PYSC 224
Introduction to Experimental Psychology

Session 7 – Personality and Culture

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Session Overview

- Personality is shaped by the internal factors (such as genes) and external factors (the environment).
- One key environmental factor that shapes personality is culture.
- Cultural orientation and traditions influence how individuals behave. Thus, some personality traits may be more pronounced in some cultures than in others.
- The session discusses how socialization, cultural values and beliefs shape a person’s personality.
- The three approaches to studying cultural influences on personality as well as the different types of cultural orientations will also be discussed.
Session Goals and Objectives

At the end of this session, you should be able to

- Discuss the role of culture in shaping personality
- Describe how socialization, beliefs and values contribute to personality formation
- Outline the three approaches to studying cultural influences on personality
- Describe the two types of cultural orientation and how they contribute to personality development
Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Personality and culture
- Cultural orientation
- Personality and gender
Reading List

- Carducci, B. J. (2009). *The Psychology of personality* (2nd ed.). Chichester: John Riley & Sons Ltd (Ch 12)
Topic One

PERSONALITY AND CULTURE
Personality and Culture

- Personality is shaped by both genetic and environmental factors
- Among the most important environmental factors is culture
- Theories reviewed may not be applicable to all other cultures
Personality and Culture

- Personality traits may be similar for people in one culture but different across cultures
- While some cultures may be individualistic, others may be collectivists
- Cultural norms as well as gender norms may influence behaviour
- E.g. Ghanaians will emphasise a woman being submissive or men being aggressive
Personality and Culture

- Culture refers to all of the beliefs, norms, behaviours customs, ideas, traditions etc. of a society
- Passed on from generation to generation, through language, media messages, cultural practices and institutions, values and artifacts, and the imitating of behaviour etc.
  (Markus & Kitayama, 1994)
Personality and Culture

- Allport considered culture to be an important influence on traits
- Identified common traits as traits shared in varying degree by a number of people
- E.g. member of a culture share common traits
- Culture determines traits and behaviours that are considered important and those that are desirable or undesirable
Personality and Culture

- Thus, personality traits, be it positive or negative are determined by cultural norms
- A positive trait in one culture may be a negative trait in another culture
- Hence the different types of personalities across culture
- If culture influences behaviour, then it can play a role in personality formation
Personality and Culture

- Also, the fact that culture contributes to people’s beliefs and values also suggests its influence on personality
- Difference in experiences, upbringing, societal norms, and standards as a result of cultural influences
- Thus, if such difference exist then personality is expected to differ
• People born and bred in the same culture share common personality traits

• Socialization patterns shape some of the variations in personality (Maccoby, 2000)

• Example, when parents show affection and security, to their children

• Children become sociable, emotionally stable, develop higher self-esteem and exhibit a positive world view
• When parents are rejecting, and do not offer love and security-
• Children become immaturesly independent, have low self-esteem, emotionally unstable, hostile and have negative world view (Rohner, 1986, 1999)
Variations in culture have different effects on one’s personality.

Eastern societies are more introvert (introverted) than Western societies.

McCrae, Yi, Traprell, Bond & Paulhus (1998) studied “recent” Chinese immigrants to Canada, and those who had migrated for 10 years.
Personality and Culture

- “Recent” Chinese immigrants to Canada, showed low levels of extraversion as those leaving in Hong Kong
- Those who had migrated for 10 years and were more exposed to western culture were higher in extraversion
- Thus, culture had impacted personality characteristics
Personality and Culture

• In Ghana for instance, the Akans view personality to be made up of
  – the physical, “honam”
  – the mental “adwen” and
  – the spirit “okra”/ “sunsum”
• These are the driving force (forces) of personality
The “sunsum” of the individual plays a role in the development of personality based on the day the person was born.

