

**Applications of Indigenous Psychology: Educational Achievement**

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## **Applications of Indigenous Psychology: Educational Achievement**

Educational attainment has been higher in East-Asian societies compared to Western societies. The higher academic performance is premised on socialization practices in the cultures (Kim & Park, 2007). Findings of indigenous psychology research posit that educational achievement is impacted by self-regulation, interdependence and proxy control, organizational culture, and collective control. This paper contrasts the effects of the factors mentioned above on Western and East-Asian societies. Understanding the impact of cultures on educational attainment is critical in formulating sound education policies.

### **Educational Attainment in East-Asian Cultures**

The East Asian approach to interdependence and proxy control, collective control, self-regulation, and organizational culture contributes to high educational attainment. Park and Kim (2007) propound that the parent-child relationship offers the basis for the development of the self. Parental support, devotion, and support are the fundamental aspects of socialization in East Asia. Kim and Park (2006) assert that these aspects still shape socialization in modern East Asian societies. Mothers maintain close relationships with their children to make them feel secure, create a strong bond, and cater to their children's needs (Park & Kim, 2007). In turn, mothers satisfy children's dependency needs, both physical and emotional.

Additionally, mothers leverage on the bond created to discipline and encourage children to succeed in school. They act as links between the school environment and the home environment by instilling appropriate normative behavior and values. This loyalty and interdependence are transferred from mothers to teachers (Park & Kim, 2007). The relationship between teachers and students is viewed as an extension of the strong parent-child relationship (Park & Kim, 2007). Children feel indebted to their teachers and parents; thus, they strive for

personal excellence to please their teachers and parents. This is visible in the attention and dedication towards schoolwork. Consequently, the commitment to schoolwork to please teachers and parents and avoid guilt lead to higher academic performance.

Similarly, collective control leads to higher educational attainment in the collectivistic East Asian societies. East Asian culture emphasizes cooperation and interdependence (Park & Kim, 2007). Consequently, parents, students, and teachers unanimously agree on the pivotal role of academic achievement for societal wellbeing. Academic achievement is collectively emphasized as the primary goal for school children, and they work toward it (Park & Kim, 2007). As promoted by the collectivistic culture, the agreement promotes collective efficacy, thereby motivating students to excel academically.

Self-regulation also affects educational attainment. In Eastern communities, individuals are pressured to contribute to societal wellbeing through hard work. The collectivistic culture views success as shared and collective. What's more, educational success is attributed to individual effort rather than ability (Park & Kim, 2007). The emphasis on self-cultivation challenges students to work harder to improve their academic performance. Consequently, learning involves a commitment to studying, being guided by the teacher, and improving oneself by living ethically and observing rituals (Tan, 2017). The view of academic attainment as a result of the commitment to studying rather than ability challenges evoke a strong desire to improve, thereby leading to higher education achievement.

Lastly, organizational culture impacts educational attainment in East Asia. Park and Kim (2007) posit that East Asians value human-relatedness. Consequently, society encourages cooperation, paternalism, and contribution to the group (Park & Kim, 2007). Emphasis on group work and cooperation improves educational achievement (Jamaludin & Mokhtar, 2018).

Additionally, students are looked after, like parents and their children (Park & Kim, 2007). This encourages loyalty and hard work. Social striving improves educational attainment among Asians.

### **Educational Achievement in the United States**

The absence of interdependence and proxy control, collective control, self-regulation, and organizational culture leads to low educational achievement in the US. Unlike East Asians, Americans' individualistic culture hinders cooperation and teamwork among students (Park & Kim, 2007). Besides, American students are more disruptive, less attentive, and less dedicated to schoolwork than East Asians (Park & Kim, 2007). Moreover, proxy control in East Asians is replaced with primary control, which lets students control their actions. The absence of a guiding force lowers student's commitment to their studies. Consequently, the lack of proxy control leads to low educational achievement.

Additionally, individualistic American values affect educational achievement. Park and Kim (2007) assert that the individualistic values are incongruent with the teacher-student relationship and the hierarchical classroom structure where the teacher is the central authority. Besides, Americans emphasize the development of talent (Park & Kim, 2007; Park & Kim, 2006). This makes academic achievement a primary goal. Lastly, the diverse viewpoints stemming from the individualistic society create conflicts among parents, students, and teachers. The lack of a unity of purpose in academic matters affects a student's performance.

Additionally, the lack of emphasis on persistent effort affects educational attainment in Western culture. As highlighted by Park and Kim (2007), Americans emphasize ability and natural talent. Consequently, parents and teachers attribute poor performance in academics to the absence of innate ability. This discourages weaker students from improving their academic

performance since innate abilities are considered non-modifiable (Marsh et al., 2016). European-American students, parents, and teachers are most likely to attribute failure to innate ability. The American view of academic achievement as a gift explains the low academic achievement in the culture.

Lastly, the Americans' emphasis on individual rights and competition hinders academic achievement. In American culture, individual effort is rewarded more than group work. The view of educational achievement as an innate ability and the emphasis on competition and individual work causes student disengagement in the learning process. Moreover, students become social loafers (Park & Kim, 2006). This affects the overall learning outcome as weak students lose interest in learning.

