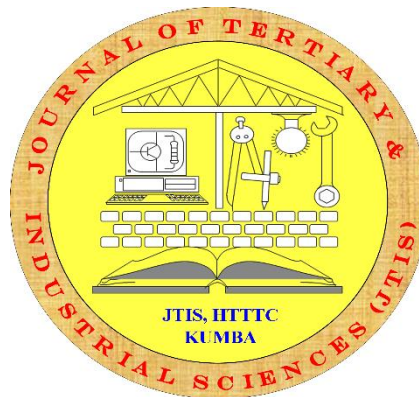


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SCIENCE OF EDUCATION

Dual Mediating Roles of Emotional Intelligence and Coping Strategy in the Link between Cultural Intelligence and Acculturation for African Immigrants in South Korea

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Abstract

This study explored how culturally specific skills and years spent in South Korea is associated with African immigrants' acculturation experience, and also examined the mediating roles of coping strategies and emotional intelligence in the link between cultural intelligence and acculturation. Using a correlational, causal and mediation quantitative research design, data for 302 African immigrants living in South Korea, selected through purposive sampling were analysed using SPSS PROCESS macro. The result revealed a significant association between acculturation and African immigrants' Korean language proficiency and length of stay. Further findings revealed Emotional intelligence and coping had dual mediating role in the relation between cultural intelligence and acculturation. These findings suggest emotional intelligence and coping strategies are critical factors in the acculturation of African immigrants in South Korea. It was recommended that African Immigrants in South Korea, Korean policy makers and administrators of Graduate schools in South Korea should implement strategies that promote high levels of acculturation, cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence and Korean language proficiency amongst immigrants.

Keywords: African immigrants, cultural intelligence, acculturation, emotional intelligence, coping strategy, language proficiency, duration of stay

1. Introduction

The upsurge of international conflicts and political instability in many regions of developing nations and Africa has caused people to migrate and seek refuge in other countries (Crawley, 2010; Liebling et al., 2014; Nakash et al., 2015; Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2010).

In the host country, immigrants face the cultural problem of either adapting to the customs and traditions prevailing in the receiving country or the customs and traditions in their home

country (Kretschmer & Kruse, 2020). In most cases, when communities (groups) with distinct cultural values come in contact, they are bound to experience some sort of conflict (Sam & Berry, 2010). These cultural misunderstandings are caused by a lack of awareness of cultural differences and an inability to understand and adapt one's behaviour in a new environment. Therefore, immigrants understanding and acceptance of the social values of the dominant culture act as a bridge on how to adapt and integrate into situations characterized by cultural differences.

According to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), asylum seekers - immigrants account for 4.6 million of the 89.3 million people displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, or events that seriously disturb public order (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2022). It has been estimated that out of the 16,090 asylum seekers settled in South Korea, 3,216 are African (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017). Asylum seekers, particularly African asylum seekers, are among these international cultural communities and face cultural variation, making it difficult to participate in the host society. Living in a host society can be challenging because they need to employ adaptation preferences, such as learning the host culture and language (Roblain et al., 2017).

The current study is grounded on Berry's Model of Acculturation (Berry, 2003). According to this theory acculturation is the process of adapting to a new culture. John Berry's model is a well-known theory that explains how people navigate this change. Berry's model proposes four main strategies: Assimilation (involves adopting the new culture and leaving behind one's original culture); Integration (is when someone maintains their original culture while also embracing aspects of the new one); Separation (is the opposite, where an individual keeps their original culture and avoids interacting with the new one); and Marginalization (occurs when an individual rejects both their original culture and the new one, which can lead to feelings of being an outsider). An individual may use a different strategy at different times throughout their acculturation journey.

Earley and Ang (2003) define cultural intelligence (CQ) as an individual's ability to function and manage effectively in a culturally diverse setting. However, according to Sternberg and Detterman (1986) construct of metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural cultural intelligence measurements (Turner et al., 1987), greater awareness of one's cultural knowledge, knowledge of the cultural environment, the ability to display an interest in and understand cultural differences, and the capacity to display correct verbal and non-verbal behaviours when interacting (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008; Ang et al., 2015) enhance one's ability to successfully adjust and effectively adapt to a new cultural environment (Ang et al., 2007).

Some studies have demonstrated that communication and language proficiency are essential elements for an individual's or a group's intercultural interchanges (Masgoret & Ward, 2006; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Thus, it has been suggested that groups or individuals with

higher cultural sensitivity acculturate more easily to a new environment (Sharma & Hussain, 2019). Some studies have raised concerns about whether the number of years spent (length of stay) by migrants and asylum seekers affects their cultural understanding (Ochieng & Kim, 2019).

Few studies have revealed the influence of cultural variables on the acculturation of African immigrants in South Korea. However, the majority of the literature is basically focused on individual-level predictors with limited emphasis on multi-level factors that may affect asylum seekers' acculturation attitudes (Kim et al., 2017; Yoon & Fisseha, 2019), and limited studies on using mediation constructs. Considering that it is important and there is limited knowledge on the predictive capacity of cultural intelligence in African immigrants' acculturation attitudes, more knowledge is required.

This study intends to investigate the influence of cultural intelligence on the acculturation of African asylum seekers in South Korea and to further examine whether emotional intelligence and coping strategies mediate the relationship between cultural intelligence and acculturation. The study further sought to determine whether African immigrants' level of acculturation differ according to their Korean language proficiency and length of stay in South Korea. Specifically, the current study intends to: (1) determine whether African immigrants level of acculturation experience differs according to their Korean language proficiency and their length of stay in South Korea; (2) investigate the correlation among the constructs of acculturation, cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, and coping strategy; and (3) examine if emotional intelligence and coping strategy play significant mediating roles in the link between cultural intelligence and acculturation.

However, in the quest to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the researchers put forth the following research questions: (1) Is there a significant difference in African immigrants' level of acculturation according to their Korean language proficiency and length of stay in South Korea? (2) Is there a positive relationship between the construct's emotional intelligence, coping strategies, acculturation, and cultural intelligence? (3) Do emotional intelligence and coping strategies have a mediating effect in the relationship between cultural intelligence and acculturation?

