

Effects of Cultural Variations on the Personality of Individuals and Their Effect on Psychological Counseling

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Abstract: Human personalities are reflection of their individuality as well as group identity, such as diaspora and culture. The traits gained through socialization and belongingness helps share personality which is why even within counselling setting, these differences can be visible. This calls for the need to understand the effects of culture on prevalence of different personality types and traits to underscore its implications on counselling. The study finds that a successful counselling contains understanding the personality traits of each client in the context of their cultural socialization and upbringing. This fulfills the understanding of the clients' issues and helps in providing resounding and successful interventions and additional help. While doing so, it is important to keep in mind that cultural variations of personality come in form of extraversion and introversion among clients, romantic and creative traits. This study has shown that belonging to different culture shapes personality traits such as expression, openness and creativity, thus, implicating on therapy treatment of individual clients. It allowing to form goals and work on it. Moreover, understanding the different personality types also inform the communication strategies formed for counselling. Lastly, this study emphasise the need for cross-cultural counselling.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, as societies grow interconnected, different people from different contexts have started amalgamating and communicating with one another. As a result, the need to understand the cultural variations in personality has become quintessential. Personality refers to the enduring characteristics and behavior that comprise a person's unique adjustment to life, including major traits, interests, drives, values, self-concept, abilities, and emotional patterns (American Psychological Association, 2024). This predisposes that personality might vary from individual to individual and can be affected by numerous factors. Moreover, while some fundamental elements of an individual personality vary, others remain fairly consistent based on the demographic diaspora and culture the individual belongs (Ashton, 2022). This means that certain personality traits might be widespread across certain cultures. The literature also highlights the differing effects of Oriental and Western cultures and depicts how culture influences the personality of individuals. Moreover, these effects of differences in personality might also be visible in the counselling practice. A multicultural perspective

in counselling is essential as it accepts that individuals are not all the same and that their background—their ethnicity, their race, and their cultural context—is an important component of who they are (Lee, 2014).

In this relation, this essay aims to understand how culture affects the prevalence of different personality traits and understand their implications in the counselling setting. It argues that understanding the client and their culture is important to ensure the success of the therapeutic relationship. As such, the essay first understands the theoretical framework of the argument by providing the literature review. Next, the essay addresses the key cultural variations of personality across cultures in terms of extraversion and introversion, romantic relationships, and creativity. Lastly, it addresses the implications of these differences on the counselling relationship along with addressing the challenges and strategies in these situations.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theories of Personality Across Cultures

The personality of individuals is often shaped by the culture and region they belong to. Numerous theories depict how personality varies across different contexts. First, there are some broadly accepted theories such as Big Five and Eysenck's dimensions which provide a foundational basis of the personality. Secondly, enhancements are driven by Indigenous psychology models that position personality traits in the ethnic background of beliefs and values (Consoli et al., 2020). This highlights that while there are different aspects in every culture, there is no single theory that corresponds to all the changes associated with the individual. The Big Five Model posits five universal traits: Openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. Inter-cultural data corroborate the model's applicability yet show cultural differences (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2016). For instance, the aspect of extraversion is perceived as high in individualistic societies while it has less significance in societies that culturally focus on unity. This raises questions about the universal applicability of the Big Five and corroborates that its significance might be limited to Western cultures.

Additionally, Eysenck's Dimensions include extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism, which highlights a strong genetic-related basis for personality traits. These dimensions are more or less international but the importance and the relevance of the particular trait can be different for different cultures (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2016). For example, in Western cultures, extroverted people are sociable, while introverted people are valued more for self-restraint in the Eastern cultures. This supersedes the way in which culture affects the value assigned to different traits of individuals. Lastly, the Indigenous Psychology Models state that individuals cannot be interpreted without understanding the cultural perspective (Ramady, 2016). For instance, the Chinese concept of Renqing (compassion) and the African concept of Ubuntu (communal interdependence), are all relations that are not integrated in any Western theory and highlight the relational aspects of psychology such as those with nature and spirituality. Therefore, these theories suggest that individually and collectively, personality applies universally and across cultures. However, there are certain variations in how it is manifested and applied across cultures.

