

Boredom found to be a factor in sadistic behavior

January 14 2022, by Bob Yirka



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

A team of researchers at Aarhus University has found evidence that suggests feeling bored can be a factor in setting off sadistic behavior. In their paper published in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*:

Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes, the group describes their review of nine unique studies they looked at that involved the study of sadistic behavior by people in different settings and what they found by doing so.

Prior research has shown that a large number of people engage in sadistic behavior—from insulting others, to taunting, bullying or [physical abuse](#)—people have at their disposal a long list of ways to hurt other people. In this new effort, the researchers looked at the role boredom plays in such behavior.

To learn more about such behavior, the researchers looked at nine unique studies that had been conducted to learn more about sadistic behavior. The first involved researchers sending personality assessments to large numbers of people and happened to include some questions about boredom. A closer look showed that people admitted to intentionally harming others more often when bored. In a second study, the researchers looked at an effort that involved people in the military inflicting harm on their colleagues and once again found boredom appeared to play a role. The third study involved looking at the trolling behavior of people online and it showed that people reported doing so more often when bored. In the fourth study, researchers looked at adults abusing children, either verbally or physically and once again found boredom was a factor.

Noting that the first four studies were all based on self-reporting scenarios, the researchers looked at other studies that involved conducting experiments and studying the results. In the first, volunteers were asked to watch videos—some of which were more boring than others. As they watched, the volunteers were allowed to push maggots through a coffee grinder as a way to alleviate their boredom, (the volunteers were deceived, no maggots were actually harmed). The researchers found that most of the maggot grinding was done by those

watching the more boring videos. In two other experiments, online volunteers were allowed to decide whether to give more money to another participant or to deduct from their tally. In both studies, those feeling more bored were found more likely to deduct from others. The researchers also looked at a couple of studies that looked at the reasons behind sadistic behavior and found once again, that boredom seemed to play a role.

The researchers conclude by suggesting that boredom appears to play a role in sadistic behavior and that it appears to be tied to attempts to mitigate negative feelings associated with being bored.

More information: Stefan Pfattheicher et al, On the relation of boredom and sadistic aggression., *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (2020). [DOI: 10.1037/pspi0000335](https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000335)

© 2022 Science X Network

Citation: Boredom found to be a factor in sadistic behavior (2022, January 14) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-01-boredom-factor-sadistic-behavior.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--