

**THE IMPACT OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR EVALUATIONS/GUILT
AND NEGATIVE SELF EVALUATIONS/SHAME OF THAI
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN BANGKOK ON THEIR
PERSONAL GROWTH INITIATIVE BOTH DIRECTLY AND
INDIRECTLY, BEING MEDIATED BY THEIR REPAIR AND
WITHDRAWAL TENDENCIES**

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Abstract: Researchers have claimed that negative evaluation of one's behavior or oneself after one has made a mistake can have a distinct negative or positive impact. After one has made a mistake, the Negative Behavior Evaluations or Guilt (NBEs/Guilt) emerges when one focuses on one's action and the Negative Self Evaluations or Shame (NSEs/Shame) emerges when one focuses on one's self. Correspondingly, the present study investigated the direct and indirect impact of NBEs/Guilt and NSEs/Shame on Personal Growth Initiative (PGI) which is an active, intentional engagement in the process of personal growth, being mediated by their repair and withdrawal tendencies among Thai undergraduate students in Bangkok. This quantitative research employed path analysis using survey questionnaires with 232 Thai participants obtained via convenience sampling (mean age was 22). The path analysis results indicated that NBEs/Guilt had both direct and indirect relationships with participants' level of PGI mediated by repair tendencies, while NSEs/Shame only had a relationship with PGI when it was mediated by repair tendencies. Moreover, the result showed that the relationship between NBEs/Guilt and repair tendencies were significantly higher than the relationship between NSEs/Shame and repair tendencies. Lastly, NBEs/Guilt had a negative relationship with withdrawal tendencies while NSEs/Shame was positively correlated with withdrawal tendencies. The results suggest that in Thailand, a collective culture, NSEs/Shame can lead to PGI mediated through repair tendencies. However, since the relationship is much stronger for NBEs/Guilt to PGI, one should try and reduce NSEs/Shame and attempt to induce NBEs/Guilt as a response to one's mistakes.

Keywords: Collective Culture, Guilt, Negative Behavior Evaluations (Nbes), Negative Self Evaluations (Nses), Personal Growth Initiative (PGI), Repair Tendencies, Shame, Withdrawal Tendencies.

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Introduction

NBEs/Guilt and NSEs/Shame represent two distinct ways a person acknowledges that one is aware of having violated important norms or values (Pronovost & Bienvenu, 2015). When people experience NBEs/Guilt, they focus on their behavior after they have done something wrong, such as “I did something bad” (Brown, 2012). NBEs/Guilt is a critical voice in one’s mind telling that one has done something that is not in accordance with one’s personal values (Carn, Petrocchi, Miglio, Mancini, & Couyoumdjian, 2013). For NSEs/shame, people experience this emotion when they focus on the negative evaluation of the self, such as “I am a bad person.” The goal of NSEs/Shame is to protect the ideal appearance a person would like to show others; hence, it is about saving or losing face (Bracht & Regner, 2013; Carn et al., 2013). Major scholars assert that these two emotions play critical roles on one’s moral behavior (Makogona & Enikolopovb, 2013).

Importantly, these different evaluations lead to different behaviors. Several studies support the assumption that NBEs/Guilt motivates repair tendencies e.g., apologizing for behaving in a manner he or she does not feel good about, whereas NSEs/Shame motivate withdrawal tendencies e.g., ignoring, withdrawing or avoiding the consequences of their mistakes (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). However, most studies were conducted in the West where adherence to individualistic values emphasizes the impact of NBEs/Guilt in producing more positive behavioral outcomes after the self-evaluation of guilt. However, in the East, the opposite may be equally true in that NSEs/Shame is associated with personal values one holds, encouraging self-improvement (Wong & Tsai, 2007). Thus, NSEs/Shame would probably be more adaptive than NBEs/Guilt in collectivistic cultures as it is associated with one’s personal value and relationships with others. In other words, experiencing NSEs/Shame within a collectivistic context could motivate a person to engage in self-improvement (Wong & Tsai, 2007). It would also be interesting to investigate how NBEs/Guilt operates in a collectivistic society like Thailand.

