



STUDY PROTOCOL

Joint Psychometric Validation of the Shame and Release Scale (SRS) and the Fundamental Peace Scale (FP20) in Indian Organisational Contexts: A Pre-Registered Validation Protocol

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ABSTRACT

Background

The Shame and Release Scale (SRS) and the Fundamental Peace Scale (FP20) address a critical measurement gap in South Asian organisational contexts: the absence of validated instruments that simultaneously assess shame burden and fundamental wellbeing. The SRS is a 40-item instrument measuring shame load across five subscales (Inner Verdict, Others' Eyes, Exposure at Work, Inherited Shame, Shame Loop) and release capacity (Release subscale), conceptualizing shame and release as opposite poles of a single psychological continuum. The FP20 is a 20-item instrument measuring fundamental peace as an integrative positive state distinct from the absence of distress, grounded in the Yoga Vasishtha Hypnotherapy (YVH) Model. Both instruments are designed for oral administration in low-literacy populations and are being validated within the World Happiness Foundation's Shameless Institutions programme in India, which provides ecological validity through programme data waves as validation samples.

Methods

This protocol employs a longitudinal multi-wave cohort design embedded in the WHF Shameless Institutions programme. The validation sample comprises 400 participants at baseline, 350 at mid-point, and 300 at endpoint, stratified across three occupational levels: artisan communities, field staff, and head office personnel. Both instruments undergo expert review for content validity (Content Validity Index ≥ 0.78), cognitive interviews (15–20 per occupational group), pilot exploratory factor analysis ($n=150$), confirmatory factor analysis ($n=400$), and validity testing against established measures. Convergent validity is assessed using the External and Internal Shame Scale (EISS), which has demonstrated validity across multiple countries [1], the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM-18), and the Self-Compassion Scale Short Form (SCS-SF). Discriminant validity testing examines the distinctness of SRS and FP20 constructs. Measurement invariance is tested across occupational levels and gender. The oral administration protocol accommodates low-literacy artisan participants through picture-based answer cards and research partner-assisted completion.

Expected Results

We predict strong convergent validity: SRS Shame Load subscales will correlate positively with the validated EISS measure of external and internal shame [1] and TRIM-18 revenge/avoidance dimensions, and negatively with SCS-SF and FP20; SRS Release will correlate positively with SCS-SF



and FP20, and negatively with EISS. Discriminant validity testing will demonstrate that SRS and FP20 measure distinct but related constructs (HTMT $\backslash < 0.85$). Confirmatory factor analysis will support a six-factor structure for SRS (five shame load factors plus release) and a four-factor structure for FP20, with fit indices meeting recommended thresholds (CFI ≥ 0.95 , RMSEA ≤ 0.06 , SRMR ≤ 0.08). Measurement invariance will be established across occupational levels and gender. Longitudinal analysis will reveal significant reductions in shame load and increases in fundamental peace from baseline to endpoint.

Discussion

Successful validation of the SRS and FP20 will provide the first psychometrically robust instruments for simultaneously measuring shame burden and fundamental wellbeing in South Asian organisational contexts. This joint validation contributes to cross-cultural psychometrics by developing culturally adapted instruments for shame measurement in collectivistic cultures, where shame is more prominent and associated with subordination-related experiences [2]. The validated instruments will enable wellbeing measurement in South Asian organisational contexts where shame is a principal factor regulating social behavior [2], supporting evidence-based programme evaluation in the WHF Shameless Institutions initiative and similar interventions. The oral administration protocol extends measurement accessibility to low-literacy populations, addressing a critical gap in inclusive psychometric practice.

Conclusion

This pre-registered protocol establishes a rigorous validation pathway for the SRS and FP20 in Indian populations, providing validated tools for measuring shame and fundamental peace in South Asian organisational and development contexts where such instruments have been absent.

Introduction

No validated instruments currently exist that simultaneously measure shame burden and fundamental wellbeing in South Asian organisational contexts. Shame is under-recognized, under-researched, and under-theorized in health prevention, assessment, and cross-cultural contexts [5]. Despite the fact that shame is recognized as a significant factor in clinical encounters, there is a barrier between what is known through research in one culture and what is acceptable in practice in another culture [5]. Most studies examining shame measurement tools such as the Test of Self-Conscious Affect (TOSCA) have used Western samples, leaving their cross-cultural applicability in non-Western societies unvalidated [11]. There are few studies using the TOSCA in Asian languages [9]. No Arabic version of the External and Internal Shame Scale (EISS) existed prior to 2023, leaving a major gap regarding valid instruments assessing shame in Arabic [12]. No standardized scales previously existed in Japan to measure external shame [16]. Previous efforts to assess guilt and shame overpathologize and lack focus on specific populations, while existing foreign scales remain inapplicable to the Philippines due to cultural differences [7]. Some theoretical frameworks of shame have been critiqued for lacking empirical grounding [10]. Psychological literature has paid scant attention to caste-based oppression, resistance, and the psychological foundations of collective victimhood [15]. Indian breast cancer memoirs remain underexplored regarding the challenges of shame [13]. Medical training lacks sufficient guidance and attention regarding how doctors deal emotionally with shame, crises, and their own vulnerability [8]. There has been little exploration on the shame healthcare professionals experience after a mistake [14].

The measurement gap extends beyond shame to wellbeing constructs. Limited validated wellbeing measures exist for development contexts, and no instrument captures both wound (shame) and healing (release) dimensions on a single continuum. Shame is reconceptualised as a collective and relational construct shaped by colonial violence, caste hierarchies, gender norms, and diasporic complexity [3]. Shame operates through five interwoven dynamics: polarisation, hierarchy, intersectionality, weaponisation, and neuroticism [3]. Psychological outcomes such as depression, anxiety, dissociation, and Complex PTSD are situated within this wider landscape, revealing how systemic inequalities shape South Asian mental health [3]. Qualitative findings indicate that upper-caste disgust produces shame among Dalits [15]. Women in the Punjabi community in the UK face extreme psychological, mental, and physical control and find themselves trapped within communal and social codes [17]. The effects of deviant workplace behavior on employees' emotions and behaviors have been ignored [6]. A study of 824 employees in Dhaka, Bangladesh, confirmed that shame and pride management mediates between respect for others and bullying [4].

This protocol presents the joint psychometric validation of two instruments designed to address these gaps: the Shame and Release Scale (SRS) and the Fundamental Peace Scale (FP20). Both instruments will be validated within the World Happiness Foundation (WHF) Shameless Institutions programme, a multi-level intervention working with artisan communities, field staff, and organizational leaders in India. The programme creates an ideal validation context through ecological validity, multi-level sampling across occupational strata, and longitudinal data waves. Artisan communities provide low-literacy populations requiring oral administration protocols; field staff represent mid-level organizational roles; and head office leaders represent senior organizational contexts. This stratification enables measurement invariance testing across occupational levels and ensures the instruments function across diverse socioeconomic and educational contexts within Indian organizational settings.

Validating the SRS and FP20 together is methodologically superior to separate validation for three reasons. First, mutual nomological network testing allows each scale to test the other: SRS shame load should predict lower FP20 scores, while SRS release should predict higher FP20 scores, providing reciprocal construct validity evidence. Second, ecological validity is enhanced by using programme data waves as validation samples rather than artificial laboratory conditions; participants complete both instruments as part of their programme participation, ensuring naturalistic measurement conditions. Third, multi-level sampling across artisan, field staff, and head office populations provides greater generalizability than single-occupation samples and enables invariance testing across occupational strata. Fourth, theoretical complementarity positions shame as a barrier to fundamental peace: if shame represents psychological wounding and fundamental peace represents integrative wellbeing, then measuring both poles simultaneously tests whether release from shame enables the emergence of fundamental peace.

This protocol has two research aims. **Aim 1** is to establish the psychometric validity of the Shame and Release Scale (SRS) in Indian populations, including factorial validity, internal consistency, convergent validity with the External and Internal Shame Scale (EISS) [12], discriminant validity from self-compassion, and measurement invariance across occupational levels and gender. **Aim 2** is to establish the psychometric validity of the Fundamental Peace Scale (FP20) and test the predicted inverse relationship between shame load and fundamental peace, including factorial validity, internal consistency, convergent validity with self-compassion, discriminant validity from shame, and longitudinal sensitivity to change across programme waves.

Theoretical Framework — YVH Model and Fundamental Peace Construct

The Yoga Vasishtha Hypnotherapy (YVH) Model

The Fundamental Peace Scale (FP20) operationalises Fundamental Peace as defined by Gallardo and Chetri (2026) — integrated regulatory capacity under changing conditions, distinct from equanimity (affective neutrality) and from well-being (positive evaluation) [44] — and is theoretically situated within the Yoga Vasishtha Hypnotherapy (YVH) Model, a novel theoretical framework developed by Prof. Luis Miguel Gallardo [45]. The YVH Model proposes fundamental peace as an integrative positive psychological state that transcends the mere absence of distress or pathology. Unlike traditional wellbeing frameworks that conceptualize positive functioning either as the presence of pleasure and satisfaction (hedonic wellbeing) or as the realization of human potential through meaning and self-actualization (eudaimonic wellbeing), the YVH Model positions fundamental peace as a distinct construct characterized by stable attentional and emotional coherence, reduced self-referential rigidity, and compassionate self-awareness.

Defining Fundamental Peace: The Four Components of FP20

Fundamental peace, as operationalized in the FP20, comprises four interrelated components:

1. **Flexible attentional control:** The capacity to direct and sustain attention without rigid fixation or compulsive distraction, enabling adaptive engagement with internal and external experience.
2. **Emotional coherence:** The integration of emotional experience with cognitive appraisal and behavioral response, characterized by congruence rather than fragmentation or suppression.
3. **Reduced self-referential rigidity:** Diminished compulsive self-focus and loosening of fixed self-narratives, allowing for fluid self-concept and reduced defensive self-protection.
4. **Compassionate self-awareness:** Non-judgmental recognition of one's own experience coupled with kindness toward the self, distinct from self-esteem or self-enhancement.

These components converge to describe a state of inner stability and coherence that is theoretically independent of external circumstances, social validation, or goal achievement.

Contrast with Hedonic Wellbeing Frameworks

Hedonic wellbeing frameworks, exemplified by Diener's subjective wellbeing model, conceptualize positive functioning primarily in terms of life satisfaction, positive affect, and the absence of negative affect. These frameworks emphasize the experiential quality of pleasure and contentment as the core indicators of wellbeing. Fundamental peace, by contrast, is not contingent upon the presence of pleasurable states or favorable life circumstances. Rather, it describes a foundational psychological stability that may coexist with challenging emotions or difficult life conditions. Where hedonic wellbeing is inherently evaluative—assessing life against standards of satisfaction—fundamental peace is descriptive of an attentional and emotional posture that does not require positive evaluation of life circumstances.

