

The Multifaceted Process of Psychological Acculturation: An Individual Behavioural Analysis

Neela Bai R*

Department of Social Exclusion, The English and Foreign Languages University, India

***Corresponding author:** Neela Bai R, Research Scholar, Department of Social Exclusion, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, Telangana, India, Tel: +919492818606; Email: neelagopalm@gmail.com

Received Date: July 08, 2024; **Published Date:** August 02, 2024

Abstract

Culture plays an important role in every individual's life. Culture builds a moral and ethical compartmentalisation in an individual's life. The process of socialization is prominent in the starting phase of the individuals, which builds their personality and behaviour. However, the process of acculturation, learning a new cultural practice in life influences the individual's life. The interconnection of the culture motivates and transforms the interpersonal interactions around the society and the individual creates the ideas of adopting the various cultural practices. From a psychological point of view, the new contextual complexity makes it harder to develop a sense of self and belonging within a particular community or society. Acculturation is a multifaceted process and individuals of the recent times around the world are going through the process of encountering new cultures and influences with it. In this context, the paper intended to analyse the individual behaviour changes with the acculturation process. How the acculturation process is multifaceted and influences an individual's behaviour? The present study elicited that acculturation is a multifaceted process and individual self, identity and societal changes affect the process of acculturation.

Keywords: Acculturation; Culture; Psychology; Assimilation; Behaviour

Introduction

Acculturation is a process by which individuals or groups adopt the customs, practices, and values of another culture, it is a complex and multifaceted process. It is influenced by various factors such as cultural norms, social expectations, and individual agency. It can be understood that culture can be a complex phenomenon and acculturation is a product of the cultural change process. The psychology disciple understands the concepts of biculturalism, acculturation, dialogical self and identity theories. In today's rapidly changing world, the study of psychological acculturation must incorporate contemporary work in social and cognitive psychology [1]. Acculturation is a multidimensional process that involves the confluence of heritage and receiving cultural practices, values, and identifications. The deculturation of

some original cultural habits and the acculturation of new ones are integral parts of the process of adaptive change. This process occurs through communicative engagements between individuals and their host environment, with long-term and extensive experiences leading to assimilation into the mainstream culture.

Graves (1967) coined the concept of 'psychological acculturation' to refer to the fact that this phenomenon involves not only group changes as ecological, cultural, social, institutional, etc. but also includes individual changes, that is, changes in attitude, conduct, way of life, values, identity, etc. in persons and groups that come into contact [1]. In the context of cultural contact, individuals and groups experience variations in how they acculturate and adapt to the process. This variation can be seen in the different

acculturation strategies, such as integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Acculturation is not a linear process, but rather one that is influenced by factors such as cultural similarity, discrimination, and the context of reception. In the study of psychological acculturation, it is important to consider the role of cultural competence, social identity, and social stigma. Psychological acculturation is a complex and multifaceted process that encompasses the interplay of heritage and receiving cultural practices, values, and identifications. It involves not only the assimilation of new cultural elements but also the deculturation of some original cultural habits.

Psychological acculturation, a complex and dynamic phenomenon, encompasses the multifaceted adaptation and transformation that individuals undergo when exposed to a cultural environment different from their own. This process involves navigating the intricate interplay between personal identity, social connections, and the host culture, leading to diverse outcomes that can range from integration to marginalization [2]. Psychological Acculturation involves various factors that influence an individual's adaptation to a new culture. These factors can include the individual's age, gender, education level, social support networks, and previous experiences with different cultures. Additionally, the level of acceptance and integration within the host culture, as well as the individual's own cultural identity, can play a significant role in the process of psychological acculturation.

The process is usually on-going and can last several years. A comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional aspects of psychological acculturation can attain a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between heritage and receiving cultures. This holistic perspective serves as a foundation for advancing our knowledge and practices in the field of psychological acculturation. In this globalisation era, people are encountering different types of challenges, Students going to different cities and sometimes different countries for their studies and people are migrating to new places for better opportunities and jobs, the new settlements in unknown cities or sometimes different countries. After marriage, adjusting with the new family is also adopting psychological acculturation, so in this context, it is important to understand how an individual acts and how the host community or host individual is ensuring a better understanding of the situation.

