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**Culture, and its Psychotherapeutic Influences on Emotions, Cognitions, and
Motivations**

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Abstract

Purpose: This study explores the psychotherapeutic influences of culture on emotions, cognitions, and motivations. It emphasizes culture's role in shaping individual identity, well-being, and behavioral outcomes.

Methodology: The research involves a literature review focusing on cultural definitions, emotional development, motivational drivers, and their therapeutic applications.

Findings: Key findings reveal the dynamic and evolving nature of culture, its foundational role in shaping cognition and identity, and its impact on emotional and motivational processes. The study underscores the necessity of culturally competent psychotherapy to address diverse sociocultural challenges, foster therapeutic connections, and promote mental health.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study highlights the importance of understanding culture as a critical clinical discipline to better address its influence on individual and collective experiences.

Keywords: *Culture, Psychotherapy, Cognition, Emotional well-being, Motivation*

JEL Code of Classification: *Z1, I38, M52*

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INTRODUCTION

In the last 50 years, there has been an increasing awareness around the significance of cultural influences through emotions, cognitions, and motivations on individual life stories. Culturally focused psychotherapy has developed as an important branch of mental health support provision process. Also, the competency of any psychotherapist is determined by the level of awareness and attention given to cultural factors like diverse values, individual beliefs, and unique behaviors.

In order to fully understand psychotherapeutic influences of culture on emotions, cognitions and motivations, a clear definition and understanding of the concept is required. Many experts of the field of psychology and sociology, have conducted studies to best understand culture. Fernández-Dols et al. (2004) have talked about culture as social process based on the unique concepts of peace and individual harmony. The personal perceptions that connect society with the family, mental health to sense of well-being, and the professional success with ideas of growth; all of these aspects, and many similar or diverse personal and social elements, come together to define culture.

Discussion

Anagnostopoulos (2017) has also described the culture as a collection of shared elements that are used in the processes of perceiving, believing, evaluating, communicating, and acting, transferred from generation to generation with timely modifications. Thus, culture can be considered as a social force that is constantly evolving, and is never static.

Anagnostopoulos (2017) has emphasized the cultural formulation around psychotherapeutic influences, and have attempted to describe culture on the following distinct aspects:

- Cognitive identity of the individual, and emotional connections around ideas of well-being.
- Conceptualization of illness, and the personal perceptions of motivation to deal with the illness.
- Individual orientations around psychosocial factors like stress management and anxiety awareness.
- Assessment tool for psychotherapeutic support, and for individual idea of growth, and validation.
- Therapy tool to build a better therapeutic connection between client and therapist for more effective therapy experience and outcome (Anagnostopoulos, 2017).

Perhaps, a better understanding of the above aspects can be achieved in the following hypothetical example of a client from a collectivist culture, who may struggle with balancing personal desires against familial expectations. Through psychotherapy, they explore how their cultural values influence their sense of self and emotional well-being, eventually developing strategies to assert their individuality while honoring their family ties. Another example of Psychotherapeutic influences and culture can be seen in the emotional thought processes of a client from a high-pressure academic culture who exhibits severe anxiety. Therapy involves addressing culturally ingrained beliefs about success and failure, enabling the client to develop healthier stress management techniques and challenge perfectionistic tendencies.

It is easy to comprehend the force of culture in the light of the above categorical aspects. But the true impact of cultural can be seen as it plays significant role in the determination of the personal life stories, based on individual connection through cognitions, emotions, and motivation. Therefore, in order to comprehend the presence and impact of cultural forces in our lives, let's examine it under the lenses of these tendencies.

Culture as a Cognitive Factor

Cognitive processes are central to the mental system, grounded in sensorimotor skills, situational perceptions, and the relevance of actions. The human cortical system's openness to social interactions facilitates cognition, fostering reorganization and change that manifest as complex, dynamic mental systems. This understanding, informed by research in biology and neuroscience, has led to broader insights into social, cultural, and religious dimensions. Consequently, the term "mental" transcends its conventional association with brain activity, encompassing intricate, time-oriented interactions with social and cultural forces (Brown & Reimer, 2013).