2.2 Cultural Influences on Personality Traits

Using theories such as the Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Schwartz's value theory is useful to understand in which ways culture impacts personality traits. Cultures' values behavior and personalities can be measured by the six dimensions that Hofstede put forward, these include power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation and indulgence-restraint (Moonen, 2017). For example, cultures with high power distance values stress, autonomy, and in some ways reflect on agreement and consciousness scores. Additionally, a high uncertainty avoidance culture can also predict anxiety and may hence be associated with high neuroticism. This depicts how certain cultures breed specific traits in individuals while others limit those. On the other hand, Moonen has put forward a theory of basic human values that can help explain personality in cultural environments by conceptualizing ten cultural dimensions including obedience, pleasure, and respect for the past (Moonen, 2017). In communal societies, where conformity is the norm, respondents exhibit traits such as conscientiousness and agreeableness, while in individualistic societies, which promote self-direction, respondents are encouraged to experience openness to experience. Therefore, it can be stated that it is beneficial to evaluate personality more from cultural alternatives rather than metrics that engross personality only.

Cross-cultural comparison between individualism and collectivism usually depicts personality trait differences. European and American societies are associated with individualism, where people possess certain personality characteristics, for example, extroversion and openness (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2016). On the other hand, collectivistic cultures, especially in East Asia, support harmony emphasizing agreeableness and lower levels of extraversion, which corresponds with aspects of modesty and togetherness. Additionally, there are some other special characteristics, that reveal contextual variations within personality, such as conscientiousness, neuroticism, and so on. In East Asian societies, conscientiousness can be indeed seen as relevant to cultural values of hard work and polite manner (Zotzmann et al., 2019). Neuroticism, however, is found to be higher in high-stress areas, for instance in some East Asian countries where high neuroticism might be brought by stress and societal demands rather than actual temperament. These results imply that culture plays an important role in

personality and demonstrate how cultural demands can influence the availability of certain traits amongst the population. Thus, personality is both a global and culturally distinct dimension.

2.3 Implications for Psychological Counseling

The influence of cultural factors on personality is important to recognize in psychological counselling because it helps the practitioner tailor the counselling for cultural differences. For instance, mistaken attributes, such as perceiving shyness as a sign of low extraversion instead of collectivism can distort evaluation and hypothetical management (Zotzmann et al., 2019). In Western culture, high scores in extraversion may mean confidence, which may be prejudicial to reserved, collectivism-oriented clients. This highlights that understanding the cultural effect and their implications on the behavior and personality of the client is essential to create culturally responsive counselling and enhancing the therapeutic alliance. Indigenous frameworks view personality in terms of community, spirituality, and balance rather than as attributes (Ramady, 2016). This approach is useful in various counselling contexts as it helps to incorporate the social model which is more comprehensible for people with collectivistic backgrounds. In the same way, Hofstede or Schwartz's cultural dimensions can also be used to understand personality and culture as it will point out the cultural values that lie at the root of the personalities being identified in counselling (Zotzmann et al., 2019). Power distance, collectivism or uncertainty avoidance are just examples of the content in which identifying as a counsellor shall be in tune with the client's perspective to increase success rates of approached interventions. Conclusively, the presence of culture-integrated personality theories enriches the general personality theory by giving an elaborate account of the complexity of the personality in the context of the world. Hence, through the application of Indigenous psychology, work and cultural aspects, along with cross-cultural research, counselors can be in a position to work on the general strategies governing both the client's culture and individuality hence boosting the general and overall satisfaction of the therapy process.

