

What Are The Effects Of Shame?

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The primary emotions are feelings that are innate and universal and are found in any person; however, secondary emotions must be learned and developed with the growth of the individual and social interaction. The shame falls under secondary emotions. Shame is defined as the emotion of self-awareness arising from the self-evaluation and analysis of a personal failure against the desired standard according to shared rules, purposes, or models of behaviour. Therefore, shame is intimately linked to social competence, in other words, connected to the evaluation and understanding of cultural standards to which the person seeks to join. When individuals feel ashamed, they might feel inadequate and not up to the standard. The second impact of shame might be depression in some people. The third effect might be the feeling of loneliness. Shame might be detrimental to humans by producing feelings of inadequacy, depression, and loneliness.

Shame and Feelings of Inadequacy

Shame arises when individuals deviate from the social norm, perceiving the sense of failure typical of this emotion, which often leads to feeling inadequate. The individual thinks that there are very few possibilities to remedy what is considered an error or failure. In fact, the main difficulty lies in the fact that shame is the result of an internal state of the self and not the product of an external conflict, so it undermines the integrity of the self and one's abilities. Shame is an emotional state that also characterizes some personality disorders that reinforce inadequacy (Lamia). The same point of inadequacy was discussed by another author and contributor to the topic, Peter O'Dowd. It is shameful that the U.S.'s COVID-19 mortality rate is higher than in other countries, although the U.S. has the best educational and research institutions (O'Dowd). Both Lamia and O'Dowd point out that shame might lead to feelings of inadequacy; however, O'Dowd refers to it in the national context in the wake of COVID-19. People who experience, in the depths of their inner self, the sensation of having something wrong, of not being sufficiently adequate or worthy of being loved, experience the relationship with others with deep pain, often manifesting an attitude of insecurity. The deep and widespread feeling of inadequacy is difficult to reveal to others and sometimes denied even to oneself. These painful and disturbing feelings result in an orientation towards lifestyles characterized by detachment from others. For example, children usually feel inadequate when they are unable to secure good marks on school tests. On such occasions, they reduce social interaction with other people around them. Shame is often the feeling which might result in a thought pattern dominated by inadequacy.

Shame, Depression, and Self-Harm

The second important effect of shame might be depression. Depression refers to a serious medical illness that adversely affects how people feel, how they think, and how they act. In many cases, shame forces a person to focus primarily on the condition of the personal self, with the painful perception of a negative self. Thus, the feeling of an incompetent and bad person creeps in, accompanied by a sense of shrinkage, as if to feel smaller, useless, inadequate, and weak. A very interesting element concerning shame concerns the presence or absence of other people; in fact, it has been seen that for this emotion to manifest itself, the situation does not need to involve external observers; this happens because the subject finds himself mentally representing an imaginary audience, and thanks to the false presence of other people the feelings of shame are generated equally, even in circumstances of loneliness. As a result, the concerned person becomes depressed due to the continuous negative flow of emotions. The shame leads to a thinking pattern that reinforces the feelings of sadness and depression (Lamia). A famous professor of psychology, Jefferson M. Fish, contemplates that shame leads to depression, resulting in suicidal thoughts as the person concerned thinks that he or she is a failure. The people suffering from shame might be so depressed that they think of committing suicide to punish themselves for their perceived shortcomings (Fish). As compared to Lamia, Fish has discussed the negative impacts of shame on depression in more detail. Lamia has not mentioned the emergence of suicidal thoughts in a depressed person. For example, an employee might be under stress and face depressive thoughts when he receives no promotion or pay raise like his or her fellows at the end of periodic appraisal in the company. Some emotionally unbalanced individuals might think about ending their lives in depression. Individuals facing shame might be so depressed that they might end their lives or harm themselves.

Shame and Social Isolation

The third critical effect of shame might be loneliness. Loneliness refers to a condition when a person wants to avoid other humans; therefore, it unfavourably affects how people feel, the way they think, and how they interact with others. In situations of shame, a person usually looks away from the other, folds back the posture, and turns his or her face, which generally could blush. Many people in this situation try to hide from other people in order to become invisible. All these attitudes confirm that they have not managed to reach certain standards of performance, or even norms and values, which are considered indispensable to have a good consideration of themselves. People usually react to shame by isolating themselves; consequently, they become lonely. Therefore, the resulting consequences might be negative, and the feeling of loneliness might creep into the sufferer's thoughts (Lamia). When a person commits a crime, they might be ashamed when caught and might show antisocial behaviour (Fish). Antisocial behaviour also includes withdrawal from society and loneliness. As compared to Fish, Lamia has elaborated on the process of becoming lonely in a more detailed and explicit manner. For example, if an individual is caught red-handed when taking out

money from a traveller on a bus, The thief might face severe social pressure to cut or significantly reduce interaction with his or her fellows. He or she would not want to receive negative comments from people, so withdrawal from society is an option for him or her, at least temporarily. Most of the time, when a person feels ashamed, he or she might resort to antisocial behaviour and might prefer to be lonely to avoid social pressures and criticism.

The Combined Effects of Shame

Shame falls under the category of secondary emotions, which are developed with the individual's growth and social relations. Shame is demarcated as the emotion of self-awareness that creeps in as a result of the self-evaluation of a personal disappointment against a set benchmark according to purposes, shared rules, or models of behaviour. Shame has many negative impacts on human life at the individual and societal levels. The three major adverse impacts of shame include the feeling of inadequacy, depression, and loneliness. The feelings of inadequacy might be linked to social competence. Due to self-analysis or the opinions of others, a person might feel ashamed and feel inadequate. The negative feeling of inadequacy might lead to depression, which might be dangerous to health. The third impact might be the feeling of loneliness because shame induces people to cut ties with friends and family members. Shame might be harmful to people by producing feelings of inadequacy, depression, and loneliness.

Works Cited

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