

Understanding the Relationship between Values and Self-Conscious Emotions: Implications for Emotional Well-being

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The present study aimed to understand how values are integrated within the self, and how values and self-conscious emotions affect the emotional well-being of an individual. This study reveals how young people incorporate changes into their existing value system and undergo various kinds of self-conscious emotions such as shame and guilt that influence their Emotional Well-being (EWB). Quantitative data was collected from 145 participants- 125 females and 20 males, between the ages of 18 to 25 years and of Indian nationality, using an online questionnaire containing three scales. The scales used included Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, PANAS (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988); Test of Self Conscious Affect, TOSCA (Tangney, Wagner and Gramzow, 1989); and Portrait Values Questionnaire, PVQ (Schwartz et al., 2001). Through analysis of the data, correlations between Schwartz's values, Self Conscious Emotions (Shame and Guilt) and Emotional Well-being (Positive Affect and Negative Affect) were calculated. Results showed that self-focused values are not positively related to EWB and social values are negatively related to EWB. It was found that people with guilt and shame had poorer Emotional Well-being. Guilt-proneness proved to have a positive correlation with self-focused values while Shame-proneness did not have negative correlations with social-focused values. It is implicated to develop intervention to enhance EWB by enhancing values that will help to reduce the feelings of shame and guilt.

Keywords: Values, Shame, Guilt, Emotional Well-being.

Values deeply influence our psyche. Being brought up in Indian culture where the roots of our development are based on traditional value systems, it becomes very intriguing to understand if values influence the experience of self-conscious emotions which are also deeply embedded in our socio-cultural norms. Indian culture lays a lot of emphasis on value systems which guide an individual's behavioral pursuits as they grow up. In the period of emerging adulthood, young adults undergo a significant process of change in their well-being, behaviors and interpersonal relationships which are inherently guided by their values and emotions (Jekielek & Brown, 2005; Khosla & Chopra, 2018; Melendro et al., 2020). Any arising conflict between the values and their desires causes feelings of shame and guilt which can form a vicious circle influencing the mood.

Review of literature reveals the association between values and emotional well-being

(Bobowik et al., 2011; Joshanloo & Ghaedi, 2009; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000), and self-conscious emotions of guilt and shame (Haka, 2015; Silfver et al., 2008). Studies also show the relationship between self-conscious emotions of guilt and shame and emotional well-being (Lundberg et al., 2009; McDonnell, 2017; Orth et al., 2010). This study aims to explore if values are influenced by the experience of self-conscious emotions, particularly guilt and shame due to the social significance of these two self-conscious emotions, and how these associations further influence emotional wellbeing.

Understanding Shame and Guilt

Shame and guilt are self-conscious emotions that critically involve self-relevant thoughts, feelings, intentions, and behaviors (Tangney & Fischer, 1995) evoked by self-reflection and self-evaluation which may be consciously experienced or transpiring beyond awareness. Shame involves a non-moral negative self-

evaluation arising from the social standards for which an individual is not responsible, while guilt implies a negative moral self-evaluation which is rooted in an individual's own actions and characteristics. Guilt is centrally involved in reparative and pro-social behaviors such as empathy, altruism, and care-giving (Batson, 1987; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Shame punishes immoral behavior, as it is felt when individuals violate social norms. Shame and guilt are the quintessential "moral emotions" that inhibit antisocial, morally objectionable behavior.

Shame is viewed as a more "public" emotion than guilt (Benedict, 1946), arising from public exposure and disapproval of some shortcoming or transgression (Khosla, 2011). Guilt is conceived as a more "private" experience arising from self-generated pangs of conscience (Tangney et al., 1996). Sznycer & Lukaszewski (2019) suggests that self-conscious emotions are neurocognitive adaptations crafted by natural selection that resolve adaptive problems of social valuation by limiting information-triggered devaluation (shame); and remedying events where one puts insufficient weight on the welfare of a valuable other (guilt).

Understanding Values

Values are cognitions that foster emotions and motivate goal-directed behavior (Cieciuch et al., 2015). Values are "the criteria people use to select and justify actions and to evaluate people and events" (Schwartz, 1992). They are general life goals that guide action and the evaluation of behavior of the self and others (Khosla et al., 2016) reflecting basic human biological, safety, belongingness needs of individuals. Values influence choices, effect planning and mediate perception of the situation as people act in order to attain, affirm, or preserve the goals that are congruent with their values (Cieciuch et al., 2015).

