



Journal Homepage: -[www.journalijar.com](http://www.journalijar.com)

## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/13118

DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/13118>



### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### SOCIAL ACCULTURATION, WORKPLACE INCIVILITY AND DIVERSITY

Junie Elizabeth<sup>1</sup> and Neethika Raveendran<sup>2</sup>

1. Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Christ University, Bangalore.
2. Research Scholar, Institute of Management, Christ University, Bangalore.

#### Manuscript Info

##### Manuscript History

Received: 05 May 2021

Final Accepted: 10 June 2021

Published: July 2021

##### Key words:-

Social Acculturation, Incivility,  
Diversity And Inclusion

#### Abstract

The advent and dissemination of technology had made it possible for people to move from one region to another. The movement of people from one geographical area to another resulted in the transfer and exchange of cultures and ways of life. When individuals move from one location to another, they often experience culture shock, given that the culture they are used to is different from the one they have gone to. To adapt, these individuals had to learn and accept the new way of life so as to successfully live and work in a new environment. The process by which an individual acquires, adjusts, and adapts to a new culture is known as social acculturation. In this article, an analysis is made on the impact of social acculturation on the efforts to fight workplace incivility and in the promotion of diversity and inclusivity. The analysis showed that. Through social acculturation, individuals who visited a new environment for the first time experienced acculturative stress. The stress caused those affected to behave in a way that fostered incivility at the workplace. Some of the incivil behaviors expressed by immigrant workers include absenteeism, laziness at work, depression, among others. Social acculturation had also played a role in the assimilation of bad behaviors carried from one culture into a new one by replacing them with the most dominant culture, thus eliminating work-related incivility among new immigrants. Social acculturation had also been crucial in enhancing inclusivity and diversity. Social acculturation enabled the sharing of different cultures through the exchange of food, language, and religion. These cultural phenomenon played important roles in bringing people from diverse backgrounds together, thus fostering diversity and inclusivity regardless among global populations regardless of individual culture and social backgrounds. Acculturation had also played a key role in enhancing globalization which is the most significant arena where diversity and inclusivity play out. By exchanging and adapting to a new culture, people were able to work and live together in peace and harmony.

Copy Right, IJAR, 2021., All rights reserved.

#### Introduction:-

Every employer hopes to work with a team that is peaceful and comparative with one another as well as respective and supportive of each other. The success of any business entity is measured by the level of civility and cooperation

**Corresponding Author:- Junie Elizabeth**

**Address:-** Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Christ University, Bangalore.

among its employees. Every employee within a business organization works towards one common objective: the company's mission and vision. If all employees work individually and cooperate, then they will attain their common mission and aims sooner than later. However, the preceding sentiments can only be achieved under an ideal situation; the reality is that employees within any organization usually disagree with one another; some fight within the organization's premises while others exhibit a lack of teamwork and rarely cooperate with other employees (Van Dam, 2013). Different employees within an organization come from different backgrounds and have different personalities; a combination of all these personalities often results in workplace incivility. However, through social acculturation, the employees from different backgrounds will appreciate, acknowledge and accept their diverse backgrounds, thus promoting peaceful existence at work. The HRM is responsible for establishing work culture and promoting diversity and inclusivity in an organization: this functions to ensure that all employees, irrespective of their culture, perform their duties in peace and harmony. The HRM, therefore, facilitates social acculturation among employees by coming up with socially inclusive practices. This paper explores social acculturation, work place incivility and diversity.

