). Laughter is crucial for establishing relationships, strengthening bonds, and maintaining them, as it helps individuals connect with one another and build friendships. According to Glenn (2003), laughter can sometimes be malicious, and in this case, it may carry meanings such as belittling, mocking, or making fun of others.

In addition to all these behavioral indicators, a study by Lange and Boecker (2019) examined the interpersonal and social functions of *Schadenfreude* and noted that *Schadenfreude* emerges in the context of power and dominance. Lange and Boecker stated that *Schadenfreude* appears as a response to the misfortune of a person exhibiting dominance or arrogant pride and contributes to the regulation of hierarchical differences by reducing the person's dominance. The study also found that *Schadenfreude* may not be accepted by society in non-hierarchical contexts, indicating the limitations of its social function.

Mental Health and Schadenfreude

The emotion of *Schadenfreude* refers to the feeling of pleasure or joy experienced internally in response to the failure, misfortune, or pain of others (Smith 2008). This emotion can affect an individual's psychological state and mental health. For instance, individuals who tend to derive pleasure from the misfortune of others may exhibit emotional instability and psychological symptoms (Van Dijk et al. 2006a). Over time, this condition can even reach pathological and clinical dimensions. Furthermore, factors associated with *Schadenfreude*, such as low levels of empathy, jealousy, competitiveness, and social comparison, can negatively impact mental health. For example, low levels of empathy can reduce the ability to form emotional connections and may lead to problems in relationships (Davis et al. 1994). Similarly, strong feelings of jealousy and competitiveness can result in higher stress and anxiety levels in individuals who constantly compare themselves with others or harbor jealousy (Parrott and Smith 1993, Smith and Kim 2007). The long-term effects of these emotional responses on mental health are significant. Particularly, individuals who frequently experience *Schadenfreude* may face mental health issues such as emotional burnout, depression, and anxiety (Abraham et al. 2016). This indicates that *Schadenfreude* not only affects others' emotional states but can also influence an individual's own emotional well-being and psychological welfare.

1. Emotions Related to Others' Luck and Schadenfreude

The emotion of *Schadenfreude* is placed in the taxonomy of "emotions related to others' luck." Emotions related to others' luck can be defined as feelings that arise based on social comparison when individuals observe what others have achieved or experienced. Similar to self-conscious emotions, emotions related to others' luck originate from the discrepancy between the self individuals desire and the self they possess. A person tends to develop these emotions when another person is in a situation that, from the perspective of their own goals and interests, is desirable or undesirable. In brief, these emotions emerge in situations where an individual's emotional state is dependent on the emotional states of others (Ortony et al. 1988).

The concept of emotions related to others' luck is based on the emotional taxonomy theory of Ortony et al. (1988). This classification system is centered on the emotions a person experiences in response to others' successes, failures, luck, or misfortunes. Ortony and colleagues argue that these emotions arise from social comparison and the relationship between an individual's internal states and the circumstances of others. The taxonomy of emotions is shaped by social comparison theory (Festinger 1954) and the differences between the self and the ideal self.

In Ortony et al.'s (1988) model, emotions related to others' luck are categorized into four main groups. The first group is called "happy-for," which refers to feeling happy when someone else experiences a positive situation. This emotion occurs when there is a positive connection between the individual and the other person. It arises when the other person's success aligns with the individual's interests or when the individual has a positive social relationship. The second group is "*Schadenfreude*," which refers to feeling pleasure when others experience misfortune. This emotion occurs when the person views another's failure as contributing to their own success or sense of superiority. *Schadenfreude* often stems from competitive or jealousy-based social comparisons. The third emotion is "envy," which arises when someone else possesses something that the individual does not. Envy

is triggered by comparisons that highlight the individual's own failures or inadequacies. The final emotion is "pity," which involves feeling sorrow or compassion when someone else faces a misfortune. Pity typically occurs when the individual perceives themselves as being in a more advantageous position but without harboring a negative sense of superiority. This classification is grounded in the idea that emotions develop based on social comparisons. According to Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, individuals constantly compare themselves to others to evaluate their own achievements, status, or luck. Ortony et al.'s classification explains the different forms of emotional responses that arise from these comparisons and emphasizes their impact on social relationships. All four emotions—"happy-for," schadenfreude, envy, and pity—are interconnected with mental health.