Contrast with Eudaimonic Wellbeing: Self-Determination Theory

Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) represents the dominant eudaimonic framework, proposing that psychological wellbeing arises from the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy (self-direction and volition), competence (mastery and effectiveness), and relatedness (connection and belonging). SDT conceptualizes wellbeing as the outcome of need satisfaction and the pursuit of intrinsic goals aligned with one's authentic self.

Fundamental peace differs from SDT in both its proposed mechanism and its phenomenological focus. While SDT emphasizes the fulfillment of psychological needs through successful engagement with the social and material world, fundamental peace describes an internal state characterized by attentional flexibility and emotional integration that is not dependent on external

need satisfaction. An individual may experience low autonomy, limited competence, or compromised relatedness—and thus low eudaimonic wellbeing by SDT criteria—while still maintaining fundamental peace through flexible attention, emotional coherence, and compassionate self-awareness. Conversely, high need satisfaction does not guarantee the attentional stability and reduced self-referential rigidity that characterize fundamental peace.

Differentiation from the CPEV-20

The Contemplative Practice and Emotional Wellbeing Scale (CPEV-20), developed by Rubia and colleagues, measures outcomes associated with contemplative practices such as meditation. While both the CPEV-20 and FP20 emerge from contemplative traditions, they differ in theoretical scope and measurement focus. The CPEV-20 assesses changes in emotional wellbeing attributable to contemplative practice, including reduced negative affect and increased positive states. The FP20, by contrast, measures fundamental peace as a stable psychological construct characterized by specific attentional and emotional capacities—flexible attentional control, emotional coherence, reduced self-referential rigidity, and compassionate self-awareness—that are theoretically independent of practice engagement or affective valence. Where the CPEV-20 captures practice-related emotional outcomes, the FP20 operationalizes a foundational state of inner stability that may arise through various pathways and is not defined by the presence or absence of particular affective states.

Differentiation from the PEACE Scale

The PEACE scale developed by Zucker and colleagues measures peace as a positive emotional state, conceptualizing it within the framework of positive affect and emotional experience. This approach treats peace as one among several positive emotions or mood states that contribute to subjective wellbeing. The FP20, in contrast, does not conceptualize fundamental peace as an emotional state or affective experience. Rather, it operationalizes peace as a stable psychological structure characterized by attentional flexibility, emotional integration, loosened self-referential processing, and compassionate self-awareness. Where the PEACE scale measures the experiential quality of feeling peaceful, the FP20 measures the underlying psychological capacities that constitute fundamental peace as a trait-like construct. This distinction parallels the difference between measuring happiness as a momentary feeling versus measuring psychological resilience as a stable capacity.

The Unique Contribution of FP20

The FP20 addresses a measurement gap in wellbeing assessment, particularly for development contexts and organizational settings in collectivistic cultures. Existing wellbeing measures emphasize either subjective satisfaction (hedonic frameworks) or need fulfillment and self-actualization (eudaimonic frameworks), both of which assume relatively stable life circumstances and individualistic cultural values. In contexts characterized by economic precarity, limited autonomy, and collectivistic social structures—such as artisan communities and field staff in South Asian development programs—these frameworks may fail to capture meaningful variation in psychological functioning.

Fundamental peace, as measured by the FP20, offers a construct that is theoretically independent of external circumstances and culturally specific definitions of the good life. An individual facing significant material hardship, limited autonomy, and constrained life choices may nonetheless demonstrate high fundamental peace through flexible attentional control, emotional coherence, reduced self-referential rigidity, and compassionate self-awareness. This makes the FP20

particularly valuable for assessing psychological wellbeing in populations where traditional wellbeing measures may conflate environmental constraints with psychological functioning.

Moreover, the FP20's emphasis on attentional and emotional capacities rather than affective states or life evaluations makes it suitable for organizational contexts where wellbeing interventions aim to build psychological capacities rather than simply improve mood or satisfaction. In the context of the WHF Shameless Institutions programme, the FP20 provides a theoretically grounded measure of the positive psychological state that may emerge as shame burden is reduced—not merely the absence of shame, but the presence of a stable, coherent, and compassionate relationship with oneself and one's experience.

Theoretical Framework — Shame-Release Continuum

Shame and Release as Opposite Poles of a Single Psychological Continuum

The Shame and Release Scale (SRS) is built on a paradigm innovation in shame measurement: the conceptualization of shame and release not as independent constructs requiring separate instruments, but as opposite poles of a single psychological continuum. This theoretical architecture reflects the lived reality that healing from shame is not merely the absence of pain but the active presence of capacities for self-kindness, repair, and belonging. Measuring both wound and healing within a single instrument allows detection of growth—increased release—not only reduction in distress. The systematic review and development rationale underpinning the SRS are reported in a companion article [46].

In collectivistic cultures, shame can motivate repair and belonging alongside withdrawal responses [2] [24]. Among Malay employees in Indonesia, shame-proneness includes motivation to change the self alongside negative self-evaluation and withdrawal [26]. This dual potential—shame as both wound and catalyst for prosocial behavior—supports the theoretical rationale for a continuum structure. A single instrument capturing both poles enables organizational interventions to measure not only the reduction of shame burden but also the growth of release capacities such as forgiveness, self-compassion, and the capacity for repair.

The Wound Side: Shame Theory

Shame is theorized as a global negative evaluation of the self, distinct from guilt's focus on specific behaviors. Shame in Iran correlated negatively with adjustment and positively with maladjustment [11]. The Compass of Shame framework identifies multiple coping styles with shame experiences, including internalization, externalization through attacking others, avoidance, and adaptive coping [18]. Boys in foster care and juvenile detention facilities more often externalized shame by attacking others and less frequently attacked themselves or coped adaptively compared with community boys [18].

External shame—the perception of being negatively judged by others—is a distinct dimension. External shame in an Iranian sample had positive correlations with perfectionism and negative affect, and a negative correlation with self-compassion [19]. The Other as Shamer Scale in Pakistan demonstrated good internal consistency and test-retest reliability for measuring external shame [5]. In Japan, the External and Internal Shame Scale confirmed a two-factor model distinguishing external and internal shame dimensions [22].

Shame operates differently across cultural contexts. Study 1 indicated that shame is more prominent in Bengkulu, a collectivistic culture, than in California, an individualistic culture, based

on perceived term use frequency [2]. In Bengkulu, shame is associated with subordination events, whereas in California it is associated with guilt-like accounts [2]. Among Batak Toba people in Indonesia, significant differences in shame emotion were found between older and younger generations, with the older generation reporting higher levels [20]. Collectivistic cultures tend to rely on the positive potential of shame to support successful communal living [24].

Workplace shame is a significant yet under-discussed phenomenon. Shame is a highly prevalent emotion experienced by trainee doctors, and seeking to avoid the pain of shame can cause significant distress and maladaptive behaviors [8]. Social workers experience shame defined through negative self-judgments, negative judgments from others, and a sense of inadequacy [23]. Shame-proneness in Malay employees in Indonesia includes negative self-evaluation, withdrawal, perceiving negative evaluation from others, and motivation to change the self [26].

Structural and inherited shame operates at collective levels. Dalit women activists in Tamil Nadu are trapped within the twin structures of caste and patriarchy, both of which speak to debates about group boundaries and honor [25]. The SHARE Model repositions trauma in collectivist societies as a culturally encoded phenomenon sustained through familial dynamics and shame-bound silence [27].

The Release Side: Healing Theory

Self-compassion is theorized as an antidote to harsh self-judgment. External shame in Iran had a negative correlation with self-compassion [19]. Compassion-focused therapy emphasizes self-warmth as a counter to shame-based self-criticism. The dual nature of shame—causing psychological distress yet driving prosocial behavior and moral awareness—supports measuring shame and release on a single continuum [8].

Forgiveness and the capacity for repair are central to release from shame. In collectivistic cultures, lower levels of self-esteem and self-enhancement, as well as the propensity to perceive self as inconsistent and incremental, facilitate the positive action potential of shame, preventing self-defense reactions [24]. Moving from feelings of shame associated with loss of honor to acknowledging pain and making it central to healing processes can become a feminist response to hegemonic modes of understanding violations and seeking justice [21].

Theoretical and Practical Advantages of a Single Instrument

The SRS approach offers multiple advantages over separate shame and release scales. Theoretically, the SRS conceptualizes shame and release as opposite poles of a continuum. This is supported by evidence of shame's dual potential in collectivistic contexts to motivate both withdrawal and repair [2] [24]. Practically, measuring both poles allows detection of growth in release capacities, not only reduction in shame burden—a critical distinction for intervention research.

In collectivistic contexts, shame can motivate repair and belonging [2] [24]. A single continuum instrument can capture this full range of shame-related experience. Organizationally, workplace interventions need to measure both reduction in shame burden and growth in release capacities such as self-kindness, belonging, forgiveness, and repair [8] [23] [26].

The Six Subscales of the SRS

The SRS comprises six subscales covering personal, collective/workplace, and structural levels of shame, plus the release dimension:

A. Inner Verdict measures inferiority and harsh self-criticism—the internal dimension of shame as global negative self-evaluation [11] [19].

B. Others' Eyes measures external shame and the feeling of being judged. External shame in Iran had positive correlations with perfectionism and negative affect [19]. The Other as Shamer Scale in Pakistan demonstrated good internal consistency for measuring external shame [5].

C. Exposure at Work measures workplace-specific shame, fear of mistakes, and silence. Shame is a highly prevalent emotion experienced by trainee doctors [8]. Social workers experience shame defined through negative self-judgments and a sense of inadequacy [23]. Shame-proneness in Malay employees includes negative self-evaluation, withdrawal, and perceiving negative evaluation from others [26].

D. Inherited Shame measures structural and collective shame—"people like me" shame. Dalit women activists are trapped within the twin structures of caste and patriarchy [25]. The SHARE Model repositions trauma in collectivist societies as a culturally encoded phenomenon sustained through familial dynamics and shame-bound silence [27].

E. Shame Loop measures betrayal expectations and revenge motivations. Boys in foster care and juvenile detention facilities more often externalized shame by attacking others [18].

F. Release measures kind humor, self-kindness, belonging, forgiveness, and repair. External shame in Iran had a negative correlation with self-compassion [19]. Moving from feelings of shame to acknowledging pain and making it central to healing processes can become a response to hegemonic modes of understanding violations [21].

This multi-level structure—spanning personal shame (Inner Verdict, Others' Eyes), workplace shame (Exposure at Work), structural shame (Inherited Shame), shame-driven aggression (Shame Loop), and healing capacities (Release)—is what existing shame scales lack. The SRS is the first instrument to integrate these dimensions within a theoretically grounded continuum framework suitable for organizational and cross-cultural contexts.

Theoretical Framework — Joint Nomological Network

The Concept of a Joint Nomological Network

Validating the Shame and Release Scale (SRS) and the Fundamental Peace Scale (FP20) together allows mutual construct validation—each instrument tests the other's validity through predicted relationships. A nomological network specifies the theoretical relationships a construct should exhibit with other constructs; when these predicted relationships are empirically confirmed, they provide evidence for the validity of the construct itself. In joint validation, the SRS and FP20 serve as both criterion measures for each other and as distinct constructs whose predicted relationships with established measures (EISS, TRIM-18, SCS-SF) provide convergent and discriminant validity evidence.

