Modern Research on the Impact of Culture on Human Psychology

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Keywords: National culture, National character, Consciousness, Psychology, Emotions, Cognition development, Intellect.

Abstract. The question of national culture’s influence on human psychology is rather debatable today. Is there causation? What kind of mechanism is there? How human’s behavior and thought are determined by national culture? In each culture, people in their own way see and organize the world around them in their minds. These differences are explained by culturally determined experiences. Modern researchers recognize the influence of cultural practices, the axiological experience of society on the course of cognitive processes, the formation of emotional behavior and certain skills of representatives of the corresponding society. There is no doubt that there is a universal potential that assumes properties of the nervous system that are common to all people, but cultural practices, differences in values, and everyday activities form their own style of thinking and behavior.

Activities, behavior are determined by the value orientations of culture, ideas about the ego. Historical and cultural experience, the process of adaptation and adaptation contribute to the development of certain, the most appropriate behavioral strategies, the formation of skills determined by this context, the formation of a psychological type of personality that possesses the necessary character traits for the most comfortable existence. The study of cognition and cognitive processes in different cultures is extremely instructive, as it provides information on how the environment and other sociocultural factors contribute to the formation and transformation of a person's ability to process information, think and act in this world.

We can talk about the fact of the formation of a number of universal human abilities, the course of cognitive processes, the formation of the psychological type of personality and types of behavior in a social context, in the process of culturally mediated practical activity of members of a given society. The behavior, thinking, emotional side of the personality bears the imprint of the sociocultural environment in which it took place. Cultural factors prescribe what and at what age should be learned, therefore, different types of cultural environment lead to the formation of various abilities. Culture is a means of socialization, the formation of identity and individuality of an individual. The manifestation of the national culture in the psyche and human behavior is a fact of the regulatory and regulatory impact of the cultural value orientations: the peculiarities of the national character are determined by the values of the national culture.

Cross Cultural Investigations of Culture’s Influence on Human Psychology

A review of world scientific literature shows the interest of many researchers in culture, ethnicity, or national origin as determinants in the interpretation of thinking and behavior (K. Girtz, M. Cole, D. Matsumoto, G. Triandis, L. White, etc.). V. Wundt can be called a pioneer in this field because of his interest in the psychology of peoples. In the work «Psychology of Peoples» he offers a psychological interpretation of myth, religion, art [1]. W. Wundt noted that thinking is largely due to language and customs. The problem of cultural representation in the human psyche was developed by L.S. Vygotsky, A.N. Leontiev, A. Luria. Modern studies of the influence of the sociocultural environment on the human psyche unfold in the framework of cross-cultural psychology, developing at the intersection of cultural studies and psychology, which is experiencing a real upsurge today (J. Berry, M. Cole, J. Lonner, D. Matsumoto, J. Miller, G. Triandis, etc.).
The recognition of the important role of the influence of cultural factors on human development is associated with a wide range of long-standing theoretical directions and approaches, including the symbolic interactionism of J. Mead, and K. Levin’s field theory. There is a relationship between the cultural context of human development and those types of behavior that are the norm for individuals formed in a particular culture.

Among researchers there are a number of disagreements regarding the primacy and dependence of the components of this relationship. Culture is considered as allowing or as a limiting factor in behavior. Most cross-cultural theories view culture as a factor preceding behavior, often even as a direct cause of behavior [2]. R. Schweder interprets culture at the same time as a prerequisite and as a consequence of individual behavior [3]. According to J. Berry, culture can and should be considered as the result of human activity, and not just as its determinant or factor preceding this activity [4]. J. Miller notes that personality culture and behavior are inextricably linked components of a single phenomenon, mutually complementary and inseparable from each other [5]. According to J. Adamopoulos and W.J. Lonner, science has not reached a theoretical or methodological level sufficient to bring to a complete reduction of such phenomena (culture and psychology) into a single whole or to accurately describe how these categories of phenomena mutually constitute each other. In our opinion, culture is both the basis and the result of behavior; it, restricting a person to a certain framework, determines the line of behavior, acts as a deterrent or a stimulating factor.

