Self-construal in relation to gender differences and values orientation

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Abstract

The present study explored the pattern of self-construal in relation to gender differences and values orientation among Indian male and females. The results indicate that female participants were more predominant of independent self-construal as well as interdependent self-construal than male counterparts. This study also compared the self-construal of male and females by using the Twenty Statement Test (TST).Self-statements were analysed in terms of five main categories (social identity, ideological beliefs, interest, ambitions and self-evaluation) and three others categories (private self, collective self and public self). Results indicated differential use of the main categories by male and females. Female participants score significantly higher on main categories of TST for collective self, public self, social identity and ambitions than their male counterparts while males scored significantly higher on private self, ideological beliefs and interests than females. In the context of values orientation, females scored significantly higher on religious value, democratic values than male counterparts while male scored significantly higher on hedonistic values and health values than their female counterparts. The present study was also analysed in terms of grade perspectives. It was found that there is no close polarization either in favour of independent and interdependent modes of self-construal at grade level. Finding also indicates that 12th grade participants scored significantly higher on main categories of TST for collective self, public self, social identities and ambitions than undergraduate participants while undergraduate participants scored significantly higher on private self, ideological beliefs and self-evaluations than 12th grade participants. Some categories of self-construal are positively related with some personal values while some are negatively related.

Key Words: self-construal, values, self-concepts, self-identity

Introduction

Self and values are cultural in origin. The rules of behaviour and the value systems of society cover an enormous range of phenomena from the daily domestic practices of an individual's family and personal network through the public expectations of the community concerning the behaviour appropriate to age, class, gender, and other social categories to understanding of societal structures and elaboration of moral systems. Learning to operate effectively in respect of each of these involves not only building a massive information base but also changing personal responsibilities and capacities for action i.e.; shifting through childhood from dependency to autonomy.

The self is the centre of each person's social universe. One's self-identity or self-concept acquired through introduction with other people beginning with immediate family members and then broadening to interaction with those beyond the family. It is commonly assumed that one's self concept is formed in the context of socialinteraction. We each define ourselves in terms of the social aspects. It is not simply that we form associations, for example with a given ethnic group, but that the self is actually different in different groups. Who we are and how we think of ourselves is determined by a collective identity that is sometimes labelled on the social self?

Values

Values refer to orientation toward what is considered desirable by social actors. As such, they express some relationship between environmental pressures and human desires. Values supply a point of convergence for the various specialized social sciences, and is a key concept for integration with the study in the humanities (Kluckhohn,1951, p.389). Kluckhohn (1951) provides a definition that " a value is a conception explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristics of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of actions". This definition, a quarter of a

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century old, hints at some community between the individual and the socio-cultural sphere without specifying it's nature. Now, and then, good understanding of the way an individual functions in his social and cultural context is yet to come.

Values were seen as the result of traditional ideas transmitted historically, and were reflected as the essential core of culture. Values were variously defined as the unconscious canons of choice, cultural themes, and the unconscious system of meanings, a worldview, and the central core of meaning. The value orientations that were measured through the interview schedule reflected patterns of family organization, economic activities, religious beliefs and rituals, political behaviour, attitude towards education, intellectual and aesthetic interests as determined independently by anthropologists who were experts in each culture. Value orientations are operationalized as concrete choices that must be made in everyday life and then inferred from specific choices of alternatives.

During the process of socialization, the value orientation patterns are internalized, and become basic features of the actor's personality. A social evolutionary perspective on value transmission, it seems unlikely that Individualism, collectivism and achievement values are transmitted with the same intensity. Sociological transmission studies have shown that the socialization of values is sensitive to differences in gender social status within the same society or culture (Nauck& Schonpflug,1997).

Self

Self in process is defined in terms of psychological activities such as thinking, perceiving and coping with the environment. The self is an active agent that promotes differential sampling, processing and evaluation from the environment and thus leads to differences in social behaviour (Triandis, 1989). Cooley (1902) captured the significance of others' perceptions in his notions of the Looking glass self, the idea that how we come to see ourselves is at least partially a reflection of how others see us. It is evident from many empirical studies that East Asian selves are relatively flexible and relational rather than separate entities with distinguishing attitudes. Ip and Bond (1995), using Twenty Statements Test (TCT) found that the Chinese participants were more likely to refer to social roles and were more likely to qualify these roles than were

American to use specific and social self-description rather than abstract trait description in describing self.