2. Literature review

Acculturation, second language proficiency, and length of stay

Studies of acculturation models have divided acculturation into two categories: unidirectional and bidirectional. Both unidirectional and bidirectional acculturation models have been instrumental in explaining how individuals and groups navigate cultural change. The unidirectional model defines acculturation as the process by which an individual or group adopts the host country's culture and discards its home culture (Gans, 1979). The bidirectional model defines acculturation in terms of the cultural changes that occur in

relation to an individual's or group's host or home culture. These models agree that the acculturation style adopted by an individual or group is influenced by linguistic, social, economic, and political factors in the host country (Flannery et al., 2001).

Bruner (1956), who adopted a unidirectional model to identify the factors that influenced the acculturation of families in Lone Hill, linked the structure of the acquisition of a second language as a determinant of their acculturation process. He focused on determining why some families became more acculturated than others. In this context, acculturation was viewed as the process by which a group abandons its culture to function effectively in a community of different cultures. Accordingly, families in which only the second language was widely spoken acculturated and adapted better to the community than families that considered the second language as a choice.

Similarly, a study conducted by Kagan and Cohen (1990) on international students suggested that the level of acculturation is influenced by the degree to which cultural adjustment is affected by psychosocial factors, including employment level, language spoken at home, having American and native friends, internal decision-making, and work value. The study also indicates that acculturation refers to the integration of the host culture and the abandonment of the home culture. His study assumed that the level of acculturation predicted low or high cultural adjustment. The frequency of speaking a second language, as well as social and economic factors, influence acculturation and the extent of cultural adjustment. Therefore, the more a second language is spoken, the greater the cultural adjustment of an individual to the new environment.

Wilton and Constantine (2003) examined the relationship among length of stay, cultural adjustment, and psychological distress among 90 Asian and Latin American international college students. The main assumption was that length of stay negatively affects psychological distress. Thus, individuals who stay longer in the host country experience less mental distress, which facilitates their acculturation. The psychological distress of these foreign students originated from the fact that they encountered difficulties in adapting to the new cultural environment. Therefore, immigrants who have spent more years in the host country develop the intelligence necessary to improve their proficiency in a second language and, in turn, easily adjust to the host culture.

In addition, the study of acculturation was predominantly bidirectional. In this study, acculturation was divided into four categories (assimilation, integration, marginalization, and separation). These orientations determine the extent to which a person maintains the home culture or adopts the host culture (Berry, 2003). The acculturation strategy adopted depends on an individual's or group's cultural competence to either maintain their heritage culture, values, and behaviours or adopt the cultural values and behaviours of the host culture without abandoning their heritage culture (Ryder et al., 2000; Berry, 2005).

Tran (1990) found that an individual's general understanding, learning methods, and applied knowledge of a second language improved language competence and affected integration. In this study, for example, older Vietnamese refugees and asylum seekers were unable to integrate well into American society because of insufficient second language abilities. Van Tubergen (2010) conducted a similar study of 3,500 refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, former Yugoslavia, and Somalia who settled in the Netherlands. This study assumes that second language exposure affects second language proficiency, length of stay, and area of residence. Second language proficiency influenced acculturation orientation; asylum seekers who successfully completed the integration course had better second language skills. In contrast, length of stay had a negative effect on second language skills; those who stayed for a prolonged period in a refugee camp were found to have poor second language skills.

Conversely, African immigrants experience rejection in dominant countries. A study conducted in Germany revealed concerns about the marginalization of black African immigrants. The study concluded that asylum seekers were discriminated against their right to access healthcare services by administrative and health staff (Scott, 2014).

Cultural intelligence

Cultural intelligence refers to an individual's ability to effectively understand and adapt to multicultural environments (Van Dyne et al., 2010). Cultural intelligence is a tool that helps individuals bridge cultural differences (Wang and Goh, 2020).

Van Dyne et al. (2010) classified cultural intelligence into four subcategories: metacognition, cognition, motivational, and behavioural. "Metacognition" refers to the level at which a person becomes conscious and aware of others' cultures during interactions. People with high metacognitive levels always reflect on and question their cultural assumptions and adjust them when interacting with other cultures. "Cognition" refers to the knowledge an individual has acquired concerning the norms, practices, and conventions of other cultures. This reflects how well a person understands others' cultural environments. "Motivational" refers to the drive and energy that a person possesses to understand other cultures. This is critical because it triggers the energy to function well and interact with new cultures. "Behavioural" refers to a person's ability to carry out appropriate nonverbal and verbal expressions.

Cultural intelligence is a cognitive trait that empowers individuals to understand and adjust to their host culture (Al-Jarrah and Alrabee 2020). Individuals with a high cultural intelligence quotient can easily modify their behaviours and attitudes in a multicultural environment. In other words, a high cultural intelligence quotient provides an individual with the capacity to invest interest and energy in understanding, respecting, reconciling, and adapting to the host culture (Brislin et al., 2006).

Studies linking cultural intelligence and acculturation have found that cultural intelligence significantly predicts an individual's acculturation outcomes during interactions in a multicultural environment (Wang et al., 2023). Sharma and Hussain (2019) studied the role of cultural intelligence in the acculturation outcomes of 246 Northeastern Indians. The research questions focused on the relationship and moderating effect between cultural quotients and psychological adaptation. These findings indicate that the degree of integration and psychological adaptation of Northeastern Indians to mainland India was facilitated by a high level of cultural intelligence.

Chu and Zhu (2023) tested the effects of cultural intelligence on the cultural adaptation of foreign students in China with psychological resilience as the mediator. The study proposed the mechanism that which cultural intelligence will have an impact on foreign student's cultural adaptation. According to the findings cultural intelligence had an impact on the cultural adaptation of foreign students through psychological resilience.

Triandis (2006) considers that in an organizational context, knowledge of cultural intelligence has the potential to influence the successful interaction of an individual across cultures. He proposes that a cultural intelligent person is one who has the traits of which decision-making is executed till information about the other person becomes available, is mindful and situate the current cultural behaviours of the other person. Setti et al. (2020) found that a higher level of cultural intelligence in foreign expatriates working in the energy sector in the Middle East enabled easy cultural adaptation and improved their capacity to perform at work.

