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بِوَيْبَرِضِيَّتِي إِسْلَامًا وَأَنْبَارًا يَجْنِبًا مِلَّةِنَا

**DEVELOPMENT OF A THEORETICAL
MULTIFACETED PROCESS MODEL OF SHAME:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MALAYS**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The present research aimed to weave a theoretical process model of shame. Mainstream psychology views shame as a unitary construct that is conclusively pathogenic. In the present research a tentative theoretical framework that encompasses adaptive and maladaptive forms of shame based on the interface between shame and different forms of self-esteem was developed. A qualitative study was conducted to enrich the preliminary theoretical framework into an overarching process model by investigating shame-inducing situations in the Malay context and the role of different self-conceptions in steering multiple forms of shame and their corresponding behavioural outcomes. Data was collected from a total of 146 Malay participants attending four Malaysian universities. Participants were asked to describe two events in which they felt ashamed and describe in detail their behavioural and affective reactions to shame experience. A systematic method of thematic analysis was utilised to code the raw data. The results indicated that though shame was engendered by a broad range of situations, the most common situational determinant of shame was negative evaluation. An unexpected inducer of shame appeared in the analysis reflected a generalised state of shame. Coding analysis yielded to a number of self-conceptions. An adaptive form of shame was evoked as a result of private feelings of self-discrepancy. Maladaptive forms of shame were elicited as a result of feeling persistently deficient, a concern with others evaluation of the self, and an adopted self (rigid and immune). Behavioural outcomes varied by virtue of different self-conceptions from anticipatory to reactive on the one hand and from genuinely (e.g., self-improvement) to maliciously motivated (e.g., self-protection, and self-enhancement) on the other. Discussion focused on interpreting the findings in light of self-discrepancy theories and how these results enriched the initial theoretical framework. Predicated on the qualitative study, a process model of a multifaceted conception of shame was proposed with nine pathways assumed to lead to different forms of shame with distinct forms of behavioural outcomes. The constructs posited to determine shame and its behavioural responses were self-knowledge and self-awareness. Three processes interconnect these two units to shame, namely, a precipitating negative event, the activation of self-knowledge, and self-comparison. The described theoretical framework departed from other previous adduced models in (1) the multiplicity of shame and its behavioural responses; (2) the proposed adaptiveness of shame; (3) the role of self-knowledge (affective and cognitive) in defining shame and its consequences; and (4) the bidirectional relationship between shame and the self. General discussion focused on the affinity of these findings with and their departure from previous research. Implications of both the qualitative study and the developed process model for future research, therapeutic interventions, and their respective limitations were discussed.