The changes in individual behaviour can be slowly seen in a different aspect; however, it is important to provide resources such as support groups or counselling to help individuals cope with the challenges and stress of acculturation. It is also important to provide education about the culture, language and customs of the host culture. The

psychological implications of acculturation can be highly variable, depending on a range of social and personal factors [3]. Individuals, who adopt an integrated approach, maintaining a connection to their heritage culture while also adopting aspects of the host culture, tend to experience better psychological adjustment and reduced acculturative stress. (Ward & Rana-Deuba,1999). Factors such as life circumstances, personal values, and peer associations can significantly influence an individual's acculturation strategy and sense of well-being. Acculturation is not merely about the extent to which one maintains their cultural identity and participates in the new culture, but also the complex interplay between these two dimensions [4]. The psychological study of cultural globalization, which integrates acculturation and identity research, is an emerging and vital field of inquiry that can shed light on the nuanced experiences of individuals navigating the challenges of a changing world [5].

The Diverse Range of Acculturation Strategies

A notable aspect of psychological acculturation is the diverse range of acculturation strategies adopted by individuals and groups. These strategies include integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization, each reflecting distinct pathways towards cultural adaptation. Exploring the nuances of these strategies provides valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of acculturation. As new members approach towards ethnic retention and associations sought among the group, they either integrate by maintaining their home culture while adapting to the new culture or assimilate with home cultural shedding and adaptation to the new culture, sometimes new members tend to be separate by showing rejection of new culture and holding on to home culture, which also emphasis the ethnocentric behaviour of the individuals. There are also possibilities of marginalization of the new member, with enforced cultural loss and exclusion from the host culture.

The process of integration and assimilation can be seen in the positive lenses. However, the separation and marginalisation have had a negative impact on individuals and or groups which creates conflicts. Exclusionary practices often lead to psychological disturbance, feelings of low self-esteem, and low confidence creating an imbalance in the society. At the individual level, acculturation implies changes in a person's behavioural repertoire; at a group level, it involves changes in social organizations and the cultural practices. Cultural variables such as life circumstances can influence one's state of well-being. This notion of a good and happy life is very important to understand not only the individual perspective but also the societal one.

Sociologists generally assume that acculturation is an inevitable process and that it proceeds from less to more

[6] argues that acculturation is a more complex process that varies over time and situations for individuals and can even go from more to less acculturation. Ali proposes that acculturation is a dynamic status process, based on Judith Harris's group socialisation theory and Murray Milner Jr's theory of status relations. The variations in patterns of acculturation of individuals can be better understood by looking at their peers, the kinds of intimate associations that individuals make, and the kinds of peer group norms an individual follows.

The acculturation process has non-linearity and has various influential factors, it emphasises the multifaceted process of acculturation. Contrary to a linear progression, acculturation is influenced by a multitude of factors such as cultural similarity, experiences of discrimination, and the specific context of reception. Understanding the non-linear trajectory of acculturation and its dependence on contextual and individual factors is imperative to grasp the intricacies of this process. By recognizing and respecting the richness of varied cultural traditions, societies can harness the synergies arising from acculturation to co-create a more equitable and cohesive social landscape.

The Interplay of Heritage and Receiving Cultural Practices

Acculturation involves a confluence of heritage and receiving cultural practices. It encapsulates not only the adoption of new cultural elements but also the deculturation of original cultural habits. This interplay between heritage and receiving cultural practices forms the foundational framework of adaptive change within individuals and groups. This process involves issues such as language barriers, and cultural differences. It can be seen that the new process of acculturation might lead to the implications of racism and discrimination. In this context, it is important to provide individuals with the knowledge and skills to navigate the new environment and to understand the interchangeability of cultural assumptions. To truly comprehend the complexity of psychological acculturation, it is essential to delve deeply into the multidimensional facets that govern this process.

While the acquisition and adaptation of new cultural elements play a pivotal role in acculturation, it is equally crucial to understand the intricate dynamics of heritage and receiving cultural practices, values, and identifications. It is essential to provide guidance and support for individuals to effectively adapt to their new culture at the school and family level [7]. Various social change theories underscore the significance of intercultural communication and empathy-building in facilitating constructive acculturation processes and fostering social change. Social change theories highlight the role of education, intergroup dialogue, and inclusive

policies in promoting cultural exchange, understanding, and mutual respect among diverse communities.