Research Objectives

The present study investigated the direct and indirect impact of NBEs/Guilt and NSEs/Shame on PGI, being mediated by their repair and withdrawal tendencies among Thai undergraduate students in Bangkok. The inclusion of PGI as the study’s criterion variable reflects the proposed study’s aim to examine whether NBEs/Guilt and NSEs/Shame can produce productive outcomes on individuals from a collectivistic culture, in terms of their intentional and active engagement in the process of improving oneself (Robitschek, 1998).

Literature Review

This study is anchored on two major theories: Tangney, Wagner, and Gramzow’s (1989) model of NBE/Guilt and NSEs/Shame and Robitschek et al.’s (2012) PGI. The following is a discussion on these theories and some related studies on other variables of the study.

Tangney et al.’s (1989) Model of NBEs/Guilt and NSEs/Shame

Tangney et al. (1989) differentiated NBEs/Guilt and NSEs/Shame because of whether the emotion that influences subsequent actions after one has made a mistake is

regarded as moral failure of the self or specific behavior. Technically speaking, NSEs/Shame can be defined as “an emotion of self-blame, involving negative evaluations of the global self” (Tangney & Dearing, 2002, p. 93) and NBEs/Guilt as “an emotion that stems from a negative evaluation of specific behaviors, embedded in local contexts” (Tangney & Dearing, 2002, p. 39). That is, one experiences NSEs/Shame when one makes internal, stable, negative attributions about the self - such as “I am bad” whereas one experiences NBEs/Guilt when one makes internal, stable, negative attributions about the behavior such as “I did something bad” (Tracy, Robins, & Tangney, 2007). While individuals have the capacity to experience NBEs/Guilt and NSEs/Shame as emotional states, they can take on the characteristics of personality traits as some people might experience NBEs/Guilt and NSEs/Shame across a wide range of relevant situations (Tracy & Robins, 2004).

Most researchers agree that NBEs/Guilt motivates approach and repair tendencies, an action or tendency to correct to compensate for one’s mistakes (Cohen, Panter, & Turan, 2012). NBEs/Guilt encourages people to right their wrongs and apologize for their mistakes (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). NSEs/Shame, on the other hand, is more painful than NBEs/Guilt because it focuses on the self which is harder to change than the action. So, it motivates avoidance and withdrawal tendencies, an action tendency to hide or withdraw from public (Cohen et al., 2012); that is, NSEs/Shame causes people to ignore, withdraw, and avoid the consequences of their mistakes (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Thus, this theoretical framework from Tangney et al. strongly theorized that the focus on behavior of NBEs/Guilt is followed by repair responses, while the focus on self of NSEs/Shame is followed by withdrawal tendencies. Accordingly, this present study expected that among Thai participants, the relationship between NBEs/Guilt and repair tendencies will be positive and the relationship between NSEs/Shame and withdrawal tendencies will also be positive.

PGI by Robitschek et al. (2012)

The construct of PGI is rooted in positive psychology and was developed in 1998 by Robitschek. PGI is defined as “an active, intentional engagement in the process of personal growth” (Robitschek, 1998, p. 184). PGI is characterized as a developed set of skills that helps individuals work toward positive self-change throughout their lives (Robitschek et al., 2012; Sharma & Rani, 2013). There are two core components that constitute PGI — cognitive and behavioral. Cognitive components include beliefs, attitudes, and values supporting personal growth, such as knowing how to change and being committed to the growth process. They comprise two skills: readiness for change (the ability to assess one’s preparedness to engage in the process of personal growth) and preparation and planning (the ability to organize and create strategies for the positive self-change). On the other hand, behavioral components involve actions actualizing the above-mentioned cognitive components. They consist of two skills: using resources (the ability to indicate and approach resources that one has, including other people and materials) and intentional behavior (the ability to actualize the plans that one has made or carry out self-change plans and behaviors).