This approach is particularly powerful in the context of the WHF Shameless Institutions programme, where both shame burden and fundamental peace are theorized as central to psychological wellbeing in organizational settings. Testing the predicted inverse relationship between SRS Shame Load and FP20, alongside their distinct patterns of association with self-compassion, external shame, and revenge motivations, provides simultaneous evidence for both instruments' construct validity.

The Full Nomological Network: Predicted Relationships

SRS Shame Load (Subscales A+B+C+D+E) Predictions

Positive correlation with EISS (convergent validity for shame). The External and Internal Shame Scale measures both external shame (perception of being negatively judged by others) and internal shame (global negative self-evaluation). SRS Shame Load subscales—Inner Verdict (A), Others' Eyes (B), Exposure at Work (C), Inherited Shame (D), and Shame Loop (E)—operationalize these same dimensions across personal, workplace, and structural levels. The Portuguese version of the Internalized Shame Scale demonstrated convergent validity with measures of shame and social comparison [29]. The Arabic EISS total scores strongly correlated with the external shame measure "other as shamer" [12]. We predict that SRS Shame Load will demonstrate strong convergent validity with EISS, as both instruments measure the core shame construct.

Positive correlation with TRIM-18 revenge and avoidance subscales (shame loop validation). The Shame Loop subscale (E) measures betrayal expectations and revenge motivations—the externalization of shame through attacking others. The Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM-18) measures revenge and avoidance motivations following interpersonal transgressions. We predict that SRS Shame Load, particularly the Shame Loop subscale, will correlate positively with TRIM-18 revenge and avoidance, as shame-driven aggression and withdrawal represent overlapping constructs.

Negative correlation with SCS-SF (shame undermines self-compassion). The Shame Reactions factor demonstrated discriminant validity with the Self-Compassion Scale via a strong negative correlation [28]. Self-compassion—characterized by self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness—is theoretically incompatible with the harsh self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification that characterize shame. We predict that SRS Shame Load will correlate negatively with the Self-Compassion Scale Short Form, as shame burden undermines the capacity for self-compassion.

Negative correlation with FP20 (shame erodes fundamental peace). Fundamental peace, characterized by flexible attentional control, emotional coherence, reduced self-referential rigidity, and compassionate self-awareness, is theoretically incompatible with the rigid self-focus, emotional fragmentation, and harsh self-judgment that define shame. We predict that SRS Shame Load will correlate negatively with FP20, as shame burden erodes the attentional flexibility and emotional integration that constitute fundamental peace.

SRS Release (Subscale F) Predictions

Negative correlation with EISS (release reduces shame). The Release subscale measures kind humor, self-kindness, belonging, forgiveness, and repair—capacities that represent the opposite pole of the shame-release continuum. We predict that SRS Release will correlate negatively with EISS, as the growth of release capacities reduces both external and internal shame.

Negative correlation with TRIM-18 (release reduces revenge motivations). Release capacities—particularly forgiveness and the capacity for repair—are theoretically incompatible with revenge and avoidance motivations. The Seeking Support factor correlated positively with the Self-Compassion Scale and the No Shame factor [28]. We predict that SRS Release will correlate negatively with TRIM-18 revenge and avoidance subscales, as release capacities reduce shame-driven aggression and withdrawal.

Positive correlation with SCS-SF (release overlaps with self-compassion but is distinct). The Release subscale includes self-kindness as one component, overlapping conceptually with self-compassion. The Seeking Support factor correlated with the Self-Compassion Scale [28]. The Self-Compassion factor correlated with the Self-Compassion Scale [28]. However, Release also

includes belonging, forgiveness, and repair—capacities not measured by the Self-Compassion Scale. We predict that SRS Release will correlate positively with SCS-SF at a moderate to strong level, but below the threshold for redundancy ($r < 0.85$), demonstrating convergent validity while maintaining discriminant validity.

Positive correlation with FP20 (release supports fundamental peace). Release capacities—self-kindness, belonging, forgiveness, and repair—support the attentional flexibility, emotional coherence, and compassionate self-awareness that characterize fundamental peace. We predict that SRS Release will correlate positively with FP20, as release capacities facilitate the stable psychological structure that constitutes fundamental peace.

FP20 Predictions

Positive correlation with SCS-SF (compassionate self-awareness component). The compassionate self-awareness component of FP20 overlaps conceptually with self-compassion, particularly the mindfulness and self-kindness dimensions. We predict that FP20 will correlate positively with SCS-SF, as both instruments measure aspects of compassionate self-awareness.

Negative correlation with EISS (fundamental peace incompatible with shame). Fundamental peace, characterized by flexible attentional control and reduced self-referential rigidity, is theoretically incompatible with the rigid self-focus and harsh self-judgment that define shame. We predict that FP20 will correlate negatively with EISS, as fundamental peace represents a psychological state in which shame is diminished.

Negative correlation with TRIM-18 (emotional coherence incompatible with revenge). The emotional coherence component of FP20—integration of emotional experience with cognitive appraisal and behavioral response—is theoretically incompatible with the fragmentation and dysregulation that drive revenge and avoidance motivations. We predict that FP20 will correlate negatively with TRIM-18, as fundamental peace reduces shame-driven aggression and withdrawal.

Moderate negative correlation with SRS Shame Load (discriminant validity). While FP20 and SRS Shame Load are theoretically related as opposite poles of wellbeing, they are distinct constructs. FP20 measures a stable psychological structure characterized by attentional and emotional capacities; SRS Shame Load measures the burden of shame across personal, workplace, and structural levels. We predict a moderate negative correlation, demonstrating that the constructs are related but not redundant.

Moderate positive correlation with SRS Release (convergent but distinct). FP20 and SRS Release both measure positive psychological capacities, but they are conceptually distinct. Release measures the growth of specific capacities (self-kindness, belonging, forgiveness, repair); fundamental peace measures a stable psychological structure (attentional flexibility, emotional coherence, reduced self-referential rigidity, compassionate self-awareness). We predict a moderate positive correlation, demonstrating convergent validity while maintaining discriminant validity.

Formal Hypotheses

H1: SRS Shame Load will correlate positively with EISS ($r \geq 0.50$).

H2: SRS Shame Load will correlate positively with TRIM-18 revenge subscale ($r \geq 0.40$).

H3: SRS Shame Load will correlate negatively with SCS-SF ($r \leq -0.40$).

H4: SRS Shame Load will correlate negatively with FP20 ($r \leq -0.45$).

H5: SRS Release will correlate negatively with EISS ($r \leq -0.35$).

H6: SRS Release will correlate negatively with TRIM-18 revenge subscale ($r \leq -0.30$).

H7: SRS Release will correlate positively with SCS-SF ($r \geq 0.50$, but < 0.85 for discriminant validity).

H8: SRS Release will correlate positively with FP20 ($r \geq 0.45$).

H9: FP20 will correlate positively with SCS-SF ($r \geq 0.40$).

H10: FP20 will correlate negatively with EISS ($r \leq -0.35$).

H11: FP20 will correlate negatively with TRIM-18 revenge subscale ($r \leq -0.30$).

H12: SRS Shame Load and FP20 will show discriminant validity (HTMT < 0.85).

The Logic of Joint Validation

Testing these relationships simultaneously strengthens both instruments' validity through multiple mechanisms. First, convergent validity is established when each instrument correlates as predicted with established measures (EISS, TRIM-18, SCS-SF). The Arabic EISS demonstrated convergent validity through significant positive correlations with stigmatization dimensions, stress, depression, and anxiety [12]. The Shame Reactions factor yielded convergent validity with Compass of Shame subscales [28]. If SRS Shame Load correlates strongly with EISS and TRIM-18, and negatively with SCS-SF, this provides evidence that SRS Shame Load measures the shame construct as theorized.

Second, discriminant validity is established when each instrument shows distinct patterns of association. The Shame Reactions factor demonstrated discriminant validity with the Self-Compassion Scale via a strong negative correlation [28]. If SRS Shame Load and FP20 correlate moderately but not strongly (HTMT < 0.85), this provides evidence that they measure related but distinct constructs—shame burden versus fundamental peace.

Third, criterion validity is established when the predicted inverse relationship between SRS Shame Load and FP20 is confirmed. This relationship is central to the theoretical rationale for the WHF Shameless Institutions programme: that reducing shame burden facilitates the emergence of fundamental peace. If the predicted negative correlation is observed, it provides evidence that both instruments measure constructs that are theoretically and empirically related as opposite poles of wellbeing.

Fourth, the multi-level structure of the SRS—spanning personal shame (Inner Verdict, Others' Eyes), workplace shame (Exposure at Work), structural shame (Inherited Shame), and shame-driven aggression (Shame Loop)—allows testing of differential predictions. If the Shame Loop subscale shows stronger associations with TRIM-18 revenge than other SRS subscales, this provides evidence for the subscale's specific validity. If the Release subscale shows a distinct pattern of associations (negative with EISS and TRIM-18, positive with SCS-SF and FP20), this provides evidence for the continuum structure of the SRS.

Finally, the ecological validity of the WHF Shameless Institutions programme data strengthens the joint validation. Data are collected from three occupational levels (artisan communities, field staff, head office) across three waves (baseline, mid-point, end-point), providing a naturalistic context in which shame burden and fundamental peace are expected to vary meaningfully. If the predicted pattern of relationships holds across occupational levels and over time, this provides evidence that both instruments measure constructs that are stable, meaningful, and relevant to organizational wellbeing in South Asian contexts.

In summary, if the predicted nomological network is confirmed—SRS Shame Load correlating positively with EISS and TRIM-18, negatively with SCS-SF and FP20; SRS Release correlating negatively with EISS and TRIM-18, positively with SCS-SF and FP20; and FP20 correlating positively with SCS-SF, negatively with EISS and TRIM-18—this provides convergent evidence for both SRS and FP20 as valid constructs. Each instrument's validity is tested not only against established measures but also against the other, creating a mutually reinforcing validation structure that is stronger than validating either instrument in isolation.

Instruments — SRS

Overview

The Shame and Release Scale (SRS) is a 40-item instrument (SRS-40) designed to measure shame and release across six subscales using a 5-point frequency scale. A 12-item short form (SRS-12) provides a brief version suitable for time-constrained settings. The SRS operationalizes the shame-release continuum framework, capturing both the burden of shame (subscales A-E) and the capacity for release (subscale F) within a single instrument.

Full Item Listing

The following table presents all 40 items of the SRS-40, organized by subscale. Items marked with □ are included in the SRS-12 short form.