White (2004) has talked about the perception of individual identity as a socially constructed phenomenon, which is based on the connection of self within the parameters of will, authority, and agency of the surrounding cultural norms. Thus, culture becomes a resource for interconnectedness between the concept of self, and the development of identity.

The cognitive influences of cultural forces, support an individual to develop significant relationships. Those relationships are based on the historical knowledge of ancestors, and current experiences of the social roles being played at the time of the inception of such relationships. Thus, it is the cognitive process under the umbrella of culture, that determines the relationship for a child, an adolescent, a young individual, partner in an intimate relationship, or even a relationship with oneself or the idea of being a successful professional.

Oyserman and Lee (2008), while researching the social implications of individualism and collectivism, have postulated on the value of cultural identity cognitions. It was noted that cultural identity cognitions are based on how we imagine relationships, determine the value of personal efforts, and how the mind works on believing the result of the efforts. Such culturally oriented cognitive process provides cues for individualistic and collectivistic behaviors that promotes the society connections, and build identities.

Many research studies have shown the profound effects of culture on the psychological and physiological maturation processes. Kirby et al. (2019) have talked about the impact of parental sociocultural connections on the development of identity and the perception of self. Early life experiences are mainly based on child-parent relationship, and the perceptions of the child on being received and accepted by parents, peers, and other significant individuals.

Kirby et al. (2019) further added that parents play an influential role in nurturing the cultural identity of their children. If the parents are observed by the child as having too much or too little considerations for the culture, then the child will also develop the similar view of the culture. The formulation of personal ideas of culture is also based on the individual societal experiences and individualized perspectives. It is important to emphasize that such ideas are initiated as a familial view of cultural identification based on the nature of relationship with the parents, individualized perspectives, and societal experiences.

James and Foster (2003) have described the concept of self as a relational narrative. It has been argued that concept of self never develops solely on the psychological or physiological nature. It is dependent on historical cultural and cross-cultural contexts surrounding the individual. Another significant aspect of the process of cognition towards the understanding of the cultural limits, and socio-historical expectations, is the eventual emergence of a well-defined cultural identity.

Garcia-Marques and Ferreira (2009), have described the individualized connections, and personalized assumptions towards the world as the root for various cognitive process. The psychotherapeutic influence of culture can be understood on a subconscious level, where a person finds the reasoning behind self-identification, and interactions with the world. Cognitive processes have been explained as “scaffolding” that encourages the development of mind, through determining a path that is based on the physical world with the fundamental emotional and perceptual experiences.

Culture as an Emotional Factor

Walle and Dahl (2020) has described the culture as the most important factor in the emotional development of any individual. The functionalist and structuralist approaches have been used to explain the cultural influences when assessing the idea of emotional well-being. The study argues that emotional development and well-being of an individual is flexible, and evolves with time, based on the changing connections with the cultural forces.

Winchester (2016) has provided details of culture as an embodied metaphor to individual well-being. It has been argued that human consciousness, both practical and discursive, leads to a dual action of culture that determines the perception of subjectivity and action. It is this human perception that emerges as the idea of well-being. Many cultural studies have led to the ethnographical findings while focusing on theological and sociological considerations. If the concepts of religion and nation can be defined as cognitive abstracts, then the idea of well-being becomes a representation of individual emotional connection with culture.

Ignatow (2009) has talked about the use of culture as a tool to generate personal insight, and determine the process of change in a person’s life. Cultural cohesion, and social bonding are identified as the two factors that can connect a person with the sense of well-being. The research done by Ignatow (2009) argues that the desire for bonding, and cohesion, is primarily based on the emotional understanding of a person towards the society. Another significant aspect of the study, was the fact that the idea of well-being is easily achieved when conceived as a cognitive construct, as compared to an outside element that may lead to more emotional distress or anxiety.