2. Social Comparison and Schadenfreude

People tend to compare themselves with others in their social environments to understand their own abilities and thoughts (Festinger 1954). Social networking sites, in particular, facilitate this social comparison process by constantly providing users with information about others (Gonzales and Hancock 2010, Feinstein et al. 2013, Jelenchick et al. 2013, Appel et al. 2016). This topic is also prominent in social psychology research (Wills 1981, Wood et al. 1994, Gibbons and Buunk 1999, Smith 2000a, Buunk and Ybema 2003). When an individual compares themselves with someone superior, emotions like admiration or inspiration may arise. Negative emotions like pessimism, depression, or jealousy may result, and comparisons with someone perceived as inferior can lead to emotions such as pride or schadenfreude, as well as negative emotions like worry or sympathy. These emotions triggered during social comparison can affect an individual's psychological well-being and mental health. Research into the psychological effects of social comparison on users of social networking sites (e.g., Facebook or Instagram) is increasing daily. In a study by Şahin (2020), the effects of social media use on young people's self-esteem and the role of social comparison were examined. Another study by Güler (2019) explored how social media use impacts body image concerns among university students. A study by Özdemir and Şen (2021) focused on the impact of social media use on social comparison and feelings of loneliness. A meta-analysis by Aydın and Akyol (2022) examined the overall effects of social media interactions on young people's psychological health.

Most research on the psychological outcomes of social comparison has provided empirical evidence of the negative effects of social comparison (Krasnova et al. 2013, Kross et al. 2013, Sagioglou and Greitemeyer 2014, Tandoc et al. 2015). However, current studies have focused on the potential limitations of previous research. First, aside from a few studies (Haferkamp and Krämer 2011, Johnson and Knobloch-Westerwick 2014, Steers et al. 2014, Batenburg and Das 2015, Johnson and Knobloch-Westerwick 2017a), most previous research has investigated only upward social comparison. While studies generally agree that upward social comparison predominates in social networking sites or other online environments, the importance of downward social comparison should not be ignored. Second, many studies have focused only on negative emotions like jealousy, depression, or shame that are triggered under upward social comparison (Johnson and Knobloch-Westerwick 2014, Steers et al. 2014, Batenburg and Das 2015). However, the social psychology literature (Smith 2000, Buunk and Ybema 2003) suggests that upward social comparison can also trigger positive emotions like optimism or inspiration. In other words, the effects of social comparison on psychological health can be positive or negative, depending on the type of emotion triggered by the comparison. Third, previous studies using Gibbons and Buunk's (1999) comparative orientation scale assumed that social comparison orientation is a one-dimensional construct. However, the original study suggested that social comparison orientation could consist of two factors: the ability to engage in social comparison and the tendency to compare opinions (Gibbons and Buunk 1999). Previous studies using this scale have not differentiated these two factors in the context of social comparison on social networking sites. This study expands the scope of emotions triggered in the social comparison process (Smith 2000a) and addresses these limitations by focusing on differences in social comparison orientation (Festinger 1954, Gibbons and Buunk 1999). Specifically, it tests Smith's (2000a) four types of social comparison-based emotions by distinguishing between the "social comparison ability tendency" and "social comparison opinion tendency" of social network users. These four types of emotions include upward contrasting emotions (e.g., jealousy and depression), upward assimilative emotions (e.g., optimism and inspiration), downward contrasting emotions (e.g., pride and schadenfreude), and downward assimilative emotions (e.g., worry and sympathy).