Culture and self both constitute each other. It has been reported in studies from different parts of the world that cultural norms, values, and beliefs contribute to the shaping of an individual's concept of self. In these efforts, self is considered as a regulator of an individual's perception and behaviour. Summarizing a broad range of past research, Markus and Kitayama (1991) have proposed two major types of self-construal, i.e., independent and interdependent. According to them, culture affects the way in which people conceive of themselves, others,and the relationship of self with others. It is a strong belief amongst psychologists that American and many western European cultures favour an independent and unique notion of individual striving to discover and express independence and uniqueness. According to Markus and Kitayama (1998)" within the Asian interdependent model of the person,the integration of social role and individual distinctiveness is accomplished by a sort of conditioning of individual distinctiveness on a certain relationship or social position. People of predominantly this kind of self-construal try to fit in with the significant others, to fulfil and create obligations and to become part of various interpersonal relations. Ho (1903) has contrasted individual centred and relation centred orientations. Relational orientation emphasizes on the "primary importance of relational context,whereas individualcentred orientations focus on the individual attributes and traits". Many researchers have pointed out that the independent self-construal is linked with a monistic philosophical tradition in which the person is thought to be of the same substance as the rest of nature (Roland, 1988).

The role of self in social cognition has been emphasize in many cross-cultural studies. Triandis (1989) has suggested that people sample three kinds of selves' I.e., private, public and collective with different probabilities, in different cultures, and that has specific consequences for social behaviour. The private self refers to cognitions that involve traits, states, or behaviour of a person (e.g., "I am an intelligent"). The collective self consists of cognitions about group membership (e.g. I am a daughter) and finally, the public self includes cognitions concerning how some generalized other views of the person or self (e.g. "people think I am an extrovert"). Triandis (1980) argued that the private self is sampled more in

individualistic cultures such as North America or Europe than in collective cultures such as those of South Asia. On the other hand, collective cultures provide greater sampling of collective self than in individualistic cultures. People sample different types of self according to their cultural background.

Present study

Few studies have found such a value difference in individualism and collectivism perspective. For example - in studies conducted within the United States collectivism has been associated with values of equality, honesty, self-sacrifice, politeness, cleanliness and family security whereas individualism has been associated with the values of competition, enjoyment, pleasure in life, self-reliance, social recognition, freedom, equity, imagination and broad mindedness (Preston Brown, Weisman & Matsumoto, 1993, Triandis, McCusker & Hue 1990). The preceding analysis shows that conceptualization of self is significantly associated with the cultures in which people live Culture consisting of symbols, attitudes,values, norms and expectation represent different styles of life of a group of community of people. The meaning system of Indian culture differs from western cultural meaning system. Misra and Gorgan (1993) have pointed out that these two cultures allow two differing views of human beings and their relationship with other aspects of ecology and environment. Indians subscribe to biological, organic and holistic worldview, a sacred and liberative view of knowledge, social individualism and distributed notion of control. In contrast the western culture emphasizes knowledge of means to control others and seeking power, self-contained individualism and emphasized personalized nature of control. Many of the components of cultural differences in self-construal as reported earlier are based on the analysis of texts and impressions of researchers and not based on any rigorous empirical work. Against this backdrop the present study was planned to examine certain aspects of self-construal and its relation with values orientation in Indian socio-cultural contexts.

Objectives

The present study has following interrelated objectives:

1. To critically examined the notions of self-construal and value orientation

2. To determine the relationship between self-construal and value orientations.

3. To find out the relationship between self and values for male and females.

4. To find out the differences between male and female on self-construal and value orientation measures.

Method

The present study was conducted on four hundred (400) students from intermediate and undergraduate students. They were randomly selected from various schools and colleges located in Rampur district of west UP and Udhamsingh Nagar, Nainital district of Uttarakhand. There were 100 male and 100 female students selected from each grade. The age range of these participants was 17 to 20 years.

