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Metacognitive Flexibility as A Predictor of Resilience in Multicultural Conflict Contexts

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Abstract

Cultural diversity does not only expand social interaction; it also exposes tensions between competing norms, interpretative habits, and identity claims. In such contexts, conflict escalates less because of disagreement itself than because of cognitive rigidity - the tendency to fix one interpretation as definitive when ambiguity increases. This paper develops a theoretically grounded framework that positions higher-order reflective capacity as a mechanism supporting adaptive functioning under intercultural strain. Metacognitive flexibility is defined here as the ability to regard one's interpretations as revisable, adjust confidence in judgments, shift across social perspectives, and remain cognitively open in conditions of uncertainty. Drawing on research in metacognition, resilience theory, intercultural communication, and cognitive-behavioral models of self-regulation, the paper outlines a methodological pathway for empirically examining these relationships. A mixed-method design is proposed, combining validated psychometric instruments with short-term situational assessments in culturally diverse interaction settings. The central hypothesis is that reflective regulation moderates the impact of intercultural stressors on adaptive functioning by reducing perseverative rumination and reinforcing perceived agency. Rather than treating intercultural tension solely as an issue of emotional control, the framework reframes it as a problem of cognitive self-regulation and proposes a coherent empirical strategy for testing this claim across heterogeneous populations.

Keywords: Acculturative Stress; Adaptive Functioning; Epistemic Regulation; Intercultural Communication; Reflective Agency