Related Studies of Relationships among Key Variables

In this section, several studies on the relationships among key variables were examined. It is worth noting how their findings support or disagree with the contentions of this present study.

Relationship between Nbes/Guilt and Withdrawal Tendencies

According to the framework of Tangney et al.'s (1989) model of NBEs/Guilt and NSEs/Shame, withdrawal tendencies are described as action tendencies that one focuses on hiding, withdrawing from public, or avoids facing the consequences of one's failure (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). This could refer to a failure one has made or one thinks that is potential to happen (Brown, 2012). Thus, self-handicapping (i.e., an active action of making obstacles to ones' goals and use them as an excuse to protect their self-esteem when they failed) and depression can be considered as withdrawal behaviors as people engage in these behaviors when they are in fear of the failure they made or the failure that might happen to them (Berglas & Jones, 1978; Young, Neighbors, DiBello, Traylor, & Tomkins, 2016). In addition, research studies found that NBEs/Guilt has a negative relationship with self-handicapping (Hofseth, Toering, & Jordet, 2015), and has negative relationship with depression (Young et al., 2016). That is, the more an individual is prone to experience NBEs/Guilt, the less possibility he or she will engage in self-handicapping and depression (Young et al., 2016). As such, this present study expected that NBEs/Guilt will have a negative relationship with withdrawal tendencies.

Relationship between Nbes/Guilt and PGI

To the best of the present researcher's knowledge, the relationship between NBEs/Guilt and PGI has not been empirically tested. Accordingly, the following literature supports this present study's hypothesized relationship of NBEs/Guilt with PGI by drawing upon related studies about the role of NBEs/Guilt that have a significant effect on some essential characteristics which can influence and predict one's improvement in various aspects of life. Firstly, a study from Passanisi, Sapienza, Budello, and Giaimo (2015) demonstrated that NBEs/Guilt has a positive relationship with self-efficacy; self-efficacy is used to represent PGI as Robitschek (1998) posited that it is one of the fundamental elements that constitute PGI. Next, a study from Allard and White (2015) found NBEs/Guilt can influence consumers to buy self-improvement products. This is because the nature of NBEs/Guilt that emerges from failing to live up to one's standards or values motivates people to repair their mistakes and improve themselves even in the areas unrelated to the one that make them experience NBEs/Guilt. Therefore, this finding supports the idea that NBEs/Guilt may encourage a person to engage in PGI.

Relationships between Nses/Shame and Repair Tendencies and PGI

From cross-cultural perspective, most of the studies that support the link between emotional and behavioral responses of NBEs/Guilt and NSEs/Shame were conducted in the West where the over-riding cultural imperative is individualism. Accordingly, many of these Western-oriented studies claimed that NBEs/Guilt reflects a positive emotion followed by productive behaviors. The main reason could be that Westerners place great value on an independent concept of the self and NBEs/Guilt is associated

with personal values which each person holds (Wong & Tsai, 2007). On the other hand, people from collectivistic cultures (e.g., Thailand) may consider NSEs/Shame to be more positive than NBEs/Guilt because people in this culture highly promote the “interdependent” concept of self. That is, they generally view themselves in terms of their connections with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). Thus, external influences (e.g., thoughts and feelings from other people) are meaningful and important to them as well as internal ones (e.g., feelings and thoughts about themselves) (Kondo, 1990). Therefore, NSEs/Shame is viewed to be positive in the collectivist cultures due to its association with the interdependent goals of society, making an individual adjust and improve himself or herself in accordance with social standards and norms (Wong & Tsai, 2007). Thus, this present study expected that NSEs/Shame will elicit productive behaviors; its relationship with repair tendencies and PGI will be positive accordingly.