Empirical evidence has shown that the influence of culture on the formation and course of a number of mental processes is essential. The famous researcher of cognitive development L.S. Vygotsky expressed the idea that cognitive development is the result of the interaction of cultural and historical factors. He suggested that the process of cognitive development includes three main components: the use of language, the role of culture and the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development, or the difference between what a person can achieve on his own and what his potential level of cognitive development can achieve with outside assistance or guidance, is a key concept in L.S. Vygotsky on the crucial role of sociocultural influence in the development of the cognitive abilities of an individual.

Cognition, defined as a set of processes during which an individual obtains and uses knowledge about the objects surrounding him, is one of the main mental processes. The study of cognition and cognitive processes in different cultures is extremely instructive, as it provides information on how the environment and other sociocultural factors contribute to the formation and transformation of a person's ability to process information, think and act in this world. The conclusion of such studies, according to R. Mishra, is as follows: cognitive processes are universal in nature, but the essence and direction of their formation is determined by culture [6]. For example, the level of mental abilities also depends on a number of socio-cultural factors, such as economic interests, cultural and educational experience.

National Culture and its Mechanisms of Influence on Human Psychology

In different cultures, people perceive and organize their world in different ways. These differences in cognitive behavior are understood and explained in terms of culturally determined experiences. Cultural differences are more determined by a situation in which certain cognitive processes are used and certain skills are developed [6]. There is a universal development potential associated with the properties of the nervous system common to the species, but cultural practices, difference in values, and everyday activities form their own style of thinking [7]. We can say that cultural factors prescribe what and at what age should be learned, therefore, different types of cultural environment lead to the formation of various abilities. So, D. Matsumoto suggests that the mathematical abilities and memory are well developed among the Japanese, because they don’t use calculators in Japanese schools, they often use retelling rather than written language [8].

Thus, the development of mental processes of a representative of a certain cultural community is determined by the historically developing, culturally mediated practical activities of the members of this community. Learning and thinking are formed in a social context and bear the imprint of culture. Of course, intelligence—as an innate mental ability—does not depend on the nationality of
an individual, but at the same time, its manifestations are always nationally marked. Intelligence cannot be distinguished, “taken away” from consciousness, the latter always bears the national stamp. The presence of consciousness is one of the differential signs of personality. The personality is formed in society in the process of socialization. Consequently, consciousness cannot but bear the distinctive features of the society in which the formation of personality takes place [9].

Not only cognitive processes, but also emotions have a culturally determined character. Studies of emotions played an important role in the writings of Aristotle and Socrates, C. Darwin, J. Piaget, Z. Freud, E. Erickson and others. Six universal facial expressions are distinguished—anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise. But people can modify the expression of emotions in accordance with the cultural norms of the manifestation of emotions. So, in Japanese culture there are norms of manifestation of emotions that prevent the free manifestation of negative emotions in the presence of other people [8], and in French culture the expression of emotions is a sign of sincerity. Studies have confirmed the assumption that sociocultural parameters influence differences in the perception of emotions: representatives of different cultures adopt a certain approach to perception, which is influenced by cultural norms of decoding. Thus, the expression and perception of emotions contains both universal and culturally specific elements.

According to F. Boas, not only our language, but even our emotions are the result of our social life and the history of the people to which we belong [10]. Of course, we cannot fully accept this position of F. Boas, since it demonstrates a view in which the behavior and way of thinking of an individual are entirely explained by social or cultural reasons, and the personality traits of a person and his free will are ignored. But it is impossible to deny that each nation has its own national character, which, according to the data of psychological anthropology, reflects the psychological characteristics of representatives of a particular nation, because in similar conditions representatives of different nations manifest themselves in different ways.

Cultural ideas and cultural practices also influence the formation of moral principles and judgments, and the application of moral standards in everyday situations. Understanding the essence of being depends on the cultural context and the fundamental psychological attitudes associated with this cultural context, and a person acts on the basis of culture, its value attitudes. Since different cultures have different paths to psychological well-being, we can note the difference in identifying cultural, social, spiritual, and behavioral priorities. So, in European cultures, independence and independence are valued higher than harmony with the outside world. Europeans strive to master social and material resources to such an extent that for their own pleasure they become independent and self-sufficient [11].

Marcus and Kitayama suggest that different cultures form a different psychology of the ego, and self-concepts, in turn, in their opinion, largely determine the nature of culture. Describing the cultural possibilities of the «existence» of the ego, researchers distinguish two of its types: an independent self and an interdependent self (which is in a relationship with other people). In the West, an independent self is more widespread, which is characterized by a sense of autonomy and relative isolation from surrounding people. The interdependent self prevails in Asia [12].