## **Literature Review:-**

### **Social Acculturation**

Social acculturation is a psychological process by which an individual or group of people acquire, adjust and adapt to a new way of doing things. Social acculturation occurs when an individual finds themselves in a place where the culture and way of doing things are different from those they are used to. Acculturation can also occur when a new culture is introduced in a community or at an individual's work place (Sam & Berry, 2010). At work, social acculturation occurs when an employee finds a job in a place where the culture and ways of doing things differ from that of the place they come from. For example, The United States culture and ways of life are different from that of Africa; thus, when an individual from Africa finds work in America, they will enter a different culture and must therefore adapt to this new culture if they are to fulfil their responsibility successfully. Social acculturation can also occur when an organization changes its management, especially when the new management comes in with new ways of doing things which employees are not conversant with. Although humanity is psychologically made to adapt to different situations and life circumstances, they often adapt to the most prevailing circumstance and situations. In social acculturation, individuals or groups of people who find themselves in a new culture often adopt the dominant culture (Schwartz et al., 2010).

### **Social acculturation and work place incivility**

Workplace incivility is the uncivilized behaviors of employees within the work premises; they may include rudeness, absenteeism, hooliganism, vandalisation of work equipment, stealing work equipment, drunkards at the workplace and threatening other employees, among others. These are behaviors that are considered uncivil, and employees who exhibit these behaviors are liable for punishment. However, employees don't just wake up and decide to be incivil; most employee incivility results from an underlying psychological issue: stress, pressure from work, and problems at home, among others. Social acculturation has been documented as the leading cause of stress among employees and immigrants who find themselves in a new culture (Sam & Berry, 2010).

### **Acculturative Stress Theory**

The theory states that the human mind is made in such a way that it resists changes; the mind responds to changes in cultures and ways of doing things through stress. Therefore, acculturative stress is the psychological response of immigrants or workers in a new environment due to their acculturation experiences (Dow, 2011). Several factors can stimulate acculturative stress. Some of these factors include the inability to understand a foreign language: immigrants from non-English speaking countries who find work or visit English-speaking countries often find it challenging to communicate with native English speakers. Because humans are social beings, the inability to communicate can result in a lot of pressure which may cause stress. Immigrants in foreign countries also find it challenging to balance their native cultures with the new culture; this imbalance results in anger and stress. Other factors include navigating the new terrains, homesickness and the difference between the acceptable behaviors of one's native culture and the host native cultures. All these factors put so much pressure on an immigrant employee mind resulting in stress. Acculturative stress is a psychological process. It may manifest in many ways including, anxiety, lack of sleep, making so many mistakes at work, anger, indiscipline, absenteeism, depression, and can also lead to health complications such as high blood pressure (Sam & Berry, 2010).

Social acculturation is a highly tiresome experience, especially acculturation of two extremely different cultures and ways of life. Social acculturation requires one to be comfortable with being lonely, especially within the first few

days or months of their stay in the new environment: this usually results from the inability to interact and make new friends. It requires one to be willing to sleep hungry or miss several meals due to the difference in food eaten in both cultures. It may take time for one to adapt; however, during this time, one can exhibit incivil behaviors in response to the acculturation stresses (Sam & Berry, 2010).

Thanks to globalization, access to education has been made more accessible, and applications to study in any country in the world have been made possible. Studies show that most immigrants in America and Europe are primarily international students. International students in foreign countries where the culture differs from that of their home country usually find it difficult to adapt to the new culture. The language barrier, differences in behaviors, and varying food makes them anxious for months, impacting their academic performance and relationship with other students. This indicates how social acculturation stress can negatively impact an individual (Sam & Berry, 2010).

Given the natural nature of acculturative stress, it poses a significant challenge in fighting workplace incivility. Employers who prefer people from diverse backgrounds, especially people from other countries, experience the most significant impact of social acculturation when fighting workplace incivility. To reduce the pressure experienced by immigrant workers due to culture shocks, many employers that recruit international workers have put in place programs to orient the new worker on the ways of life and the new country's culture. Some employers also appoint local individuals to help the new employee adapt to the new culture. However, these efforts reduce the impact of social acculturation stress but do not eliminate it in its entirety. Studies show that immigrant workers are often associated with incivil behavior at the workplace; this is blamed on the change in culture and lack of knowledge of the preferred codes of conduct of the new culture (Celenk & Van de Vijver, 2011).