While developing the narrative for cultural influences, it is important to consider the element of emotion towards religion. In most countries of the world, the well-being of an individual is compared with the theological definitions of success as well as cultural ideas of emotional accomplishments. Lorrimar (2019) has provided details of theological and cultural influences that leads a person to the notion of emotional accomplishment and eventual well-being.

The cultural value of doing well is based on the personal levels of acceptance around religious, societal, and familial expectations. Schaaf et al. (2019) has talked about the emotional well-being as an unconscious source of knowledge that is based on many sociocultural factors like dominant religion, peer approval, and familial values. The relevance of the embodied cognition

as an unconscious process is high as it also signifies the impact of cultural forces on the lifespan of individuals.

Martin et al. (2019) has pointed towards the cultural competency when explaining the notion of success with professionals. The interesting reality of increasing cultural diversity around the world, has been promoting certain universal ideas of well-being and personal success. It is important to recognize the social expectations for professional well-being while also being conscious of the cultural implications of professional successes. DeGraff et al. (2016) has further explored the idea of well-being with the cultural awareness around professionalism and social constructs. It has been postulated that idea of well-being is connected with a person's emotional connections since early life experiences. It is not only the parental witnessing that influences the notion of well-being; it is also based on the developmental outcomes of highly significant and impressionable cultural experiences.

Another important realization of culture as a determinant of emotional well-being can be observed in the understanding, creating, initiating, and maintaining of relationships. Ren and Gray (2009) provide detailed insights into the value of relationships for emotional well-being. Cultural forces are particularly dominant when an individual decides to have a specific type of presence in a relationship. Individual presence in communication styles and adherence to emotional concepts such as trust, support, and respect reflects an individual's cultural understanding of what constitutes a healthy and normal relationship.

Culture as a Motivational Factor

Henderson (2020) has pointed towards a most interesting aspect of culture; as a motivational source that determines the morals credentials, while focusing on individual strengths or flaws. Cultural motivation then becomes the reasoning behind maintaining social status, moral decision making, and other significant behavioral factors. Ethical values and performance of individual can be assessed based on their motivational connection with the culture. The debate between ethics-based culture and performance-based culture takes a new realization when explored with the focus on motivational influences (Lee et al., 2020). It is also important to realize the different levels of motivation based on unique perceptions and definitions of motivation in different cultures.

Perhaps, another important aspect of psychotherapeutic influence of culture on human motivational levels, can be seen in the performance of professionals. Liden et al. (2014) has talked about the culture of leadership that directly impacts the performance outcome. It has been argued that performance is based on a person's motivational levels that are dependent on the culture of leadership experienced by an individual. It was hypothesized that if the leadership culture is positive then the motivational levels will be high that would result in better performance outcome.

Holstein et al. (2020) in their cultural study have talked about the evaluation and prediction of result for any action based on the cultural expectation of motivation. Motivational factors can be exploratory and confirmatory based on an individual's perception to the expected task. Colella et al. (2020) has talked about the need for best practice manuals in every organization to ensure the maintenance of motivational levels in the organizational culture, that would eventually lead to the success of the organization. Such individualistic cultural perception also highlights the value of communication in any social circle. Being mindful of the linguistic

diversity of individuals around social situations not only maintains the emotional well-being but also provides the motivation to stay connected to social situations.

Another good example of maintaining motivational levels through cultural competency can be seen in the interactions and performance of students in classroom activities. Denton et al. (2018), has talked about the role of a teacher who promotes the culture of positive motivation in the class. Motivational activities through acceptance of the individual student struggles, and persistent pursuit of positive reinforcements by the teacher, would maintain a culture of personalized accomplishments and successes in the classroom activities.

Culture as Psychotherapeutic Tool to Assess Individual Mental Health

Lakes et al. (2006) have discussed the value of cultural competency while delivering psychotherapeutic support to people who are struggling with life issues. The provision of culturally focused therapy has the foundation on two notions; namely the awareness on the societal expectations, and the idea of having a therapeutic connection with focused cultural understanding between therapist and the client. Thus, the main goal of culturally conscious therapeutic conversations could be the determination around the awareness of what is at stake in the social and local world surrounding the client that constitutes as a life issue. Such therapeutic conversations can happen naturally if there is a presence of shared cultural narratives between therapist and the client.