G. Triandis, who deals with the issue of the conditionality of social behavior by culture, argues that the latter plays a decisive role in the processes of categorization, association, the formulation of beliefs, assessments, the formation of ideals, values, in the manifestation of aggression, in the pursuit of conformism/domination, etc. [13].

Social Aspect of the Formation of the Human Psyche

The formation of the human psyche is the result of the most complex interaction of the social and biological. The decisive factor in the development of the human psyche is social inheritance. The development and formation of the human personality and behavior is possible only on the basis of a social program and under its control. It is not denied that in the individual specifics of human behavior, a specific role is played by the biology features of an individual individual, however, these biological characteristics are mediated by social conditions through the interaction of the sensory sphere with socio-historical experience. L.S. Vygotsky considers the mental development
of the individual as social, due to the environment. In his opinion, mental functions are internalized relations of the social order [Provided by: 14].

Culture plays a decisive role in shaping a person’s personality. It is an important means of socialization, the formation of identity and individuality. In the absence of culture, human nature would be reduced to basic instincts. It is through culture that a person thinks and feels, behaves in a certain way and interacts with reality. Culture sets the framework for perception in determining what is significant, relevant, and significant.

Discussion of the representation of culture in the human psyche requires a direct appeal to the concept of «psyche». According to A.N. Leontiev, the psyche is a property of living, highly organized material bodies, which consists in their ability to reflect their existing conditions around them, regardless of them. Mental phenomena—sensations, representations, concepts—are more or less accurate and deep reflections, images, images of reality ... [15] (emphasis added by I.M.). From this we can conclude that reality is primary, and «reflections, images» are secondary. The mental reflection characteristic of all «living highly organized material bodies» in a person is distinguished by consciousness, consciousness is a specifically human form of reflection of reality, the highest type of psyche [15]. Reflection is understood as the process of perceiving information while simultaneously processing it cognitively.

The perceived information about an object is determined by a person, classified and placed in a certain place in his existing picture of the world. Consciousness is a product of the development of matter, a product of the development of life. This is the highest form of reflection, specifically human, that arose in the course of historical development [16]. Human consciousness is a reflection of reality, refracted through the prism of socially developed linguistic meanings and concepts [15].

The essence of consciousness is a reflection of reality. Reality is realized by a person insofar as it is reflected through linguistic meanings, therefore, language is real consciousness. Thus, reality is perceived by members of any national cultural community through the prism of linguistic meanings inherent in a given community, socially developed meanings. The word does not reflect the object of reality itself, but its vision, which is imposed on the lonely body of the language with an existing idea in its mind, a concept about this object. The meaning of words is determined not only and not so much by the structure and forms of thinking, as by the mechanisms of life and the types of human activity in the context of which it was formed.

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, the study of the relationship between culture and psychology, considered in the framework of cross-cultural psychology, leads to the conclusion that thinking (conclusions, cognitive processes), emotions and their expression, having a universal foundation, at the same time have a national-cultural marking. Culture and human psychology are in a state of mutual influence. Activities, behavior are determined by the value orientations of culture, ideas about the ego. Historical and cultural experience, the process of adaptation and adaptation contribute to the development of certain, the most appropriate behavioral strategies, the formation of skills determined by this context, the formation of a psychological type of personality that possesses the necessary character traits for the most comfortable existence.

Everything experienced by the human community is reflected in a culture that not only translates the accumulated knowledge and experience, but also passes from generation to generation the most significant, necessary. The national language is a significant factor in the process of the impact of culture on human psychology. Language provides a «toolbox» of thought formation, cognitive processing of reality. The most significant phenomenon for a particular community receives a voluminous layer of linguistic representation.

Language calls a phenomenon/object of reality, contains a value characteristic and forms the corresponding attitude to the phenomenon/object in the speaker and thinker in a given language. We can say that language sets priorities in the human mind, forms an emotional and value attitude, lays down stereotypes of reaction, behavior and perception. Thus, such a phenomenon as a national character is a result of the influence of national culture, it is part of the national culture, as it reflects
its features, expresses its meanings. The manifestation of the national culture in the psyche and human behavior is a fact of the regulatory and regulatory impact of the cultural value orientations: the peculiarities of the national character are determined by the values of the national culture.

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