

Interethnic Communication in Multicultural Areas: A Case Study of Intercultural Sensitivity Between Baloch and Persians in Iran

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Abstract : Iran is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups such as Baloch, Kurds, Persians, Lors, Arabs, and Turks. The Persian ethnicity is the largest group, while Baloch people are considered a minority residing on the southeastern border of the country with different language and religion. As a consequence, Political discussions have often prioritized national identity and national security over Baloch ethnic identity. However, to improve intercultural understanding and reduce cultural schemas, it's crucial to decrease ethnocentrism and increase intercultural communication. In the meantime, Kerman, a multicultural province that borders Sistan and Baluchistan, has become a destination for Baloch immigrants. By recognizing the current status of intercultural competence, we can develop effective policies for expanding intercultural communication and creating a more inclusive and peaceful society. As a result, this research aims to study the domain of intercultural sensitivity between Persians and Baloch in Kerman. Therefore, the question is how do Persians and Baloch ethnicities perceive each other? This study represents the first exploration of communication dynamics between Persians and Baloch individuals. Utilizing a qualitative approach, this study employs thematic analysis in conjunction with Bennett's intercultural sensitivities model. The model comprises two components: ethnocentrism, which spans from denial and defense to minimization, and ethno-relativism, which ranges from acceptance and adaptation to integration. To attain this objective, 30 individuals from Persian and Baloch ethnicities were interviewed using a semi-structured format. It analysis suggests that the Baluch and Persians exhibit a range of intercultural sensitivities characterized by defensive and minimizing attitudes in the ethnocentrism domain, and accepting attitudes in the ethno-relativism domain. The concept of minimization involves recognizing the shared humanity and positive schemas of both groups. Furthermore, in the adaptation domain, Persians' efforts to assimilate into Baloch culture at an acceptance level are primarily focused on the civilizational dimension, including using traditional Balochi clothing designs on their clothes. The Persians hold intercultural schemas about the Baloch people, including notions of religious fanaticism, tribalism, poverty, smuggling, and a nomadic way of life. Conversely, the Baloch people have intercultural schemas about Persians including religious fanaticism, disdain towards the Baloch, and ethnocentrism. Both groups tend to tie ethnicity to religion and judge each other accordingly. Also, the origin of these schemas is in the representation of the media and the encounter without interaction between the two ethnic groups. These findings indicate that they have not received adaptation and integration levels in ethno-relativism. Furthermore, the results indicate that developing personal communication in multicultural environments reduces intercultural sensitivity, and increases positive interactions and civilizational dialogues. People can understand each other better and perform better in their daily lives.

Keywords : intercultural communication, intercultural sensitivity, interethnic communication, Iran, Baloch, Persians

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