The Schwartz theory of values (Schwartz, 1992) concerns the basic or core values that people in all cultures recognize. It identifies ten motivationally distinct values and specifies the dynamic relations among them, such as: Security includes values like safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self with two subtypes; one of which serves

primarily individual interests (e.g., avoiding danger) while the other wider group interests (e.g., strong country). Conformity includes restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others or violate society's expectations. Tradition includes values like respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that one's culture or religion provides. Benevolence includes helpfulness, honesty, loyalty, love and emphasizes voluntary concern for others' welfare. Universalism values include justice, equality, world peace and protecting the environment which derive from survival needs and concern for the welfare of those in the larger society, world and nature. Self-Direction involves values originating from need for control and mastery such as creativity, freedom, curiosity, independence. Stimulation values excitement, novelty and challenge in life which arise from the organismic need for an optimal level of stimulation. Hedonism is concerned with deriving pleasure or sensuous gratification, thus involving values such as pleasure, enjoying life and fun. Achievement values such as ambitiousness, success, and capableness represent individuals' attempts at proving personal competence according to social standards. Power values such as authority, wealth and social power aim to attain a dominant position within the general social system.

The 'openness to change' versus 'conservation' values dimension captures the conflict between values that emphasize independence of thought and readiness for change (self-direction, stimulation) and values that emphasize order, self-restriction and resistance to change (security, conformity, tradition). Conservation values emphasize avoiding conflict, unpredictability, and change by submission and passive acceptance of the status quo. Openness to change values emphasize autonomous, self-expressive experience (Silfver et al., 2008). The 'self-enhancement' versus 'self-transcendence' values dimension captures the conflict between values that emphasize concern for the welfare of others (universalism, benevolence) and values that emphasize pursuit of one's own relative success and dominance (power, achievement). Self-transcendence

values emphasize promoting the welfare of others. Power values emphasize overcoming anxiety by actively controlling threats.

Kesberg and Keller (2018) has assessed the relation between the endorsement of human values and situation characteristics. Power related to experiencing more deceptive situations, unlike universalism and benevolence. Tradition was related to experiencing more aversive situations unlike self-direction. Thus, socio-cultural environment influences the development of personal values (Maslova et al., 2020). While Traditionalists demonstrate a common hierarchy of values as tradition, universalism, benevolence and conformity, Social Superiority Seekers are ambitious, open to changes and focused on leadership, superiority, and individual achievement.

Indian values are an integral core of our personality and mediate our cognition, behavior and emotions in a significant way (Khosla, 2011). With the increasing influx of globalization which influences the mindsets of the youngsters more easily, this study intends to understand to what extent the Indian youth believe in their personal values and how these value systems influence their emotional wellbeing.

Relationship between Values and Feelings of Shame and Guilt

Guilt-proneness in transgression situations has been found to be positively related to valuing universalism, benevolence, tradition, and conformity (Silfver, Helkama, Lonqvist & Verkasalo, 2008) while values of power, hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction are negatively related to guilt-proneness. Emphasizing one's personal interests or independence is related to low guilt-proneness, whereas valuing others' well-being or the stability of the social system is related to high guilt-proneness.

Haka (2015) found Shame-proneness to be negatively associated with universalism, and positively associated with power and security. Guilt-proneness was negatively associated with self-direction, stimulation and universalism and positively associated with achievement and power. Additional studies have found Guilt to be positively related to valuing universalism,

benevolence, tradition, and conformity (Silfver-Kuhlampi, 2009), and negatively related to valuing power, hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction. Even though Guilt is likely to be linked to prosocial behaviors, excessive guilt can cause psychological problems. Overall, moral emotional tendencies are related to culture, cultural conceptions of gender and to individual value priorities.

Emotional Well Being

Emotional well-being (EWB) includes a positive balance of pleasant to unpleasant affect and a cognitive appraisal of satisfaction with life in general (Keyes, 2003), the experience of pleasant emotions and happiness (Khosla & Khosla 2020). The positive feelings may be operationalized as positive affect (PA), happiness, and life satisfaction (Keyes, 2003).

Positive Affect may be such as being regularly cheerful, in good spirits, happy, calm, peaceful, satisfied, and full of life (Langeland, 2014). It refers to one's propensity to experience positive emotions and interact with others and life's challenges in a positive way. Positive emotions broaden the scopes of attention and cognition, and, by consequence, initiate upward spirals toward increasing emotional well-being (Fredrickson and Joiner, 2002).