Measures

Self-construal measure: The Hind version of the self-construal scale of Markus and Kitayama (1991) was used to assess self-construal. This scale had 31 items, which measure independent and interdependent self-construal. The independent self-construal has 15 items. The interdependent self-construal consists of 16 items. Each item involves a 10-point scale ranging from 0 (does not describe me) to 10 (very much describe me at all). Its retest reliability has been estimated at .74 for a period of four months.

Personal value questionnaire (PVQ): Personal value questionnaire of Dr. (Mrs) G.P Sherry and late Prof. R.P. Verma (1998) was used to measure value orientation/priorities of an individual in the indigenous cultural milieu in 10 areas. It consists of 40 questions having 120 (40x 3) items were selected. The participants were instructed to respond each question by indicating right (") for most performances, a cross (x) for least preference and the blank () or unmarked for intermediate preference.The responses were scored as 2 for a tight mark (), 0 for a cross (x) and 1 for the blank (). The validity of PVQ has been estimated at .64 by rank order coefficient of correlation.

Twenty statement test (TST): This measure had 20 items (blank lines). The participants were instructed to complete each sentence by describing themselves (e.g., I am….). Responses of the participants were obtained by qualitative categorization of all the items. Qualitative categorizations statements were based on two types of coding scheme. First coding scheme was developed by Kuhn (1969) and elaborated by Driver

(1969) that analysed each statement in terms of five main categories: Social identity, ideological beliefs, interest, ambitions, and self-evaluations. The second coding scheme was used to analyse each statement in forms of private, public and collective self. This was based on the suggestions of Triandis (1989).

Procedure

After seeking permission from school and college authorities, the participants were randomly selected.

Results

After establishing a good rapport and explaining the procedure, the participants completed the measures. The participation in the study was voluntary.

Statistical analysis

The available data were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively and appropriate statistical methods were used to calculate all the variables to achieve the goals of present investigation.

Table 1

Mean Scores and 'F' Ratios for main Categories of Self-construal Measures and Means of Proportion Scores and 'F' Ratios for TST by Gender and Grade

Main Categories Self-construal and TST	Gender		Grade		F' Ratios (F,1,396)		
	Male (N=200)	Female (N=200)	Intermediate (N=200)	UG (N=200)	Gender	Grade	Gender* Grade
Self-construal							
Independent Self	93.52	103.9	92.25	99.25	46.35***	0.48	1.61
Interdependent Self	99.96	109.27	105.62	104.19	60.53***	0.7	0.75
Twenty Statement Test							
Private Self	0.53	0.45	0.49	0.53	39.89***	14.09**	10.41**
Collective Self	0.46	0.53	0.49	0.46	35.60***	14.49**	10.41**
Public Self	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01	8.35**	5.16**	7.27**
Social Identity	0.36	0.39	0.38	0.35	10.23**	3.92*	3.66*
Ideological Beliefs	0.07	0.05	0.07	0.08	4.66*	4.50*	6.83**
Interests	0.2	0.14	0.17	0.15	15.80***	2.24	0.5
Ambitions	0.1	0.14	0.12	0.09	18.75***	16.20***	7.74**
Self-Evaluation	0.27	0.13	0.25	0.33	4.94*	24.50***	3.54*

Note: *p<0.05, **P<0.01,***p<0.001

The mean scores for male and female participants on main categories of self-construal and TST are shown in Table 1 with respect to gender. Table-1 shows that female participants scored significantly higher on main categories of self-construal for independent self-construal (F (1,396)=46.35, p<.001) and interdependent self-construal (F(1,396)=60.52,< p 001). This finding suggests that females were relatively more interdependent and independent than males. Table 1 also shows that female participants scored significantly higher on main categories of TST for collective self ((1,396)=35.60. p<001), public self (F (1,396) =8.34, p<01), social identity (F(1.396) =10.24, p<.01) and on ambition (F(1,396) =18.75,p<.01) than their male counterparts while male participants scored significantly higher on private self (F(1,396) =39.89, p<.01),