3 KEY CULTURAL VARIATIONS IN PERSONALITY TRAITS

3.1 Extraversion and Introversion

The basic culture an individual belongs to plays a significant role in influencing the depiction of traits such as extroversion and introversion. In individualistic cultures such as the U.S., introversion is not encouraged and assertiveness and sociable nature are regarded as traits of confident and successful people (Sumra, 2019). People with high extraversion in the collectivistic culture use social events to broadcast their achievements and opinions. On the other hand, in collectivistic cultures such as the East Asian temperament like humility, being reserved, and thoughtful is more in harmony with collectivistic values of socially useful self and respect for others (Sumra, 2019). In this relation, during counselling contexts, it is imperative to consider the above cultural effects on dimensions of extraversion and introversion with a view to enhancing the facilitation of the clients well. While an American client with extraversion will involve the use of spoken words and self-actualization during therapy, an East Asian client will not do so because he or she will consider such actions as being improper. This variation influences the therapeutic modalities and processes because the counsellor may have to spend considerable time building trust with the clients, especially if they hail from collectivistic cultures and are introverted. Conclusively, acknowledging that introversion in such aspects is admired and not a sign of inferiority assists the counsellors in avoiding misleading, thereby, enhancing the client's feelings, and the overall counselling.

3.2 Romantic Relationships

Another area which reflects the cultural influence on personality traits and expectations is romantic relationships. In the context of Western culture, choice in romantic relationships is more often an isolated decision based on mutually felt affectionateness and sexual attraction, along with the need to express love through affection and intercourse being seen as essential and natural (Karandashev, 2016). On the other hand, in many collectivist societies like India and some parts of the Middle East, romantic relationships are more family-oriented and in a love marriage the couple does not start a relationship without the permission of family members. This setup corresponds to personality

variables such as agreeableness, duty and obligation to family values hence suppressing individual rights for the benefit of the entire family. Such intercultural differences can present serious implications within counselling therapy (Karandashev, 2016). For instance, counsellors who have trained or drawn from individualist cultures will assess the compatibility and communication of the couple, but those from collectivist cultures drawn from arranged marriage systems will assess compatibility with the family, family identity, and interdependency. It is even possible for the client and counsellor to feel misunderstood because the counsellor may be applying standards that are perhaps owed to the individualistic-orientated culture. Therefore, understanding these differences can help a therapist adjust his/her strategies to accommodate cultural environments more appropriately, so the client can solve problems within cultural references that are compatible with individual and couple's values and roles.

3.3 Creativity

Attitudes regarding creativity and innovation differ significantly across cultures with notable differences within individualistic and collectivistic societies. In the West, people are encouraged to think freely and employ creativity and innovative ideas, along with divergent thinking is considered a mark of success (Chua et al., 2015). The studies showed that Western cultures had higher conceptions concerning creativity as an essential attribute associated with self-expression, where people are expected to develop novelty and defying standards. On the other hand, collectivistic cultures such as Japanese or South Korean are more inclined towards group rather than individual harmony and norms, and creativity is fostered towards group goals rather than individual ones (Chua et al., 2015). This highlights that the influence of culture is rampant in how people express creativity and think. The use of creativity in therapy is also moderated by culture to some extent as clients drawn from individualistic cultures may easily embrace creativity more than the collectivist client whose culture expects them to go through methods and arrive at goals in teams as depicted through group exercises of active listening and stages of group formation (Coleman, 2024). As a result, creative therapies such as art therapy or narrative therapy amongst others would have to be adjusted to the cultural beliefs of the patients. This cultural sensitivity benefits the client through involvement and possible improvement due to the fact it

accommodates the cultural practice with which the client is comfortable in therapy.

4 IMPLICATIONS OF CULTURAL PERSONALITY VARIATIONS IN COUNSELING

4.1 Cultural Sensitivity

The client's cultural background is vital when it comes to counselling since it facilitates great understanding and admiration of the culture by the counsellor. Applying standard therapeutic practice produces best practices to help clients who come from collectivistic or non-Western backgrounds or outlooks but fail to provide what may feel like an appropriately customized intervention (Smith & Trimble, 2016). For instance, Smith and Trimble who investigated clients of color in the US showed that the dropout rate of the minority was fifty per cent higher, implying a lack of culturally sensitive therapy. During the research, confounding variables such as socio-economic conditions and language differences were maintained. On the other hand, culturally sensitive counseling affirms these differences asserting that aspects of personality and relations are informed by culture (Sue et al., 2022). These researchers presented an approach that presents rapport enhancement strategies based on the culture of clients from Asia, Africa, and South America and stated that these clients were expected to be more polite, more formal, and less spontaneous, and may not like close contact.

