

# Culture and Cognitive Ability

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## ABSTRACT

At present there is growing interest in exploring the relationship between culture and cognitive abilities of a man. Different articles are coming up on this issue. There are various view points with regard to the types of relationship between culture, intelligence, creativity and cognitive abilities within a person. Some hold the opinion that creativity, intelligence and cognition is positively related to culture. The positive relationship between culture and cognitive abilities and shaping the growth of cognitive abilities in human beings. It has been clearly demonstrated by some scholars that the rich culture has an amplifying on all cognitive and non cognitive abilities. Cultural conditions not only favour the growth of cognition but it is transmitted to the next generation.

**Keywords :** Culture, Cognitive Abilities, Human Beings

## I. INTRODUCTION

The richness of a culture acquired by a person is transmitted to the next generations. Thus culture has far reaching impact on the individual. Culture is mixed with socialization of the child and it is manifested in overt and covert behaviour patterns. But it should not be presumed that culture and cognitive growth run in a parallel form. Each culture has its own peculiarities and characteristics. Differences in cognitive ability and personality characteristics are observed due to differences in various cultures. Here comes the point of cultural facilitation and cultural deprivation. Rich cultures facilitate the growth of cognitive ability share as

deprivation of cultural richness hinders the growth of these abilities. Take the example of an urban living and village living man. Both types of conditions have their own characteristics. Urban life condition favours growth of certain characteristics. Urban life condition favours growth of certain characteristics whereas rural life condition favours the growth of some other characteristics. However it is very difficult to say which of the two living conditions are more culturally rich. A very good example of cultural deprivation has been presented in the study of canal boat children. Gordon (1923,1970) reported that children deprived of socio-cultural facilities exhibited a significant differences in IQ and there was also a negative correlation between age and IQ. Which indicated that

the more the time the children spent in socio-culturally deprived situations, the greater the intelligence was reduced. The study reveals that cultural deprivation has a negative impact on intelligence and other cognitive abilities. The effect of this cultural deprivation increases with age and it lowers the intellectual and other cognitive ability of a man. Stennett (1969) reported that the effect of cultural deprivation in early years of life is more pronounced and its effect may be observed in later years of life.

It has been pointed out earlier that different cultures have their own characteristics. Therefore, different cultures have differential effect on the growth of different cognitive abilities. It may be clearly observed in case of boys and girls. Boys and girls are supposed to be reared in somewhat different cultural settings. Therefore they develop differential cognitive ability. Some studies have clearly demonstrated that boys are more efficient in numerical reasoning whereas girls are more proficient in verbal reasoning. Burg, Bhank and Belmount (1990) conducted a study in Israel. They observed that children from different cultural backgrounds showed different patterns of verbal, numerical and spatial skills. It again shows the distinctiveness of the culture and associated characteristics with different culture.

Some scholars are of the view that culture works as a motivating agent. Parents and teachers are only the agent of this cultural transmission. Carr, Marths and Barkowaki (1990) have similar views about culture. They ground that societies are influenced by culture and children are taught the cultural norms by parents and teachers. In this way culture is a transmitted from generation to generation. They are also of the view that cognitive skills are also transmitted from parents to children. Ray (1990) concluded that culture shapes the personality pattern of the individual. It also prepares the individual for achievement motivation which is a cognitive skill. It has also its effects on anxiety which lead to achievement motivation. Piazsoto (1989) says that

family is model of culture and higher and lower families differ in their cultural model. It is the major cause of difference in cognitive abilities among children. In higher families parents have high aspiration from children. It motivates them to have higher achievement. On the contrary lower family parents have no such aspiration from children- resulting in lower achievement of the children of such families. The same thing has been explained by the researcher in another way also. Higher achiever children of higher family have more intrinsic orientation resulting in high achievement, whereas lower family children have extrinsic orientation. They do not concentrate on achievement. It results in lower achievement. In course of developing differential ability scale Elliot (1990) observed that children of different types of family develop differential ability. It was observed that pre-school childrens of different family differed in their verbal and non-verbal reasoning and also in their spatial ability. It again is a proof of family culture of children which affects them differently.

It is generally observed that culture and religious traditions determine the kind of food essential for development. Sometimes it is seen that it affects the nutrient value of the food intake. Collis and Jens (1968) reported that in parts of Nigeria fruits and vegetables are not considered appropriate foods for pregnant women; coconut milk is thought to produce idiocy in children and eggs to make their and liars. In other cultures other foods are not considered good food for infants (Bihar, 1968) while cultural conditions may not be challenged but it clearly affects the nutrient value of the food intake but it clearly affects the nutrient value of the food intake resulting in poor cognitive development of the infant. So it may be said that culture is indirectly responsible for the poor cognitive development of the child.

Culture has been found to affect specific cognitive abilities. Kamii and Radin (1969), for example, have found that the lower class child is not hadicapped in sensory-motor abilities but seriously

limited in urbanisation, abstraction of attributes and relationship and special reasoning. De Aremengol, Goldstein and Lomouna (1974) have found social class differences in imitations, comprehension and production of test materials. Hess and Shipman (1965) have observed that cognitive functioning and linguistic codes differ within the cultures; Negroe children of different social strata have been found to differ in cognitive mode due to difference in early experience and socialization. Cohen (1968) has also that socially backward American children have higher comprehension than information scores and a higher incidence of severe visual perceptual dysfunctions. Similarly the studies of Deutsch (1964), Ketz (1967 and Raph (1965) come to the conclusion that children from lower class homes are deficient in auditory discriminations.

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