The mediation role of emotional intelligence

This study suggests that emotional intelligence is a factor mediating the relationship between cultural intelligence and acculturation. Emotional intelligence comprises an individual's ability to monitor and understand emotions, feelings, and others (Sluyter and Salovey, 1997). Grewal et al. (2006) described an emotionally intelligent person as one who can regulate their emotions, and this trait adds to their ability to easily adapt and integrate into a new environment. Therefore, an emotionally intelligent person has the ability to (i) perceive emotion, that is, the ability to understand non-verbal signs such as vocal and facial recognition, as well as gestures (Mayer, et al., 1990); (ii) regulate their emotions by using their cognitive ability to effectively solve problems, make decisions, reason, and take up new endeavours; and (iii) understand emotions, namely, the ability to feel and assemble what they are experiencing at a particular moment or the ability to organize and understand their and others' emotions (Izard et al., 2000).

Individuals who deal with, identify, and accurately express their emotions are said to be more emotionally intelligent than those who do not (Mayer et al., 2001). Lam and Kirby (2002) found that overall emotional intelligence, perceiving emotions, and regulating

emotions increased the cognitive abilities of 302 undergraduate university students in the Western United States. Conversely, Salvo and Williams (2017) contend that the inability of immigrants to understand and control their emotions (anxiety) acts as a barrier to learning English in the United Kingdom (UK).

Another study on immigrants confirmed that the ability to manage emotions plays a significant role in well-being because they can easily regulate their mood to withstand difficulties in finding jobs, earning money, and obtaining housing (León-Pinilla et al., 2020). This is in accordance with Brackett et al. (2004), who hold that the ability to manage emotions involves using the best strategy to elicit optimal feelings in oneself and others.

The mediation role of coping strategies

Coping strategies play important roles in the adjustment and adaptation of individuals and groups during acculturation. It provides individuals with the skills to appraise the acculturation challenges and stress originating from intercultural contact (Berry, 2006). Therefore, individual coping strategies are essential elements that mediate acculturation (Greer, 2011).

Donnellan et al. (2006) define coping strategies as the precise behavioural and cognitive efforts that individuals use to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events. Coping strategies are classified into two categories: problem-focused coping, which refers to the direct effort available to solve a problem, and emotion-focused coping, which involves the effort employed to reduce the emotional distress associated with stress (Stephenson and DeLongis, 2020).

In the context of acculturation and the mediation effect of coping strategies, the coping style adopted might imply that individuals lack the appropriate methods to withstand acculturation challenges (Corbin et al., 2013). Although the adopted coping strategy mitigates psychological adjustment, it may also be used dysfunctionally (Park and Levenson, 2002; Rüscher et al., 2009).

Matheson et al. (2008) conducted a study on 90 Somalian refugees in Canada to determine whether consistent traumatic encounters undermine their ability to cope with stress-related acculturation challenges. We hypothesized that traumatic experiences are associated with individual coping strategies. Poor coping strategies predicted a reduced effect on self-reported health, elevated morning cortisol levels, and greater cortisol reactivity in response to stressor reminder cues, while coping strategies mediated the relationship between traumatic experiences and health outcomes. This study found that the trauma experienced by Somalian refugees was associated with trauma symptoms and poor health. Coping strategies also mediated the relationship between traumatic experiences and health outcomes. The adoption of a negative coping strategy (avoidance coping) by Somalian refugees reduced their capacity to deal with stress resulting from acculturation challenges.

Baluku (2023) conducted a study on 353 South Sudanese and Somalian immigrants in Uganda and examined the relationship between individual coping strategies, psychological capital, mental health, and quality of life during the COVID-19 pandemic. We hypothesized that individual coping strategies mediate the relationship between refugees' psychological capital and their quality of life. The results indicated that coping with adjustment had an impact on psychological capital, which in turn maintained good mental health and quality of life in refugees.

A study conducted among breast cancer patients diagnosed with stress and quality of life found that engagement coping moderated the effect of symptom stress on mental health quality of life, whereas disengagement coping mediated the effects of both traumatic stress and symptom stress on mental health quality of life (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008).

3. Methods

Research design

A cross-sectional or one-shot survey design was used to evaluate "the dual mediating effects of emotional intelligence and coping strategies on the relationship between cultural intelligence and acculturation." A quantitative survey questionnaire was used to allow the researcher to describe and observe the relationship between the main constructs and to predict the population by drawing inferences from a reasonable sample size of 302 African immigrants in South Korea.

Data collection and research procedure

All constructs in this study were measured using a numbered data questionnaire, which allowed the researchers to describe trends in responses and rely on probability theory to test the research questions or statistical hypotheses (Popper, 2005). A paper survey questionnaire was used to gather data. The researchers contacted all African associations in South Korea, and the research purpose and directions of the questionnaire responses were carefully explained to different African communities. The population of the study includes all African Immigrants living in South Korea., while the sample population included all registered African associations. Using a purposive sampling technique, data for 302 selected Africans from different regions of origin (North Africa, East Africa, West Africa, and South Africa) was analysed after careful screening for missing data.

Research model

The research model used in this study was Model 6, which was adapted from the PROCESS macro by Hayes (2013, 2018). The model is illustrated in Figure 1. Thus, from the research model, the dependent variable is "acculturation," the main independent variable is "cultural intelligence" and the mediating variables are "emotional intelligence" and "coping strategy." Emotional intelligence and coping strategies have been proposed to mediate the relationship between cultural intelligence and acculturation. The model further proposes that cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, and coping strategies significantly predict the acculturation of African asylum seekers in South Korea.

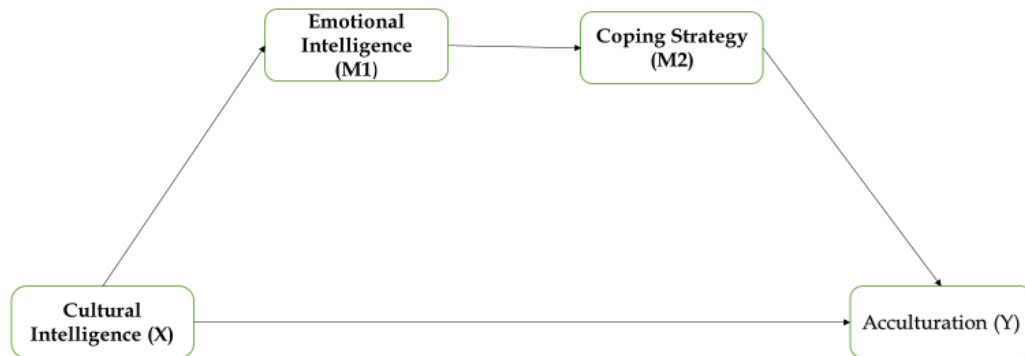


Figure 1: Research Model

Distribution of participants

Data was collected from 302 African immigrants. The distribution of the study's demographic characteristics included age, and the average age of respondents was 32.90 years with a standard deviation of 6.243 years as shown in *table 1*. The minimum age was 18 years, the maximum age was 50 years, and the age range was 32 years. Accordingly, those within the age groups of 25–31 and 32–38 years were the most represented in this study, representing 38.8% and 38.4%, respectively. Those aged between 46 and 50 years were the least, representing only 3.3% of the participants.

