

Coping Strategies Used By Pakistani Immigrants To Canada to Deal With Shame In Complex Social Contexts

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BACKGROUND

- In Western psychology, shame is typically viewed as a painful, maladaptive emotional experience whose focus is on the full self (Tangney et al, 2007).
- Yet, shame is a valued emotional experience in many cultures (e.g. China; Ho, Fu & Ng, 2004) and may be associated with a motivation to improve the self (De Hooge, 2013) or repair relationships (Wong & Tsai, 2007).
- Two quantitative studies have investigated shame in a Pakistani context, using Western measures (Taihara & Malik, 2016; Shahnawaz & Malik, 2017). To date, no study has explored beliefs about shame or ways to cope with shame within a Pakistani context, without imposing Western norms.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What coping strategies do Pakistani immigrants to Canada use when dealing with shame?
2. How are those influenced by beliefs about the role or purpose of shame?

METHODS

Approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Victoria

Short online survey (demographics) & semi-structured interview over phone (10 participants) or emails (7 participants), mixed (1 participant)

Analyzes – Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014) with a responsive approach to data collection.
To improve the quality, rigor and trustworthiness of the study: use of self-reflexive journal, 3 coders, memos, participants sent a summary of findings for feedback.

DEMOGRAPHICS INFORMATION (N=18)

- Age: M = 35.5 years-old, SD= 8.74 (range= 24.5 to 61 years old); Age at immigration: M=31.89, SD=7.48 (range=22 to 53 years-old)
- 11 men & 7 women who immigrated from Pakistan within the last 8 years
- Cultural background: Punjabi (10), Mahajir (7), Memon (1), Urdu-Speaking (1); Religion: Atheist (2), Muslim (16)
- Interviews conducted in English (14), Urdu (3) or both (1)

RESULTS

Step One: Analyse self and situation

Did I act against my values? What is the context? Who is present?

"First of all I will adopt a proactive approach. For example, it depends. If, you know, it was a willful contribution, I will definitely have a 360-degree review of why I did that. Can I live without that? And you know I will take a different route. And if it was not willful, it was a forceful then to some extent you don't have a control on that. Maybe you have to do it again for your survival."

Shame as a signal for wrongdoing

"I feel sharam (shame) is a blessed feeling, it tells you [the] person is afraid to do wrong things which are prohibited [by religion] and encourage him, her to talk about [it]"

May be due to one's own wrongdoing or the wrongdoing of a family or community member. Signals something needs to be done to repair the situation/improve the self

Potential Positive Coping:

Better the self
Accept and correct
Stop unwanted behavior
Seek support from close others

Potential Negative Coping:

Withdrawing or hiding the truth
Anger or violence
Lack of confidence

Shame as social control

"if someone is superior, they will try to burdenize the inferiors, so that, [they] make them feel shame."

Use of shaming to enforce certain behaviors or norms, usually by members who have a higher status to the shamed individual

Potential Positive Coping:

Better the self (one participant)
Seek support from close others
Seek protection with God
Act despite shame/Ignore the shame
*Blame may need to be publically accepted depending on situation & who is giving the blame (e.g. elder)

Potential Negative Coping:

Anger or violence (especially negative if elders are present)
Lack of confidence

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