Long-Term Communicative Engagements

The adaptation to the new cultural pattern is not a short-term phenomenon. The process of acculturation unfolds through extensive communicative engagements between individuals and their host environment. Over time, these interactions lead to the assimilation of individuals into the mainstream culture. This is the long-term process with the communication involvement and adjustment to the new elements. The long-term psychological consequences of acculturation are highly variable, depending on a complex interplay of individual, social, and contextual factors [8]. It is crucial to acknowledge the transformative power of prolonged and immersive experiences in shaping the acculturation process. However, psychologically it may create stress, when the process starts establishing a sense of identity and belonging this takes long-term engagement and reduces the created stress. In the study of psychological acculturation, it is essential to acknowledge the pivotal roles played by cultural competence and social identity. These factors significantly impact an individual's ability to navigate and adapt within a new cultural context, shaping their acculturation experiences in profound ways.

Cultural competence is the ability to understand and or to adopt the new cultural situation, which leads to acculturation. However, social identity is eminent in this process as it is a long-term role of an individual. Long-term communicative engagements form an essential part of the acculturation process, shaping individuals through immersive experiences and interactions within the host environment. These experiences have a transformative impact, leading to the assimilation of individuals into the mainstream culture.

Addressing Social Stigma

Stigma is treating an individual or a group negatively because of a particular characteristic or attribute such as cultural background, disability, skin colour etc. Stigmatization involves specific social-cognitive processes, including stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. Cambridge University dictionary defines Stigma as, 'a strong feeling of disapproval that most people in society have about something, especially when this is unfair'. Studies have proven that social stigma can create a feeling of shame, hopelessness, isolation and low confidence at the individual level. In this context, the impact of social stigma on the acculturation process cannot be overlooked. Individuals and communities may encounter various forms of social stigma as they navigate acculturation, highlighting the need to address and mitigate the detrimental effects of stigmatization within the broader framework of psychological acculturation.

The process of acculturation involves two factors, the host culture, and the new member of the cultural practice. The host culture can have a stigma on the new members [9]. The ethnocentric behaviour of the new member can also be one of the reasons for the stigma. It is important to address the stigmatization at the early stage to ensure it may not impact the individual's socialization or the acculturation process. However, the inbuilt stigmatization is an important factor in problems. A certain amount of work to create awareness of the stigmatization of any of the issues would be a notable aspect.

The Depth of Acculturation Theory and Sociocultural Framework

In conclusion, psychological service providers need a sociocultural framework that considers the diversity of values, interactional styles, and cultural expectations. This framework should include multicultural assessment and intervention skills, an understanding of the impact of culture and ethnicity/race on development, recognition of the influence of socioeconomic and political factors on diverse populations, support in maintaining individual sociocultural identities, and an understanding of how culture, gender, and sexual orientation interact with behaviour and needs. In conclusion, the various sources highlight the importance of studying and understanding acculturation processes in order to navigate the complexities of multicultural societies [10-14]. The knowledge and skills acquired through a sociocultural framework can enable psychological service providers to effectively address the needs and challenges faced by diverse populations in acculturating to new cultural environments. In conclusion, the sources emphasize the need for cultural competence and the integration of evidence-based practice in mental health services.

The psychological service providers, equipped with a sociocultural framework that considers the diversity of values, interactional styles, and cultural expectations, can effectively address the needs and challenges faced by diverse populations in acculturating to new cultural environments. This underscores the significance of integrating cultural competence and evidence-based practice in mental health services and recognises the importance of individualist and collectivist cultural values in shaping identity formation and adherence to societal norms.

Laying the Foundation for Comprehensive Insights

The measurement of psychological acculturation is a critical area of research, as it provides insights into the multifaceted

nature of this process. Bi dimensional scales that assess both overt behaviours and internal domains offer a more comprehensive understanding of an individual's level of acculturation. These scales must be carefully examined in relation to the actual exposure and involvement of individuals in each culture, as well as the influence of sociocultural factors on the course of acculturation. The parallel application of qualitative and quantitative methods can further enhance the validity of acculturation assessments, allowing for a deeper exploration of the lived experiences and personal narratives of individuals undergoing this transformative process.