Negative Affect (NA) involves experiencing the world in a more negative way, feeling negative emotions and more negativity in relationships and surroundings. Negative emotions tend to be of longer duration than positive and that the NA (Larsen, 2009) system produces stronger emotional responses than the PA system, which is a phenomenon called as negativity bias.

EWB and Shame and Guilt

Dispositional shame has been associated positively with psychological distress, poorer mental wellbeing (Lundberg et al., 2009) and negatively with life satisfaction (Sullivan et al., 2020). Experiences of guilt have been associated with a feeling of causing harm to another person (Tangney, 2003) increasing the desire to create positive relationships with other people.

McDonnell (2017) found a strong and negative association between external shame and psychological well-being, which suggests

that lower external shame was associated with higher wellbeing. Similarly, a strong and positive association was found between internal shame and psychological well-being which suggested that lower internal shame was associated with higher wellbeing. Despite shame being negatively related to psychological well-being, shame-free guilt shows positive relations with well-being (Orth et al., 2010).

Values and Emotional Well-being

“Healthy” values promote psychological growth and self-actualization (e.g., self-direction, benevolence, universalism, achievement, and stimulation) having positive consequences on well-being, whereas “unhealthy” values emphasizing extrinsic needs (e.g., conformity, tradition, security, and power) have negative effects (Bobowik et al., 2011; Joshanloo & Ghaedi, 2009; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000). Bobowik et al. (2011) revealed that hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, and benevolence were positively correlated, though weakly, with life satisfaction and affect balance. By contrast, tradition, conformity, security, and power were negatively correlated with these dimensions of well-being.

Objectives

Since the review of literature shows that values affect all aspects of our life, including relationships and social interactions, motivation, attention, health and wellbeing, this research intends to understand how values are integrated within the self and influence the emotional well-being, along with self-conscious emotions. Young college going students experience a lot of changes as they enter college life, such as attending college with different teaching styles, lectures, friends etc. as well as challenges related to college adjustment, family environment, identity issues etc. (Jekielek & Brown, 2005; Melendro et al., 2020). As a result, it becomes important to examine how young people incorporate changes into their existing value system and undergo self-conscious emotions that influence their emotional wellbeing. The main objective of this study was to focus on exploring the relationship between values, self-conscious emotions and emotional well-being which probably has an important implication

for health (Beller, 2020), self-esteem (Brown & Marshall, 2001), improved social relationships (Bagozzi, 2006), adaptation to new environments (Bagozzi, 2006) etc. Such implications can aid researchers in developing interventions to enhance EWB by enhancing values that will help to reduce the feelings of shame and guilt.

On the basis of the review of literature, it was predicted that self-focused values (self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, security, achievement and power) will be positively related to emotional wellbeing while social values (tradition, conformity, security, benevolence and universalism) (Schwartz, 1992) will be negatively related to emotional well-being. It was further proposed that proneness to experience guilt and shame would influence emotional well-being, with guilt-proneness having a positive association with self-focused values and shame-proneness having a negative association with social-focused values.

Method

Sample

The sample consisted of 145 participants (125 women and 20 men) aged between 18-25 years ($M=21.5$, $SD = 2.4$). The participants were all Indian nationals who are pursuing or have completed their graduation, are well versed in English, unmarried and belong to the middle income group.

Measures

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson et al., 1988) is a self-report questionnaire that consists of two 10-item scales to measure both Positive and Negative Affect. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale of 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely). The instrument shows great internal reliability ranging from 0.86 to 0.90 for Positive Affect and 0.84 to 0.87 for Negative Affect.

Test of Self Conscious Affect-3 (TOSCA) (Tangney et al., 2000) is a 16-item scale consists of brief scenarios designed to assess individual differences in dimensions of shame proneness, guilt proneness, externalization, detachment unconcern, alpha-pride and beta-pride. For each statement, respondents rate on a 5-point scale how likely they could react in the manner stated.

TOSCA-3 Shame and Guilt scales correlated .94 and .93, respectively with their corresponding full length versions, while having the Cronbach's alphas of .76 and .66 respectively.

Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ-21) (Schwartz, 2003) is a self-report questionnaire that consists of a 21-item scale rated on a 6-point scale. The Cronbach's alpha for the dimensions of Conformity, Tradition, Benevolence, Universalism, Self-Direction, Stimulation, Hedonism, Achievement, Power and Security were .68, .16, .85, .75, .79, .70, .67, .73, .55, .39 and .63 respectively.

