The Sadism Spectrum Measure: An Inclusive Measure of Benign to Malignant Sadistic Expression

Aisling O’Meara, Jason Davies & Sean Hammond
Overview

- Background
- Methodological approach
- Preliminary findings
- Future directions
Background

- Seeking an appropriate understanding of the concept of sadism

- Is sadism a personality disorder, sexual deviance or a more complex construct expressed through numerous modalities?

- Previous Research – The Short Sadistic Impulse Scale (SSIS)
How to measure such a complex construct

- Sadism may be a function of interpersonal relating
- Sadism may be expressed through consensual means or otherwise
- Sadism may be expressed through the medium of humour
- Sadism may involve various forms of hurting
How to measure such a complex construct

- Sadism is
  - *Pleasure and enjoyment experienced as a result of witnessing or causing another’s psychological, physical or emotional suffering, whether this suffering is consensual or otherwise.*

- SSIS is too restrictive
How to measure such a complex construct

- Two-part study
  - Phase 1: Identify potentially useful items
  - Phase 2:
    - Merge with SSIS and investigate psychometric utility
    - Explore demographic comparisons
Phase 1

- Methodology
  - Sample: 1,981 individuals from a secure psychiatric unit (1966-1999)
  - Mine for relevant items - MMPI
  - Refine items through analyses
  - Cross validate against established sub-scales
Results

- PCA & PA to establish cohesiveness of items
- 16 items became 7

- MMPI 80
- MMPI 218
- MMPI 254
- MMPI 269
- MMPI 355
- MMPI 393
- MMPI 452
Results

– Cronbach’s alpha = .828

– Correlation with established PD scales:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Significance 2-tailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial</td>
<td>.592</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsive</td>
<td>.507</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paranoid</td>
<td>.719</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schizotypal</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive-Aggressive</td>
<td>.616</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phase 2

Methodology

– Sample 1: 2,203 international participants
  ▪ 18 – 76 years (M = 26.07, sd. = 8.71)
  ▪ 1,130 males (49.6%); 1,149 females (50.4%)
  ▪ European (60.08%), North and South American (33%), Australasian (4.9%), African (1.4%) and unspecified (1.4%)

– Sample 2: 74 male prisoners
  ▪ 24 – remand; 31 – medium secure; 19 – low secure
  ▪ 18 – 62 years (M = 30.92)
## Results – Correlation analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SSIS AND ADDED ITEMS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SSIS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSIS 1</td>
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<td>SSIS 2</td>
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<td>SSIS 3</td>
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<td>SSIS 9</td>
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<td>SSIS 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>MMPI 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>MMPI 7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

All correlations significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
Results - Sequence plot of 17 item scale
Results – The Sadism Spectrum Measure (SSM)

- Mean inter-item correlation = .382
- Alpha = .88; Omega = .89
- All items loaded strongly and significantly on the first factor
- Skew = 1.156; Kurtosis = 1.442
- Armor’s theta = .906; Ferguson’s delta = .982

### Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSM17Total</td>
<td>2279</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>14.56</td>
<td>10.626</td>
<td>112.911</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>2279</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results – Group Comparisons

- Males presented with significantly higher mean scores than women ($t = 13.84$, $p < 0.01$; mean difference $= 5.92$)

- Significant negative correlation with age, $r = -.147$; ANOVA shows 45-54 year olds show greatest difference
Results – Group Comparisons

[Graph showing estimated marginal means for different age groups and genders]
Results – Group Comparisons

- No significant differences between prisoner and matched non-prisoner samples

- Both American and Australasian groups scored significantly higher than European participants (mean difference = 3.81, p<0.01 & 6.22, p<0.01, respectively)
Results – Group Comparisons

![Chart showing mean of SSM17 total by occupational level](chart.png)
Summary

- SSM is psychometrically stronger than the SSIS
- Possible to tap into other features of sadistic expression
- Further research
  - Within organisations
  - Cross-cultural differences
  - Prison-based research
Thank you very much.

Any Questions?

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