By recognising and respecting the richness of diverse cultural traditions, societies can harness the synergies arising from acculturation to co-create a more equitable and cohesive social landscape. The multifaceted dimensions of acculturation offer a foundation for advancing knowledge and practices in the field of psychological acculturation, fostering meaningful dialogues, and promoting cultural diversity and social equity. This approach should aim to reduce the negative impacts of acculturation stress and enhance individuals' well-being by promoting strategies that foster integration, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging [1]. Positive outcomes, such as increased intercultural competence and personal growth, can be facilitated by strategies that promote integration and a sense of belonging in the host culture. Conversely, negative outcomes, such as acculturative stress and identity confusion, may arise when individuals experience significant challenges in adapting to the new cultural environment.

Discussion

Psychological acculturation is a multifaceted process, individual's socialization and cultural change shade life in the acculturation process. Cultural shedding, cultural learning, and conflict associated with behavioural changes and "fitting" into the reception context are part of the acculturative process. Conflict can lead to stress reactions and other psychological issues on an individual basis. Several passive or active coping strategies can be used to handle a problematic acculturation experience. Various factors have an impact at the group and individual level considering cultural and social changes. These factors include the expectations of the group, the presence of social support, and the individual's cultural background. Understanding these factors can help individuals or groups to better cope with acculturative stress. It is also important to recognize signs of acculturative stress in oneself or in others. Seeking help early can help prevent long-term negative effects on individual behaviour and minimising the social stigmatization.

Conclusion

Acculturation plays an important role in the individual's life. This process has an impact on the individual's behaviour. The multifaceted process of psychological acculturation highlights the significance of individualist and collectivist cultural values in shaping identity formation, relationships with others, and adherence to societal norms. Delving into the multidimensional aspects of psychological acculturation reveals a rich tapestry of experiences and factors that influence the adaptation process. It is evident that the interplay between heritage and receiving cultural practices is not simply a one-way assimilation, but rather a dynamic interaction that involves both the adoption of new cultural elements and the adaptation of original cultural habits. Acculturations have impacted an individual's behaviour in various aspects and works as an important adoption process of new cultural norms for the individuals in the society.

References

1. Sam DL, Berry JW (2006) *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation psychology*. Cambridge University Press.
2. Haider M (2020) Gendered Acculturation Pakistani International Graduate Students Navigating US Culture. *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 43(2).
3. Berry J (2002) Conceptual approaches to acculturation. In KM Chun, et al. (Eds.), *Acculturation Advances in theory measurement and applied research* pp: 260.
4. Carla Moleiro, Ines Ratinho, Sonia F Bernardes (2017) Autonomy-connectedness in collectivistic cultures: An exploratory cross cultural study among Portuguese natives Cape Verdean and Chinese people residing in Portugal. *Personality and individual differences* 104: 23-38.
5. Ozer Simon (2019) Towards a Psychology of Cultural Globalisation A Sense of Self in a Changing World. *Psychology and Developing Societies* 31(1): 162-186.
6. Ali Syed S (2008) Understanding Acculturation among Second Generation South Asian Muslims in the United States. *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 42(3): 383-411.
7. Benet Martinez V, Leu J, Lee F, Morris MW (2002) Negotiating Biculturalism Cultural frame switching in Biculturalism with oppositional versus compatible cultural identities. *Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology* 33(5): 492-516.
8. Bourhis R, Moise LC, Perreault S, Senecal S (1997) Towards an interactive acculturation model A social psychological approach. *International Journal of Psychology* 32(6): 369-386.
9. Bridley A, Daffin LW (2018) *Essentials of Abnormal Psychology* 1st Edition. Washington State University.
10. Cobb CL, Xie D, Meca A, Schwartz SJ (2016) Acculturation, Discrimination & Depression among Undocumented Latino/as in the United States. *Cultur Divers Ethnic Minor Psychol* 23(2): 258-268.
11. Friberg JH (2019) Does Selective Acculturation Work Cultural Orientations Educational Aspirations and School Effort among Children of Immigrants in Norway. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 45(15): 2844-2863.
12. Ndika N (2013) Acculturation A Pilot Study on Nigerians in America and Their Coping Strategies. *Sage Open* 3(4).
13. Sue DW, Sue D (2008) *Counselling the Culturally Diverse Theory and practice* (5th ed.). Hoboken: Wiley.
14. Josep U, Judit J, Fernando S, Cecilio L (2023) People in contact languages in contact A multi group analysis of the effects of interethnic contact on acculturation attitudes. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 1-14.