Procedure

Participants participated in the study online, whereby they received a Google form through different social media platforms. The participation included informed consent, as participants were

informed about the purpose of the study and encouraged for voluntary participation, followed by a demographic form and standardized questionnaires. Each participant took 15-20 minutes to complete the procedure.

Results

Relationship between Self-Conscious Emotions and Values

The findings revealed significant relationships between many values and self-conscious emotions. Universalism showed a significant positive correlation ($r(144)=.23, p<.01$) with Guilt. Self-direction ($r(144)=.24, p<.01$), Stimulation ($r(144)=.18, p<.05$), Tradition ($r(144)=.17, p<.05$), Benevolence ($r(144)=.18, p<.05$) and Universalism ($r(144)=.27, p<.01$) showed significant positive correlations with Shame.

Table 1. Mean and SD for PA, NA, Shame and Guilt

Variables	Men (n=20)		Women (n=125)		Total (n=145)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Positive Affect	37.8	7.43	33.6	7.64	34.49	7.71
Negative Affect	29.15	9.91	25.38	8.84	25.90	9.05
Shame	89.75	13.71	86.18	10.86	86.68	11.31
Guilt	90.4	12.60	85.06	10.75	85.79	11.19

Table 2. Correlations between Individual Values, Self-Conscious Emotions & Affect

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Guilt	—													
2. Shame	.81**	—												
3. SD	.13	.24**	—											
4. ST	.12	.18*	.63**	—										
5. HE	-.13	-.09	.61**	.61**	—									
6. AC	-.04	.03	.57**	.44**	.54**	—								
7. PO	-.02	-.01	.36**	.30**	.46**	.67**	—							
8. SE	.05	.12	.48**	.43**	.46**	.57**	.42**	—						
9. CO	.08	.10	.12	.17*	.09	.29**	.24**	.36**	—					
10. TR	.10	.17*	.51**	.40**	.40**	.40**	.37**	.50**	.49**	—				
11. BE	.09	.18*	.68**	.55**	.58**	.65**	.45**	.54**	.26**	.57**	—			
12. UN	.23**	.27**	.72**	.59**	.55**	.59**	.40**	.61**	.30**	.53**	.77**	—		
13. PA	.15	.06	-.32**	-.21*	-.23**	-.16	-.01	-.14	-.02	-.18*	-.20*	-.13	—	
14. NA	.17*	.24**	.11	.15	.01	-.03	-.15	.14	.06	.00	.05	.11	-.00	—

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

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

Table 3. Correlations between Values, Shame and Guilt

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Self-focused	—					
2. Social-focused	.80 **	—				
3. PA	-.24**	-.18*	—			
4. NA	.05	.10	-.00	—		
5. Shame	.10	.22**	.06	.24**	—	
6. Guilt	.02	.14	.15	.17*	.81**	—

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

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

Relationship between Self-Conscious Emotions & Emotional Wellbeing

The correlational analysis between the values obtained for different participants revealed a significant positive relationship between guilt ($r(144)=.17$, $p<.05$) and shame ($r(144)=.24$, $p<.01$) with negative affect, a component of emotional wellbeing.

Relationship between Values & Emotional Wellbeing

Assessing the obtained scores on PVQ and PANAS, the correlational analysis revealed significant relationships between Self-direction ($r(144)=-.32$, $p<.01$), Stimulation ($r(144)=-.21$, $p<.05$), Hedonism ($r(144)=-.23$, $p<.01$), Tradition ($r(144)=-.18$, $p<.05$) and Benevolence ($r(144)=-.20$, $p<.05$) and Positive Affect.

Discussion

The results of the study reveal how values and self-conscious emotions are associated with one another and impact emotional wellbeing. Pearson's correlation coefficient between self-focused values and emotional well-being showed a significant negative correlation between Self-Focused Values and Positive Affect in the given sample ($r = -.237$, $p<.01$) which reflects a decrease in emotional well-being. With the branch of self-focused values involving self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, security, achievement and power, this value could also be supported by the significant negative correlation obtained between Stimulation and PA ($r=-.323$, $p<.01$), and Hedonism and PA ($r=-.231$, $p<.01$). However, no such significant

correlations were found between measures of Self-Focused Values and Negative Affect. Such results were found to contradict the findings of past literature that proposes a positive correlation between self-focused values and emotional wellbeing due to their growth-oriented and motivating nature (Jensen & Bergin, 1988; Schwartz & Sortheix, 2018). However, these findings can be explained through the interplay of culture which exerts contextual influences over individuals' associations between values and wellbeing (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000; Sortheix & Schwartz, 2017). With the sample belonging to the predominantly collectivistic population of India, the individuals may prioritize the social-focused set of values, as learned through their environmental influences, thus equating it with a higher functionality and improved emotional wellbeing.

