

Lay Approach of Psychological Flexibility: Concept, Prototype, and Its Application in Multicultural Adaptation

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Abstract : Being psychologically flexible is important, especially, under a globalized cultural milieu. Treating psychological flexibility as a form of multicultural competence, we conducted five studies to construct the lay concept of psychological flexibility (Study 1 and 2) and test the association between psychological flexibility and multicultural adaptation (Study 3-5). In Study 1, we first identified the components of psychological flexibility by prototype analysis among lay Chinese (N = 165) and American (N = 165). In Study 2, we examined the convergent validity of the lay concept of psychological flexibility consisted with hypothesized structures via survey among Chinese (N = 172) and American participants (N = 165). Then, we examined the relationship between psychological flexibility and multicultural orientation in American and Chinese contexts (Study 3, N = 6245), and tested the influence of experimentally-manipulated psychological flexibility on foreign cultural accommodation (Study 4 N = 409; Study 5, N = 320). The results showed, higher flexibility was accompanied by higher cognitive flexibility, emotion reappraisal, resilience, and openness to experience, and lower need for cognition closure; besides, people with high psychological flexible turned out to have stronger multicultural orientation and better multicultural adaptations. Our research highlights the importance of psychological flexibility in multicultural situations and extends the understanding of the relationship between multicultural experience and well-being.

Keywords : adaptation, psychological flexibility, multicultural competence, multicultural orientation

Conference Title : ICPMS 2019 : International Conference on Psychology and Management Sciences

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : April 18-19, 2019