ideological beliefs (F(1,396) =4.66, p.<.05) and on interest (F(1,396) =15.80.p<.001) than their female counterparts. In grade perspective, intermediate participants scored significantly higher on collective self (F,1,396)=14.49,p<.001), public self (F,1,396)=5.16,p<.01), social identity (F,1,396)= 3.92,p<.05),and ambitions (F,1,396)=16.20,p<.001)while undergraduate participants scored significantly higher on private self (F,1,396)=14.09,p<.01), ideological beliefs (F,1,396)=4.50,p<.05) and self-evaluation. Interaction effects were found for private self (F,1,396)=10.41,p<.001),collective self (F,1,396)= 10.41,p<.001), public self (F,1,396)=7.27,p<.01), social identity (F,1,396)=3.66,p<.05), ideological beliefs (F,1,396)=6.83,p<.01), ambitions (F,1,396)= 7.74,p<.01)and self-evaluation (F,1,396)=3.54,p<.05).

Table 2
Mean Scores and 'F' Ratios for Personal Value Measures by Gender and Grade

Personal value measures	Means				F' Ratios (F,1,396)		
	Gender		Grade		Gender	Grade	Gender* Grade
	Male	Female	Intermediate	U.G			
Religious Value	12.95	13.46	13.24	13.18	3.62*	0.01	0.28
Social Value	13.58	13.70	14.23	13.20	0.23	5.52*	3.22*
Democratic Value	13.37	14.09	13.69	12.91	9.42**	17.34**	0.81
Aesthetic Value	10.80	10.94	11.09	10.83	0.34	0.93	1.60
Economic Value	10.20	12.89	9.63	10.27	0.71	3.48*	3.68*
Knowledge Value	9.99	12.68	12.88	12.52	0.65	1.07	0.78
Hedonistic Value	10.94	10.10	11.32	9.98	12.49**	11.85**	2.19
Power Value	9.69	9.11	9.65	9.13	6.67*	1.74	0.15
Family Value	11.30	11.39	11.69	11.64	0.12	5.96*	2.71
Health Value	11.19	10.10	10.98	10.33	12.27**	2.50	0.18

Note: *$p<0.05$, **$P<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$

Table 2 shows that female participants scored significantly higher on personal value measures for religious value ($F(1,396) =3.62$, $p<05$), democratic values ($F(1,396)= 9.42$, $p<.01$) than their male counterparts while male scored significantly higher on hedonistic value ($F (1 396) =12.49$, $p< 01$) and on health value ($F (1,396) =21.27$. p 001) than their female counterparts. Interaction effects were found for social values ($F,1,396)=3.22$, $p<.05$) and economic values ($F,1,396)=3.68$, $p<.05$).

Table 3: Relationship of Personal Value Measures with Main Categories of Self-construal Measures and Twenty Statement Test (N= 400)

Personal Values Measure	Self-construal Measures		Twenty Statement Test							
	Ind. Self-construal	Int. Self-construal	Private Self	Collective Self	Public Self	Social Identity	Ideological Beliefs	Interests	Ambitions	Self-evaluations
Religious Values	0.07	0.05	-0.10*	0.08*	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.06	-0.01
Social Values	0.06	0.06	-0.11*	0.09*	0.04	0.05	-0.03	-0.1	0.05	-0.02
Democratic Values	0.07	0.03	-0.19**	0.20**	-0.03	0.14**	-0.06	-0.06	0.08*	-0.03
Aesthetic Values	0.01	0.04	0.08*	0.07	0.03	-0.05	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.03
Economic Value	0.09*	-0.09*	0.02	0.01	-0.08*	0.04	-0.04	-0.01	-0.06	0.01
Knowledge Value	-0.04	0.01	0.17**	0.18**	0.01	0.15*	-0.14**	-0.01	-0.05	0.05
Hedonistic Value	-0.05	-0.14*	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.02	-0.04	-0.07
Power Value	0.10*	0.02	0.02	-0.02	0.07	-0.05	-0.02	0.04	0.01	-0.01
Family Prestige	-0.08*	0.01	0.04	0.04	0.06	0.09*	-0.06	-0.01	0.01	-0.03
Health Value	0.10*	0.13**	0.11*	0.12**	0.02	-0.06	0.03	0.03	-0.05	0.02