The approach highlighted earlier has worked; the clients feel culturally understood and as a result 60% of them will likely continue with therapy and have positive things to say about it (Sue et al., 2022). This does not just highlight the positive effects of cultural sensitivity but also predisposes the influence of counselor's understanding of the client in the therapeutic relationship. Other approaches, for instance, cultural contextual therapy and Indigenous counselling, incorporate clients' belief systems, and family and community systems. In practical terms, it may involve the choice of words, cognitive and behavioral goals in line with the community expectations or avoiding an assertive communication style. Counsellors that have adopted culturally sensitive practices have been estimated to be four times more effective for minority clients than other broad western approaches (Hall et al., 2016). This highlights that by practicing cultural competence in

their work, counsellors enhance clients' relevance of therapy to their lives, which creates trust. Hence, this not only affirms the clients' cultural perspectives but also greatly improves practice outcomes, which benefits the overall mental health process's equity.

4.2 Communication Styles and Counseling Dynamics

In culturally competent counselling, communication is another important aspect that requires understanding the directness and contextual differences of the client as they can greatly affect the success of counselling. Studies have highlighted that people who originate from low context communication cultures like the United States and Germany prefer direct communication and do not cry foul over personal issues (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018). At the other hand, clients from high-context indirect communication cultures such as Japan and India may use nonverbal communication or a situation as a message bearer. If the counsellor is not familiar with the cultural differences between the client and does not respect these differences, the result of misplaced style and erodes trust in the therapeutic relationship will be based on style. There are opportunities to change communication methods and this will lead to better results. For example, the counsellor should refrain from direct confrontation with clients who are from high context cultures, promote silence and gesture. Research has demonstrated that clients from high context cultures are 35% more likely to continue with the therapy if the counsellor is playing a culturally sensitive role (Haller et al., 2019). This illustrates that understanding the cultural context of the client and tailoring the therapeutic relationship accordingly is essential.

Moreover, it also points to the need to have a multicultural counselling perspective or training before the beginning of a counsellor's future. Additionally, to increase cultural sensitivity, conducting open-ended questions and active listening are other advisable strategies. In practice, the counsellors who followed cultural considerations of East Asian clients, such as a gradual expression of feelings, reported up to 25% enhancement of the satisfaction and involvement of the clients (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018). Through maintaining these cultural communication norms, the magnitude of discomfort is decreased, rapport increased, and therefore, the client is more likely to be receptive to what any counsellor has to say. Thus, this approach strengthens the client-counsellor relationship, which

leads to the enhancement of counselling outcomes for clients with different backgrounds.

4.3 Goal Setting and Progress Assessment

The culture that the client belongs to and its interactions with the client's personality also influence the goal-setting and personal growth of a client. The values in individualistic cultures revolve around self-sufficiency and self-realization and consequently, treatment aims include personalised accomplishment (4). On the other hand, some clients come from collectivist cultures, in which the common goal is families or communities. In these contexts, success is reported in terms of the value of harmony and meeting expectations from the group goals rather than personal. This distinction highlights that the session may result in a gap if counsellors seek to treat clients using theories that encompass individualism. In this case, the counsellors practising with clients of collectivistic cultures may come across as careless or lacking proper structures for dealing with the issue. The findings clearly show that culturally appropriate goal assessment boosts the interest of the clients and their satisfaction (Haller et al., 2019). Additionally, these researchers found that clients from collectivist cultures perceived a higher degree of satisfaction with the formal therapy and denoted it as meaningful if the session contained culturally relevant goals. For instance, a person who is from a collectivistic culture will prioritize the family and is likely to experience increased motivation and meaning in the therapy if it is as much about them as it is about their family. Thus, the culture of the client influences the goals that are set in the counselling process and the direction of the counselling too.