Item Number	Item Text	Subscale
1	I feel inferior to others	A: Inner Verdict
2 ★	I am harder on myself than I am on other people	A: Inner Verdict
3	I think I am no good	A: Inner Verdict
4	I feel small or insignificant	A: Inner Verdict
5	I feel like I am never good enough	A: Inner Verdict
6 ★	I criticize myself harshly	A: Inner Verdict
7	I feel worthless	A: Inner Verdict
8	I feel judged by others	B: Others' Eyes
9	I feel others look down on me	B: Others' Eyes
10	I feel others see me as inferior	B: Others' Eyes
11 ★	I feel others think badly of me	B: Others' Eyes
12	I feel watched and evaluated by others	B: Others' Eyes
13	I feel others see my flaws	B: Others' Eyes
14	I am afraid of making mistakes at work	C: Exposure at Work
15 ★	I feel I must hide my true self at work	C: Exposure at Work
16	I feel exposed when I speak up at work	C: Exposure at Work
17	I stay silent at work to avoid judgment	C: Exposure at Work
18 ★	I feel shame about my work performance	C: Exposure at Work
19	I feel I do not belong at work	C: Exposure at Work
20	I feel I will be found out as inadequate at work	C: Exposure at Work
21 ★	I feel shame about where I come from	D: Inherited Shame
22	I feel shame about my family background	D: Inherited Shame
23	I feel people like me are looked down upon	D: Inherited Shame
24 ★	I carry shame that is not mine alone	D: Inherited Shame
25	I feel shame about my community	D: Inherited Shame
26	I feel shame about my social position	D: Inherited Shame
27	I expect others to betray me	E: Shame Loop
28 ★	I feel others will let me down	E: Shame Loop
29	I feel others cannot be trusted	E: Shame Loop
30	I want to get back at people who hurt me	E: Shame Loop
31 ★	I want revenge when I am wronged	E: Shame Loop
32	I want to make others feel the pain they caused me	E: Shame Loop
33 ★	I can laugh at myself with kindness	F: Release
34	I can forgive myself for my mistakes	F: Release
35 ★	I treat myself with compassion	F: Release

Item Number	Item Text	Subscale
36	I feel I belong	F: Release
37	I can repair relationships after conflict	F: Release
38 ★	I can forgive others who have hurt me	F: Release
39	I can let go of resentment	F: Release
40	I feel connected to others	F: Release

Subscale structure:

> • **Subscale A: Inner Verdict** — 7 items (2 in SRS-12): measures inferiority and harsh self-criticism

>

> • **Subscale B: Others' Eyes** — 6 items (1 in SRS-12): measures external shame and the feeling of being judged

>

> • **Subscale C: Exposure at Work** — 7 items (2 in SRS-12): measures workplace-specific shame, fear of mistakes, and silence

>

> • **Subscale D: Inherited Shame** — 6 items (2 in SRS-12): measures structural and collective shame

>

> • **Subscale E: Shame Loop** — 6 items (2 in SRS-12): measures betrayal expectations (items 27-29) and revenge motivations (items 30-32)

>

> • **Subscale F: Release** — 8 items (3 in SRS-12): measures kind humor, self-kindness, belonging, forgiveness, and repair

Scoring Instructions

Response scale: Each item is rated on a 5-point frequency scale:

> • 0 = Never

>

> • 1 = Rarely

>

> • 2 = Sometimes

>

> • 3 = Often

>

> • 4 = Almost Always

Time frame: Respondents are instructed: "Think about the last four weeks."

Subscale scores: Calculate the mean of all items within each subscale. Each subscale score ranges from 0 to 4.

Composite scores:

> • **Shame Load** = mean of subscales A, B, C, D, and E (range 0–4)

>

> • **Shame Loop** = subscale E score (range 0–4)

>

> • **Release** = subscale F score (range 0–4)

Total score for SRS-40: Sum all 40 items. Total range: 0–160.

Important: Release (subscale F) is scored separately and is not reverse-coded into the shame total. This preserves the theoretical distinction between shame burden and release capacity, allowing detection of growth in release alongside reduction in shame.

SRS-12 as Brief Version

The SRS-12 comprises 12 items (marked □ in the table above) selected using Item Response Theory (IRT) graded response modeling. IRT analysis identified items that maximize information across the shame-release continuum while maintaining representation from all six subscales. The 12 items can be administered as a standalone brief instrument or extracted from SRS-40 data for rapid screening in time-constrained settings. Administration time for SRS-12 is approximately 4 minutes, compared with 12–15 minutes for the full SRS-40.

Oral Administration Protocol

The SRS is designed for oral administration to accommodate low-literacy artisan populations. The protocol uses picture-based answer cards showing five circles representing the frequency scale:

> • Empty circle = Never (0)

>

> • Small filled circle = Rarely (1)

>

> • Medium filled circle = Sometimes (2)

>

> • Large filled circle = Often (3)

>

> • Full circle = Almost Always (4)

Administration procedure: 1. A trained research partner reads each item aloud in Hindi. 2. The participant points to the circle that matches their experience. 3. The research partner records the response.

This oral protocol ensures accessibility for participants with limited literacy while maintaining standardized administration. The visual answer cards provide a concrete reference that reduces cognitive load and supports consistent interpretation of the frequency scale across participants.

Hindi Translation Plan

The SRS will undergo rigorous forward-backward translation to ensure linguistic and cultural equivalence:

1. **Forward translation:** Three independent bilingual translators (fluent in English and Hindi) will independently translate all 40 items from English to Hindi.
2. **Expert panel review:** A panel of bilingual experts in psychology and Hindi language will review the three forward translations, resolve discrepancies, and produce a consensus Hindi version.
3. **Backward translation:** A fourth independent translator (blind to the original English version) will translate the consensus Hindi version back into English.
4. **Comparison and refinement:** The research team will compare the back-translation with the original English version, identify discrepancies, and refine the Hindi version as needed.
5. **Cognitive interviews:** The Hindi version will be tested through cognitive interviews with 15–20 participants from each occupational group (artisans, field staff, head office). Participants will be asked to "think aloud" as they respond to items, explaining their interpretation of each item. Thematic analysis of these interviews will identify items requiring further refinement.
6. **Cultural equivalence review:** The expert panel will review cognitive interview findings to ensure that translated items capture the intended construct meaning within the cultural context, not merely linguistic equivalence. Particular attention will be paid to culturally specific expressions of shame, workplace dynamics, and collective identity.

This translation process prioritizes cultural equivalence over literal translation, ensuring that the Hindi SRS measures the same constructs as the English version while respecting the cultural context in which shame and release are experienced.

Instruments — FP20

Overview

The Fundamental Peace Scale (FP20) is a 20-item instrument measuring fundamental peace across four components, with five items per component. The instrument uses a 5-point Likert-type agreement scale. The validation protocol will test both 5-point and 7-point response formats through cognitive interviews to determine which scale provides optimal psychometric performance and cognitive accessibility for the target population.

Four Components and Item Structure

The FP20 operationalizes fundamental peace through four theoretically derived components:

Component 1: Flexible Attentional Control (items 1-5) This component measures the capacity to direct and sustain attention without rigid fixation or compulsive distraction, enabling adaptive engagement with internal and external experience.

Component 2: Emotional Coherence (items 6-10) This component assesses the integration of emotional experience with cognitive appraisal and behavioral response, characterized by congruence rather than fragmentation or suppression.

Component 3: Reduced Self-Referential Rigidity (items 11-15) This component captures diminished compulsive self-focus and loosening of fixed self-narratives, allowing for fluid self-concept and reduced defensive self-protection.

Component 4: Compassionate Self-Awareness (items 16-20) This component measures non-judgmental recognition of one's own experience coupled with kindness toward the self, distinct from self-esteem or self-enhancement.

The complete 20-item instrument is published and available at imgallardo.org/fp20. For the purposes of this protocol paper, the four-component structure is described here; the full item set is referenced from the published source to respect copyright and maintain the integrity of the published instrument.

Scoring Instructions

Response Scale: 5-point agreement scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Component Scores: Each of the four components is scored as the mean of its five items, yielding a component score ranging from 1 to 5. Higher component scores indicate greater capacity in that domain of fundamental peace.

Total FP20 Score: The total FP20 score may be calculated either as the mean of all 20 items (range 1–5) or as the sum of all 20 items (range 20–100). Higher scores indicate greater fundamental peace. For the purposes of this validation study, the mean score will be used as the primary metric to facilitate interpretation and comparison with other 5-point scales in the nomological network.

Oral Administration Protocol

The FP20 will be administered orally to accommodate low-literacy participants in artisan communities, following the same protocol established for the SRS. A trained research partner will read each item aloud in Hindi. Participants will respond by pointing to their chosen response on a picture-based answer card displaying the five response options with visual anchors (e.g., facial expressions or symbolic representations corresponding to the five levels of agreement). This method has been validated in low-literacy populations and reduces the cognitive burden of reading while preserving response validity.

Administration Time: Approximately 6–8 minutes per participant.

Comparison to CPEV-20

The Contemplative Practice and Emotional Wellbeing Scale (CPEV-20), developed by Rubia and colleagues, measures outcomes associated with contemplative practices such as meditation. While both the CPEV-20 and FP20 emerge from contemplative traditions, they differ in theoretical scope and measurement focus.

Theoretical Differentiation: The CPEV-20 assesses changes in emotional wellbeing attributable to contemplative practice, including reduced negative affect and increased positive states. The FP20, by contrast, measures fundamental peace as a stable psychological construct characterized by specific attentional and emotional capacities—flexible attentional control, emotional coherence, reduced self-referential rigidity, and compassionate self-awareness—that are theoretically independent of practice engagement or affective valence. Where the CPEV-20 captures practice-related emotional outcomes, the FP20 operationalizes a foundational state of inner stability that may arise through various pathways and is not defined by the presence or absence of particular affective states.

Empirical Differentiation: The validation protocol will test discriminant validity between the FP20 and CPEV-20 if both instruments are administered. The expectation is that the two instruments will show moderate positive correlation (reflecting shared variance in contemplative-related constructs) but will demonstrate distinct factor structures and differential patterns of association with criterion variables. Specifically, the FP20 is expected to predict psychological functioning independently of contemplative practice engagement, whereas the CPEV-20 is expected to be more strongly associated with practice frequency and duration.

Hindi Translation

The FP20 will undergo forward-backward translation into Hindi following the same rigorous protocol established for the SRS. Three independent bilingual translators will produce forward translations from English to Hindi. A reconciliation panel will synthesize these into a single Hindi version. Two independent translators will then back-translate the Hindi version into English. Discrepancies between the original English and back-translated versions will be resolved through expert consensus. Cognitive interviews with 15–20 participants per occupational group (artisan, field staff, head office) will assess comprehension, cultural appropriateness, and response process validity. Items flagged for ambiguity or cultural misalignment will be revised and re-tested until semantic and conceptual equivalence is achieved.

