Shame as a Predictor of the Guilt of Sexual Offenders in the Correctional Institutions

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SHAME AS A PREDICTOR OF THE GUILT OF SEXUAL OFFENDERS IN THE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Studies of shame and guilt have focused more on normal populations and cultural and religious contexts. The study of this topic for a group of subjects who commit crimes is still limited, especially sexual crimes as actions that are considered socially embarrassing. This study focused on examining the relationship of shame with guilt on inmates of sexual crimes (N = 143) who are carrying out sentences in correctional institutions. Shame and guilt are measured using the Guilt and Shame Proneness (GASP) Scale developed by Cohen et al. This study found a significant positive association so that shame can be a predictor of guilt. This study has implications for the importance of correctional institutions providing treatment to increase shame for prisoners of sexual crimes, thereby preventing the re-offense of their crimes.

Keywords: Shame; Predictor; Guilt; Sexual Offender.
A. Introduction

Shame in cultural and religious contexts has an essential role in controlling individual bad behavior in their social environment. According to Hadi (2017), these cultural values are still relevant to be developed because they can be the basis of social behavior. In society, shame is the emotional center of moral regulation (Haidt, 2003). Based on the results of studies of corruption behavior, Khodijah (2018), explained that the culture of shame and the guidelines possessed by individuals will make social control more accumulated and focused on eradicating corruptive behavior. Another study also found that an educational environment that develops shame can prevent juvenile delinquency (Yunizar, 2019). Shame and guilt have a positive relationship with teenage smoking behavior in public places (Rahayu, 2019). Culturally, shame plays an important role in preventing deviant behavior.

Islamic view explicitly explains that shame is part of the faith (HR History of Bukhari and Muslim). Shame is the foundation of noble morals and leads to goodness so that people who are ashamed more will be more kind, and vice versa (Nawawi, 2010). The latest psychological theory and research show that shame and guilt are related to self-repentance, which can be analyzed in one's emotional experience (Leach, 2017). However, if someone already does an act that violates the commands of religion (sin), Islam teaches to do repentance. One of the keys to repentance is the existence of remorse and requests for forgiveness. According to Ibn Qayyim Al Jauziyah, repentance is related to acknowledging, regretting, humiliating, and asking for forgiveness from Allah SWT (Aljauziyah, 2005).

Studies of shame and guilt that have been done so far more often focus on the normal group, or compare it with the group of prisoners. Tangney, Stuewig, and Hafez (2011) identify the most psychological research on shame and guilt in the general population sample. The general population is most often a student, some studies using clinical samples, whereas studies of criminal offenders are rarely conducted. A study conducted by Martinez, Stuewig, and Tangney (2014) on shame and guilt using subjects with criminal types of cases in general.
Studies that look at the relationship of shame with guilt on sex offenders after being in prison are still very limited. This study aims to identify the relationship of shame with guilt on sex offenders who are carrying out sentences in prison. This research proposes the hypothesis that the higher the shame of convicted sexual offenders, the higher the guilt.

In the discipline of psychology, shame and guilt belong to the moral emotion family. Shame and guilt are usually mentioned in the same explanation, as moral emotions that can inhibit antisocial behavior, morally contradictory behavior (Tangney, 2011). Guilt and shame are self-conscious emotions caused by self-reflection and self-evaluation, and they both help in self-regulation (Cohen, Wolf, Panter & Insoko, 2011). Shame makes someone want to stay away and avoid contacting the consequences of their violations (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). While guilt explains one's focus on certain actions that negatively affect oneself or others, which are aroused by attributions caused by internal factors and self-control naturally (Haidt, 2003).

Shame involves a negative evaluation of the whole self, which is an acutely painful emotion that is usually accompanied by feelings of "being small," and my feelings of worthlessness and helplessness (Smith, Webster, Parrott, & Eyre, 2002; Tangney & Tracy, 2012). Shame is triggered by a violation of the norm and knowing that others know the violation (Haidt, 2003). Shame is a self-evaluative emotion, which is essential for the process of developing identity in self-assessment that refers to internal and external standards (Czub, 2013). The shame studied in this study illustrates two components, namely negative feelings about oneself (Negative Self-Evaluation) and illustrates the tendency for actions to focus on hiding or withdrawing from the public (withdrawn) (Cohen et al., 2011).