According to the region of origin, the highest participation was by African asylum seekers from Central Africa (140), representing 46.4% of the overall participation, followed by those from West Africa (102) (33.8%), East Africa (33) (10.9%), and South Africa (24) (7.9%). Only three North Africans participated in the study.

Additionally, according to education level, African immigrants with a “Master’s degree” were the most represented (117) in this study, representing 38.7% of the total sample, followed by those with a “Bachelor’s degree (84) representing 27.8% of the total sample, then those with a “High School Diploma” (42) representing 13.9%, and those with “Vocational Training” (32) representing 10.6%. Finally, from the bottom up, asylum seekers with education levels “less than a high school diploma” were the least represented (3.0%), followed by those with Ph.Ds. (18), representing 6% of the total sample size.

Furthermore, according to the number of years the African immigrants have lived in South Korea, those who have lived between one and three years represented the highest (106) participation (35.1%), followed by those who had lived for more than five years (82 participants), occupying 27.2% of the total sample, and those who have lived between four

and five years (80), representing 26.5% of the total sample. Finally, immigrants who had lived in Korea for less than one year were the least represented (11.3%).

Finally, according to their level of Korean language proficiency, it was observed that African immigrants with “average (moderate) proficiency” in the Korean language were the most (132) represented in this study (43.7%), while only 2.3% (7 participants) of the participants were found to be “very well proficient” in the Korean language. Furthermore, 97 participants had a “poor level” of “Korean language proficiency,” while 53 of them had a “very poor” proficiency in the Korean language. Moreover, it was further observed that only 13 asylum seekers were “well proficient” in the Korean language.

Table 1: Characteristics of participants

Variables	Sub-constructs	n	%
Gender	Male	200	66.2
	Female	102	33.8
Age	18 to 24 years	13	4.3
	24 to 31 years	117	38.8
	32 to 38 years	116	38.4
	38 to 45 years	46	15.2
	45years plus (+)	10	3.3
	North Africa	3	1.0
Region of origin	South Africa	24	7.9
	Central Africa	140	46.4
	West Africa	102	33.8
	East Africa	33	10.9
Education level	Less than high school	9	3
	High school	42	13.9
	Vocational training	32	10.6
	Bachelor degree	84	27.8
	Masters` degree	117	38.7
	PhD (Doctorate) degree	18	6.0
Length of stay in South Korea	Less than 1 year	34	11.3
	1 ~ 3 years	106	35.1
	4~ 5 years	80	26.5
	Greater than 5 years	82	27.2
Korean language proficiency	Very poor	53	17.5
	Poor	97	32.1
	Moderate	132	43.7
	Well	13	4.3
	Very well	7	2.3

Source: Fieldwork 2024

Measures

All instruments used in this study were tested and proven to be reliable and valid for the measurement of the main constructs. The following research instruments were used to measure the main constructs of cultural intelligence, acculturation, emotional intelligence, and coping strategies:

Cultural intelligence scale (CQS)

This study measured "cultural intelligence" using the "Cultural Intelligence Scale" developed by Ang et al. (2007). The scale is a 20-item questionnaire comprising a combination of four subscales: metacognitive (MC: 4-items; e.g., "I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds"), cognitive (COG: 6-items; e.g., "I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures"), motivational (MOT: 5-items; e.g., "I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me"), and behaviour (BEH: 5-items; e.g., "I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it"). Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The average score for this measure was calculated by averaging the scores of the four dimensions. A higher score indicates higher levels of "cultural intelligence." The reliability values for the four cultural intelligence dimensions (MC, COG, MOT, and BEH) were 0.773, 0.792, 0.745, and 0.687, respectively. However, the overall Cronbach's alpha (α) for this measure was 0.859.

Vancouver Instrument of acculturation (VIA)

The acculturation variable was measured using the Vancouver Instrument of Acculturation, adopted from Paulhus (2013). This tool is a 20-item questionnaire. That was originally measured on a 9-point Likert scale. However, in this study, we adopted a 5-point Likert scale. Participants responded to the items using the scale "1 = strongly disagree to "5 = strongly agree." The VIA measures acculturation in terms of two subcategories: mainstream and heritage acculturation (MA and HA, respectively), with the two subcategories containing 10 items each (e.g., mainstream: "I often participate in mainstream Korean culture;" heritage: "I often participate in my heritage cultural traditions"). All subcategories explained the level of acculturation. Mainstream culture refers to South Korean culture, whereas heritage culture refers to the ethnic cultures of African immigrants in South Korea. The highest score on this scale is 100 points, and the lowest is 20 points. In terms of a scale of 1 to 5, an average acculturation score between 1.00 and 1.50 indicates very low levels; 1.51 to 2.50 indicates low levels; 2.51 and 3.50 indicate moderate levels; 3.51 and 4.50 indicates a great level; and 4.51 to 5.00 indicates a very great level. The VIA has been reported to have good reliability, and Cronbach's alpha (α) was 0.841 in this study.

Emotional intelligence scale (EIS)

The "Emotional Intelligence Scale," as adopted from Schutte et al. (1998), was used to measure the variable "emotional intelligence" in this study and was designed to assess the appraisal, expression, regulation, and utilization of emotions in the self and others. The scale consists of 33 items measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Items 5, 28, and 33 were reverse-coded before the sum or mean was

calculated. Examples of the items include, "I know when to speak about my personal problems to others." However, a total score of "emotional intelligence" is the sum or mean of all the items. Higher scores indicate higher levels of "emotional intelligence," whereas lower scores or the mean indicate lower levels of "emotional intelligence." The Cronbach's alpha (α) for this measure was 0.909.