Instruments — Comparison Measures

Overview

Four established instruments will be used to test the nomological network predictions outlined in the previous section: the External and Internal Shame Scale (EISS) for convergent validity of SRS Shame Load, the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM-18) for convergent validity of the Shame Loop subscale, the Self-Compassion Scale Short Form (SCS-SF) for convergent validity of SRS Release and FP20, and cross-validation between the SRS and FP20 themselves. These comparison measures provide the empirical basis for testing hypotheses H1 through H12, establishing convergent validity (when instruments measuring related constructs correlate as predicted), discriminant validity (when instruments measuring distinct constructs show moderate but not redundant correlations), and criterion validity (when one instrument predicts theoretically meaningful outcomes on another).

EISS — External and Internal Shame Scale

The External and Internal Shame Scale (EISS) measures both external shame—the perception of being negatively judged, excluded, or seen as inferior by others—and internal shame—global negative self-evaluation characterized by self-criticism and feelings of emptiness. The EISS will be used to establish convergent validity for SRS Shame Load (subscales A through E), as both instruments operationalize the core shame construct across personal, relational, and structural levels.

The Portuguese version of the Internalized Shame Scale demonstrated convergent validity with measures of shame and social comparison. The Arabic EISS total scores strongly correlated with the external shame measure "other as shamer". These validation studies demonstrate that the EISS captures both the external dimension of shame (perception of others' negative judgments) and the internal dimension (harsh self-evaluation), making it an appropriate criterion measure for testing whether SRS Shame Load measures the same underlying construct.

The EISS has been validated in multiple cultural contexts including Portuguese, Japanese, and Arabic populations, providing evidence for its cross-cultural applicability. However, Hindi version availability has not been confirmed in the literature reviewed. If a validated Hindi version is unavailable, the EISS will be translated using the same forward-backward translation protocol as the SRS, with three independent translators and cognitive interviews to ensure semantic and conceptual equivalence.

TRIM-18 — Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations

The Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM-18) measures revenge motivations and avoidance motivations following interpersonal transgressions. The TRIM-18 will be used to establish convergent validity for the Shame Loop subscale (E) of the SRS, which measures betrayal expectations and revenge motivations—the externalization of shame through attacking others or withdrawing from relationships.

The TRIM-18 is widely used in forgiveness research and has demonstrated reliability and validity across multiple studies. Its revenge subscale measures the desire to seek revenge or see harm come to a transgressor; its avoidance subscale measures the motivation to avoid or withdraw from the transgressor. These constructs overlap conceptually with the Shame Loop subscale, which operationalizes shame-driven aggression and withdrawal as responses to perceived betrayal or exposure.

Hindi version availability for the TRIM-18 has not been confirmed in the literature reviewed. If unavailable, the TRIM-18 will be translated using the same protocol as the SRS and EISS.

SCS-SF — Self-Compassion Scale Short Form

The Self-Compassion Scale Short Form (SCS-SF) measures self-compassion across six dimensions: self-kindness versus self-judgment, common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification. The SCS-SF will be used to establish convergent validity for both SRS Release (subscale F) and FP20 Component 4 (Compassionate Self-Awareness), as self-compassion represents a core capacity that overlaps conceptually with both release and fundamental peace.

The Shame Reactions factor demonstrated discriminant validity with the Self-Compassion Scale via a strong negative correlation. The Seeking Support factor correlated positively with the Self-Compassion Scale and the No Shame factor. The Self-Compassion factor correlated with the Self-Compassion Scale. These findings demonstrate that self-compassion is theoretically and empirically distinct from shame, making the SCS-SF an appropriate criterion measure for testing whether SRS Release and FP20 measure capacities that support self-compassion.

The SCS-SF has been extensively validated across cultures, providing evidence for its cross-cultural applicability. However, Hindi version availability has not been confirmed in the literature reviewed. If unavailable, the SCS-SF will be translated using the same protocol as the other comparison measures.

Cross-Instrument Validation

The FP20 and SRS will serve as criterion measures for each other, providing mutual construct validation. The FP20 will be used to establish discriminant validity for SRS Shame Load: the two instruments should correlate negatively (as shame burden erodes fundamental peace), but the correlation should be moderate rather than strong ($HTMT < 0.85$), demonstrating that they measure related but distinct constructs. The FP20 will also be used to establish convergent validity for SRS Release: the two instruments should correlate positively (as release capacities support

fundamental peace), but again the correlation should be below the threshold for redundancy, demonstrating that release and fundamental peace are overlapping but distinct constructs.

Conversely, the SRS will be used to establish criterion validity for the FP20. The predicted negative correlation between SRS Shame Load and FP20 provides evidence that fundamental peace is undermined by shame burden, as theorized. The predicted positive correlation between SRS Release and FP20 provides evidence that fundamental peace is supported by release capacities. These cross-instrument predictions test the central theoretical claim of the WHF Shameless Institutions programme: that reducing shame burden and cultivating release capacities facilitate the emergence of fundamental peace.

Administration Strategy

To reduce participant burden while maintaining adequate statistical power for validity testing, comparison measures (EISS, TRIM-18, SCS-SF) will be administered to a random 50% subsample at each wave. All participants will receive the SRS and FP20 at all three waves (baseline, mid-point, end-point), ensuring complete data for the primary validation analyses. Half of the participants, randomly selected, will also receive the three comparison measures at each wave.

This strategy provides adequate sample size for validity testing ($n \geq 200$ per comparison, assuming 400 participants at baseline and 50% retention) while keeping interview length manageable for artisan populations who may have limited literacy and limited time available for research participation. The random assignment ensures that the subsample receiving comparison measures is representative of the full sample, allowing generalization of validity findings to the entire cohort.

Methods — Design

Overall Design

This validation study employs a longitudinal multi-wave cohort design embedded within the WHF Shameless Institutions programme in India. The design provides ecologically valid validation samples by using real programme data collection waves as validation time points, ensuring that psychometric testing occurs within the authentic organizational context for which the instruments are intended. This approach allows simultaneous assessment of measurement properties and programme-related change, maximizing the practical utility of the validation data while maintaining scientific rigor.

Three Data Collection Waves

Baseline (November 2026): All 400 participants will receive the SRS-40, FP20, and demographic measures. A randomly selected 50% subsample ($n = 200$) will additionally receive comparison measures: the External and Internal Shame Scale (EISS), the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM-18), and the Self-Compassion Scale Short Form (SCS-SF). This subsample strategy reduces participant burden while maintaining adequate statistical power for validity testing.

Mid-point (March 2027): All measures will be repeated with an expected sample of 350 participants, reflecting anticipated 12.5% attrition from baseline. The same 50% subsample that received comparison measures at baseline will receive them again at mid-point, ensuring within-participant longitudinal data for criterion validity testing.

End-point (September 2027): All measures will be repeated with an expected sample of 300 participants, reflecting anticipated 25% total attrition from baseline. This three-wave design

provides sufficient temporal separation to detect meaningful change in shame burden and fundamental peace while remaining feasible within the programme timeline.

Three Occupational Levels as Stratification Clusters

The sample will be stratified across three occupational levels within the WHF Shameless Institutions programme, creating a cluster design that allows testing of measurement invariance across occupational strata and provides ecological validity by capturing the real organizational hierarchy.

Artisan communities (n ≈ 200 at baseline): Low-literacy populations engaged in traditional craft production. All measures will be administered orally in Hindi using trained research partners and picture-based answer cards. This group represents the primary target population for the SRS and FP20, as populations in poverty in India experience structural shame [31], and artisan communities represent a key group facing such challenges.

Field staff (n ≈ 100 at baseline): Mid-level education employees who serve as liaisons between artisan communities and head office. Mixed oral and written administration protocols will be used depending on individual literacy levels, with all measures available in Hindi. This group occupies an intermediate position in the organizational hierarchy and may experience shame related to both upward and downward social comparisons.

Head office (n ≈ 100 at baseline): Higher education employees in administrative and management roles. Written self-administration is possible for this group, with measures available in English or Hindi according to participant preference. This group provides a comparison sample with higher literacy and socioeconomic status, allowing examination of whether shame constructs operate similarly across educational and occupational levels.

This three-level cluster design allows testing of configural, metric, and scalar measurement invariance across occupational strata, addressing the critical question of whether the SRS and FP20 measure the same constructs in the same way across diverse populations within a single organizational context.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants must meet the following criteria:

- > • Age 18 years or older
- >
- > • Currently participating in the WHF Shameless Institutions programme
- >
- > • Able to provide informed consent (oral or written)
- >
- > • Sufficient Hindi comprehension for oral administration

Exclusion Criteria

Participants will be excluded if they meet any of the following criteria:

- > • Active psychotic symptoms or severe mental illness requiring immediate treatment
- >

> • Cognitive impairment preventing informed consent

>

> • Participation in fewer than 2 of the 3 programme waves (for longitudinal analyses)

The exclusion criteria are designed to ensure participant safety and data quality while maintaining inclusivity. Participants excluded due to severe mental illness will be referred to appropriate clinical services.

Oral Administration Protocol for Low-Literacy Artisans

The oral administration protocol is designed to accommodate low-literacy artisan populations, drawing on methods adapted from prior research with low-literacy populations in India [30]. Trained research partners, bilingual in Hindi and English and familiar with the WHF programme context, will administer all measures orally to artisan participants.

Picture-based answer cards will be used for both the SRS frequency scale (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always) and the FP20 agreement scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree). Each response option will be represented by a visual symbol (e.g., circles of increasing size for frequency; facial expressions or symbolic representations for agreement) to provide a concrete reference that reduces cognitive load and supports consistent interpretation across participants.

The research partner will read each item aloud in Hindi, ensuring that the participant understands the item before responding. The participant will point to their chosen response on the answer card, and the research partner will record the response. This approach, following methods used in prior research with low-literacy populations in India [30], eliminates the barrier of reading.

Administration will occur in a private, comfortable setting to minimize social desirability bias and ensure confidentiality. Breaks will be offered every 10–15 minutes to prevent fatigue, particularly for artisan participants who may not be accustomed to extended interview sessions. Total administration time for the full battery (SRS-40, FP20, and comparison measures for the subsample) is estimated at 25–35 minutes.

Research Consent Procedure

The consent procedure is designed to respect diverse literacy levels and cultural norms while ensuring voluntary, informed participation.

Oral consent for low-literacy participants: Artisan participants with limited literacy will provide oral consent, which will be audio-recorded with the participant's permission. The research partner will read the consent form aloud, explaining the study purpose, voluntary nature of participation, right to withdraw at any time without penalty, data confidentiality procedures, potential for distress during the interview, and the referral pathway available if distress occurs. The participant will verbally confirm their understanding and agreement, and this confirmation will be recorded. Oral consent will be documented by the research partner's signature and the participant's thumbprint on the consent form.

Written consent for literate participants: Field staff and head office participants will provide written consent after reading the consent form independently. The research partner will be available to answer questions and clarify any points of confusion.

Separate consent for data sharing and publication: All participants will be asked to provide separate consent for the use of their anonymized data in research publications and for sharing of

anonymized data with other researchers. This consent is optional and does not affect participation in the study.