Social acculturation also plays a key role in cooling down resistance to change among workers after company mergers. Today, several big companies have been reported to have bought smaller companies whose technology and innovations were viewed as a threat to the bigger company. To acquire the innovations of these smaller companies, several big companies opt to buy or merge with them. The merger results in an exchange of two different work cultures; this usually results in resistance, especially among the minority group. Such resistance is expressed in the form of anxiety, lack of cooperation, indiscipline behaviors, among others. Given that the bigger company retains employees from both companies merging, there may be some incivil behaviors brought by such mergers. Most incivil work-related behaviors are often associated with the smaller company; it is assumed that the larger companies are more established and have a strict and focused culture. However, thanks to the concept of assimilation brought about by social acculturation, the minority group will adopt the new culture as they interact and work with the majority groups. With time, they will accept and internalize the new culture that will be part and parcel of their new life. Such assimilations play a key role in fostering the destruction of incivil behavior at the workplace (Berry, 2017).

### **Effects of Social Acculturation on Promoting Workplace Diversity and Inclusivity**

Research conducted by McKinsey in 2018 revealed that companies whose employees were diverse were associated with higher profits; these companies also fostered an increased value on the company as well as its products. The same study also associated better financial performance. Companies with high ethnic diversity within their employee portfolio were 33% more likely to report higher than average profits as compared to those with too few ethnically diverse employees. With regards to gender, companies whose employees were of mixed gender had a 21% chance of reporting more profits than those whose employee portfolios were not gender-sensitive, an indication of the role of diversity and inclusivity in an organization's success (Laird, 2011).

When people from diverse backgrounds and cultures interact with one another at work, each individual will be exposed to the other's culture. Individual cultures that one has grown up with are extremely difficult to erase. Therefore, when one finds themselves in an environment where the host culture is more pronounced than their own, they will adapt to this new culture and blend it with their own, resulting in a hybrid culture that captures both their own and the host culture. This on its own is proof of how social acculturation fosters diversity and inclusivity. Accepting a foreign culture and conducting oneself based on that culture indicates that social acculturation plays a key role in enhancing the diversity of cultures (Blancero et al., 2018).

Globalization has resulted in a massive exchange of labor among different countries. Such exchanges result in the introduction of employees from different backgrounds and cultures to an organization. At first, the new entrants find

it difficult to blend in; the already existing employees also find it difficult to understand the new employee's ways of life. As a result, the two group's experience a culture clash which makes work difficult. However, through acculturation, the two groups will begin to understand each other's ways of life and accept each other for who they are. This results in the creation of a diverse and inclusive work environment where each employee appreciates each other's culture (Laird, 2011).

Through social acculturation, different people from different backgrounds can introduce their cultures in the new environment they find themselves in and take up the cultures of the new environment and share it with their people back in their countries. Social acculturation has resulted in the introduction of new dress codes, music, food, language and behaviors into a place. They accomplish this by importing these new ways of life into an already existing culture. However, the interpretation of the preceding element introduced into an already existing culture is totally up to the natives of that culture. For example, through globalization, the world has been made to look like a small global village. Technological advances such as the discovery of the airplane and the internet have enabled people from different geographical areas to move freely from one locality to another either physically through locomotives and airplanes or virtually through exploring Facebook pages of individuals living in other areas. The free movement brought about by globalization has played an important role in introducing certain cultures to areas where they were previously not there. The introduction of these foreign cultures has been made possible by social acculturation. In a business context, through benchmarking activities conducted by many organizations (where a company sends delegation to another company in a foreign land to learn their culture and systems so as to bring such ideas back), business organizations have been able to introduce foreign ways of doing things into their organizations resulting in a multicultural organization where diverse ideas are implemented. A number of companies, especially huge international companies, in an attempt to introduce some great cultures seen in foreign countries, have enacted policies that allow them to employ foreigners working and practicing the business culture they desire, thereby fostering inclusivity and diversity in these organizations.