Relationship between Repair Tendencies and PGI

The behavioral tendencies to repair the mistake that one has made, such as the willingness to apologize for one’s mistakes or increasing the effort to restore the relationship that one has strained, reflect the ability of self-regulation, which is defined as an ability to act consistently in one’s best interest with one’s deepest and most important values (Exline & Baumeister, 2000; Howell, Turowski, & Buro, 2012). Several research studies support that people who can self-regulate themselves are able to start and maintain their behavior that they want to change and not engage in undesired behaviors; accordingly, they are likely to achieve their goals (Heatheron & Vohs, 1998; Higgins, 1997). So, this also suggests that people who engage in repair tendencies when experiencing NBEs/Guilt or NSEs/Shame may possess the ability to self-regulate themselves. Thus, this ability promotes them to engage in the process of PGI which requires a person to actively and intentionally work toward his or her positive self-change throughout his or her life.

Relationship between Withdrawal Tendencies and PGI

As mentioned earlier, in this present study behavioral self-handicapping and depression are regarded as withdrawal tendencies. Past studies suggested that self-handicapping decreases one’s overall life satisfaction, motivation, and one’s ability to achieve one’s goals (Özçetin & Hiçdurmaz, 2016). For depression, research studies assert that it is negatively linked with self-efficacy (representing PGI) (Greco et. al., 2015; Kwasky & Groh, 2014; Mushtaq & Zahir, 2015; Wu et al., 2013). Therefore, it is assumable from these findings that behavioral self-handicapping is often negatively related with achievement and depression is often negatively related with self-efficacy, these findings imply that repair tendencies may have a significant negative relationship with PGI.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework for this study.

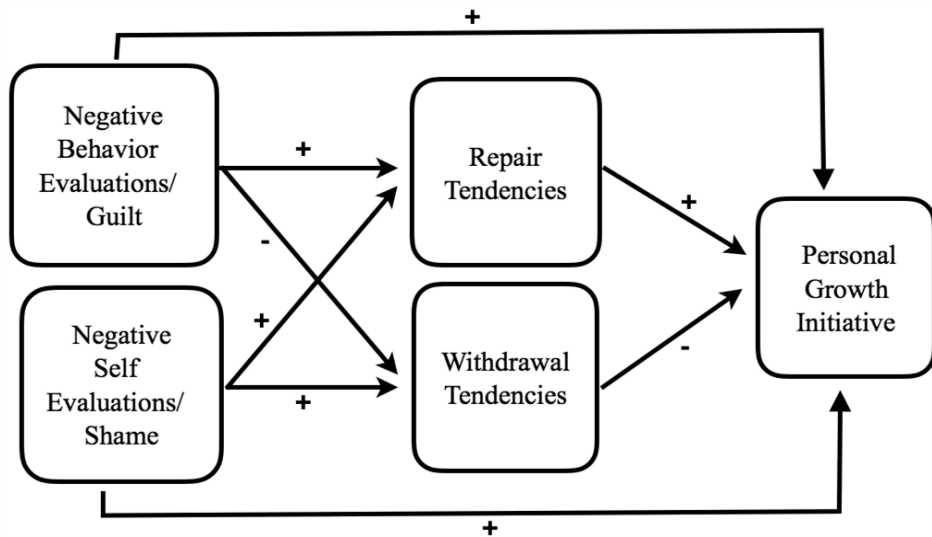


Figure 1: Path Model Showing Possible Direct and Indirect Impact of Negative Behavior Evaluations/Guilt and Negative Self Evaluations/Shame on Personal Growth Initiative, Being Mediated by Repair and Withdrawal Tendencies

Method

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 232 undergraduate students of two universities in Bangkok, Thailand: 55.2% (n=128) were female and 44.8% (n=104) were male. Their age ranged from 18 to 50 years, with a mean of 22 years (SD=4.2) (median=21). Of the respondents, 47.8% (n=111) were from Assumption University and 52.2% (n=121) were from Ramkhamhaeng University

Materials

The study employed a three-part self-administered survey questionnaire in Thai. This questionnaire was made up of three parts with the following descriptions:

Part I: Demographic information. This section contains research questions aimed at deriving information on the participants' age and gender.