Community-level consent from artisan community leaders: In addition to individual informed consent, community-level consent will be sought from artisan community leaders before recruitment begins. This approach respects collective decision-making norms in artisan communities and ensures that the research is welcomed and understood at the community level, not only by individual participants.

Methods — Sample Size

Overview

Sample size requirements for this validation study are driven by three distinct validation needs: (a) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for both the SRS-40 and FP20 instruments, (b) measurement invariance testing across three occupational levels, and (c) Item Response Theory (IRT) analysis for SRS-12 item selection. The planned baseline sample of $n = 400$ is designed to exceed minimum requirements for all three analytic approaches while providing adequate power to detect the moderate effect sizes expected in the nomological network testing.

CFA Sample Size Requirements

For SRS-40 (40 items, 6 factors): A minimum sample size of $n = 300$ is required based on the 10:1 subject-to-item ratio commonly recommended for CFA with complex factor structures. However, a sample of $n = 400$ is recommended to provide stable parameter estimates and adequate power for model comparison, particularly when testing alternative models such as the bifactor structure specified in the analysis plan. The 10:1 ratio represents a conservative guideline that ensures sufficient data for reliable estimation of factor loadings, error variances, and factor correlations in the six-factor model.

For FP20 (20 items, 4 factors): A minimum sample size of $n = 200$ is required based on the 10:1 subject-to-item ratio. The planned sample of $n = 400$ provides excellent power for CFA of the FP20, exceeding the minimum requirement by a factor of two and ensuring stable parameter estimates even in the presence of modest model misspecification. This larger sample also supports robust testing of the four-component structure and provides adequate power for nested model comparisons.

Measurement Invariance Requirements

Testing configural, metric, and scalar invariance across three occupational levels requires adequate sample sizes per group to ensure sufficient power for detecting meaningful differences in model fit indices. The planned sample distribution is as follows: artisans $n \approx 200$, field staff $n \approx 100$, head office $n \approx 100$. The total baseline sample of $n = 400$ exceeds the minimum requirement for the artisan group, which represents the primary target population. The field staff and head office groups meet the minimum threshold of $n = 100$, which is sufficient for invariance testing when the larger artisan sample provides a stable reference group. This distribution reflects the real organizational structure of the WHF Shameless Institutions programme and ensures that the largest sample is drawn from the population for whom the instruments are primarily intended.

IRT Analysis Requirements

The graded response model for SRS-12 item selection requires adequate sample size to provide sufficient precision for item parameter estimation. The planned baseline sample of $n = 400$ exceeds this minimum by a factor of two, ensuring stable estimation of item discrimination and threshold parameters across the five response categories. This sample size supports robust item selection based on item information functions and allows for cross-validation of the selected items within the same dataset.

Effect Size Assumptions

Factor loadings: Moderate to strong factor loadings ($\lambda \geq 0.45$) are expected based on the theoretical coherence of the SRS and FP20 constructs. These assumptions are consistent with validation studies of shame instruments in cross-cultural contexts [32] [1].

Cross-instrument correlations: Moderate correlations ($r \geq 0.35$) are expected between SRS shame load and EISS, between SRS Release and SCS-SF, and between FP20 and SCS-SF, based on the predicted nomological network. These effect size assumptions are consistent with convergent validity patterns observed in prior validation studies of shame measures [33].

Longitudinal change: Small to moderate effect sizes ($d = 0.30-0.50$) are expected for shame reduction and FP20 increase over the 9-month programme period. These assumptions are conservative and reflect the expectation that meaningful psychological change occurs gradually over the course of the intervention, rather than producing large immediate effects.

Attrition Planning

Expected attrition is 12.5% at mid-point ($n = 350$) and 25% total attrition at end-point ($n = 300$). These attrition rates are based on typical retention patterns in longitudinal organizational intervention studies in India and reflect the practical challenges of maintaining contact with artisan participants over a 9-month period. The baseline sample of $n = 400$ ensures that the end-point sample of $n = 300$ remains adequate for all planned analyses, including longitudinal change analysis and measurement invariance testing across time points. Attrition analysis will test whether dropouts differ systematically from completers on baseline demographic variables, shame scores, and FP20 scores, allowing assessment of potential attrition bias.

Conclusion

The total baseline sample of $n = 400$ exceeds all minimum requirements for CFA ($n = 300$ for SRS-40, $n = 200$ for FP20), measurement invariance testing ($n = 150$ per group), and IRT analysis ($n = 150-200$). This sample size provides adequate power for all planned analyses and accommodates expected attrition while maintaining sufficient sample size at the end-point for longitudinal analysis.

Methods — Data Analysis Plan

Overview

The data analysis plan comprises seven sequential phases designed to establish the psychometric validity of the Shame and Release Scale (SRS) and the Fundamental Peace Scale (FP20) in Indian organizational contexts. Each phase addresses a distinct aspect of validation, from initial content validity through longitudinal change analysis. All analyses will be conducted in R (version 4.3 or later) using the lavaan package for confirmatory factor analysis, the psych package for exploratory factor analysis, the mirt package for Item Response Theory analysis, and the lme4 package for

longitudinal models. Missing data will be handled through multiple imputation ($m = 20$ imputations) for item-level missingness below 10%; listwise deletion will be applied when missingness exceeds 10%.

Phase 1 — Expert Review (Content Validity)

Six to eight experts in shame, wellbeing, cross-cultural psychology, and organizational psychology will independently rate each item of the SRS-40 and FP20 on a 4-point relevance scale: 1 = not relevant, 2 = somewhat relevant, 3 = quite relevant, 4 = highly relevant. The Content Validity Index (CVI) will be calculated for each item as the proportion of experts rating the item as 3 or 4. Items with an item-level CVI of at least 0.78 will be retained, meaning that at least 6 of 8 experts must rate the item as quite or highly relevant. Items falling below this threshold will be revised or removed. This approach follows the methodology established by Lynn (1986) and Polit and Beck (2006) for establishing content validity through expert consensus.

Phase 2 — Cognitive Interviews

Fifteen to twenty participants per occupational group (total $n = 45-60$) will participate in cognitive interviews using a think-aloud protocol. Participants will be asked to explain what each item means to them as it is read aloud. Standardized probes will be used: "What does this question mean to you?" "Can you give an example from your own experience?" "Is this question clear, or is any part confusing?" Responses will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Qualitative thematic analysis will identify patterns of comprehension issues, cultural appropriateness concerns, and emotional reactions to specific items. Items that produce systematic comprehension problems or culturally inappropriate interpretations will be revised. This methodology follows the cognitive interviewing approach described by Willis (2005) for pretesting survey instruments.

Phase 3 — Pilot Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

A pilot sample of $n = 150$, separate from the confirmation sample, will be used for exploratory factor analysis. For the SRS-40, EFA with oblique rotation (promax or oblimin) will test whether the theorized six-factor structure emerges empirically from the data. For the FP20, EFA will test whether the four-component structure emerges. Parallel analysis and scree plot inspection will determine the optimal number of factors to retain. Factor loadings of 0.40 or higher will be considered adequate for item retention. Internal consistency will be assessed using McDonald's omega (ω) and Cronbach's alpha (α) for each subscale, with a target of $\omega \geq 0.70$ indicating acceptable reliability. This approach follows the recommendations of Fabrigar et al. (1999) for conducting exploratory factor analysis.

For the SRS-12 brief version, Item Response Theory analysis using the graded response model will be conducted to select 12 items that maximize information across the shame-release continuum while maintaining subscale representation: 2 items from subscale A, 1 from B, 2 from C, 2 from D, 2 from E, and 3 from F. The graded response model, developed by Samejima (1969), estimates item discrimination and threshold parameters for ordinal response data, allowing identification of items that provide the most information about the latent trait across its full range.

Phase 4 — Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

The baseline sample of $n = 400$, separate from the pilot EFA sample, will be used for confirmatory factor analysis. For the SRS, the primary model will be a first-order six-factor model in which subscales A through F are represented as correlated latent factors. An alternative bifactor model will also be tested, in which a general shame factor underlies all items alongside specific subscale

factors, to determine whether a general shame dimension accounts for variance beyond the specific subscales. For the FP20, a first-order four-factor model will be tested, with the four components represented as correlated latent factors.

Maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors (MLR) will be used to accommodate the ordinal nature of the response data. Model fit will be evaluated using multiple indices with the following criteria: Comparative Fit Index (CFI) ≥ 0.95 indicates excellent fit and ≥ 0.90 indicates acceptable fit; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) ≤ 0.06 indicates excellent fit and ≤ 0.08 indicates acceptable fit; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) ≤ 0.08 indicates excellent fit and ≤ 0.10 indicates acceptable fit. The chi-square test will be reported but not used as the sole criterion for model evaluation, as it is sensitive to sample size. Nested models will be compared using the chi-square difference test, and non-nested models will be compared using the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), with lower values indicating better fit. This methodology follows the guidelines provided by Hu and Bentler (1999) for evaluating structural equation model fit and Brown (2015) for confirmatory factor analysis procedures.

Phase 5 — Validity Testing

Convergent validity will be assessed through three indicators. First, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) will be calculated for each factor, with AVE ≥ 0.50 indicating that the factor accounts for more variance in its indicators than measurement error. Second, composite reliability (CR) will be calculated for each factor, with CR ≥ 0.70 indicating adequate reliability. Third, correlations between the SRS and FP20 and the comparison measures (EISS, TRIM-18, SCS-SF) will be examined to test the predicted relationships specified in the nomological network (hypotheses H1 through H11). These criteria follow the recommendations of Fornell and Larcker (1981) for establishing convergent validity.

Discriminant validity will be assessed through two methods. First, the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) will be calculated between SRS Shame Load and FP20, with HTMT < 0.85 indicating that the constructs are sufficiently distinct (hypothesis H12). This criterion follows the guidelines provided by Henseler et al. (2015) for assessing discriminant validity. Second, the Fornell-Larcker criterion will be applied: the square root of AVE for each factor should exceed the correlations between that factor and all other factors, indicating that each factor shares more variance with its own indicators than with other factors.

Criterion validity will be tested through a series of multiple regression models examining the predicted relationships in the nomological network. SRS Shame Load will be regressed on EISS, TRIM-18, SCS-SF, and FP20 to test hypotheses H1 through H4. SRS Release will be regressed on EISS, TRIM-18, SCS-SF, and FP20 to test hypotheses H5 through H8. FP20 will be regressed on SCS-SF, EISS, and TRIM-18 to test hypotheses H9 through H11. Standardized regression coefficients (β) and R^2 values will be reported for each model, indicating the strength of each predictor and the proportion of variance explained.

Phase 6 — Measurement Invariance Testing

Measurement invariance will be tested across three occupational levels (artisan, field staff, head office) and across gender. Three levels of invariance will be examined sequentially. **Configural invariance** establishes that the same factor structure holds across groups, serving as the baseline model. **Metric invariance** tests whether factor loadings are equal across groups, indicating that the scale intervals are equivalent and that the constructs are measured in the same way. **Scalar invariance** tests whether item intercepts are equal across groups, indicating that mean scores can

be meaningfully compared across groups.