### **Modeling of the East Asian Approach into American Culture**

The East Asian approach to interdependence and proxy control, self-regulation, collective control, and organizational culture can be "imported" to increase educational achievement. The adoption of the East Asian approach can be facilitated by initiating behavior change through parents and teachers, who later pass it on to children. Teachers and parents can be enlightened through a community empowerment program delivered through mixed change strategies—micro, macro, and meso strategies.

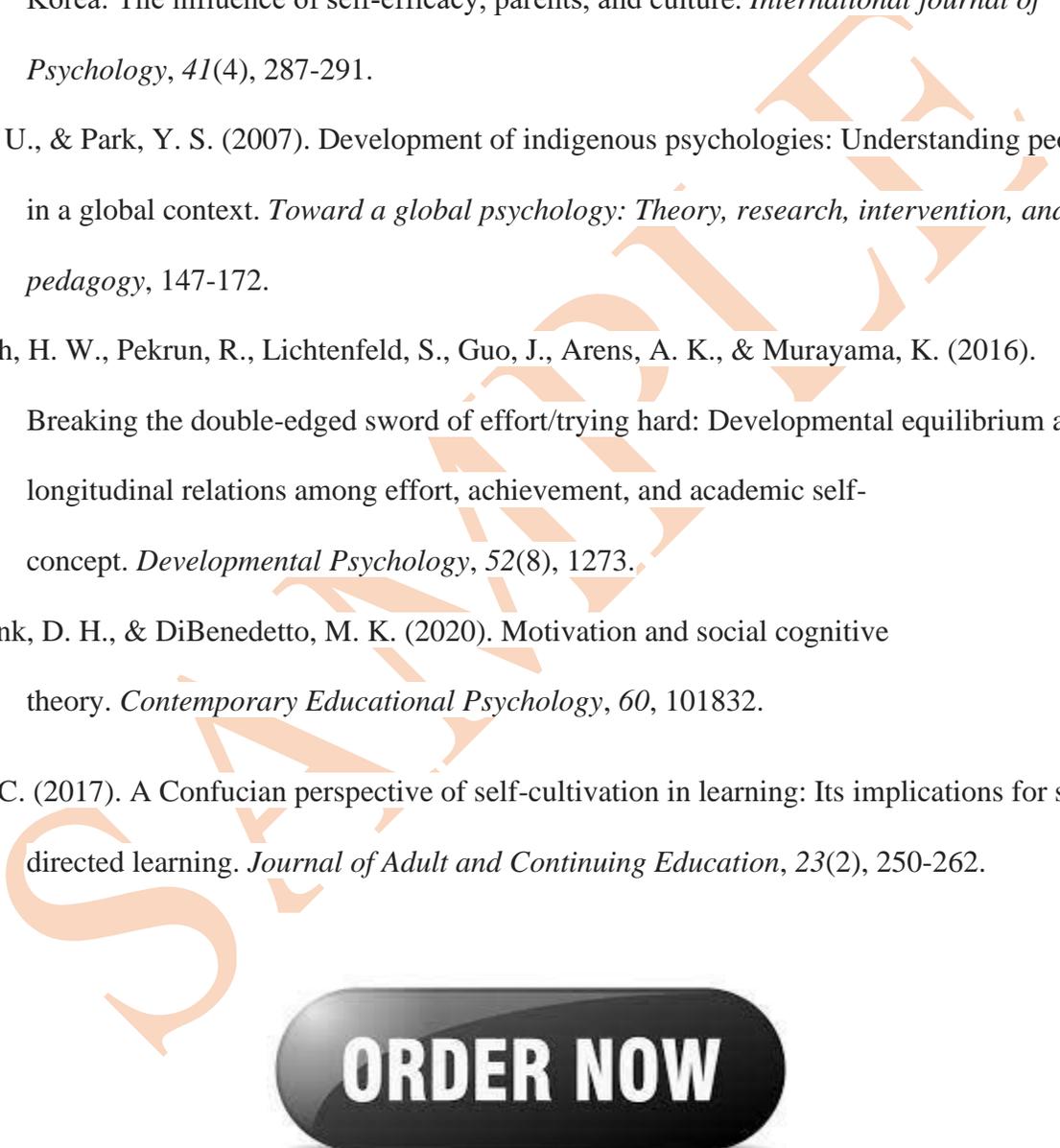
As highlighted in the social learning theory, students can learn the new behavior by observing their parents and teachers (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). The models should depict the East Asian traits such as valuing collective work, viewing educational achievement as an individual effort rather than innate ability, and emphasizing education. The desired traits, such as social striving and individual efforts, should be reinforced by rewarding collective efforts (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Similarly, academic excellence should be stressed by rewarding

it. Modeling these behaviors will lead to a behavior change among American students, thereby improving academic achievement.

In brief, indigenous psychology has provided a breakthrough in understanding cultural differences in educational attainment. Higher academic performance is attributed to socialization practices among cultures. East Asians have a higher educational achievement due to the presence of interdependence and proxy control and the view of success as shared and collective and shared as influenced by the collectivist culture. Conversely, the individualistic American culture explains the lower educational attainment in the US. The East Asian culture can be modeled into American culture through social modeling.

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