Depending on the type of social comparison, it is evident that social comparison can have positive effects on mental health. Following these related studies, several research findings suggest that schadenfreude may have negative effects on mental health. For instance, as the level of schadenfreude increases, symptoms of depression

have been found to increase (Feather and Sherman 2002). Moreover, an increase in schadenfreude has been linked to higher stress levels, which can negatively affect mental health (Smith and Turner 2018a). Based on these studies, it can be said that the effects of schadenfreude on mental health are complex and can vary depending on the context (Smith 2000b, Buunk and Ybema 2003, Van Dijk et al. 2006c). For example, in some cases, experiencing schadenfreude may enhance an individual's self-esteem and improve their mental health (Van Dijk et al. 2006c). Additionally, it has been suggested that schadenfreude may strengthen social connections and expand social support networks (Abraham and Windmann 2016). These contradictory findings indicate that more research is needed to better understand the effects of schadenfreude on mental health.

3. Neuropsychology and Schadenfreude

Explaining psychological concepts from a biological perspective plays a crucial role in strengthening the scientific side of research. Upon reviewing the relevant literature, it is evident that while there is limited research on the biological foundations of schadenfreude and its associated concepts, various studies have been conducted. Understanding the neural connections underlying emotions and behaviors is significant for comprehending neuropsychiatric disorders and intervening in them (Kang et al. 2013, Swencionis and Fiske 2014). Jealousy and schadenfreude, particularly those arising from social comparison, are emotions supported by the prefrontal-striatal network. Neural stimulation in social comparison situations largely governs both positive social behaviors (prosocial) and negative social behaviors (antisocial). These findings are crucial for cognitive and neuroendocrine interventions in social adjustment disorders (Jankowski and Takahashi 2014).

In a study by Hein et al. (2010), the neurobiological processes underlying social decisions such as empathy and helping behavior through group dynamics were examined. In the functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) analysis, it was observed that the activation occurring in the left hemisphere of the brain of an individual witnessing someone else's pain was a predictor of empathy. When the pain of an in-group member was observed, the activation was stronger. Moreover, when a member of an out-group was seen suffering, there was an increased activation in the right NAcc (Nucleus Accumbens), which is known as the brain's reward center, while activation related to empathy in the left hemisphere decreased. The pain of an out-group member, by activating the reward center, could lead to pleasure. However, when positive impressions of the out-group member were formed (including spending time in the same room), activation in the left hemisphere increased, while the activation in the reward center decreased. Furthermore, increased activation in the left hemisphere related to empathy also led to an increased likelihood of helping behavior.

A study by Cikara et al. (2011) examined whether neural responses to failures in competitive groups were related to the likelihood of harming out-group members. When the opposing team succeeded and the individual's team failed, activation of the anterior cingulate cortex and insula was observed in the functional magnetic resonance (fMRI) scans. In contrast, when the individual's team succeeded and the opposing team failed, the ventral striatum was activated. The anterior cingulate cortex is known to play an active role in empathy, learning, behavior control, and decision-making in the brain (Altınbaş et al. 2010, Dinç and Özer Kaya 2022). The insula, along with the anterior cingulate cortex, is involved in emotion and behavior regulation, as well as cognitive and empathetic processes (Flynn 1999). The ventral striatum is described as a brain region that converts emotional inputs into motivation (Ulupınar 2020). In conclusion, the study showed that intergroup competition directly affects brain regions related to reward and empathy, and can motivate harmful actions toward rival groups (Cikara et al. 2011).