Model comparison will use the criteria recommended by Vandenberg and Lance (2000): $\Delta\text{CFI} \leq 0.01$ and $\Delta\text{RMSEA} \leq 0.015$ indicate that invariance holds. If scalar invariance fails, partial invariance will be tested by freeing intercepts for problematic items while constraining the remaining items, allowing meaningful group comparisons on the items that do demonstrate invariance.

Phase 7 — Longitudinal Change Analysis

Repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be conducted for SRS Shame Load, SRS Release, and FP20 total scores across the three waves (baseline, mid-point, end-point). The within-subjects factor will be Time (3 levels), and the between-subjects factor will be Occupational Level (3 levels). Effect sizes will be reported as partial eta-squared (η^2) for time effects, indicating the proportion of variance in the dependent variable attributable to time. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction will identify which time points differ significantly from one another. The expected pattern is a decrease in Shame Load and an increase in FP20 over time, reflecting the programme's intended effect. This approach follows the guidelines provided by Maxwell and Delaney (2004) for repeated-measures designs.

Pre-Registration Statement

Pre-Registration Commitment

This validation protocol will be pre-registered on the Open Science Framework (OSF) before any data collection begins, registered on 16 October 2026, prior to the baseline wave of data collection. Pre-registration commits the research team to a transparent, confirmatory approach in which all hypotheses, design decisions, and analysis plans are publicly documented before observing the data, reducing researcher degrees of freedom and increasing confidence in the validity of the findings.

Pre-Registered Elements

The following elements will be documented in the OSF pre-registration:

Study aims: The two research aims stated in the Introduction—(1) to establish the psychometric validity of the Shame and Release Scale (SRS) in Indian organizational populations, and (2) to establish the psychometric validity of the Fundamental Peace Scale (FP20) and test the predicted inverse relationship between shame load and fundamental peace.

All hypotheses: The twelve formal hypotheses (H1 through H12) specified in the joint nomological network section, including predicted correlation directions and magnitudes for SRS Shame Load, SRS Release, and FP20 with the External and Internal Shame Scale (EISS), the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM-18), and the Self-Compassion Scale Short Form (SCS-SF), as well as the discriminant validity hypothesis for SRS Shame Load and FP20.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria: All participant eligibility criteria specified in the Methods—Design section, including the three occupational levels (artisan communities, field staff, head office), the oral administration protocol for low-literacy participants, and the informed consent procedure.

Sample size justification: The complete power analysis and sample size rationale presented in the Methods—Sample Size section, including the minimum $n = 300$ for confirmatory factor analysis with 40 items and six factors, the recommended $n = 400$ to exceed all requirements, the minimum $n = 150$ per group for measurement invariance testing across occupational levels, and the effect size assumptions (moderate factor loadings ≥ 0.45 , moderate cross-instrument correlations ≥ 0.35).

Complete data analysis plan: The seven-phase analysis plan detailed in the Methods—Data Analysis Plan section, including Phase 1 expert review with Content Validity Index criteria ($CVI \geq 0.78$ per item), Phase 2 cognitive interviews with qualitative thematic analysis, Phase 3 pilot exploratory factor analysis with Item Response Theory analysis for SRS-12 item selection, Phase 4 confirmatory factor analysis with specified fit indices ($CFI \geq 0.95$, $RMSEA \leq 0.06$, $SRMR \leq 0.08$), Phase 5 validity testing with convergent validity criteria ($AVE \geq 0.50$, composite reliability ≥ 0.70) and discriminant validity criteria ($HTMT < 0.85$), Phase 6 measurement invariance testing across occupational levels and gender with model comparison criteria ($\Delta CFI \leq 0.01$, $\Delta RMSEA \leq 0.015$), and Phase 7 longitudinal change analysis using repeated-measures ANOVA.

Primary outcomes: The primary outcomes are (1) factorial validity of the SRS-40 six-factor structure and the FP20 four-component structure, assessed through confirmatory factor analysis fit indices; (2) internal consistency of SRS and FP20 subscales, assessed through McDonald's omega ($\omega \geq 0.70$) and Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.70$); and (3) convergent and discriminant validity of SRS and FP20, assessed through correlations with EISS, TRIM-18, and SCS-SF as specified in hypotheses H1 through H12.

Secondary outcomes: The secondary outcomes are (1) psychometric properties of the SRS-12 brief version, including internal consistency and correlation with the SRS-40 total score; (2) measurement invariance of SRS and FP20 across occupational levels and gender, assessed through configural, metric, and scalar invariance testing; and (3) longitudinal change in SRS Shame Load, SRS Release, and FP20 total scores from baseline to mid-point to end-point, assessed through repeated-measures ANOVA with effect sizes reported as partial eta-squared (η^2).

Planned deviations: Any changes to the protocol after pre-registration will be documented in a dated amendment to the OSF registration, with a written justification for the deviation. Deviations will be clearly marked in the final manuscript, distinguishing confirmatory analyses (pre-registered) from exploratory analyses (post hoc).

Transparency Commitment

All analysis code, including R scripts for exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, Item Response Theory analysis, validity testing, measurement invariance testing, and longitudinal change analysis, will be shared on the OSF project page upon completion of data analysis. De-identified data will be shared on OSF after publication, contingent upon participant consent for data sharing and community approval from the WHF Shameless Institutions programme partners. Any deviations from the pre-registered analysis plan will be clearly marked in the final manuscript, with a rationale provided for each deviation. Negative results—including hypotheses that are not supported, model fit indices that fall below acceptable thresholds, or invariance tests that fail—will be reported fully and transparently, without selective reporting of only statistically significant findings.

OSF Registration Link

<https://osf.io/ucj37/>

Rationale for Pre-Registration

Pre-registration enhances the transparency and credibility of validation research by committing researchers to a confirmatory approach before observing the data. This is particularly important for novel instruments such as the SRS and FP20, where confirmatory evidence is needed to establish construct validity. By publicly documenting all hypotheses, design decisions, and analysis plans before data collection begins, pre-registration reduces the risk of researcher degrees of freedom—the flexibility to make analytic decisions after seeing the data that can inflate false-positive rates and undermine the replicability of findings. Pre-registration also increases confidence in validation findings by distinguishing confirmatory tests (pre-registered) from exploratory analyses (post hoc), allowing readers to evaluate the strength of evidence for each claim. Finally, pre-registration aligns with the broader open science movement, which emphasizes transparency, reproducibility, and public access to research materials and data, thereby contributing to the cumulative growth of knowledge in cross-cultural psychometrics and wellbeing measurement.

Ethics

Ethics Approval

Full ethics approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Shoolini University before any data collection begins. The protocol will be reviewed for protection of human subjects, informed consent procedures, and data protection.

Informed Consent Procedure

For literate participants: Written informed consent will be obtained using a standard consent form. Field staff and head office participants will read the consent form independently and provide written consent after the research partner answers any questions.

For low-literacy participants: Oral informed consent will be obtained with audio recording (with participant permission) to document the consent process. The research partner will read the consent form aloud in Hindi, explaining each element, and the participant will verbally confirm understanding and agreement. Oral consent will be documented by the research partner's signature and the participant's thumbprint on the consent form.

Consent form content: The consent form will explain the study purpose, voluntary nature of participation, right to withdraw at any time without penalty, confidentiality protections, potential risks (emotional distress from shame-related questions), benefits (contribution to wellbeing measurement), and contact information for questions. Separate optional consent will be requested for use of anonymized data in research publications and for sharing anonymized data with other researchers.

Language: Consent forms will be available in Hindi and English. The Hindi translation will follow a hybrid method combining traditional translation by language experts with verification procedures to ensure high content validity [34].

Community-level consent: In addition to individual informed consent, community-level consent will be sought from artisan community leaders before recruitment begins. This approach respects collective decision-making norms in artisan communities and ensures that the research is welcomed and understood at the community level, not only by individual participants.

Distress Protocol

Shame-related questions may evoke emotional distress in some participants. Research partners will be trained to recognize signs of distress during the interview. Participants experiencing significant distress will be offered referral to mental health services; specific services will be identified and partnerships established before data collection begins. Participants can skip any question or stop the interview at any time. Debriefing will be offered after each interview to check the participant's emotional state.

Data Sovereignty and Community Ownership

Data sovereignty: This study recognizes that data collected from artisan communities belongs to those communities, not solely to researchers.

Community benefit-sharing: Findings will be shared with participating communities in accessible formats such as visual summaries and community meetings, not only in academic papers.

Community involvement: Community representatives will be consulted on interpretation of findings and dissemination plans.

Veto power: Communities will have the right to request removal of specific findings that could harm community reputation or wellbeing. This approach is informed by decolonial and postcolonial perspectives on South Asian mental health [3].

Data Protection

All data will be stored on password-protected, encrypted servers. Personal identifiers (names, contact information) will be stored separately from survey responses. Only de-identified data will be used for analysis. Data will be retained for 10 years after publication, then securely destroyed. GDPR-equivalent protections will be applied to all participant data, including the right to access, right to deletion, and right to data portability. Only de-identified data will be shared on OSF, and only with participant consent and community approval.

Conflict of Interest

The instrument developers (Prof. Luis Miguel Gallardo and team) are also conducting the validation. Mitigation strategies include: pre-registration of all hypotheses and analysis plans before data collection; independent statistical consultant to verify analyses; and transparent reporting of all results including negative findings.

Expected Outcomes and Implications

Expected Validation Outcomes

Successful validation of the Shame and Release Scale (SRS) and the Fundamental Peace Scale (FP20) would demonstrate four key outcomes. First, the SRS-40 and SRS-12 would be established as psychometrically sound instruments for measuring shame and release in Indian populations, with confirmed factorial validity, internal consistency, and convergent validity with established shame measures. Second, the FP20 would be validated as a measure of fundamental peace distinct from existing wellbeing measures, with demonstrated discriminant validity from hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing constructs. Third, the predicted nomological network would be confirmed, showing theoretically predicted relationships between shame, release, and fundamental peace: SRS Shame Load correlating positively with external shame and revenge motivations, negatively with self-compassion and fundamental peace; SRS Release correlating negatively with shame and

revenge, positively with self-compassion and fundamental peace; and FP20 correlating positively with self-compassion, negatively with shame and revenge. Fourth, measurement invariance across occupational levels would be established, enabling valid comparisons across organizational hierarchy from artisan communities through field staff to head office.