Coping scale - Life path version

To measure the variable "coping strategy," a scale adopted from Hamby et al. (2015) was used in this study, which was partially adapted from Holahan and Moos (1987) and Spitzberg and Cupach (2008). This is a 13-item scale measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = not at all true about me" to "4 = mostly true about me." This questionnaire assesses cognitive, emotional, and behavioural methods of dealing with problems. An example of the item is "When dealing with problems, I make compromises." The total score was the sum or the mean of all items. The highest total score in terms of sum was 52 points, and the lowest was 13 points. However, in terms of mean, an average coping score of "1.00 to 1.50" indicates a very low level, "1.51 to 2.00" indicates low levels, "2.10 to 2.50" indicates moderate levels, "2.51 to 3.50" indicates high levels, and "3.51 to 4.00" indicates very high levels of coping. In this study, Cronbach's alpha (α) for the coping scale was 0.808 in this study, indicating good reliability.

Data analysis

The data for this study were analysed using the SPSS PROCESS macro. Frequency, reliability, and mean comparison (ANOVA) analyses were performed using the SPSS software. A mediation analysis was conducted using ordinary least squares path analysis with the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013, 2018) in SPSS. Bootstrap confidence intervals to verify the direct, indirect, and pairwise contrast effects were calculated at a 95% confidence level based on 10,000 corrected bootstrap samples. The effects were considered statistically significant if there was no zero between the lower and upper confidence limits. Prior to the analysis, all continuous variables were mean-centred and all negative questions were reverse-coded.

4. Results

The results are presented in the order of the research questions mentioned in the introduction. Thus, mean comparison (ANOVA techniques), correlation, and mediation analyses were performed and are presented as follows:

Mean comparison analysis

A Univariate ANOVA analysis was performed to verify whether there was a statistically significant difference in the level of acculturation according to participant characteristics (length of stay and language proficiency). As can be gleaned from Table 2, univariate ANOVA determined that there was a statistically significant difference in acculturation according to "length of stay" ($F(3, 298) = 9.555; p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.088$), and according to "Korean language proficiency" ($F(4, 297) = 8.465; p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.102$).

According to "length of stay" in South Korea, a "Scheffe" post hoc test revealed that African asylum seekers who have lived above "five years" in South Korea reported a statistically

significantly higher level of “acculturation” ($M = 3.639$) compared to those who have lived “less than one year” ($M = 3.266$) and those between “one and three years” ($M = 3.217$). However, those who had lived in South Korea for between four and five years did not display any statistically significant difference compared to the other subgroups.

Table 2: Differences in “acculturation” levels according to participant’s length of stay and language proficiency.

Constructs	Sub-category	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation	F/t-test	Post hoc test/Scheffe
Years spent in Korea	Less than 1 year	34	3.266	0.472	F (3,298) = 9.555***	BB
	1 ~ 3 years	106	3.217	0.585	$\eta^2=0.088$	B
	4~ 5 years	80	3.394	0.556		AB
	Greater than 5 years	82	3.639	0.538		A
Proficiency in Korean language	Very poor	53	3.038	0.529	F (4, 297) = 8.465***	B
	Poor	97	3.388	0.576	$\eta^2=0.102$	AB
	Moderate	132	3.461	0.526		AB
	Well	13	3.781	0.315		A
	Very well	7	3.771	1.001		AA

Source: Authors. *** $p < 0.001$; η^2 = partial eta squared: measures the size of the effect

Furthermore, according to “Korean language proficiency,” a “Scheffe” post-verification result revealed that African asylum seekers who are “very well” and “well” proficient in the Korean language displayed statistically significantly higher levels of acculturation ($M = 3.781$ and $M = 3.771$, respectively) compared to those who were “very poor” in “Korean language” ($M = 3.038$). However, those with “poor” and “moderate” language proficiency did not present any significant differences from other subgroups.

Correlation and Descriptive results

To check the relationships among the main constructs of this study, a bivariate correlation analysis was performed using Pearson correlation (r).

Correlation results as revealed in Table 3, reveals that all main constructs were significantly positively correlated with each other, and no multicollinearity was observed. Acculturation was observed to be statistically significantly positively correlated to cultural intelligence ($r = 0.457^{***}$), statistically significantly positively correlated to emotional intelligence ($r = 0.410^{***}$), and statistically significantly positively correlated to coping strategy ($r = 0.382^{***}$). Furthermore, cultural intelligence was statistically significantly positively correlated to emotional intelligence ($r = 0.460^{***}$) and statistically significantly positively correlated to coping strategy ($r = 0.429^{***}$); and finally, emotional intelligence was statistically significantly positively correlated to coping strategy ($r = 0.381^{***}$).

Descriptive statistics of the study revealed that on average African asylum seekers exhibited moderate levels of “cultural intelligence” ($M = 3.433$, $SD = 0.559$); moderate levels of “acculturation” ($M = 3.384$, $SD = 0.576$); high levels of “emotional intelligence” ($M = 2.987$, $SD = 0.406$); and high levels of “coping strategy” ($M = 2.789$, $SD = 0.569$). It was also observed that the data for “acculturation,” “emotional intelligence,” and “coping strategy” were all negatively skewed, while the data for “cultural intelligence” were positively skewed. Furthermore, because all skewness values (absolute) were less than three and all kurtosis values (absolute) were less than seven, this implies that the data supported the rule of standard normal distribution. Furthermore, according to the sub-constructs of acculturation, descriptive statistics revealed that participants reported higher average levels of heritage acculturation (HA; $M = 3.611$, $SD = 0.772$) than mainstream acculturation (MA; $M = 3.157$, $SD = 0.726$). It was further observed that among the cultural intelligence sub-groups, metacognitive (MC) presented the highest average level ($M = 3.722$, $SD = 0.809$), while cognitive (COG) displayed the least average levels ($M = 2.959$, $SD = 0.797$).

Table 3: Correlation of main constructs

Variable	Mean(M)	Standard deviation (SD)	CQ(1)	AC(2)	EI(3)	CS(4)
Cultural intelligence (CQ)	3.433	0.559	1			
Acculturation (AC)	3.384	0.576	0.457 ^{***}	1		
Emotional intelligence (EI)	2.987	0.406	0.460 ^{***}	0.410 ^{***}	1	
Coping strategy (CS)	2.789	0.569	0.429 ^{***}	0.382 ^{***}	0.381 ^{***}	1

Source: Authors. ^{***} $p < 0.001$

Dual mediating effects of “emotional intelligence and coping strategy” in the relationship between cultural intelligence and acculturation

In this subsection, we present the results of the dual mediating effects of “emotional intelligence” and “coping strategies” on the relationship between “cultural intelligence” and “acculturation.” We used unstandardized coefficients (*B*) for interpretation.