Social acculturation has made it possible for cultural imperialism to prosper. Cultural imperialism is the process by which an individual, a group of people or a nation promotes their culture in another country (Celenk et al., 2011). The objective is to assimilate the culture of those living in those countries by imposing their own. Through social acculturation, several countries of the world have adapted to other countries' local dialects. For example, the proximity between France and Germany has made it possible for Germans around the French border to speak French and the French people around the German border to speak the German language. As a result, the two communities (the French and Germans living around the two countries' borders) that were previously unable to work together due to language barriers can today work together due to social acculturation (Dow, 2011). An indication of how acculturation through adaptation of communication strategies can foster inclusivity and diversity where people from different backgrounds can live and work together in peace and harmony.

### **Discussion:-**

Social acculturation has played a key role in promoting the efforts to fight workplace incivility. Based on Gordon's assimilation theory, immigrants entering a new culture often undergo gradual and steady assimilation into the new ways of doing things. It states that the assimilation is skewed towards the majority culture. Immigrant workers who enter a new territory often adapt to the ways of life of the new environment. Different people have different cultures; what is considered excellent behavior in one culture may be viewed as a bad one in another. For example, in some parts of Europe, drivers are taught to keep left while on the road; however, this is not the case in other parts of the world where the normal behaviors for all drivers are to keep right. When an individual from Europe where their driving culture is to keep left finds themselves in a foreign land and are required to keep right, they will receive such culture change with shock, and most may forget from time to time and opt to drive on the left side as they are used to. However, because the most dominant behavior in the new country is always to keep right while driving, the immigrant driver, through social acculturation, will adapt to the new code of behavior and begin driving on the right side of the road as is the norm (Schoettle & Sivak, 2014).

In this context, incivility would be to break the law by driving on the left side of the road, as is the norm in the immigrant's country. However, in this scenario, social acculturation has destroyed the old culture and facilitated the acceptance of the new culture, thereby preventing any form of incivility within the workplace (the logistic company the immigrant driver is working for). As people from different backgrounds interact with each other, they begin to experience and accept each other's cultures. Through this, one gets assimilated to a new culture, especially the most dominant culture, resulting in changes in behavior that are often in line with the new dominant culture (Berry, 2017).

Immigrant workers entering a new environment for the first time often experience psychological stress. This is because of the tendency of the mind to resist change, mental resistance is part of social acculturation; it is the first step when adapting to change. This type of stress is referred to as social acculturation stress and it negatively impacts an individual behavior at work place. The pressure arising from adapting to a new culture, learning a new language and adapting to the new ways of life causes psychological stress, which may present in the form of depression, anger, indiscipline at the workplace and disagreeing with everyone aimlessly, among others which are part of the incivil behaviors at workplace. This shows how social acculturation can derail the efforts to fight incivility at the workplace.

With regards to promoting diversity and inclusivity, through social acculturation, different people from different backgrounds are able to share their ways of life, including the food they eat and their drinks. When an individual from Africa finds themselves studying in America or a student from America finds work in Africa, the two will be exposed to different lifestyles, including the food they eat. The two individuals will introduce their food and prepare them for the countries they immigrate to. The locals will pick this up from their friends and colleagues, who will learn how to prepare the food and share it with other friends. The exchange of ways of making food from one culture to another results in diversifying meals within a given culture or country. In the long run, society will end up with meals from a different society, given that food is a great connector of people, availability of meals from different cultures plays a key role in attracting foreign visitors who will find it easier to visit such country because they will find food which is similar to their own. This has played a key role in fostering globalization and exchange of labor among countries because those moving in are sure that they will find a good meal similar to the one in their countries (Hartwell et al., 2011). This fosters globalization which is the largest form of global diversity and inclusivity.