According to Proeve and Howells (2002), guilt involves an individual's belief that they have violated personal or moral standards. Guilt arises when a person experiences an internal, unstable, specific attribution of an action, which causes negative feelings about the behavior that has been done (Tracy & Robins, 2007). Guilt does not only arise from the assessment that he has caused harm, but is most strongly triggered by the assumption that the dangerous act creates a threat to the closeness of a person's relationship or relationship.
with the victim (Haidt, 2003). In this study, guilt contains two components, namely bad feelings against oneself for violations committed (Negative Behavior-Evaluation) and action tendencies (i.e., behavior) that focus on correction or compensation for violations (repair) (Cohen et al., 2011).

Sexual crime is one of the most disturbing crimes and raises significant concern about the risks posed by sexual violations in the community (Hanson, 2008). Studies of shame and guilt show that sexual offenders show that juvenile sexual offenders experience a higher level of guilt and shame for their crimes than juvenile non-juvenile offenders (Crutchley, 2010). Shame and guilt towards the victim have implications for the handling of perpetrators of sexual crimes against children (Proeve & Howells, 2002).

Guilt plays an important role in the improvement of prisoners while in prison. Guilt has been seen as a useful emotion because it motivates people to respond constructively to an error (Leach, 2017). Analysis of historical events shows that guilt at the beginning of imprisonment correlates with a low level of recidivism (Hosser, Windzio, & Greve, 2008). Guilt-proneness is positively related to the nature of self-forgiveness (Carpenter, Tignor, Tsang, & Willett, 2016), collectively predicting long term attitude improvement (Brown, González, Zagefka, Manzi, & Ćehajić, 2008), adaptive characteristics, and increased empathy (Leith & Baumeister, 1998), so that guilt can prevent criminal behavior (Martinez, Stuewig, & Tangney, 2014).

Various psychological studies of shame and guilt that find a significant relationship with the prevention of bad behavior and crime. Mediational modeling shows that shame is positively able to predict recidivists through strong relationships by blaming outsiders (Tangney, Stuewig, & Martinez, 2014). Shame and guilt studies can contribute to the improvement of prisoners. Inmate rehabilitation programs can be successful if prisoners have a self-evaluation that encourages better self-improvement. Shame and guilt provide potentially good intervention points for violators (Tangney, Stuewig, & Hafez, 2011).

B. Method

This study investigates the relationship of shame as a predictor of guilt in inmates of sexual offenders. Predictive analysis uses correlation
and linear regression techniques and statistics to analyze shame's characteristics as predictors of possible patterns of guilt in inmates in the future. Predictive analytics is defined as the process of finding meaningful data patterns using pattern recognition techniques and statistics (Abbott, 2014). Predictive analytics is concerned with predicting future events based on previously observed historical data and transformed by applying methods and using various techniques such as filtering and correlating data (Mishra & Silakari, 2012). According to Howell, (2010), the predictive analysis process starts with data collection, analysis, and statistics. Regression statistical analysis is carried out if the study aims to see the relationship and possible predictions of Y based on knowledge about X.

This research selected two correctional facilities in West and East Java. The two research sites are classified II of the correctional institution, which has inmates with general and special crimes, including crimes of sexual offenders. Data collection is carried out on inmates who have been convicted by the judge as perpetrators of sexual offenders and placed in these two correctional institutions. Data on the types of cases and the number of participants were obtained from the correctional institutions' registration section.

Research has been carried out at Cibinong and Kediri Correctional Institution (Lapas), Indonesia. Inmate research participants with sexual crime cases in the two correctional institutions numbered 143 (Lapas Cibinong n = 58, Lapas Kediri n = 85). Participants have agreed in writing to be involved in the research. Twenty-eight inmates were unable to follow the research procedures because they were illiterate and had impaired visual function, so they could not read and fill in the research instruments. Before this research, the researchers had obtained official permission and approval from the prison authorities and the Ministry of Law and Human Rights offices in each region.