As can be gleaned from the statistical model (Figure 2) or from table 4, the mediation analysis conducted using ordinary least squares path analysis revealed that “cultural intelligence” had a statistically significant positive influence on “acculturation” ($B = 0.290, p < 0.001$), “emotional intelligence” ($B = 0.335, p < 0.001$), and “coping strategy” ($B = 0.327, p < 0.001$). It was further reported that cultural intelligence indirectly influenced the acculturation of African asylum seekers through its effects on emotional intelligence and coping strategies.

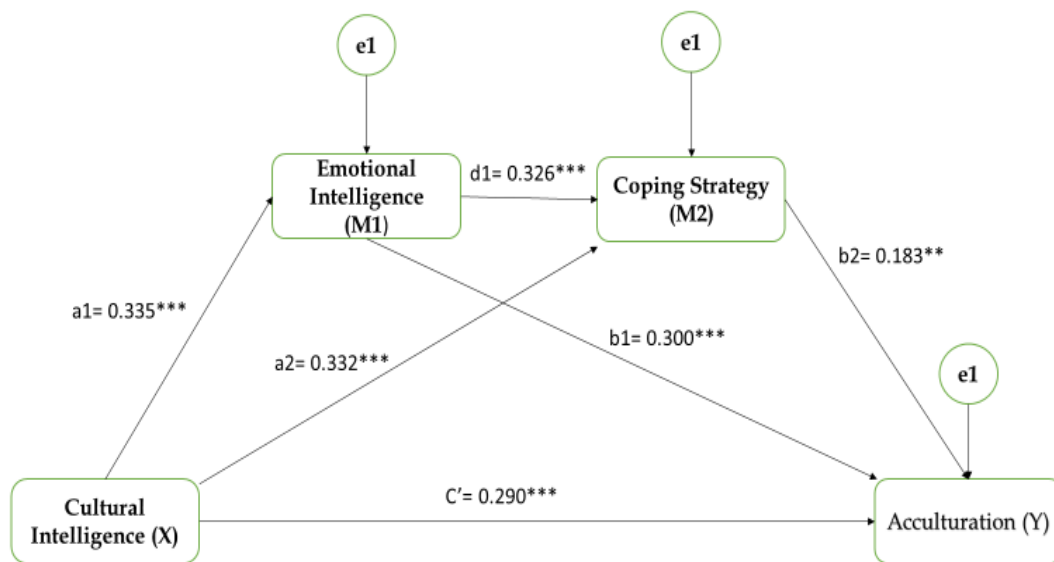


Figure 2: Statistical Model

Furthermore, “emotional intelligence” and coping strategies presented a statistically significant positive effect on acculturation ($B = 0.300, p < 0.001$, and $B = 0.183, p < 0.01$, respectively). It was also observed that “emotional intelligence” significantly positively affects “coping strategy” ($B = 0.326, p < 0.001$). As depicted in Table 4, the overall model

Table 4: Path analysis

Outcome variable Emotional intelligence						
R	R-square	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	p-value

Outcome variable Emotional intelligence							
Model summary	0.4605	0.2121	0.1306	80.7377	1	300	0.0000
Model 1	B	SE	T	p-value	LLCI	ULCI	
Constant	1.8374	0.1296	14.1769	0.0000	1.5823	2.0924	
Cultural intelligence	0.3348	0.0373	8.9854	0.0000	0.2615	0.4082	
Outcome variable Coping strategy							
Model summary	R	R-square	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	p-value
	0.4763	0.2269	0.2517	43.8722	2	299	0.0000
Model 2	B	SE	T	p-value	LLCI	ULCI	
Constant	0.6915	0.2325	2.9744	0.0032	0.2340	1.1491	
Cultural intelligence	0.3272	0.0583	5.6149	0.0000	0.2125	0.4419	
Emotional intelligence	0.3262	0.0801	4.0698	0.0001	0.1685	0.4839	
Outcome variable Acculturation							
Model Summary	R	R-square	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	p-value
	0.5335	0.2846	0.2399	39.5260	3	298	0.0000
Model 3	B	SE	T	p-value	LLCI	ULCI	
Constant	0.9798	0.2203	4.2536	0.0000	0.5265	1.4331	
Cultural intelligence	0.2904	0.0598	4.8543	0.0000	0.1727	0.4082	
Emotional intelligence	0.3000	0.0804	3.7318	0.0002	0.1418	0.4582	
Coping strategy	0.1833	0.0565	3.2457	0.0013	0.0722	0.2944	

Source: Authors

(Model 3) reported that cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, and coping strategies, when taken as a set of predictors, explained 28.5% of the variance in acculturation.

The statistical diagram (Figure 2) demonstrates that “cultural intelligence” affects “acculturation” through four different pathways: the direct path that runs from “cultural intelligence” directly to “acculturation,” the indirect pathway that runs from “cultural intelligence” passing through “emotional intelligence” to “acculturation” (referred to as

Indirect path 1: Ind 1), and the second indirect path that runs from “cultural intelligence” passing through “coping strategy” to “acculturation” (referred to as indirect path 2: Ind 2); and the final pathway is that which runs from “cultural intelligence” passing through “emotional intelligence” to “coping strategy” and then to “acculturation” (referred to as the indirect path 3: Ind 3).

Verifying the mediating effects of “emotional intelligence” and “coping strategy” in the relationship between “cultural intelligence” and “acculturation”

Table 5 reveals the verification of the “indirect effects” and the “pairwise contrast effects.” The results revealed three indirect effects (Ind 1, Ind 2, and Ind 3), all of which were statistically significant.

