



THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE PROCESS OF SOCIO PSYCHOLOGICAL ADAPTATION

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Abstract

This conference paper aims to investigate which psychological characteristics of an individual positively or negatively influence the process of cross-cultural adaptation, what role these characteristics play in adaptation mechanisms, and how intercultural competence can be enhanced through their development.

Keywords: Cross-cultural adaptation, acculturation, integration, assimilation, separation, cultural intelligence, behavior, extraversion, neuroticism

Аннотация

Данная конференционная статья направлена на исследование того, какие психологические характеристики личности оказывают положительное или отрицательное влияние на процесс межкультурной адаптации, какую роль эти характеристики играют в механизмах адаптации, и как можно повысить межкультурную компетентность через их развитие.

Ключевые слова: Межкультурная адаптация, аккультурация, интеграция, ассимиляция, сепарация, культурный интеллект, поведение, экстраверсия, невротизм

In the 21st century, with the increasing intensification of globalization processes, intercultural dialogue and communication are becoming an integral part of our daily lives. Relations between different peoples, nationalities, and ethnic groups are expanding, increasing the need for intercultural cooperation. However, effective communication and collaboration between representatives of different cultures do not arise spontaneously. This complex process is achieved through an individual's intercultural adaptation.

Intercultural adaptation is a dynamic process that encompasses an individual's psychological and social adjustment to a new cultural environment, including the assimilation of its values, behavioral norms, and system of social relations. The success of this process depends on the individual's psychological characteristics. While some individuals adapt easily to a new cultural environment, for others, this process is accompanied by significant difficulties.





Intercultural adaptation is a multifaceted process that enables an individual's successful integration into a new cultural environment. This process involves not only acquiring new cultural knowledge but also undergoing profound psychological changes.

Canadian psychologist J. Berry explains intercultural adaptation through the concept of "acculturation" and divides it into four main strategies: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Integration is the most successful strategy, where an individual adapts to the new culture while maintaining their original cultural identity. (Berry 697-712)

Assimilation involves fully embracing the new culture while relinquishing one's original cultural identity. Separation entails maintaining one's original cultural identity while isolating oneself from the new culture. Marginalization involves disengagement from both one's original cultural identity and the new culture. The choice of strategy largely depends on an individual's psychological characteristics. For instance, open-minded, adaptable, and emotionally stable individuals tend to favor an integration strategy, while conservative individuals resistant to change may prefer a separation strategy.

One of the most prevalent models in contemporary personality psychology is the "Big Five" model. This model classifies personality traits along five core factors: openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Each of these factors plays a distinct role in cross-cultural adaptation.

Openness to experience encompasses a receptiveness to new ideas, experiences, and cultures, as well as creativity and curiosity. Various studies indicate that individuals with a high degree of openness possess a significant advantage in the process of cross-cultural adaptation. They explore new cultural norms and values with interest, embrace cultural differences as an asset, and can find creative solutions in non-standard situations.

For example, according to a study conducted by Siem et al. (2018), students with a higher degree of openness experienced cultural shock more mildly and were able to establish more effective relationships with local students during their studies abroad. Extroversion, or sociability, is a trait encompassing activity and self-confidence. Extroverted individuals tend to meet new people easily, are communicative, and actively participate in social situations. These qualities are beneficial during cross-cultural adaptation, as they expand opportunities to establish relationships with host culture members, create social networks, and practice language skills. According to research by Wilson et al. (2013),





extroverted international students befriended local students more quickly, positively impacting their cultural adaptation.

Another personal characteristic that positively influences the adaptation process is agreeableness, a trait that includes a tendency towards cooperation, empathy, and care for others. Agreeable individuals are capable of mitigating cross-cultural conflicts, resolving disagreements, and finding common ground with people from different cultures. They value cross-cultural harmony and respect diverse perspectives.

Conscientiousness, another key trait, encompasses responsibility, organization, and goal-orientation. Conscientious individuals consciously adapt to new cultural norms and rules, purposefully and systematically plan for cross-cultural adjustment, and patiently work through and overcome challenges in the process. Neuroticism is a personality trait encompassing emotional instability and a propensity for stress. Individuals with lower neuroticism (i.e., are emotionally stable) manage ambiguity and stress better during cross-cultural adaptation, are more resilient to culture shock, and embrace adaptation challenges positively. Beyond the Big Five personality traits, another theory connects personality with cognitive characteristics.

The concept of Cultural Intelligence (CQ), developed by P. Christopher Earley and Soon Ang, refers to an individual's ability to function effectively in diverse cultural contexts. CQ comprises four main components: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral. Metacognitive CQ involves the ability to consciously plan, monitor, and revise cross-cultural experiences. Individuals with high metacognitive CQ can critically evaluate their understanding and stereotypes related to different cultures, accurately analyze cultural situations, and adapt their strategies in cross-cultural communication. Cognitive CQ is the body of knowledge about the values, norms, practices, and conventions of different cultures. This encompasses understanding cultural differences, accurately interpreting cultural contexts, and perceiving cultural nuances. Motivational CQ, or ambition, represents intrinsic drive to engage with different cultures, enjoy cross-cultural interaction, and strive to overcome cultural challenges. Individuals with high motivational CQ embrace cross-cultural communication as an engaging and enriching experience, rather than avoiding it. Behavioral CQ is the ability to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal behaviors in diverse cultural contexts, ranging from language skills to displaying correct body language and culturally appropriate conduct. According to a study by Ang et al. (2007), individuals with higher levels of cognitive ability demonstrated better decision-making in diverse





cultural contexts, were more effective in intercultural communication, and assimilated cultural differences more rapidly.

Adaptability and resilience are psychological attributes of particular importance in the process of intercultural adjustment. Adaptability refers to the capacity to adjust quickly to new circumstances, while resilience encompasses the ability to withstand and overcome difficulties and stressful situations. Research indicates that individuals with high adaptability and resilience experience less stress during the intercultural adaptation process, overcome culture shock more quickly, and adjust more effectively to new cultural environments.

Self-regulation, the ability of an individual to control their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, plays a crucial role in intercultural adaptation, particularly during periods of culture shock and stress.

In the context of intercultural adaptation, self-regulation helps manage frustration associated with misunderstandings, cultural clashes, and communication difficulties. This ability enables individuals to maintain emotional stability during culture shock, remain patient in intercultural communication, and engage in behaviors geared towards long-term adaptation goals.

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