Part II: Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (GASP). GASP was developed by Cohen (2011) to evaluate the individual differences in the tendency to experience NBEs/Guilt and NSEs/Shame through a range of personal wrongdoings. Participants were instructed to imagine themselves in 16 different situations that people could encounter in daily life and rate the likelihood that they would react on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1=Very unlikely to 7=Very Likely. The scale consists of the following four-item subscales: (1) NBEs/Guilt, (2) Repair tendencies, (3) NSEs/Shame, and (4) Withdrawal tendencies.

Part III: PGI Scale II (PGIS-II). PGIS-II was developed by Robitschek et al. (2012). It is multidimensional and measures four elements of personal growth: (1)

Readiness for change, (2) Preparation and planning, (3) Intentional behavior, and (4) Using resources. The PGSI-II consists of 16 items, with each item scored on a 6-point Likert scale from 1=Disagree strongly to 6=Agree strongly. The Thai version of the PGIS-II was translated by Patipatwutikul and Tuicomepee (2013).

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaires were distributed to Thai undergraduate students who agreed to participate in the research voluntarily and studied at Assumption University and Ramkhamhaeng University in Bangkok. After the collection of the completed questionnaires, the researcher individually inspected each completed questionnaire to check for possible errors of commission and omission. Only valid questionnaires were used for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage distributions were utilized to analyze the demographic data obtained from the participants. Furthermore, finalized mean scores and standard deviations were employed to examine the analysis of the respondents' scores. Next, path analysis via multiple regression analysis was utilized to test the hypothesized direct and indirect impacts of the NBEs/Guilt and NSEs/Shame and PGI among Thai participants, being mediated by repair tendencies and withdrawal tendencies.

Results

Reliability analysis was conducted for the Thai-translated scales of NBEs/Guilt, NSEs/Shame, repair tendencies, withdrawal tendencies, and PGI. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the five scales ranged from .52 to .93. The computed Cronbach's alpha values for each scale were as follows: .67 for "NBEs/Guilt"; .56 for "NSEs/Shame"; .66 for "repair tendencies"; .52 for "withdrawal tendencies"; and .93 for "PGI". Moreover, in order to test the hypothesized direct and indirect relationship represented by the path model depicted in Figure 1, path analysis via multiple regression analysis was conducted. The results of this path analysis are presented in the following Figure 2.

(See Figure 2 on the next page)

Of the two exogenous predictor variables of NBEs/Guilt and NSEs/Shame, only the variable of NBEs/Guilt was found to be directly related to the participants' reported level of PGI. Thus, the more the participants reported feeling guilty, the higher their reported level of PGI (Beta=.32) was.

The exogenous predictor variables of NBEs/Guilt were also found to be indirectly related to PGI, being mediated by the participants' reported level of repair tendencies. Thus, the more the participants reported feeling guilty, the higher their reported level of repair tendencies (Beta=.52), and subsequently the higher their reported level of PGI (Beta=.25). The exogenous predictor variable of NBEs/Guilt was also found to be negatively related to the participants' reported level of withdrawal tendencies. Thus, the more the participants reported feeling guilty, the lower their reported level of withdrawal tendencies (Beta=-.30). However, the