The tendency for guilt and shame has been measured by the Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (GASP) developed by Cohen et al. (2011). This scale includes two subscales, namely Guilt proneness, consisting of eight statement items for Guilt Negative Behavior-Evaluations (Guilt NBE) and Guilt repair indicators. Shame subscales have eight statements from the Shame Negative Self-Evaluations (Shame NSE) and Shame withdrawal
indicators. Answer choices for respondents consist of 7 responses (1 = very unlikely, 7 = very possible). The results of the validity test of each Guilt subscale item show that overall items are valid ($r = 0.608 - 0.725$). The validity of the Shame subscale produces a significant value on each item ($r = 0.525 - 0.732$). GASP reliability test obtained a value of $r = 0.735$.

Statistical analysis of participants' shame and guilt scores used correlation and regression tests. Analysis using IBM SPSS statistics version 26. Correlation calculating the relationship between two sets of variable measures can be positive (increase) or negative (decrease) (Singh, 2006). Meanwhile, according to Pandey and Pandey (2015), linear regression analysis is carried out to calculate the probability of a phenomenon occurring to predict phenomena or relationships with different variables. These two analysis techniques are closely related to the development of equations to predict one variable from another (Howell, 2010).

C. Result and Discussion

1. Result

The demographic description of participants ($N = 143$) based on self-report (see Table 1) has shown the marital status of participants when committing sexual crime did not show significant differences ($n = 60$, married $n = 59$). Participants with divorce/separated status had shown the lowest number ($n = 24$) compared to the two groups. The education level of participants of sex offenders has shown that the majority ($69\%$) have secondary school education ($junior high school n = 40$, high school $n = 57$). The smallest number is participants with higher education background (college students/undergraduate $n = 9$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior high school</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate / Bachelor</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/separated</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Percentage of formal education level and marital status of participants.
As figure 1 shows, participants did not display significant differences in shame with low and high levels ($Mean = 31.3007$, $SD = 8.3447$). The picture which tends to be the same can be seen in Guilt, which does not show a significant difference in the number of prisoners with low and high guilt ($Mean = 39.0769$, $SD = 9.64$).

![Figure 1 Comparison of participants' shame and guilt levels](image)

**Figure 1** Comparison of participants' shame and guilt levels

The confirmed shame and guilt relationship test showed a significant positive relationship ($r = .609$, $p < 0.01$). This finding concludes that shame can be a predictor of guilt for sexual offenders (see Figure 2, $R$ Square = .371). Their respective subscale correlations significantly support the power of the shame predictor of guilt on sexual offenders (see table 2), especially Shame Negative Self Evaluation (NSE) against Guilt Proneness ($r = .649$), negative behavior evaluation ($r = .714$), and repair ($r = .631$, $p <0.01$).

![Figure 2. Scatter plot correlation of shame with guilt](image)

**Figure 2. Scatter plot correlation of shame with guilt**
Table 2 Correlation shame and guilt-proneness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shame Proneness</th>
<th>Shame Proneness</th>
<th>Shame Proneness</th>
<th>Guilt Proneness</th>
<th>Guilt Proneness</th>
<th>Guilt Proneness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shame Proneness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.864 **</td>
<td>.743 **</td>
<td>.609 **</td>
<td>.541 **</td>
<td>.550 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame-NSE</td>
<td>.664 **</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.306 **</td>
<td>.714 **</td>
<td>.631 **</td>
<td>.649 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame Withdraw</td>
<td>.743 **</td>
<td>.306 **</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.202 *</td>
<td>.185 *</td>
<td>.176 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt Proneness</td>
<td>.609 **</td>
<td>.714 **</td>
<td>.202 *</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.910 **</td>
<td>.880 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt-NBE</td>
<td>.541 **</td>
<td>.631 **</td>
<td>.185 *</td>
<td>.910 **</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.602 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt Repair</td>
<td>.550 **</td>
<td>.649 **</td>
<td>.176 *</td>
<td>.880 **</td>
<td>.602 **</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

2. Discussion

Some normal group studies show a strong relationship between shame and guilt (Baldwin, Baldwin, & Ewald, 2006; Grey, Daly, Thomas, & Marassas, 2018). Research has found that perpetrators of sexual crimes show a marked sense of shame and guilt (Proeve & Howells, 2002). An important question that needs further clarification is whether this relationship can arise in groups of people who commit crimes that are socially and legally "shameful," such as perpetrators of sexual crimes. The experience of shame or guilt occurs when people judge themselves to have failed to comply with acceptable standards of behavior (Marshall, Marshall, Serran, & O’Brien, 2009). Besides, does the perpetrator's level of shame predict the level of guilt in a person who has done something bad or has done evil to another person? This study argues that shame has a strong relationship with guilt among sex offenders and the normal group. The conclusion of this study supports this argument. This study found that in the crime group, shame can act as a predictor of guilt. This statement is in line with Marshall et al. (2009) that shame is associated with other relevant features of sexual offenders. Guilt can be conceptualized as a defensive motive against an active, aggressive desire to harm others - this desire and drive are caused by shame (Gilligan, 2003).