Table 5: Verification of the mediating effects

	Effect	SE	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Total Effect	0.4709	0.530	8.8928	0.0000	0.3667	0.5751
Direct Effect	0.2904	0.0598	4.8543	0.0000	-0.1727	-0.4082
Indirect effects	Effects (B)	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI		
Total Indirect effect	0.1805	0.0654	0.0704	0.3220		
Ind1: CI → EI → A	0.1005	0.0568	0.0074	0.2281		
Ind2: CI → CoS → A	0.0600	0.0223	0.0156	0.1036		
Ind3: CI → EI → CoS → A	0.0200	0.0106	0.0037	0.0448		
C1: Ind 1 minus Ind 2	0.0405	0.0592	-0.0589	0.1728		
C2: Ind 1 minus Ind 3	0.0804	0.0584	-0.0175	0.2112		
C3: Ind 2 minus Ind 3	0.0400	0.0171	0.0084	0.0751		

Note: C1: contrast effect 1; C2: contrast effect 2; C3: contrast effect 3; Indices 1 = mediating effect of emotional intelligence; Indices 2 = mediating effect of “coping strategy”; Indices 3 = dual mediating effect of “emotional intelligence” and “coping strategy”; CI: cultural intelligence; A: acculturation; EI: emotional intelligence; CoS: coping strategy

Accordingly: indirect effect 1: Ind 1 (mediating effect of “emotional intelligence”) was statistically significant ($B = 0.1005$, LLCI 0.0074 ~ 0.2281 ULCI); indirect effect 2: Ind 2 (mediating effect of “coping strategy”) was also statistically significant ($B = 0.0600$, LLCI 0.0156 ~ 0.1036 ULCI); indirect effect 3: Ind 3 (dual mediating effect of “emotional intelligence” and “coping strategy”) was also statistically significant ($B = 0.0200$, LLCI 0.0037 ~ 0.0448 ULCI). All indirect effects were statistically significant because, at a 95% confidence interval based on 10,000 corrected bootstrap samples, there was no zero between the lower

and upper confidence limits.

Only pairwise contrast effect 3 (C3) was statistically significant ($B = 0.0400$, LLCI 0.0084–0.0751 ULCI). The total indirect effect (Ind 1 + Ind 2 + Ind 3) of “cultural intelligence” on “acculturation” was also statistically significant ($B = 0.1805$, LLCI 0.0704 ~ 0.3220 ULCI). As all indirect effects of cultural intelligence on acculturation were statistically significant, it was verified that emotional intelligence and coping strategies partially mediated the relationship between cultural intelligence and acculturation.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

In the current study, we examined how acculturation is associated with African immigrants' length of stay in South Korea and their Korean language proficiency, the influence of cultural intelligence on acculturation, and the dual mediating roles of emotional intelligence and coping strategies in the association between cultural intelligence and acculturation of African asylum seekers in South Korea.

Our findings from the first research question reported that acculturation was associated with the length of stay of African immigrants in South Korea and their Korean language proficiency. The significant association between acculturation and the length of stay of immigrants suggests that the longer African immigrants reside in the host country, the more they adapt to the culture of the host country. This is evident from the findings of the current study, where African immigrants who have stayed in South Korea for more than five years reported higher levels of acculturation than those who have stayed for less than three years. This finding is consistent with a previous study conducted in Australia among Burmese, Ethiopian, and Congolese refugees and asylum seekers-immigrants (Khawaja & Hebbani, 2019). For instance, Oppedal and Idsoe (2015) assert that length of stay and linguistic competence are essential requirements for unaccompanied minor immigrants' cultural adaptation.

Several other empirical findings also support the significant association between acculturation and language proficiency as reported in the current study (Ćatibušić et al., 2021; Morrice et al., 2021; Sorgen, 2015). Thus, higher levels of language proficiency facilitate communication and improve immigrants' understanding of the host country's culture (Joyce & Liamputtong, 2017; Poppitt & Frey, 2007). For example, a study of Iraqi and Syrian immigrants in Belgium (Roblain et al., 2017) suggested that learning the host language was an important factor in motivating the adoption and the desire to participate in the host culture. Similarly, Lindner et al. (2020) in a study with Syrian immigrants posited that a higher level of English proficiency at home and work predicted higher levels of acculturation among Syrian immigrants from Canada than their counterparts from Germany.

Furthermore, the findings for the second research question revealed that the constructs; cultural intelligence, acculturation, emotional intelligence, and coping strategies were all significantly and positively correlated with each other. Accordingly, the significant positive correlation between cultural intelligence and acculturation indicates that the more knowledgeable African immigrants in South Korea are about Korean culture, the more they adapt to Korean culture. Therefore, it is very important that African immigrants in South Korea fully engage in learning and understanding Korean culture, as this will enable them to easily become culturally immersed in South Korea and thus help reduce their challenges as foreigners. Similarly, Ozer and Schwartz (2021) assert that involvement in destination culture as a culturally intelligent way of applying one's cultural capabilities is of great importance in helping foreign workers adapt to their destination's cultural environment. Immigrants who increasingly immerse themselves in their host culture acculturate and adapt faster than those who do not. This finding is consistent with a systematic literature review revealing that the absence of immigrants associated with the host culture reduced acculturation outcomes (Sheikh & Anderson, 2018).

Additionally, the positive correlation between cultural intelligence and emotional intelligence indicates that the higher the level of emotional intelligence African immigrants possess, the easier it is for them to control their emotions in case of any challenge from Korean culture. Individual differences occur amongst individuals which affects differently the way they react emotionally to challenges. Therefore, African immigrants living in South Korea are encouraged to possess a high level of emotional control (using emotions, reading people, managing emotions, and understanding emotions), as these attributes enable them to function well in a culturally diverse environment. Our findings are consistent with those of a previous study on the cultural intelligence and self-efficacy of healthcare providers for refugees and asylum seekers. In this study, culturally intelligent healthcare providers felt more comfortable helping refugees and asylum seekers (Yalim et al., 2022). Similarly, Gorji and Ghareseflo (2011), in a study of the relationship between cultural intelligence and emotional intelligence with the performance of university employees, found a positive and meaningful relationship between cultural intelligence and emotional intelligence and in all of its dimensions (self-awareness, self-managerial, self-motivational, empathy, and social skills).

Moreover, the positive correlation between cultural intelligence and coping strategy suggests that the more African immigrants possess greater knowledge of the host culture, the more they are able to resolve problems and have a greater ability to alleviate or manage cultural distress. Therefore, African immigrants should endeavour to learn about the culture of their host country to enable them to easily cope with all types of acculturation challenges. This finding is consistent with that of Whittaker et al. (2005), who identified the intervening conditions and consequences related to Somalian refugees and asylum seekers' stress and coping strategies as they tried to adapt to the culture of the host country.