ملخص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى بناء إطار نظري متعدد الأبعاد لمفهوم الخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) على نقيض نظريات علم النفس السائدة التي تعتبر أن الخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) هو انفعال مرضي أحادي البعد. بدأت هذه الدراسة ببناء إطار نظري أولي شمل أنماطاً متعددة للخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) بعضها مرضي، وبعضها الآخر صحي من خلال علاقة مفهوم تقدير الذات بالخزي (الحياء أو الخجل). قام هذا البحث بإجراء دراسة كيفية من أجل إثراء الإطار النظري الأولي من خلال بحث الحالات التي تؤدي إلى الإحساس بالخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) في السياق الملايوي ودور مختلف أنواع مفهوم الذات في تحديد أبعاد الخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) المختلفة. تكونت عينة هذا البحث من ١٤٦ طالب ملايوي يزاولون دراستهم في أربع جامعات ماليزية. اتبعت هذه الدراسة في تحليلها للبيانات الكيفية منهج التحليل الموضوعي. أظهرت النتائج أنه بالرغم من تنوع الحالات التي تؤدي إلى الشعور بالخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) فإن الحالة الأكثر شيوعاً هي التقييم السلبي للذات من طرف الآخرين. كما أشارت نتائج البحث إلى ظهور مثير للخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) لم يكن متوقعاً في هذا البحث، وهو عبارة عن حالة شاملة ومعممة للذات كلها. أظهرت نتائج ترميز البيانات أيضاً تعدد مفاهيم الذات واختلاف تأثيرها في تحديد مسار الشعور بالخزي (الحياء أو الخجل)، حيث بيّنت النتائج أن الخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) الناتج عن تناقض إدراك الذات هو انفعال صحي إيجابي على نقيض الإحساس المستمر بدونية الذات أو الخوف من التقييم السلبي للذات من قبل الآخرين والذات المتنبأة بنوعيتها الهش والمنيع. كما ارتبطت السلوكات الناتجة عن الشعور بالخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) بالأنماط المختلفة لمفهوم الذات، فقد تعددت السلوكات المترتبة عن الخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) بين سلوكات احترازية وأخرى تفاعلية من جهة وبين سلوكات مبنية على دوافع صحية ترمي لتطوير النفس وتحسينها أو مبنية على دوافع مرضية تهدف لحماية الذات أو لتحميل صورتها عند الآخرين. ركزت المناقشة على محاولة تفسير النتائج من خلال نظريات تناقض إدراك الذات والكيفية التي أثرت بها هذه النتائج الإطار النظري الأولي. تمّ بعدها بناء إطار نظري متعدد الأبعاد (الأوجه) لمفهوم الخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) بناءً على نتائج الدراسة الكيفية، وقد تضمنت تسع مسارات افترضت هذه الدراسة أنها تؤدي إلى أنماط مختلفة لكل من الخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) والسلوكات المترتبة عليه. اعتمد الإطار النظري الجديد مفهومي: المعرفة بالذات والوعي بالذات كمحددتين أساسيين لمسار الخزي (الحياء أو الخجل). يربط هذين المفهومين ثلاث عمليات: ١. التعرض لحدث سلبي، ٢. تنشيط المعرفة الخاصة بالذات، و٣. مقارنة الذات. اختلف البناء النظري لهذه الدراسة عن سابقه في: ١. تعدد أبعاد الخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) وسلوكاته المترتبة، ٢. اقتراح رؤية وظيفية للخزي (الحياء أو الخجل)، ٣. دور المعرفة بالذات بشقيه الانفعالي والمعرفي في تحديد أنماط الخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) ونتائجه السلوكية، و٤. ثنائية اتجاه علاقة الخزي (الحياء أو الخجل) بالذات. ركزت مناقشة النتائج على مواطن تشابه واختلاف هذه الدراسة مع الدراسات السابقة. كما تم مناقشة حدود البحث والتطبيقات المتضمنة للدراسة الكيفية والإطار النظري المقترح من خلال طرح كيفية استفادة البحوث المستقبلية والعلاج النفسي منهما.

APPROVAL PAGE

The thesis of Nadjat Aknouche has been examined and approved by the following:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Nadjet Aknouche

Signature

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**DEVELOPMENT OF A THEORETICAL MULTIFACETED PROCESS
MODEL OF SHAME: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MALAYS**

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To my Mother

To the memory of my Father

To my sister Souad

To my two brothers: Abdelhakim and Aboubaker

To my husband Noureddine and my son Munib

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Life's precious blessing of all is to have The Most High, The Most Gracious, The Supreme in Glory, and The Praiseworthy an Ally yet to the neediest of all. How many times did I feel the impossibility of carrying on along this enriching and yet challenging quest? How many times did I feel that I have been drained of all ability to pursue a-then-perceived insurmountable pretension? How many times did I pause to rethink the utopian nature of the hoped-for aspiration? How many times did I feel impaled in the crucible of self-doubts? How could one withstand feelings of ineptness and powerlessness, uncertainty and ambivalence without a belief in The Almighty Allah, a trust in His Utmost Power that is bestowed by Him, and a firmness instilled by His Graciousness.