Multiculturalism has helped therapists to develop an enhanced understanding of social forces impacting the behavioral issues of clients. It has provided the foundation to deliberate, enhance cultural awareness, and utilize the psychological theories while making an extra effort to offer validation and therapeutic support for the emotional processes of the clients. It is important to note that culturally conscious therapy helps the client to not only develop a healthy sense of self, but will also offer a chance to improve their acceptance of cultural morals and other sociocultural forces (Drinane et al., 2018).

Edge and Lemetyinen (2019) have explored the cultural challenges and opportunities that are being experienced by the modern-day psychotherapists. Large variations of culturally oriented stressors are being faced by people like never before in the known history. Increasing rate of mental health issues is also putting pressure on the psychotherapeutic care provision facilities. It has been postulated that therapists who utilize their personal cultural insights are more connected with the client's internal and external cultural orientations (Edge & Lemetyinen, 2019).

Bojuwoye and Sodi (2010) have discussed the limitations being faced by the typical Western ideas of counseling and psychotherapeutic care. The concept of effective delivery of care provision is dependent on the cultural notion and understanding of wellness of the individual. Thus, making it imperative for the counsellors, and psychotherapists to be trained and be well versed in their cultural knowledge regarding their clients.

Sato (1998) proposed that for effective psychotherapeutic care provision, special focus on the concept of self and its connection with environmental elements is required. Therefore, a successful therapeutic connection and eventual release of emotional unease issues, could be reached if the sense of self merges with the environmental forces of validation and support. It is also important to note the role of cultural beliefs and personal expectations during the therapy process, as these can be used as tools to generate therapeutic conversations and promote coping with enhanced self-awareness (Kuška et al., 2016).

Additionally, the psychotherapeutic tool of cultural validation can be the most important aspect when considering the client's reflections during the therapy process. This leads the way for more effective psychological care for the client and reduces the possibility of negative health care encounters (Flynn et al., 2020). Cultural competency of health care providers promotes the overall well-being of individuals that access the health care system.

With all the values of psychotherapy attributed to the cultural construct, it is also important to consider the challenges and limitations that are being faced by the modern-day therapist. Multiculturalism, interracial relationships, and global socio-political forces; come together to impact effective psychotherapeutic process (Gutchess & Goh, 2013). Limited resources, lack of training, diverse ethical issues, and over emphasis on philosophical or theoretical modalities; all can influence a culturally focused therapeutic conversation with the client. For instance, a therapist working with a South Asian immigrant couple may face challenges in addressing culturally embedded gender roles. If the therapist is trained primarily in Western models of egalitarian relationships, they might struggle to navigate the couple's traditional values, where the husband is expected to be the primary decision-maker. Without adequate cultural competence training, the therapist may unintentionally impose Western ideals rather than helping the couple integrate their cultural beliefs into a healthy relationship dynamic.

Conclusion

In the end, it is safe to surmise that culture has the force to affect brain activities, and can shape lives. From bio-neural actions to emotional responses, we all connect with the surrounding social elements based on our cultural assumptions and understandings. Culture can also be viewed as critical clinical discipline that would offer the best support to the individuals dealing with life struggles or mental health issues. It would be significant to remind ourselves that we all are cultural beings with individual and collective histories that impact our dealings through cognitions, emotions, and motivations.

Implications

Cultural frameworks influence the way individuals perceive mental health, determine the acceptability of seeking therapy, and shape their motivation to engage in treatment. For example, in collectivist cultures, individuals may prioritize family harmony over personal well-being, which can affect how they articulate distress and approach therapeutic interventions. A therapist working with a client from such a background may need to incorporate culturally relevant strategies, such as involving family members in treatment decisions or reframing self-care as a means of strengthening the family unit. Furthermore, cognitive patterns, such as fatalistic beliefs in some cultures, may reduce motivation to change, requiring therapists to adopt culturally responsive interventions that align with the client's worldview.

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