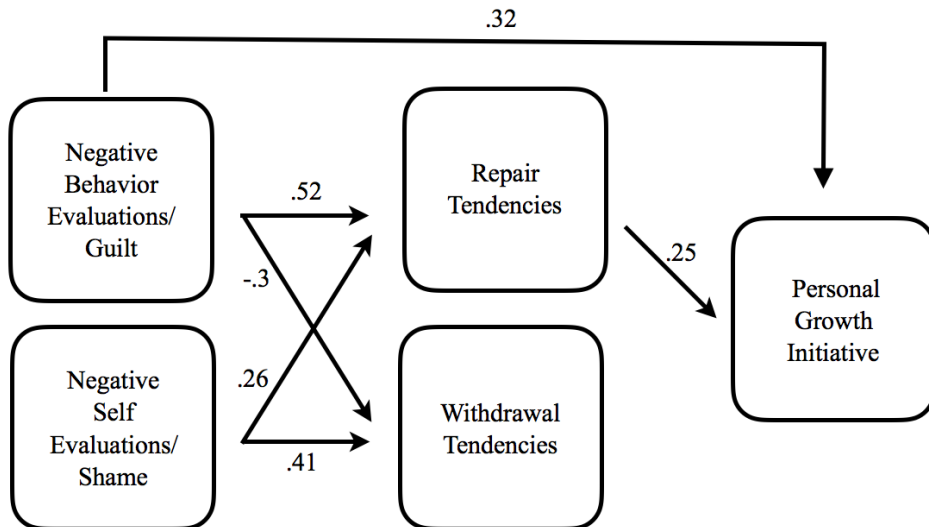


Figure 2: Path Model of Personal Growth Initiative as A Function of the Direct and Indirect Influences of Negative Behavior Evaluations/Guilt and Negative Self Evaluations/Shame, Being Mediated by Repair Tendencies, and Withdrawal Tendencies

variable of withdrawal tendencies was not found to be significantly related to the participants' reported level of PGI ($p > .05$).

The exogenous predictor variable of NSEs/Shame was found to be indirectly related to PGI, being mediated by the participants' reported level of repair tendencies. Thus, the more the participants reported feeling NSEs/Shame, the higher their reported level of repair tendencies ($\text{Beta} = .26$), and subsequently the higher their reported level of PGI ($\text{Beta} = .25$). The exogenous predictor variable of NSEs/Shame was also found to be positively related to the participants' reported level of withdrawal tendencies. Thus, the more the participants reported feeling NSEs/Shame, the higher their reported level of withdrawal tendencies ($\text{Beta} = .41$). However, the variable of withdrawal tendencies was not found to be significantly related to the participants' reported level of PGI ($p > .05$).

Discussion and Suggestions

The findings from the present study indicated that NBEs/Guilt had both direct and indirect relationships with Thai participants' level of PGI mediated by repair tendencies, while NSEs/Shame only had a relationship with PGI when it was mediated by repair tendencies. Moreover, the results showed that the relationship between NBEs/Guilt and repair tendencies was significantly higher than the relationship between NSEs/Shame and repair tendencies. Lastly, NBEs/Guilt also had a negative relationship with withdrawal tendencies while NSEs/Shame was positively correlated with withdrawal tendencies. Accordingly, the findings showed that NSEs/Shame could elicit adaptive behavior which was repair tendencies and at the same time elicit maladaptive behavior which was withdrawal tendencies in Thai

participants. However, NBEs/Guilt appeared to play an important role to enable adaptive behavior which was behavioral tendencies to repair and one's level of PGI. If this is the case, then it makes sense that effort should be directed at encouraging and promoting individuals to try and reduce the feeling of NSEs/Shame and attempt to induce NBEs/Guilt as a response to their mistakes.

In reducing NSEs/Shame, Brown (2006) suggested four ways to deal with their NSEs/Shame experience successfully and resiliently. Firstly, one should be able to recognize and understand what triggers one to feel NSEs/Shame. Secondly, one should have practical awareness such that one understands how one's culture and society impacts one to experience NSEs/Shame. Next, one should seek a positive and supportive network; this could be one's family, friends, or the persons that one trusts. Lastly and importantly, one should be able to speak out about one's shaming experience because the more one keeps this shaming experience inside oneself, the more one will feel painful. That is, one's ability to be resilient to NSEs/Shame greatly depends on one's ability to speak about NSEs/Shame.

In inducing NBEs/Guilt, Bynum and Goodie (2014) claimed that it is very important for individuals to be able to give constructive feedbacks to themselves when they have made mistakes and to others when they see that people have made mistakes. Bynum and Goodie suggested the content and focus of the feedback are the most essential factors that can indicate the subsequent response. The constructive feedback should address directly to one's actions and behaviors that one can change, and not to one's sense of self. Besides, when giving feedback to others, manner is also likely to influence the emotional response of the other person. For example, one can be supportive while giving feedback (e.g., saying that "everyone makes mistakes") and avoid the use of judgmental language (e.g., good, bad, poor). Therefore, feedback that focuses on the actions and is given with supportive and nonjudgmental manner is more likely to induce the experience of NBEs/Guilt rather than NSEs/Shame and can effectively encourage people to approach and repair their mistakes.

