

Contextualization in Contemporary Cross-Cultural Research: An Agenda for Arbitration

It is a common agenda for cross-cultural or cross-regional researchers to utilize tools and measures that are ubiquitous and universally acceptable in all the cultures. Theoretically speaking, the research protocol for all cross-cultural explorations is such that contextualization must precede the process of exploration of the variables further. However, in practice, these protocols are often violated and researchers opt for a reverse case scenario to explore the variables before they are actually contextualized in a specific cultural setting. To justify this disconnect between the theory and practice in a critical manner, the current project is undertaken. The project aims to locate the point of deviation with special reference to Indian scenario.

For executing the short-term project, the construct of mindfulness will be taken for an in-depth investigation. It is deliberately chosen because most of the mindfulness research has followed meditational experiences and has been seen through an interventional lens, especially in an Indian context. However, none of the attempts have highlighted and checked for the suitability of the mindfulness measures utilized in these sporadic attempts. Therefore, in a bid to look out for the theory-practice disconnect, Indian studies using mindfulness assessment procedures will be undertaken with reference to a primary assessment of one of the available standardized measure called Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness (KIMS). Owing to its ubiquitous cultural invariance in measuring mindfulness among the lay population and that too without the experience of mindfulness meditation, it was selected for this check. KIMS as a 39-item self-report inventory measures four essential mindfulness skills: observing, describing, and acting with awareness and accepting (or allowing) without judgment through scales designed for each of these skills.

The methodology will adopt a mixed methods approach whereby literature review and meta-analysis will be conducted to identify the studies where exploration precedes contextualization and also those studies where contextualization precedes investigation. To substantiate, data would be collected to contextualize KIMS in Indian milieu and the comparisons will be carried out on results.

Though unclear at this stage, the result will possibly suggest that initial exploration of mindfulness bears satisfactory psychometric properties but there exist variations when it comes to preparing a comparative portfolio of both the approaches. Criticisms and generalizations will be provided in light of the comparisons and cross-cultural investigations. Overall, the project will attempt to answer the big question as to whether contextualization should precede exploration or the other way round approach is more suitable.