Schadenfreude from a Social Perspective

Helping behavior is one of the prosocial behaviors that strengthen social relationships (Yavuzer 2017). Similarly, the decline in helping behavior within society can lead to the deprivation of social support, which is one of the individual's fundamental needs. A study regarding Schadenfreude from a social perspective found that as perceived competitive targets increase, the feeling of Schadenfreude for another person's misfortune reduces helping behavior. Conversely, when perceived competitive targets are low, helping behavior increases alongside empathetic feelings (Chen et al. 2021). Similarly, various studies (Schulz et al. 2013, Erzi 2019) show that the feeling of Schadenfreude is negatively related to helping behavior. This indicates the effect of Schadenfreude on behaviors in social life. It is a notable finding that Schadenfreude, by nature, involves a passive feeling on the part of the person, yet it can still influence behaviors. Moreover, some studies suggest that psychopathy traits and aggressive behaviors are positively associated with Schadenfreude (James et al. 2014), and a study by Schumpe and Lafrenière (2016) found that individuals with high sadistic tendencies experience higher levels of Schadenfreude as the severity of others' injuries increases. These researchers emphasize that further studies on

Schadenfreude, related to such negative emotions and behaviors, are necessary. In contrast, a study by Van Dijk et al. (2011) shows that another person's misfortune may be satisfying for individuals because it fulfills their concerns about self-view and self-esteem. Based on these findings, it can be said that Schadenfreude has significant effects on social relationships and individual characteristics due to its complex nature.

Measurement of Schadenfreude

Schadenfreude scales are tools used to measure the pleasure or satisfaction individuals feel from the failures or misfortunes of others. These scales are commonly used in social psychology research, emotional psychology studies, and human behavior fields. Upon reviewing the literature, various scales have been developed internationally, and there are also adapted scales in Turkey to measure Schadenfreude. Additionally, some researchers (Yeniay 2012, Erzi 2019) have used scenarios to assess Schadenfreude. In such studies, the scenarios serve as a manipulation tool to assess the feeling of Schadenfreude. These scenarios are designed to direct viewers' emotional and moral responses and have thought-provoking effects on people's social relationships and moral values.

The first scale is the Leach Schadenfreude Scale, developed by Leach et al. (2003). This scale is used to assess the level of Schadenfreude individuals feel toward the failure of other groups. This study, which also provides data within the context of social relationships, explains individuals' emotional states within their own in-groups by comparing them to the emotional states related to the failure of a successful out-group, and helps provide evidence for prejudice in terms of emotion-based information. The scale consists of 12 items and measures individuals' Schadenfreude reactions in the context of group competition and social comparison processes. Another scale is the Benign Envy Scale, developed by Van de Ven and Zeelenberg (2011), which measures benevolent jealousy and envy felt toward others' failures. However, the emotions measured by this scale do not fully align with the concept of Schadenfreude, and therefore it cannot measure the feeling of Schadenfreude. This study focuses on the single dimension of jealousy and involves four experimental studies. The scale evaluates individuals' emotional responses to others' misfortunes or failures. Another scale is the Dispositional Envy Scale, developed by Rakhshani and Oreyzi (2019), which is used to assess individuals' general tendencies toward envy. This scale measures individuals' levels of envy and their reactions to others' failures. In the "Schadenfreude Scale" developed by Cikara and Fiske (2013), the relationships between stereotypes, jealousy, Schadenfreude, and harm are explored, and the study focuses on both individual and social aspects. The "Schadenfreude Scale" developed by Atiq et al. (2023) consists of three sub-studies designed to measure Schadenfreude in the workplace. The scale, which has two dimensions—complacency and revenge—consists of 20 items for self-reporting. The "Schadenfreude/Schadenfreude to Others' Harm/Sorrow Scale," developed by Crysel and Webster (2018), is a subjective two-dimensional scale that assesses the extent to which individuals experience pleasure when others are harmed or sad. The Turkish adaptation of this scale was carried out by Sevinçli and Abayhan (2022) and Kartol and Söner (2023). In the adaptation study by Sevinçli and Abayhan (2022), two sub-dimensions were formed, just as in the original scale. These sub-dimensions were conceptualized as good intention-bad intention. The scale consists of 11 items and measures individuals' responses to another's sorrow. In the adaptation study by Kartol and Söner (2023), four sub-dimensions were formed, and the scale includes 12 items measuring individuals' responses when someone else is harmed.

