A Cross-Cultural Lens Analysis of Healthcare Practitioners’ Perceptions of People with Parkinson’s Disease

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INTRODUCTION

- Facial masking is a physical symptom of Parkinson’s disease (PD) that impairs facial expression.
- Decades of research have shown healthcare practitioners make inaccurate, negatively biased judgments about the personalities of targets with PD that are biased by masking.
- This study examined the influence of culture on practitioners’ accuracy in judging the personality traits of people with PD. It included practitioners and targets with PD from the United States (US) and Taiwan (TW).
- We examined three possible mechanisms for the influence of culture on the accuracy of personality trait judgments.

METHOD

- A lens model (Brunswik, 1955) was used to describe how practitioners viewed targets’ personalities. It yields accuracy scores, describes the behaviors associated with an attribute, and the way the behaviors are interpreted by perceivers.

RESULTS

- Agreeableness: US practitioners judged agreeableness more accurately than TW practitioners, but not US, targets significantly better than chance (p < .01).
- Conscientiousness: TW practitioners judged conscientiousness more accurately than US practitioners. All practitioners judged TW targets more accurately than US targets. Both US and TW practitioners judged conscientiousness accurately in TW, but not US, targets significantly better than chance (r = -.23, p < .05).
- Emotional Stability: TW practitioners judged emotional stability more accurately in TW targets than in US targets. Both practitioners judged emotional stability in TW, but not US, targets significantly better than chance. (r = .17, p < .05).

CONCLUSIONS

- Agreement: US practitioners judged agreeableness more accurately than TW practitioners. All practitioners judged TW targets more accurately than US targets. Both US and TW practitioners judged agreeableness accurately in TW, but not US, targets significantly better than chance (r = -.23, p < .05).
- Conscientiousness: TW practitioners judged conscientiousness more accurately than US practitioners. All practitioners judged TW targets more accurately than US targets. Both US and TW practitioners judged conscientiousness in TW, but not US, targets significantly better than chance. (r = -.17, p < .05).
- Emotional Stability: All practitioners judged emotional stability more accurately in TW targets than in US targets. Both practitioners judged emotional stability in TW, but not US, targets significantly better than chance. (r = .17, p < .05).

- Emotional Stability: There were no significant differences in extraversion judgment accuracy across cultures. All practitioners were significantly better than chance in recognizing extraversion in both target cultures. (r = .72, p < .001).

- Openness: TW practitioners judged openness more accurately than US practitioners. TW targets were judged more accurately than US targets by all practitioners. There was an interaction of practitioner and target culture, with TW practitioners more accurate than US practitioners in judging US targets. US and TW practitioners were significantly better than chance in recognizing openness to experience in both US and TW targets. (r = .19, p < .05).

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CONCLUSIONS

- Culture and facial masking are important moderators of practitioners’ understanding of clients’ character.
- Practitioners across all cultures made personality judgments based on the mask, particularly for extraversion, regardless of whether it was a valid cue.
- Cultural influences on the accuracy of practitioner judgments:
  1. Universality: extraversion was judged at levels above chance and equally accurately across all cultures. Previous work found that judgments of extraversion, compared to other Big Five traits, show the most consensus within and across cultures (Allbright et al., 1997; Ambady, Hallahan & Rosenthal, 1995). Extraversion may be universally recognized.
  2. Cultural differences in trait importance (Williams, Sattelwhite, & Saiz, 1998) may explain the cross-cultural differences in judgment accuracy of agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness.
- Collective/culture traits as more important than individualistic cultures, possibly leading them to encode and decode them differently.
- Ingroup recognition advantage (Meissner & Brigham, 2001) was not supported in this study because practitioners did not recognize traits of same-culture targets more accurately.

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