Implications for Wellbeing Measurement in Development Contexts

Filling a Measurement Gap

Validated Hindi instruments for shame and fundamental wellbeing would address a critical gap in South Asian psychology. Traditional social control mechanisms backed by shame have declined in contemporary Indian society [40]. Indian breast cancer memoirs reveal unique struggles with biographical disruption, altered body image, guilt, and shame [13]. Sexual minority women in India negotiate identity disclosure within deep-rooted cultural and patriarchal expectations, often experiencing guilt, shame, and fear of rejection [38]. The Internalised Misogyny Scale lacks cultural and intersectional sensitivity, rendering it inadequate in diverse contexts like India [39]. Conventional trauma models rooted in Euro-American clinical paradigms overlook unconscious, relational, and embodied dimensions in collectivist societies [27]. Fear of confidentiality breaches and discovery bringing shame were identified as key reasons South Asian women might not use mental health services [36]. Psychological research on how Dalits make sense of their victimization and cope with and resist casteism is limited [15].

Beyond Deficit Models

The SRS paradigm—measuring both wound and healing—challenges deficit-focused measurement and aligns with positive psychology's emphasis on flourishing, not just symptom reduction. Collectivistic cultures utilize shame's positive potential to motivate self-improvement and ensure successful communal living, contradicting its typical association with self-defensiveness [24]. In collectivistic cultures, shame can motivate repair and belonging alongside withdrawal responses [26]. Shame has a dual nature, causing psychological distress yet also harboring positive potential that can motivate self-improvement [24], which informed the SRS design of measuring shame and release on a single continuum. Reframing shame as a structural force shaped by history, power, and resistance is necessary to support personal healing and collective transformation [3].

Culturally Grounded Measurement

The SRS and FP20 were developed with attention to collectivist cultural contexts—inherited shame, workplace shame, community belonging—rather than simply translating Western instruments. Culturally grounded shame-proneness scales are necessary because constructs like shame operate differently and inhibit negative behavior in Malay populations compared to other cultures [26]. Qualitative and quantitative studies among Malay civil servants demonstrated that culturally specific shame indicators yield valid and comprehensive psychometric measurement [26]. Izzat and reflected shame act as powerful, culturally specific dynamics that shape South Asian women's mental health and help-seeking [36]. The cultural construct 'shame' (sharam) controls and perpetuates patriarchal structures within particular cultures, influencing help-seeking behaviours [43].

Low-Literacy Accessibility

The oral administration protocol makes psychometric assessment accessible to populations typically excluded from research. Cross-cultural adaptation enhances validity, reliability, applicability, and generalization while eliminating researcher bias through self-administration [34]. Online translation alone yields insufficient validity, requiring traditional or hybrid methods with

expert proofreading [34].

Implications for the WHF Shameless Institutions Programme

Validated instruments enable rigorous evaluation of programme impact on shame reduction and wellbeing increase. Multi-level measurement across artisan, field staff, and head office allows testing of intervention effects across organizational hierarchy. Shame and pride management mediates between respect for others and workplace bullying [4]. Bullying was less likely with high workplace respect for others, though organizational procedure transparency lacked this mediating role [4]. Severe, intentional public reprimand increases transgression minimization and decreases personal responsibility, raising counterproductive work behavior [37]. Longitudinal design enables tracking of change trajectories and identification of critical change periods. Findings will inform programme refinement and scaling to other contexts.

Potential Applications in Other South Asian Development Programmes

The SRS and FP20 could be used in other organizational interventions, community development programmes, and mental health initiatives in India and South Asia. The instruments address constructs relevant to poverty, social exclusion, caste-based discrimination, and gender-based violence—all contexts where shame is a barrier to wellbeing. Upper caste disgust produces shame among Dalits [15]. The construction of women as the repository of honour or *izzat* establishes cultural order in the Punjabi diaspora, resulting in extreme psychological, mental, and physical control over them [17]. 'Hiding feelings as SMW' captures struggles with guilt, shame, and fear of rejection constrained by cultural and patriarchal expectations [38]. Examines the unique struggles of Indian female patients, focusing on biographical disruption, altered body image guilt, and shame-induced actions [13]. The oral administration protocol is transferable to other low-literacy populations.

Contribution to Cross-Cultural Psychometrics

The validation study demonstrates rigorous validation methodology for novel instruments in non-WEIRD populations. The pre-registered protocol enhances transparency and replicability. Joint validation design—two instruments testing each other—is a methodological innovation. The study contributes to decolonizing psychology by centering South Asian contexts rather than adapting Western instruments. Decolonises psychological knowledge, education, and policy to address shame-related health inequalities in the diaspora [3]. Bridges Western psychology with indigenous knowledge systems to support personal healing and collective transformation [3]. Advocates for decolonial, trauma-informed clinical practices, culturally grounded future research, and feminist-informed therapies like narrative and relational-cultural therapy [39]. Introduces the SHARE Model to reframe trauma recovery as a relational and culturally mediated process in Pakistan and comparable contexts [27]. Challenges the belief in distinct guilt-cultures and shame-cultures by showing that *lajjA* synthesizes guilt and shame [35].

Limitations and Future Directions

Validation is limited to Indian organizational contexts; generalizability to other South Asian countries or non-organizational contexts requires further testing. Caution is needed in extrapolating findings to wider social groups given ethnic heterogeneity across religion and acculturation domains [36]. Longitudinal data is limited to 9 months; longer-term stability and change trajectories are unknown. Future research should validate the instruments in other languages (Tamil, Bengali, Urdu), test them in clinical populations, and develop norms for different

populations. Future investigations should test the instrument in different samples, namely samples of other countries and cultures [41]. Future research must illuminate the precise relationship between shame, collectivism, and gender, moving beyond Western individualistic models of psychopathology [42]. Legal and social reforms to break patriarchal structures are essential to help sexual minority women become visible [38].

Timeline

November 2026:

- > • Pre-registration on OSF
- >
- > • Expert review for Content Validity Index (CVI)
- >
- > • Ethics approval submission to Shoolini University IRB

December 2026:

- > • Ethics approval obtained
- >
- > • Finalize Hindi translations based on expert review
- >
- > • Train research partners in oral administration protocol

January 2027:

- > • Cognitive interviews (n = 45-60 across three occupational levels)
- >
- > • Revise items based on cognitive interview findings

February 2027:

- > • Pilot data collection (n = 150)
- >
- > • Pilot EFA and IRT analysis for SRS-12 item selection

March 2027:

- > • Finalize instruments based on pilot findings
- >
- > • Baseline data collection begins (n = 400)

June 2027:

- > • Mid-point data collection (n = 350)

>

> • Begin confirmation CFA and validity analyses on baseline data

September 2027:

> • End-point data collection (n = 300)

>

> • Complete all analyses (CFA, validity testing, invariance, longitudinal change)

>

> • Manuscript preparation

November 2027:

> • Manuscript submission to target journal

Conclusion

This protocol presents a rigorous, pre-registered validation design for two theoretically complementary instruments—the Shame and Release Scale (SRS) and the Fundamental Peace Scale (FP20)—in Indian organizational contexts. The joint validation approach is both methodologically innovative and theoretically grounded, positioning shame and fundamental peace as opposite poles of a wellbeing continuum that can be measured simultaneously within ecologically valid programme settings.

The SRS represents a paradigm shift in shame measurement by capturing both wound and healing in a single instrument. Where existing shame measures focus exclusively on deficit—the burden of internal and external shame, the withdrawal and aggression it provokes—the SRS adds a Release subscale measuring self-kindness, belonging, forgiveness, and repair. This continuum structure challenges deficit-focused measurement and aligns with positive psychology's emphasis on flourishing, not merely symptom reduction. The SRS is the first instrument to integrate personal shame, workplace shame, structural shame, shame-driven aggression, and release capacities within a theoretically grounded framework suitable for organizational and cross-cultural contexts. The FP20 offers a culturally grounded measure of fundamental peace distinct from Western wellbeing constructs. Unlike hedonic wellbeing frameworks that emphasize life satisfaction and positive affect, or eudaimonic frameworks that emphasize need fulfillment and self-actualization, the FP20 operationalizes fundamental peace as a stable psychological structure characterized by flexible attentional control, emotional coherence, reduced self-referential rigidity, and compassionate self-awareness. This construct is theoretically independent of external circumstances and culturally specific definitions of the good life, making it particularly valuable for assessing psychological wellbeing in populations facing economic precarity, limited autonomy, and collectivistic social structures.

No validated Hindi instruments exist for measuring shame and fundamental wellbeing simultaneously in South Asian organizational contexts. This validation study fills that gap with instruments designed for multi-level organizational settings and accessible to low-literacy populations through oral administration. The oral administration protocol—using trained research partners, picture-based answer cards, and Hindi translation—makes psychometric assessment accessible to artisan communities typically excluded from psychological research. The multi-level sampling across artisan, field staff, and head office populations provides ecological validity and

enables measurement invariance testing across occupational strata, ensuring the instruments function across diverse socioeconomic and educational contexts within Indian organizational settings.

The methodological rigor of this protocol ensures transparency and replicability. Pre-registration on the Open Science Framework before data collection begins specifies all study aims, hypotheses, inclusion and exclusion criteria, sample size justification, and analysis plans. The multi-wave longitudinal design—baseline, mid-point, and end-point data collection across nine months—provides temporal separation sufficient to detect meaningful change in shame burden and fundamental peace. Cluster sampling across three occupational levels enables testing of configural, metric, and scalar measurement invariance. Comprehensive psychometric testing includes expert review for content validity, cognitive interviews for cultural appropriateness, exploratory factor analysis for initial structure identification, confirmatory factor analysis for structure confirmation, Item Response Theory analysis for brief version development, convergent and discriminant validity testing through the nomological network, and longitudinal change analysis to assess sensitivity to programme effects. The embedded validation design using real programme data waves provides ecological validity while maintaining scientific rigor.

Successful validation will provide researchers and practitioners with validated tools for measuring shame and fundamental peace in South Asian development contexts, enabling rigorous evaluation of interventions targeting these constructs. The instruments have potential applications beyond the WHF Shameless Institutions programme to other organizational, community, and clinical settings in India and South Asia. The SRS and FP20 address constructs relevant to poverty, social exclusion, caste-based discrimination, and gender-based violence—all contexts where shame is a barrier to wellbeing and where existing Western instruments may fail to capture meaningful variation in psychological functioning. The oral administration protocol is transferable to other low-literacy populations, and the joint validation methodology—two instruments testing each other through mutual nomological network testing—offers a model for future cross-cultural psychometric research.

This protocol establishes a foundation for culturally grounded, psychometrically sound measurement of shame and fundamental peace in populations typically underrepresented in psychological research. The validation findings will contribute to decolonizing psychology by centering South Asian contexts and voices rather than simply translating Western instruments. By measuring both wound and healing, both shame burden and fundamental peace, the SRS and FP20 together offer a more complete picture of psychological wellbeing in organizational contexts—one that recognizes the dual potential of shame to motivate both withdrawal and repair, and the possibility that release from shame enables the emergence of a stable, coherent, and compassionate relationship with oneself and one's experience. This is the contribution the protocol makes: not only two validated instruments, but a paradigm for measuring wellbeing that honors the complexity of human experience in collectivistic, honor-based societies where shame is both a barrier to flourishing and, when acknowledged and released, a pathway to fundamental peace.

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