The developed scales (Leach Schadenfreude Scale (Leach et al. 2003), Benign Envy Scale (Van de Ven and Zeelenberg 2011), Dispositional Envy Scale (Rakhshani and Oreyzi 2019), Schadenfreude Scale (Cikara and Fiske 2013), Schadenfreude Scale (Atiq et al. 2023), Schadenfreude/Schadenfreude to Others' Harm/Sorrow Scale (Crysel and Webster 2018), Turkish Adaptation of Schadenfreude/Schadenfreude to Others' Harm/Sorrow Scale (Sevinçli and Abayhan 2022), Turkish Adaptation of Schadenfreude/Schadenfreude to Others' Harm/Sorrow Scale (Kartol and Söner 2023)) have been developed to assess and measure Schadenfreude and emotions associated with it. None of the scales are unidimensional. The Benign Envy Scale (Van de Ven and Zeelenberg 2011) and the Schadenfreude Scale (Cikara and Fiske 2013) are scales that consist only of experimental studies and do not contain items for measurement. However, the Schadenfreude Scale developed by Atiq et al. (2023) is a self-report scale, which evaluates the information individuals provide about themselves. The Leach Schadenfreude Scale (Leach et al. 2003) evaluates Schadenfreude in groups; the Schadenfreude Scale developed by Cikara and Fiske (2013) assesses Schadenfreude both in individuals and groups. Other scales assess Schadenfreude only in individuals. In this context, there is a variety of portfolios for Schadenfreude scales. While the developed scales measure Schadenfreude and associated emotions in individuals, the Schadenfreude Scale by Atiq et al. (2023) measures Schadenfreude in the workplace. The Schadenfreude/Schadenfreude to Others' Harm/Sorrow Scale (Crysel and Webster 2018) has been adapted to Turkish culture. There are two adaptations

in Turkish culture, which differ methodologically. The adaptation study by Sevinçli and Abayhan (2022) includes two sub-dimensions with 11 items, while the study by Kartol and Söner (2023) includes four sub-dimensions with 12 items.

Studies on Schadenfreude in Turkey

The concept of Schadenfreude, like in international literature, has also drawn the attention of researchers in recent years in the national literature. The following table presents information about studies related to Schadenfreude in the national literature. Table 1 includes recent manuscripts that contain one of the terms "Schadenfreude/joy at others' sorrow/joy at harm/joy at others' misfortune" in the title or keywords.

Title	Method	Results	Contributions to the Literature
Erzi (2019)	Research (Mixed (quantitative-qualitative) method)	Helping behavior is significantly predicted by schadenfreude and sympathy. A significant difference was found between participants who chose to help and those who did not in terms of schadenfreude and sympathy. Correlation analysis revealed a significant relationship between schadenfreude, social comparison, self-esteem, and sympathy; however, no significant relationship was found between the amount of help and other variables.	The study of the relationship between helping behavior and concepts like schadenfreude, self-esteem, and perceived self-threat serves as a reference for future studies. It also enhances the understanding of these concepts and their relationships.
Erzi (2020b)	Research (Mixed (quantitative-qualitative) method)	Schadenfreude was found to be indirectly related to helping behaviors and directly related to psychopathy and Machiavellianism, which are defined as dark personality traits. High levels of psychopathy and Machiavellianism were found to be associated with high levels of schadenfreude, while high levels of helping behavior were linked to low levels of schadenfreude.	The study contributes to the literature by enhancing the understanding of the relationship between schadenfreude, helping behaviors, and the dark triad (self-esteem, empathy, and perspective-taking).
Bozacı and Gökdeniz (2021)	Research (Descriptive survey method and quantitative method)	Consumers' intention to buy fake clothing products was found to be influenced by ethical perception, price sensitivity, and schadenfreude toward businesses.	The Manuscript highlights an underexplored variable in consumer research literature and sheds light on a topic that causes significant issues for businesses and consumers within a specific sample.
Erzi (2022)	Research (Path Analysis)	Path analysis revealed that only reactive relational aggression directly predicted schadenfreude. Additionally, the dark triad explained schadenfreude indirectly through reactive relational aggression, while traits like agreeableness and hostility explained the dark triad directly and reactive and instrumental relational aggression indirectly through the dark triad. Reactive and instrumental relational aggression were significantly predicted by personality traits like agreeableness and hostility, while only reactive relational aggression served as a mediator between personality traits and schadenfreude.	This study contributes to the understanding of schadenfreude by demonstrating the direct and indirect effects of personality factors and relational aggression and integrating these variables into a conceptual model through path analysis.