The findings of this study also concluded that there was a significant correlation between shame-proneness and guilt-proneness. Shame can be a guilt predictor (37.1%) of sex offenders who are serving time in prison. The higher the shame, the higher the guilt will have an impact. The conclusion of this study is in line with the theoretical findings which suggest a strong
relationship between shame and guilt (Brown et al., 2008; Ferguson & Crowley, 1997; Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1992). The results of this study found the effect of shame on increasing guilt that is useful for the improvement of the perpetrators of crime. That is different from LeBlanc et al.'s (2020) explanation, which identifies shame as a more pathogenic moral emotion for adults, while shameless guilt becomes an adaptive individual.

According to Tangney (2011), shame and guilt are family members of "self-conscious emotions" caused by self-reflection and evaluation (implicit or explicit) that fundamentally involve people's reactions to their behavior. Shame is a negative affection associated with self-assessment when someone does something wrong (Leith & Baumeister, 1998), has a stronger relationship with responses aimed at isolating themselves based on negative evaluations (Lickel, Schmader, Curtis, Scarnier, & Ames, 2005). The sexual offenders in correctional institutions describe themselves as feeling bad in front of the public and tend to act to avoid withdrawing. This emotional awareness makes them feel bad about their actions and arouses a tendency to self-correct for the crime they have committed.

The findings of this study illustrate that shame and guilt can be moral regulators. Moral responsibility implies knowledge and understanding of 'right' and 'wrong' and the ability and willingness to behave morally (Hughes & Batten, 2016). According to Sheikh and Janoff-Bulman (2010), from a self-regulatory perspective, shame and guilt are related to obstructing and directing individuals towards rules, and different interpretations emerge for moral self-violation. Sexual offenders experience guilt when interpreting violations using the moral standard of one's necessity and failing to be the person who is supposed to obey the rules and not harm others. Guilt serves a variety of functions that enhance relationships, including motivating people to treat others well and avoid violations (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994), positively correlated with pro-social orientation (Tignor & Colvin, 2017). In contrast to shame, someone interprets that he has done something that should not be done because it is blocked by the rules (Sheikh & Janoff-Bulman, 2010).

Several investigations have found that guilt is significantly associated with the successful treatment of prisoners in sexual crimes, integration,
and re-offense of their crimes (Marshall et al., 2009; Tangney et al., 2014; Tangney et al., 2011). Guilt can increase the ability to improve oneself. The characteristic of guilt is remorse, self-blame, and personal feelings related to conscience (Smith et al., 2002). So that if a criminal is identified as having a high sense of shame, it will be easier for the perpetrator to improve and not repeat the crime.

Perpetrators of crime with high guilt are associated with constructive means, can handle anger, have constructive intentions, take corrective actions, and be hostile (Tangney, Wagner, Hill-Barlow, Marschall, & Gramzow, 1996). Research shows that feelings of tension and regret usually motivate remedial actions, such as acknowledgment, apologizing, or making repairs for the damage done (Association for Psychological Science, 2014). The results of this study illustrate the need to consider efforts to prevent sexual crimes and improve the offenders by strengthening inmates' shame and guilt in training in correctional institutions.

D. Conclusion

This study concluded that shame could predict the level of guilt in prisoners with sexual crimes. Shame describes an inmate's self-evaluation of an act of sexual crime that people try to avoid and go unnoticed because it goes against social norms. The level of emotional awareness of shame determines self-evaluation and remorse for the extent of wrongdoing inmates who have committed crimes against others sexually. Guilt involves critical analysis of the inmate's thoughts and behavior and identifying the impact the crime (empathy) has on the victim increases. That can affect the low chance of committing crimes again. Based on this explanation, programs for treating sex offenders in prisons should focus more on increasing self-awareness of feelings of guilt.

Bibliography