Additionally, the positive correlation between coping strategies and acculturation suggests that when African immigrants develop a good coping style, they can easily resolve and manage cultural problems and distress while adapting to the host country's culture. Some empirical studies have asserted that cultural challenges are among the most critical challenges that immigrants face in destination countries and that adopting a good coping mechanism will improve their acculturation (Halcón et al., 2004). The findings of this study are consistent with those of an adolescent African immigrant in Ireland who adopted a positive (passive) coping style by finding ways to obtain education to adapt and adjust to the acculturation experience (Kennedy, 2014). More so, this finding is consistent with the suggestion of Abraham et al. (2018) that there is a significant association between Eritrean asylum seekers' coping strategies and acculturation. This study found that Eritrean asylum seekers navigated acculturation and adaptation difficulties by adopting coping patterns that included support from asylum centre leaders and staff, help from friends, and religious beliefs.

Furthermore, the positive correlation between emotional intelligence and African immigrants' coping strategies suggests that the further they are able to control and manage their emotions, the more capable they are of resolving problems and managing acculturation difficulties. This assertion is supported by Magro (2009), who suggests a significant association between emotional intelligence and coping with migrated refugees and asylum seekers in Canada.

Additionally, Schmitz and Schmitz (2012) posited that emotional intelligence and its subcomponents are related to beneficial forms of acculturation attitudes and acculturation behaviours. Therefore, immigrants should endeavour to build their level of emotional intelligence (the ability to control and manage emotions positively very well), as this factor will enable them to fully immerse themselves in the culture of the host country. The positive correlation between emotional intelligence and acculturation is strongly supported by previous studies; for example, a study by Akinsulure-Smith et al. (2018) revealed that the trait of emotional intelligence had a positive association with active coping and positive reframing (seeking information, seeking social support, seeking professional help) among immigrant resettlement workers.

Finally, from the perspective of the last research question, this study found that emotional intelligence and coping strategies are good mediating factors in the link between cultural intelligence and acculturation, as reported by participants (African immigrants in Korea). In other words, emotional intelligence and coping strategies are two critically important factors that influence the positive effects of cultural intelligence on the acculturation of African immigrants in South Korea. Therefore, this study suggests the need for African immigrants to develop positive levels of emotional intelligence and good coping skills, as these traits

will help buffer cultural challenges and facilitate their integration into their new environment.

However, some studies have supported emotional intelligence as a mediator of immigrants knowledge of the host culture and acculturation experience (Nickerson et al., 2015). Additionally, other studies have shown that emotional intelligence is a mediator. For instance, Keaten and Kelly (2008) asserted that emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between conversation orientation and reticence. Similarly, Sliter et al. (2013), in a study of service employees, found that emotional intelligence partially mediated the relationships between age and deep acting as well as between age and surface acting. Several other studies reported emotional intelligence as a mediating construct (Abdollahi et al., 2015; Guil et al., 2019; Szcześniak & Stochalska, 2020).

Moreover, some empirical studies have supported the use of coping strategies as a mediating factor. For example, Pereira-Morales et al. (2018) reported that emotional coping styles and psychosocial distress were significant mediators of the link between openness and health-related quality of life. This result is consistent with a previous study that found that emotional intelligence had an indirect effect on the stress and psychological adjustment of North Korean refugees and asylum seekers (Lee, 2018). Similarly, in another study, Kurt et al. (2021) revealed that coping strategies mediated the relationship between traumatic experiences and acculturation experiences of Syrian immigrants in Turkey.

However, this study had some limitations. First, the current study used a cross-sectional status survey that questioned its causal inference; therefore, future studies should consider a multilevel analysis. Second, this study sampled only African immigrants in South Korea, which also limits its generalizability.

Conclusion

In summary, the current study revealed that migrants' length of stay in the host country and language proficiency in the host country are strongly associated with their level of acculturation. The study further revealed that cultural intelligence, acculturation, emotional intelligence, and coping strategies were positively correlated. Finally, the current study found that emotional intelligence, coping strategies, and critical factors, if used as intervention factors, further influenced the positive relationship between cultural intelligence and acculturation in the context of African immigrants in South Korea.

Furthermore, a review of the empirical literature revealed strong supporting evidence of a significant association between the length of stay, language proficiency, and acculturation of migrants. The review of empirical literature further provided strong support for the positive relationship amongst the main constructs (cultural intelligence, acculturation, emotional intelligence, and coping strategy) of the current study while also providing strong supporting evidence of the use of personality traits "emotional intelligence" and "coping

strategy” as mediator variables. However, there is a large gap in research addressing the use of “emotional intelligence” and “coping strategies” as mediating factors that further influence the positive effect of cultural intelligence on the acculturation of migrants (e.g., asylum seekers). This is the gap that the current study attempts to address, as it strongly suggests the use of “emotional intelligence” and “coping strategies” as dual mediating constructs as well as single mediating factors in the link between “cultural intelligence” and “acculturation.”

However, the findings of the current study also contribute to the existing literature on factors that influence the acculturation of immigrants, as they suggest that the use of cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, and coping strategies are critically important factors that help migrants (e.g., asylum seekers, international students, etc.) adapt more easily to a foreign culture.

Implications of the study

The major implication of the current is to ensure immigrants adopts a safe mode of cultural integration into their host country. Adapting too much to the new culture can trigger a sense of guilt or a feeling of losing your connection to your home country. This internal conflict requires finding a balance between integrating and preserving your core identity. However, adopting a good coping style, developing a high level of emotional intelligence is critical for African immigrants, as these factors will enable them easily integrate to the culture of their new environment.

Recommendations

For African immigrants and their families, the research suggests a clear path for successful adaptation after moving: they should aim to integrate by embracing their new culture while also holding on to their own. This is the best approach for individuals, mirroring the advice given to governments and institutions.

South Korean government should ensure the legislation and policies that are been installed with respect to immigrants are fully implemented by all institutions.

Suggestions for further studies

Further studies should involve all immigrants from other countries to ensure generalizability. Similarly, future studies should adopt a longitudinal study design to enable investigations on the pattern of change that might occur amongst immigrants.

Declaration of conflicting interests

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