Okan et al. (2023).	Review	This Manuscript explores market and consumption-related factors that play a role in the emergence of schadenfreude. In the marketing context, it discusses how schadenfreude triggers, brand reputation management, comparative advertising, effective service recovery strategies, and online reputation management can help marketers better understand and respond to the complex dynamics of schadenfreude, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction, loyalty, and brand performance.	This Manuscript contributes to the literature by guiding firms on how to manage schadenfreude and highlighting its potential outcomes for brands.
İrk and Gürses (2021)	Research	It is stated that individuals experiencing envy may exhibit emotional changes, thought disorders, and disproportionate behaviors toward others, and may follow socially and morally disapproved paths. To overcome envy, the Manuscript suggests internalizing a structured morality and recognizing not only its destructive aspects but also its constructive and motivating aspects. Strengthening healing emotions such as love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, empathy, gratitude, and brotherhood is also recommended.	This Manuscript contributes to the literature by clarifying the destructive effects of envy in human life and offering solutions to overcome it.
Elkırnı (2024).	Review	This Manuscript discusses how schadenfreude has increasingly had negative effects in sports management, although happiness derived from a rival team's failure can, in some cases, positively affect a team's performance.	This Manuscript contributes to the literature by exploring the effects of schadenfreude in sports management, a field that influences large societal groups.
Demir Asma and Coşkun (2024).	Research (Quantitative method)	The study found that rudeness and social identity affect schadenfreude, with individuals experiencing more schadenfreude in response to rudeness. Perceived entitlement and anger were found to mediate the relationship between rudeness and schadenfreude.	This Manuscript contributes to the literature by analyzing the social aspects of schadenfreude and providing experimental findings related to the relationships and behaviors underlying it.
Akın and Yıldırım (2024).	Research (Quantitative method)	The study found that egoistic climate, as a subdimension of ethical climate, positively affected schadenfreude, while primitivism climate negatively influenced schadenfreude. No significant relationship was found between altruistic climate and schadenfreude. Narcissism was also found to positively influence the tendency to feel schadenfreude.	This Manuscript contributes to the literature by examining the relationship between ethical climate, personality traits, and schadenfreude in organizational settings, providing valuable insights for creating productive and efficient work environments.
Karaosmanoğlu and Kandemir (2024).	Review	The Manuscript finds that there are few studies exploring the relationship between narcissism and schadenfreude, with most studies focusing on grandiose narcissism. It is noted that the relationship between narcissism and schadenfreude arises when envy is felt toward others experiencing misfortune.	This review study enhances the understanding of the relationship between the two dimensions of narcissism and schadenfreude, self-esteem, social comparison, and envy.

Table 1 summarizes various academic studies on Schadenfreude (joy at others' harm) conducted in Turkey. These studies have examined the relationship of Schadenfreude with various psychological, social, and behavioral factors using different methods and have made various contributions to the literature. In these studies, Schadenfreude, related to concepts such as helping behavior, self-esteem, and empathy, has been discussed both in individual and social contexts.

Studies focusing on the relationship between Schadenfreude and helping behavior reveal the impact of this emotion on helping tendencies. For example, Erzi (2019) stated that helping behaviors could be meaningfully related to feelings of Schadenfreude and sympathy, but no significant relationship was found between the amount of help and other variables. Furthermore, in another study examining the connection between Schadenfreude and dark personality traits, it was found that high levels of psychopathy and Machiavellianism were associated with higher Schadenfreude, while high helping behaviors were related to lower Schadenfreude (Erzi 2020).