- **Sunday** - Agility, protector
- **Monday** - Peaceful, humble, suppliant, calm
- **Tuesday** - Friendly and compassionate
Personality and Culture

- **Wednesday**- Vicarious, hero, evil
- **Thursday**- Brave, courageous, aggressive, warlike
- **Friday**- Wanderer, Traveller, discover
- **Saturday**- Creative, grace, great, problem solver
Personality and Culture

- Three approaches have been proposed in the study of cultural influence on personality:
  - 1. **Cultural-comparative approach**
  - Seeks to test Western ideas about personality in other cultures
  - To determine whether they have cultural validity and can be generalized (Cheung van de Vijver, & Leong, 2011)
Personality and Culture

- E.g. researchers tested the universality of McCrae and Costa’s Five Factor Model
- Found they were applicable in numerous cultures worldwide
- Big Five traits were stable in many cultures 
  (McCrae & Costa, 1997; McCrae et al., 2005)
Personality and Culture

2. **Indigenous approach**

- Emerged as a result of Western approaches to the study of personality dominating non-Western settings (Cheung et al., 2011)

- Western-based personality assessments cannot fully capture the personality constructs of other cultures

- Personality assessment instruments pertinent to culture being studied (Cheung et al., 2011)
3. Combined approach

- Incorporates the first two approaches
- A bridge between Western and indigenous psychology
- To understanding both universal and cultural variations in personality (Cheung et al., 2011)
Topic Two

CULTURAL ORIENTATION
Cultural orientations

• Two contrasting cultural orientations exist
  
a. Individualistic culture- Independent individual, value individualism
  
E.g.- America, Australia, Britain, Canada, Netherlands (Geert Hofsede (1980))

b. Collectivist culture- Interdependent individuals, value collectivism

• Colombia, Venezuela, Pakistan, Peru, Taiwan (Geert Hofsede (1980), Japan
Cultural orientations

**Individualist**

- See themselves as stable (attitude, personality) and the environment as changeable
- E.g. change the job if you don’t like it
Cultural orientations

- Influenced by commitment/consistency in argument “You have performed this task in the past”
- Value independence, competition, and personal achievement
- Primarily concerned with achieving justice (Ohbuchi, Fukushima & Tedeschi, 1999)
Cultural orientations

- Take pride in their individual accomplishments (Ouchi, 1981)
- Competitive behaviour is linked to high self-esteem
- Individualism is associated with happiness
- Hold someone else responsible for their behaviour
Cultural orientations

- Feel responsible for being successful through self-enhancement - “I worked very hard to earn my promotion”
- Do not feel responsible for their failures in ways that protect their self-image
- Therefore assumes more responsibility for success and less for failures
- More optimistic than collectivists
- Express assertiveness


**Cultural orientations**

**Collectivists**

- Collectivism is associated with ‘tightness’ (Carpenter, 2000)
- Concerned with maintaining relationships
- See the environment as fixed or stable and themselves as changeable
- Influenced by behaviour and thoughts of other people
Cultural orientations

- Value social harmony, respectfulfulness, and group needs
- E.g. Japanese society strongly emphasise the public and communal aspect of a person and less of private aspect
- Such collectivist cultures are “tight” societies as people conform to societal values, roles and norms (Carpenter, 2000; Triandis, 2001)
Cultural orientations

1. Cooperative behaviour is linked to high self-esteem
2. Promotes greater feeling of guilt and shame
3. Attributes the course of a person’s behaviour to situational factors
4. Success or failures are also as a result of situational factors
Topic Three

PERSONALITY AND GENDER
Personality and Gender

• During childhood boys and girls are brought up in traditional stereotype ways which influence their personality

• E.g.- the display of emotional intensity is associated with females

• Females display more intensity than males

• In the Ghanaian culture for instance, one would say Barima ‘nsu (a man does not cry)
Personality and Gender

- Gender identity is an *individual’s private experience of being male or female*
- The overt expressions of behaviour and attitudes held by the individual towards their status of being male or female
- Differences in gender identity results in the development of characteristic personality features for each gender
Personality and Gender

- This produces gender differences resulting in gender-role stereotypes
- Males and females differ in their biological, psychological, societal and cultural make up that influence (influences) their personality development.
Personality and Gender

- Gender differences in personality include;
- Aggression, Expression of emotional and physical intimacy, (love and romance, mate selection, sexuality etc.) Social influence, Emotional expressiveness,
- Others are: Self-evaluation and expectations, Happiness and Depression and Cognitive functioning (Carducci, 2009)
END OF SESSION 7
References

• Carducci, B. J. (2009). *The Psychology of personality* (2nd ed.). Chichester: John Riley & Sons Ltd