



Implicit Shame and Avoidant Interpersonal Style: The Mediating Role of Identity Fragility


Lukas. Schneider¹, Jiaowei. Gong^{2*}

¹ Department of Psychology, Humboldt University of Berlin, Berlin, Germany



² VNU University of Education, 144 Xuan Thuy, Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam

* Corresponding author email address: JiaoweiGong@vnu.edu.vn

Editor

Thseen Nazir
Professor of Psychology and
Counseling Department, Ibn
Haldun University, Istanbul,
Turkey
thseen.nazir@ihu.edu.tr

Reviewers

Reviewer 1: Mohammadreza Zarbakhsh Bahri
Associate Professor (Department of Psychology, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad
University, Tonekabon, Iran. Email: M.Zarbakhsh@Toniau.ac.ir
Reviewer 2: Mohammad Hassan Ghanifar
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Birjand Branch, Islamic Azad
University, Birjand, Iran. Email: ghanifar@iaubir.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Introduction, the paragraph beginning with “Avoidant interpersonal style has been conceptualized...” would benefit from clarification regarding the distinction between behavioral and cognitive components. A brief operational definition of “cognitive schema rooted in distrust” would be useful here.

In the sentence “Implicit shame, as opposed to explicit or acknowledged shame, involves automatic and non-conscious negative evaluations...” a source defining implicit shame operationally in psychological measurement (e.g., how IAT captures this) would help bridge conceptual and methodological alignment.

In the sentence “Attachment theory provides a robust framework for understanding...” the claim that “avoidance is not merely preferred but perceived as essential for self-preservation” is strong. Suggest softening or qualifying this language, or citing an empirical study supporting this psychological necessity.

The paragraph beginning “Moreover, the role of emotion regulation strategies...” makes an insightful point, but the sentence “distorted cognitive appraisals—such as catastrophizing...” could be strengthened with citation of a cognitive model (e.g., Beck’s schema theory or cognitive appraisal theory).

The statement “Negative caregiving environments, invalidation, and chronic criticism...” in the paragraph on early relational trauma should specify whether these are self-reported recollections, clinical assessments, or observational data in the referenced literature, to clarify generalizability.

In the “Implicit Shame” subsection, the phrase “Although the number of items can vary...” creates ambiguity. Please specify how many items or blocks were used in this study’s version of the IAT and whether it followed the original Greenwald protocol.

In “Data Analysis,” the statement “Model fit indices such as the Comparative Fit Index...” would benefit from mentioning specific cutoff thresholds used (e.g., RMSEA < 0.06, CFI > 0.95), to strengthen methodological transparency.

In Table 4, the authors report both unstandardized (b) and standardized (β) coefficients. It would be helpful to briefly explain in the text why both are reported and how to interpret them, especially for a more applied readership.

In the “Discussion,” the sentence “These results suggest that individuals who unconsciously view themselves as flawed...” would be more rigorous if it emphasized that causality cannot be confirmed due to the study’s cross-sectional nature.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the paragraph that starts “The concept of identity fragility refers to...” the authors equate low self-concept clarity with identity fragility. This is a theoretical leap—please provide justification or empirical citations showing that the SCCS is valid for measuring “fragility” rather than simply “clarity.”

The paragraph that begins “Furthermore, cultural and contextual factors also shape...” lacks a direct reference to studies on Vietnamese collectivist cultural values specifically. Including regionally or demographically relevant cultural research would enhance contextual specificity.

In the final paragraph of the Introduction, the sentence “Most prior studies have explored the independent effects...” is a strong justification for the study, but it would be more persuasive if at least one of those “prior studies” was named and cited.

Under “Measures,” the description of the ASQ includes that it has “five subscales” but only two are used. Please explain whether the remaining subscales were analyzed, and if not, why they were excluded. This would clarify construct validity concerns.

In the “Identity Fragility” section, the authors state: “The SCCS is a unidimensional measure without subscales...”—this is true, but equating “low self-concept clarity” directly with “identity fragility” remains theoretically ambiguous. This term “fragility” needs clearer justification.

In “Findings and Results,” the sentence “The participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 35 years...” is clear, but reporting the exact number of participants in each age subgroup (e.g., 18–24 vs. 25–35) would enhance demographic precision and possibly reveal developmental trends.

In Table 1 reporting, the value “Mean = 0.42” for implicit shame seems abstract without context. Please provide reference to normative values or interpretation benchmarks for D-scores from IAT-Shame to help readers assess magnitude.

In Table 3 and accompanying paragraph, while the model fit indices are well-reported, the inclusion of SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) would offer a more comprehensive assessment of model fit, especially for reviewers accustomed to SEM.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.