Studies exploring the effects of Schadenfreude in the context of consumer behavior have also examined its impact on consumers' intentions to buy counterfeit products. Bozacı and Gökdeniz (2021) emphasized that Schadenfreude, along with ethical perception and price sensitivity, is a significant determinant in the intention to purchase counterfeit clothing products. This finding draws attention to a variable that has not been sufficiently explored in the consumer behavior literature and provides important insights for marketing strategies. In a study examining how Schadenfreude emerges in sports management and competitive environments, it was suggested that satisfaction derived from the failure of a rival team could positively affect one's own team's performance (Elkırımış 2024). In this context, the role of Schadenfreude in fields that affect large social groups, such as sports management, was discussed. In research on personality factors and relational aggression, it was found that Schadenfreude particularly emerged through reactive relational aggression (Erzi 2022). The study highlighted that the dark triad predicted Schadenfreude through reactive aggression, and personality traits such as agreeableness and hostility played a significant role in these relationships. These findings provide a new conceptual model for understanding how Schadenfreude interacts with personality traits and the formation of this emotion.

In another study examining Schadenfreude in the context of social relationships and societal dynamics, it was found that uncivil behaviors had a significant impact on Schadenfreude, and this effect was stronger in the context of social identity (Demir Asma and Coşkun 2024). Specifically, individuals felt more Schadenfreude in response to incivility, and this emotion was supported by perceived entitlement and anger. Finally, review studies on the relationship between narcissism and Schadenfreude pointed out that the grandiose dimension of narcissism increased Schadenfreude, and this relationship was strengthened by social comparisons and envy (Karaosmanoğlu and Kandemir 2024). These studies have made an important contribution to the literature in understanding the dynamics between Schadenfreude and narcissism.

When Table 1 is examined, it can be seen that studies on Schadenfreude in Turkey are generally conducted using various methodological approaches such as mixed (quantitative-qualitative) methods, path analysis, descriptive surveys, and literature reviews. This variety of methods shows how Schadenfreude is examined and analyzed in different contexts. Overall, these studies on Schadenfreude in Turkey contribute to the literature both theoretically and practically.

Conclusion

Schadenfreude refers to the unique pleasure individuals experience from the misfortunes of others (Wang et al. 2019). This manuscript provides a comprehensive framework and presentation of the definition of Schadenfreude, its contributing factors, its effects on mental health, and the psychosocial variables it is associated with. The measurement tools used to assess the emotion of Schadenfreude have been reviewed. Additionally, research on Schadenfreude conducted both in Turkey and internationally has been presented. Although Schadenfreude exists in many cultures, it is an emotion that is often confused with other feelings and lacks a precise conceptual equivalent in many languages. While Schadenfreude is considered a negative emotion, it has a highly complex nature, which makes it difficult to define and express. This emotion, which does not have a clear, universally agreed-upon cause, is the subject of social psychology research in many countries. For example, studies on how Schadenfreude arises and in which situations it appears have been conducted, especially in countries like Germany, the USA, and the Netherlands (Leach et al. 2003, Takahashi et al. 2009, Van Dijk et al. 2015). These studies aim to better understand how Schadenfreude functions in human relationships and its effects on individuals' psychological processes.

Schadenfreude is not only an emotion but also a multidimensional construct. It encompasses various emotional structures. Like all other emotions, it plays a role in the flow of life and also affects mental health. Recent studies (Leach et al. 2003, Takahashi et al. 2009, Steers et al. 2014, Van Dijk et al. 2015, Johnson and Knobloch Westerwick 2017b) suggest that Schadenfreude may have significant effects on mental health. Research indicates that the developmental origins of Schadenfreude trace back to infancy (Shamay-Tsoory et al. 2014). Similarly, traces of this emotion can be found in all stages of development. According to studies, infants from the age of 24 months can detect the distress of others (Hoffman 2000), and from the age of 36 months, they are thought to be able to develop the emotion of Schadenfreude due to their fundamental complex cognitive structures, such as the ability to distinguish right from wrong (Erzi 2020a). Moral selectivity has been shown to influence the experience of Schadenfreude in children between the ages of 4-8 (Schulz et al. 2013). Between the ages of 7-12, competition and jealousy are cited as factors that affect reactions to others' experiences (Roulin et al. 2012). A study on adolescence indicated that sharing Schadenfreude could lead to socialization, and that social acceptance could boost self-esteem (Watanabe 2018). This highlights the importance of addressing and preventing this emotion early on, as it is viewed negatively by society.