### Conclusion:-

In conclusion, social acculturation has played a major role in helping fight against work incivility and influencing work-related incivility. It is like a double-edged sword that can be dangerous as well as beneficial. Social acculturation has resulted in stress-related experiences that have facilitated work incivility. It has also promoted the dissimilation of bad cultures and behaviors, replacing them with good ones depending on the dominant culture, resulting in reduced incivility within the work premises. Social acculturation has also played key roles in enhancing the diversity of cultures through food, language and religion, which plays important roles in bringing people from diverse backgrounds together. As a result, people of many cultural and social backgrounds might feel connected. Acculturation has also aided globalization, which is the most excellent medium in which diversity and inclusivity are depicted. People can work and coexist peacefully by integrating to a new culture effortlessly.

### References:-

1. Berry, J. W. (2017). Theories and models of acculturation. *Oxford handbook of acculturation and health*, 15-27. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190215217.013.2
2. Blancero, D. M., Mouriño-Ruiz, E., & Padilla, A. M. (2018). Latino millennials—The new diverse workforce: Challenges and opportunities. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 40(1), 3-21. doi:10.1177/0739986317754080
3. Celenk, O., & Vijver, F. J. (2011). Assessment of Acculturation: Issues and Overview of Measures. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 8(1). doi:10.9707/2307-0919.1105
4. Dow, H. D. (2011). The acculturation processes: The strategies and factors affecting the degree of acculturation. *Home Health Care Management & Practice*, 23(3), 221-227. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1084822310390877>
5. Espeleta, H. C., Beasley, L., Bohora, S., Ridings, L. E., & Silovsky, J. F. (2019). Depression in Latina mothers: Examining the roles of acculturation, enculturation, social support, and family resources. *Cultural diversity and ethnic minority psychology*, 25(4), 527. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2019-10297-001>
6. Geiger, B. (2013). Female Arab Students' Experience of Acculturation and Cultural Diversity upon Accessing Higher Education in the Northern Galilee-Israel. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 2(3), 91-106. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1067397>
7. Hartwell, H. J., Edwards, J. S., & Brown, L. (2011). Acculturation and food habits: lessons to be learned. *British food journal*. <https://agris.fao.org/agris-search/search.do?recordID=US201400166692>
8. Laird, T. F. N. (2011). Measuring the diversity inclusivity of college courses. *Research in Higher Education*, 52(6), 572-588. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11162-010-9210-3>

9. Lopez-Class, M., Castro, F. G., & Ramirez, A. G. (2011). Conceptions of acculturation: A review and statement of critical issues. *Social science & medicine*, 72(9), 1555-1562. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21489670/>
10. Sam, D. L., & Berry, J. W. (2010). Acculturation: When individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds meet. *Perspectives on psychological science*, 5(4), 472-481. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240286013\\_Acculturation\\_When\\_Individuals\\_and\\_Groups\\_of\\_Different\\_Cultural\\_Backgrounds\\_Meet](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240286013_Acculturation_When_Individuals_and_Groups_of_Different_Cultural_Backgrounds_Meet)
11. Schwartz, S. J., Unger, J. B., Zamboanga, B. L., & Szapocznik, J. (2010). Rethinking the concept of acculturation: implications for theory and research. *American Psychologist*, 65(4), 237. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20455618/>
12. Van Dam, K. (2013). Employee adaptability to change at work: A multidimensional, resource-based framework. *The psychology of change: Viewing change from the employee's perspective*, 123-142. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289396068\\_Employee\\_adaptability\\_to\\_change\\_at\\_work\\_A\\_multidimensional\\_resource-based\\_framework](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289396068_Employee_adaptability_to_change_at_work_A_multidimensional_resource-based_framework)
13. Schoettle, B., & Sivak, M. (2014). A survey of public opinion about autonomous and self-driving vehicles in the US, the UK, and Australia. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Transportation Research Institute. <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/108384>.