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وَمَا يَكُم مِّن نِّعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ تَطَّوُّرًا إِذًا مَّسَّكُمْ الضُّرُّ فَإِلَيْهِ تَجْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

(سورة النحل: الآية ٥٣)

**And ye have no good thing but is from Allah.
and moreover, when ye are touched by distress,
unto Him ye cry with groans;**

[Surah An-Nahl (The Bee) 16: 53]

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Of all self-conscious emotions, shame has been demeaned, identified as a lapse in one's journey towards maturity, or an "epitome of an immature form of experience" (Schneider, 1987: 196), and called (together with embarrassment) as the "quislings of the organism" (Perls, 1969). For some, shame appears to be ubiquitous and a clinical phenomenon "*de jour*" (Resnick, 1997) because it is implicated in a constellation of psychological disorders like depression (Lewis, 1987b), chronic anger (Harder, Culter, & Rockart, 1992), anxiety, eating disorder symptoms, and destructive responses to anger (Gramzow & Tangney, 1992). Equating shame with psychopathology is the ramification of the phenomenology of its experience. That is, shame according to H. B. Lewis is a ferocious attack on the self (H. B. Lewis, 1987a), an "implosion" or a momentary destruction of the self (H. B. Lewis, 1987c) that is accompanied with a desire "to sink through the floor" or "crawl into a hole" (H. B. Lewis, 1987a). It is the fear of disgrace and the anxiety about the threat that one may be looked at with contempt by others or by one's conscience for having dishonoured oneself (Wurmser, 1987) that gives shame its volatility. The localization of the self in its experience is thus what makes shame a persecutory painful and pathogenic emotion. In particular, shame is characterized by a "doubleness of experience" as H. B. Lewis (1987a) called it whereby the self, after a transgression or failure, functions vicariously and feels the scorn of the "other" almost as if the self and the "other" merge into one.

Shame is a member of the "self-conscious emotion" in which people appraise

and evaluate themselves (Fischer & Tangney, 1995). Unlike basic non-self-conscious emotions (like fear, anger, and sadness), shame (embarrassment, guilt, and pride) is a self-relevant emotion in which the self is the focal point in its experience. The centrality of the self in the emotion of shame brings self-related concepts at the core of its experience. Indeed, H. B. Lewis (1971) in her indelible work on shame has contended that her research on the role of shame and guilt in neurosis has been guided by three constructs and self-concept being one of them. Shame is the “affective-cognitive state of low self-esteem”, and low self-esteem individuals are more prone to shame because of their devalued self-image and the chronic tension they endure between their ego and ego-ideal (H. B. Lewis, 1971, 1987a). Kinston (1987) considered shame as a transition from self-narcissism (self-esteem) to object-narcissism (self-protection). More recently, the systematic synthesis between shame and self-related concepts has started to witness an inconspicuous bourgeoning. Shame has been linked to self-discrepancy theory (e.g., Higgins, 1987), self-esteem (Brown & Marshall, 2001), and self-awareness (e.g., Tracy & Robins, 2004, 2007a, 2007b). Likewise, given the interdigitation of shame with self-related constructs, the present study attempts to link the two domains, suggesting that such a synthesis will aid in adducing a novel conception to shame. Based on *objective self-awareness* theory (Duval & Wicklund, 1972), *self-regulation theories* (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1981, 1998; Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987), *self-discrepancy* theory (Higgins, 1987, 1996), *authenticity* (Kernis, 2003), *self-concept clarity* (Campbell, 1990), *narcissism* (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), and *sociometer* theory of self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000), the present study gleaned different forms of self-knowledge (affective and cognitive) assumed to interact with self-focused attention and its corresponding self-evaluative processes to yield to different forms of shame with

different behavioural outcomes. A qualitative study was conducted to investigate the experience of shame in order to ameliorate the initially-proposed theoretical framework and help adduce an overarching process model of shame.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study will attempt to conflate two overlapping and yet artificially disconnected areas, namely, self-literature represented by self-awareness, and self-concept and its related components with the emotion of shame; assuming that such coalescence between the two domains may help in departing from the following inherent caveats in shame research and aid in conceptualising shame as both adaptive and maladaptive.