Schadenfreude has been associated with psychosocial variables such as lack of empathy, jealousy, competitiveness, envy, and social comparison (Festinger 1954, Parrott and Smith 1993, Van Dijk et al. 2006b, Smith and Kim 2007). For example, individuals with low levels of empathy may have a higher tendency toward Schadenfreude (Leach et al. 2003). Additionally, feelings of jealousy and competitiveness can increase the tendency to derive pleasure from others' failures (Smith and Kim 2007). Other variables associated with Schadenfreude include difficulty in attribution, stress, anxiety, and emotional burnout (Abraham et al. 2016, Kramer et al. 2018, Smith and Turner 2018b). For example, individuals under stress may have an increased tendency toward Schadenfreude (Smith and Turner 2018a). The fact that all of these psychosocial variables are characterized by Schadenfreude makes it inevitable for them to affect mental health. Furthermore, future studies examining the effects of Schadenfreude on mental health should also consider various variables such as individuals' personality traits, emotional intelligence, social relationships, and environmental factors. In this context, the impact of Schadenfreude on mental health plays an important role in psychological counseling and therapy practices. Individual or group therapy sessions that help individuals understand and manage these emotional responses could improve their emotional well-being and partially prevent and reduce mental health issues (Festinger 1954).

Research findings show that individuals are more likely to develop Schadenfreude for those they have negative evaluations of. However, it is noteworthy that even simple actions, like being in the same room as others, can reduce the level of Schadenfreude (Hein et al. 2010). The fact that interpersonal interactions decrease the manifestation of Schadenfreude provides an important clue in strengthening social relationships and preventing social conflicts. Neuropsychological studies show that individuals experiencing Schadenfreude activate reward-related regions of the brain (NAcc), while there is a decrease in the activation of empathy-related areas in the left hemisphere of the brain. Activation in the NAcc region leads individuals to allow others to suffer (Hein et al. 2010). Similarly, the literature suggests that Schadenfreude can be motivating for behaviors such as aggression, exclusion, punishment, and exploitation (Wang et al. 2019). Since these behaviors are disruptive, they could form the basis of personality disorders and negatively affect social life. The relationship between Schadenfreude and disorders like psychopathy and narcissism has been expressed in several studies (Leach et al. 2003, Ostrovsky et al. 2019). Similarly, activation of empathy-related areas in the left hemisphere of the brain has been shown to increase the willingness to help (Hein et al. 2010).

Identifying the neuropsychological connections underlying implicit structures like social emotions in individuals is crucial for developing preventive and therapeutic approaches. Furthermore, neuropsychological/neuropsychiatric studies on Schadenfreude and related concepts will shed light on neuroendocrine and cognitive interventions concerning factors that lead to disruptive behaviors. Some studies claim that Schadenfreude may negatively impact personal satisfaction and mental well-being (Smith et al. 2020). Specifically, the increased tendency for Schadenfreude, along with low levels of empathy, high jealousy, and competitiveness, may negatively affect an individual's emotional well-being (Parrott and Smith 1993, Feather 2006). In conclusion, the effects of Schadenfreude on mental health are related to the individual's psychosocial traits, neuropsychological structures, and mood states. Based on these research findings, and by expanding future studies, measures can be taken to reduce the negative effects of Schadenfreude and develop strategies to enhance emotional and social well-being.

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