Findings also suggested a significant negative correlation between social values and emotional well-being ($r=-.176$, $p<.05$). When focused on individually, increase in tradition ($r=-.178$, $r<.05$) and benevolence ($r=-.204$, $p<.05$) causes a decrease in PA. Such results are in accordance with the present literature, as values of conformity, tradition, security and universalism have been termed as "unhealthy values" that contribute to a lower emotional wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 1995; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000). This is necessarily because of the extrinsic focus of such values that is derived from individuals' need to obtain societal approval and admiration.

Feelings of guilt and shame were associated with poorer emotional wellbeing. Probable increases in feelings of guilt were associated

with enhanced feelings of NA ($r = 0.171, p > .05$); while increase in shame resulted in higher NA ($r = 0.237, p > .01$). Additionally, Guilt-proneness had a positive correlation with self-focused values as the relationship between them was significant ($r = 0.230, p > .01$). Shame and Guilt seem to be valuable emotions that have a self-regulatory influence so much so that they predispose feelings of negative affect, though these self-conscious emotions have an adaptive value as they help to regulate behavior and reduce the propensity to act in an amoral manner. These feelings of shame and guilt are the main guiding force that helps the person to understand the implications of their thoughts and actions and probably instigate cognitions in a direction to alleviate distress, hostility, anger, anxiety and unhappiness.

Values play an integral role in mediating self-conscious emotions that predispose the individual to experience a variety of emotions and influence one's emotional wellbeing. High feelings of shame and guilt may predispose one to experience poor sense of self representation, global perception of self as negative having direct or indirect adverse consequences on an individual ultimately leading to high negative affectivity and poor positive affectivity. Though shame has been shown to externalize anger and guilt to internalize the feelings of apathy and aggression, both have harmful effects on one's emotional wellbeing. Being able to adapt to feelings of guilt could have important implications for pursuit of personal values (Lewis, 2000). This is so because one feels bad about specific behaviors that are particularly incongruent to one's moral concerns or value systems. Since value systems play a pivotal role in experiencing the emotions of shame and guilt, it is important to identify the personal values that mitigate unpleasantness and associated feelings of shame and guilt and promote emotional wellbeing. Although overwhelming in certain cases, these self-conscious emotions can otherwise act as a motivator for individuals to reduce the associated psychological distress by propelling the individual to pursue their goals in a socially acceptable manner. As a result, there is an inherent need to capitalize on the resourcefulness of self-conscious emotions and utilize them as motivators in a value-approved manner, instead of allowing shame and guilt to lead to overwhelming amounts of negative affect.

Conclusion

Values and self-conscious emotions share a deep correspondence as they highly influence the wellbeing of an individual, in the cultural context one resides. While shame is highly interrelated to the social-focused values by drawing upon the socially agreed courses of actions, guilt plays a more self-directed role by influencing one's altruism.

Owing to India's collectivistic nature of prioritizing social norms over individual considerations, self-focused values exhibited a negative correlation with Positive Affect, notably Stimulation and Hedonism. Furthermore, an increase in social values, particularly Tradition and Benevolence, portrayed a decrease in PA thus contributing to a lower emotional well-being. The findings also indicated a positive relationship between self-conscious emotions of Shame and Guilt and NA. These findings can be used to develop culturally sensitive interventions that capitalize on the self-conscious emotions resulting from one's culturally-relevant values, and use them as tools for enhancement of the self.

However, despite the relations validated through the identification of numerous statistically significant correlations in this study, it has its own limitations. Although attempts were made to draw a sample representative of the gender differences in the population, the resulting participants predominantly consisted of females with a minority of males continuing with their participation till the end. In addition, the lack of random sampling raises questions about the generalisability of the findings to the wider population. Future studies can build upon these shortcomings to ensure a more reliable set of findings, while exploring a wider range of participants ranging across age, gender, ethnicity and other characteristics. Whether the relation between values and self-conscious emotions is bidirectional or causal, also remains to be studied.

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