

Representation and Consequence of Guilt in Parents of Young Children with Unintentional Burns

Yuting Lin, PhD, RN; Frances M. Lewis, PhD, RN, FAAN; Ira Kantrowitz-Gordon, PhD, CNM, ARNP, FACNM; Gretchen J. Carrougher, MN, RN; Liang Qiao, PhD, MD; JoAnne D. Whitney, PhD, CWCN, FAAN



INTRODUCTION

- The incidence of unintentional burn injuries provides a natural condition that induces guilt and other emotions, such as blame, regret in the parents of the inflicted child.
- Empirical evidence generated has suggested that the consequences of guilt include both prosocial behaviors and antisocial behaviors.
- The effects of guilt on parental behavioral and emotional outcomes have long-term implication; nevertheless, to our knowledge, the cognitive appraisal processes involved in developing and maintaining the guilt responses linked to the incidence of burn injuries have not been sufficiently studied.

PURPOSE

- 1. To examine guilt and its representation in parental responses to a child's burn; 2.
- To look for the immediate consequences that guilt has had for parents.

METHODS

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents or primary caregivers in the hospital during their child's clinical visit in a regional burn center in eastern China.
- Participants were interviewed at 1-10 month post their child's burn injury.
- Data analysis: A combination of deductive and inductive content analysis.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

- How do you feel about your child's burn injury?
- What, if any, situations cause the [feelings mentioned by the interviewee]?
- Is there a time when you experience feelings more than others?
- How, if at all, do you think feelings affect your interaction with the child?
- How have other members of your family responded to the burn injury?

RESULTS

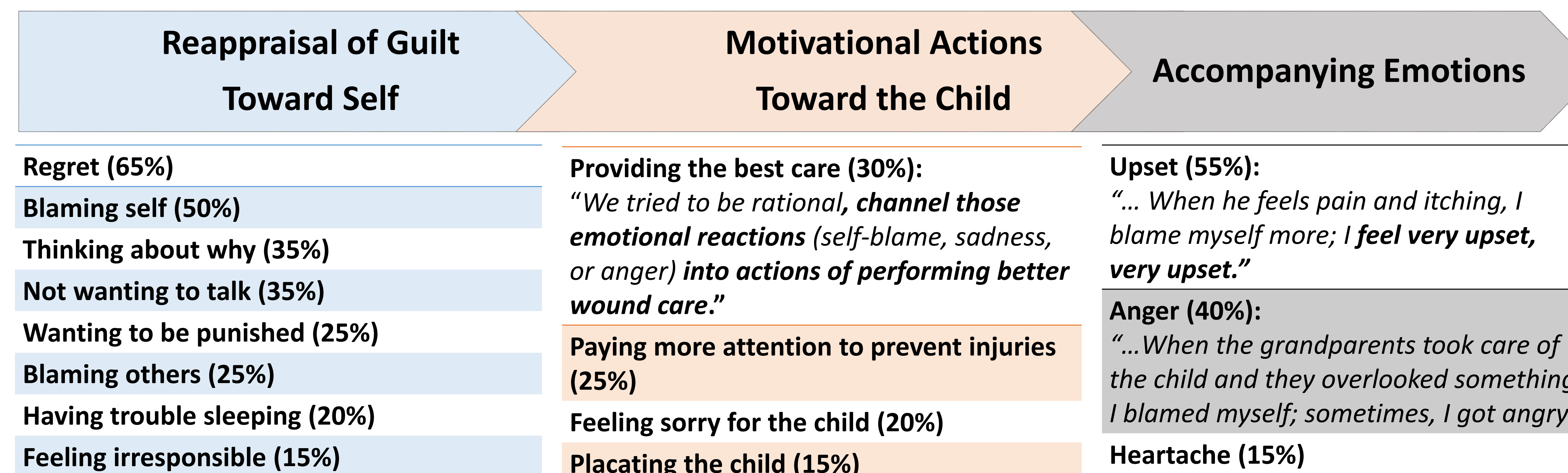
DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS

Concepts	Definition
Guilt	A feeling of having committed wrong or failed in an obligation
Regret	Feel sad, repentant, or disappointed over (something that one has done or failed to do)
Blame	Feel or declare that (someone or something) is responsible for a fault or wrong
Punish	Inflict a penalty or sanction on (someone) as retribution for an offence, especially a transgression of a legal or moral code
Be irresponsible	(of a person, attitude, or action) not showing a proper sense of responsibility
Ruminate	Think deeply about something

REPRESENTATION OF GUILT

Representation of Guilt	Verbatim Quotes
Intensity & Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Till now, my stomach still filled with guilty, not for a day or two, I guess, my lifetime." (id 10) "Especially during the early times after the scald, for about a week." (id 17)
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "For sure, the feelings of guilt, guilt about pain I caused on him, wasting his time." (id 5) "Every time he threw a tantrum, I would want to yell at him, after the yelling, I felt guilt... he was already injured, how can I do that...(sigh)" (id 14) "I felt guilt about not watching him carefully." (id 18)

CONSEQUENCE OF GUILT



APPLICABILITY TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

- Conceptual distinction on guilt
 - Guilt and its consequences, by definition, are correlated, but have distinct semantic representation
 - The cognitive appraisal process in human emotions is not clear
 - The possible reversed relationship between guilt and its consequences proposed
- The resultant outcomes
 - A combination of resultant behaviors and feelings was found to negatively contribute to 1) parental adherence to child's post-burn treatment; 2) parental willingness to access psychological support; 3) parental confidence in parenting; 4) parental perception of the burn event; 5) parental mental health
- The positive side of guilt: Parents were motivated to pay more attention in the future to prevent accidents; Parents expressed their apologies to the child; Parents wanted to do something, especially with the parent-child relationship.

DEMOGRAPHICS

	Categories	N / Mean (SD)	% / Median (IQR\$)
Caregiver	Parent	18	90
	Grandparent	2	10
Child Age (month)	-	34 (11.5)	34.5 (17.8)
Gender	Female	8	40
	Male	12	60
Number of Siblings	None	10	50
	one	10	50
Birth Order	First child	13	65
	Second child	7	35
Degree of burns	First and third degree	2	10
	Deep second degree	7	35
	Deep second and third degree	7	35
	Third degree	4	20
TBSA (%)	-	11.2 (8.7)	8.5 (10.6)
Grafting	Yes	6	30
	No	14	70
Grafting TBSA (%)	-	13.7 (10.3)	10 (10.5)
Month post-injury	-	6.4 (3.1)	7.2 (4.5)
Caregiver Age (year)	-	34 (8.6)	29.5 (9.5)
Gender	Female	15	75
	Male	5	25
Marriage	Married	19	95
	Divorced	1	5
Education	Elementary school	3	15
	Middle school	5	25
	High school or equivalent	5	25
	Associate degree	2	10
	Bachelor's degree	4	20
	Master's degree and above	1	5
Ethnicity	Han	20	100
Residency Place	Shanghai	13	55
	Others	7	35
	Working	9	45
Work Status	Stay home	6	30
	On leave	4	20
	Retired	1	5
	household income (per month in Yuan)	¥ 40,000 or over	1
¥ 20,000-39,999	3	15	
¥ 10,000-1,9999	8	40	
¥ 4,000-9,999	7	35	
Less than ¥ 3,999	1	5	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funding Sources: This work was supported by the Global Opportunity Health Fellowship; STTI Psi-at-Large Chapter; Hester McLaws Dissertation award, University of Washington, Seattle, WA