Limitations

Firstly, the sampling method was not random and, as such, the external validity of the study's finding is questionable. In addition, the sample size (N=232) is small. Therefore, caution should be considered when generalizing the study's findings to Thai population, or people in collective cultures.

Secondly, the majority of the measurement employed in the present study was constructed and validated with Western populations. Although their validity and reliability were demonstrated to be acceptable, their cross-cultural validity has not been demonstrated. Thus, the validity of the obtained findings (from a Thai sample) rests on the assumed cross-cultural validity of these Western-based scales. Moreover, because the survey questionnaire used in this study was translated from English to Thai, there is a possibility that the translation might not be accurate due to the difficulty in translating perfectly.

Thirdly, all information collected was through self-report measures. According to Anastasia (1992), self-report measures are subject to biased responses and the veracity of responses could not be validated in the survey. So, this researcher had to

accept the response at face value and assume that the respondents replied to the questions honestly.

Fourthly, the conduct of the study was limited to one point in time. Thus, the interrelationships between the exogenous, mediator, and criterion variables merely reflected how these variables are related at a particular point in time rather than the sequential influences of the exogenous variables on the endogenous variables across of time.

Fifthly, the research design employed (path analysis) was correlational and not experimental. So, the path analytic result can only be interpreted in terms of relationships and not in terms of causality.

Lastly, there is a dearth of literature with regard to NBEs/Guilt and NSEs/Shame and their subscale in the collectivistic cultural context. The majority of research studies about this present study's research were based on the literature from individualistic cultural contexts. Thus, the validity of the present study's findings may be questioned or deemed open for further verification. Nevertheless, in spite of these limitations, the current study is quite unique in itself as it offers new perspectives that serve to add to the literature. Moreover, an exploratory study of this nature may offer new avenues for further research on the role of these negative emotions in collectivistic cultural countries, especially in Thailand.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this present research suggest that Thai undergraduate students in Bangkok need to cultivate NBEs/Guilt self-talk rather than NSEs/Shame self-talk when they commit mistakes in order to effectively cope with this feeling and enhance their PGI. In particular, the findings indicated that NBEs/Guilt had both direct and indirect relationships with participants' level of PGI mediated by repair tendencies. That is, the more the participants reported feeling NBEs/Guilt, the higher their reported level of PGI, both directly and indirectly as mediated by repair tendencies. On the other hand, NSEs/Shame only had an indirect relationship with PGI when it was mediated by repair tendencies. That is, the more the participants experienced NSEs/Shame, the higher their reported level of repair tendencies, and subsequently the higher their reported level of PGI

Moreover, the result showed that the relationship between NBEs/Guilt and repair tendencies was higher than the relationship between NSEs/Shame and repair tendencies. That is, participants who reported feeling NBEs/Guilt were likely to engage in repair tendencies more than those participants who reported feeling NSEs/Shame. Lastly, NBEs/Guilt also had a negative relationship with withdrawal tendencies while NSEs/Shame was positively correlated with withdrawal tendencies. That is, the more participants reported feeling NBEs/Guilt, the lower their reported level of withdrawal tendencies whereas the more participants reported feeling NSEs/Shame, the higher their reported level of withdrawal tendencies.

Although the findings demonstrated that NSEs/Shame could elicit adaptive behavior which was repair tendencies and at the same time elicit maladaptive behavior which was withdrawal tendencies in Thai participants, NBEs/Guilt appeared to play an important role to enable adaptive behavior which was behavioral tendencies to repair and one's level of PGI. As pointed earlier, if this is indeed the

case, then it makes sense that effort should be directed at encouraging and promoting individuals to try and reduce the feeling of NSEs/Shame and attempt to induce NBEs/Guilt as a response to their mistakes.

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