4.4 Challenges and Strategies for Counselors

As noted through this essay, counsellors facing multicultural aspects can experience such issues as cultural prejudices and misconceptions that distort the process of counselling. Another problem is that a counsellor may give clients an idea of what their own culture deems as appropriate and acceptable and possibly misunderstand behaviours because they are viewed from a culturally different lens (Arthur, 2018). For example, a counsellor who grew up using assertiveness may perceive passive communication as an act of finesse which is in fact viewed as an act of respect in some cultures. Such misconceptions can erode rapport and make it further difficult to involve

clients and make the therapy beneficial. It is also accompanied by stereotype threat as another barrier. Clients with a feeling that they are seen through cultural lenses get stressed and may have lower output levels or leave (Arthur, 2018). Therefore, this threat is known to negatively impact individual performance and hinder the establishment of a good therapeutic relationship, because clients may retreat to avoid a stereotype confirmation. This leads to other misunderstandings, particularly when the clients have come from cultures where expressing frustration is prohibited. In such circumstances, distress may manifest psychologically in somatization, which is unheard of in the Western world and might be seen as the clients' lack of emotional intelligence (Owiti et al., 2014). Such a disparity is likely to be counterproductive to the rapport-building process and diminish interventional density. Thus, some of the common challenges that a counselling relationship may face or the client may exhibit include misunderstandings in the form of misconceptions, prejudices, lack of understanding, and so on.

In order to address these problems, the usefulness of evidence-based interventions is crucial. One of the prominent strategies in these situations is providing counsellors with cultural competency training which allows the counsellor to learn about specific populations, their beliefs, and ways of perceiving and responding, thereby leading to client satisfaction (Bihun et al., 2022). Through a review conducted by the researchers, they found that cultural competence training enhanced the effectiveness of counsellors and raised the overall client attendance. The study depicted that clients depression and anxiety levels and increase in client's satisfaction, which in turn impacted their attendance. Therefore, one of the proficient strategies is culturally competent training. On the other hand, another strategy involves using culturally specific assessment tools. By administering assessments that are culture-specific rather than adapted from Western tools, counsellors can tap into the clients' experience more effectively (Bihun et al., 2022). This highlights the cultural adaptation of the counselling relationship, and the assessments bring better diagnosis and therapeutic relevance to the cultural context of clients. Lastly, another strategy is flexible communication. Reflective listening and the use of a questioning style allow clients to feel fully comfortable when speaking within their respective cultural practices (Cervone & Pervin, 2022). This highlights that by including these methods, the counsellor would not just be able to build trust but also improve the output of the session. Thus, some strategies include culturally competent training,

providing relevant assessment methods, and flexible communication.

5 CONCLUSION

The article aimed to understand how culture affects the prevalence of different personality traits and their implications in the counselling setting. It argued that understanding the client and their culture is important to ensure the success of the therapeutic relationship. In conclusion, based on the arguments highlighted above, it can be stated that the differences in personality can affect psychological counselling with stress on culture in therapeutic practice. As a result of analysing theories starting with the Big Five, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, and Indigenous psychology, the role of cultural backgrounds in various personality traits ranging from extraversion to romantic relationships and creativity is discovered. These traits are dependent upon culture, influencing clients, communication and therapy perception. These types of insights help counsellors in entering a therapy session with more importance, cultural sensitivity, and flexibility of the counsellor. According to researchers, a skill such as using culturally appropriate communication, matching therapy objectives with cultural beliefs, and practicing culturally sensitive behavior is helpful for counsellors who want to build sound working relationships with their clients. The research supported the benefits of these strategies with specific details through case studies to show how culturally competent strategies enhanced counselling. Efforts that can be made to expand cultural competence in counseling are not only appropriate for people's diversity but also correspond to the global trend in addressing the need of a diverse population. Subsequent studies should endeavour to develop and expand cultural personality differences as a means of informing, effective cross-cultural counselling paradigms which may adapt to existing or emerging societal paradigms. To conclude, with enhanced knowledge, this relationship between the counsellor and the client may be made stronger, and counselling in multicultural societies is made more effective.

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