First, the conception of shame as a depressogenic emotion that should be extirpated from the person's emotional repository has a strong sway in mainstream psychology. Tangney's approach to measuring shame, namely, The Test Of Self-Conscious Affect (TOSCA; Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1989) was built on the most indelible contemporary work of H. B. Lewis (1971) and has been considered as the backbone of empirical research on shame and guilt. Despite the disaccord on the adaptiveness of the emotion of guilt among researchers, in Tangney's theorizing, it is shame that is unequivocally *ugly* and pathogenic in contrast to the more moral and *good* emotion of guilt (Tangney, 1991) because shame is an acutely painful emotion that is accompanied with "shrinking" and "helplessness" and motivates withdrawal and hiding after a transgression or a failure.

Other researchers in the field, however, did not share Tangney's views. Attempts to evince the adaptive aspects of shame among Western psychologists are on the rise. The crux of their arguments revolves around several points: (a) benign shame can

have several possible adaptive psychological functions (e.g., Barrett, 1995; Hibbard, 1994; Izard, 1977; Lindsay-Hartz, De Rivera, & Mascolo, 1995; Schneider, 1987); (b) cross-cultural research, likewise, regards shame as an engaging emotion (e.g., Kitayama, Markus, & Matsumoto, 1995) that is moral and virtuous to be pursued (Li, Wang, & Fischer, 2004); (c) the associations of shame with indices of psychopathology are found because shame has been theoretically conceptualised by Tangney and her colleagues as a maladaptive affect (e.g., Luyten, Fontaine, & Corveleyn, 2002) and a *trait* but not a *state* (e.g., Scheff & Retzinger, 1997).

Other studies have levelled their criticisms at the TOSCA. For instance, Luyten et al. (2002) have suggested that the TOSCA shame scale suffers from construct underrepresentation, in that, it does not tap adaptive forms of shame which in turn implies that the TOSCA does not have the ability to capture those adaptive aspects inherent in the emotion of shame; (d) others have questioned the validity of a clear cut distinction between shame and guilt (e.g., Nathanson, 1992).

However, the strong sway of the view that shame is maladaptive appears to affect these attempts, precluding them from getting out of the starting gate. An important stumbling impediment to move these views from the periphery lies in viewing shame as a unitary construct when gleaning its adaptive functions. More specifically, while accentuating the adaptive functions of shame (1) these perspectives were not trying to adduce alternative conceptions that view shame in a new outlook; they merely based their conceptions of an adaptive shame on the déjà available conceptualisations of shame which unanimously assent on its pathological nature. Shame was not seen in multiple forms in which an adaptive form was extracted; instead the long-standing view of a unitary pathological shame was undergirding these attempts. (2) Most functional approaches of shame were merely conjectural without

empirical moorings. Unlike shame, guilt which is the closest sibling of shame (Ferguson & Stegge, 1998) was treated differently. That is, guilt has been conceptualised in opposed but strong theoretical positions that resulted in concerted empirical research. Guilt has been viewed as a maladaptive emotion (e.g., Harder, 1995; Harder & Zalma, 1990; Harder et al., 1992; Jones & Kugler, 1993); but it has also been forcefully viewed as adaptive (e.g., Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Leith & Baumeister, 1998; Tangney, Burggraf, & Wagner, 1995) and both approaches have proliferated a spate of empirical evidence.

Second, one foremost yardstick against which the adaptiveness of guilt and the maladaptiveness of shame was evaluated is the different behavioural outcomes accompanying both emotions. That is, guilt is said to be adaptive because it motivates reparation and undoing while shame is maladaptive because it leads to hiding and withdrawing. Two particular caveats, however, deserve mention; (1) the contention that shame motivates withdrawal still eludes consensus (e.g., Barrett, 1995; Gilbert, 1997; Lindsay-Hartz et al., 1995) and attempts to show that shame leads to reparation were merely tentative; and (2) some researchers have suggested that the accompaniment of withdrawal and hiding from others in the experience of shame seems to contradict the tendency of shame-prone individuals to externalise blame and become angry and aggressive towards others. That is, anger and aggression are incompatible responses with social withdrawal (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Gilbert, 1997; Keltner & Harker, 1998). Baumeister et al. (1996) rendered this seeming disparity to individual differences in self-views. In particular, a potentially shame-inducing experience causes low self-esteem individuals to accept the unflattering evaluation and withdraw, whereas high self-esteem individuals respond by refusing to accept the evaluation and become indignant toward the evaluator. The

uniformity of behavioural outcomes of shame seems contentious and behoves the question of whether shame can have multiple forms if endogenous constructs to its experience are reckoned with.

The current research will accordingly attempt to suggest distinct forms of shame, the determinants of their adaptiveness or maladaptiveness, and their associated behavioural outcomes.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

On the surface shame appears to have only negative consequences for the individual. Yet a closer scrutiny may show that this assessment is not altogether accurate (Izard, 1977). The present study will attempt to focus on the intrapersonal and interpersonal adaptive functions of shame some of which are scattered in the literature (e.g., Abe & Izard, 1999; Barrett, 1995; Gilbert, 1997; Leary, 2001; Tomkins, 2008; Ward, 1972). More specifically, guided by the proposition that shame can have multiple forms (Hibbard, 1994; Gilbert, 1997), this research will identify different patterns of shame some of which are supposed to be adaptive. In order to do that, three core surmises from *differential emotions theory* (DET; Abe & Izard, 1999; Izard, 1977, 1991, 1993; Izard & Ackerman, 1997) have undergirded the premises of the current research.

First, Izard and Ackerman (1997) have maintained that the valence of emotions (negative or positive) does not determine the extent of their goodness or badness. But, they become maladaptive when they are associated with inappropriate cognition and action. Therefore, designating an emotion as negative should not impede the study of the adaptive function of that emotion. Indeed, this postulate has been vindicated by a dearth of research. For instance, Mayne (1999) has tried to evince that negative emotions do not constantly predict maladjustment but can preserve and promote

health. She has pointed out that it is *trait* affect or the repetition of an emotion over a long period of time that is health-damaging and not the affective *state* which occurs in a specific measured period of time. In her review, several studies have found that periodic emotional state arousal can in fact have positive effect on health.

The image of shame as an emotion that is nothing but an ugly destructive affect that is merely associated with maladaptive cognitions and actions has a strong sway. This research builds on this view and posits that, indeed, shame is detrimental when it is a pervasive negative trait that impales the individual in the grip of inept and devalued self-image and impedes him or her from moving, changing, or restituting. However, this research attempts to extend the aforementioned view in two ways: (1) gleaning from the literature multiple dysfunctional forms of shame that are associated with distinct problematic action tendencies; and (2) extrapolating a putative adaptive form of shame that is supposedly related to appropriate self-cognitions and actions.

Second, differential emotions theory (DET) regards discrete emotions as a system. Patterns of repeated emotions constitute higher-level systems (Izard, Ackerman, Schoff, & Fine, 2000). That is, when a situation triggers a discrete emotion, the evoked emotion together with contextual variables recruit other emotions, and these emotions self-organise as a coherent pattern of interdigitating emotions (Izard et al., 2000). Izard et al. (2000) maintained that shame is a prototypic example of the self-organising system of emotions. Shame is a complex emotion that couples with appraisals and traitlike affective-cognitive structures, like, self-concept which in turn can elicit additional discrete emotions like anger (Izard et al., 2000). As mentioned earlier, Baumeister et al. (1996) contended that behavioural consequences to shame greatly depend on the nature of self-worth. The present research builds on these views but extends them by proposing that low self-worth when coupled with