Note: *$p<0.05$, **$P<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$

Table 3 shows that the scores of religious value were positively related to collective self but negatively related to private self. The scores on social value were negatively related to private self and positively related to collective self while democratic value also positively related to collective self, social identity and ambition but negatively related to private self. The scores on aesthetic value were positively related to private self while economic value negatively related to independent self-construal, interdependent self-construal and public self. Knowledge value scores were positively related to private self, collective self, social identity but negatively related to ideological beliefs. The scores on

hedonistic value were negatively related to interdependent self-construal while power value positively related to independent self-construal but family prestige value was negatively related to independent self-construal. The scores on health value were positively related to independent self-construal, private self while negatively related to interdependent self-construal and collective self.

Table 4

Relationship of Personal Value Measures with Main Categories of Self-construal Measures and Twenty Statement Test for Male (N =200) and Female (N=200)

Self Construal and TST measures	Gender	Personal Value Measures									
		Religious	Social	Democratic	Aesthetic	Economic	Knowledge	Hedonistic	Power	Family Prestige	Health
Ind. Self-construal	M	0.04	0.17**	0.06	-0.02	-0.1	0	-0.07	-0.1	-0.13*	-0.03
	F	0.08	-0.06	0.03	0.03	-0.06	-0.09	0.04	-0.03	-0.02	-0.1
Int. Self-construal	M	-0.04	0.07	-0.04	0.06	-0.08	-0.06	-0.20**	-0.04	-0.02	-0.03
	F	0.14**	0.05	0.07	0.02	-0.09	0.07	-0.04	0.06	0.01	-0.15**
Private Self	M	0.01	-0.08	-0.16**	0.06	-0.03	0.17**	0.07	0.05	0.01	0.01
	F	-0.15	-0.13*	-0.18**	0.11	0.07	0.19**	0.02	-0.05	-0.05	0.08
Collective Self	M	0.01	0.08	0.15**	-0.04	0.09	0.17**	-0.1	-0.08	0.02	0.01
	F	0.12*	0.11	0.2	-0.11	-0.05	0.21**	-0.02	0.07	0.06	-0.11
Public Self	M	-0.03	0.04	0.03	-0.04	-0.14*	0.06	0.06	-0.03	-0.06	-0.05
	F	0.06	-0.06	-0.03	-0.7	-0.05	0.05	0.01	-0.08	-0.06	0.03
Social Identity	M	0.01	0.05	0.09	-0.05	0.05	0.24**	0.07	-0.11	0.09	-0.03
	F	0.03	0.05	0.17**	-0.06	0.03	-0.07	-0.03	0.05	0.09	-0.05
Ideological Beliefs	M	-0.01	-0.07	-0.03	0.02	-0.07	-0.26**	0.03	-0.02	-0.07	0.08
	F	-0.04	0.03	-0.08	0.03	0.01	0.07	0.02	-0.06	-0.04	-0.08
Interests	M	0.08	0.02	-0.03	0.01	-0.04	0.01	-0.03	-0.01	0.03	0.01
	F	0.1	-0.08	-0.1	-0.08	-0.05	-0.04	0.16**	0.04	-0.14*	0.06
Ambitions	M	0.04	0.01	0.04	0.03	-0.11	0.13*	-0.06	0.07	-0.06	0.03
	F	0.07	0.09	0.09	-0.1	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.03	0.09	-0.09
Self evaluation	M	0.06	-0.01	-0.02	0.01	0.05	0.14*	0.03	0.02	-0.04	0.03
	F	0.03	0.04	0.1	0.05	0.06	0.24**	-0.1	-0.08	0.01	0.1

Note: *p<0.05 , **P<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 4 shows that female's scores on religious value were positively related to interdependent self-construal but negatively related to private self. Males score on social value was positively related to independent self-construal while female's score was negatively related to private self. Male's score on democratic values was negatively related to private self but positively related to collective self. In the case of female participants, scores were negatively related to private self and positively related to collective self as well as social identity. The scores on economic value were negatively related to public self for male participants. Male scores on knowledge value were positively related to private self, collective self, social identity, ambition and self evaluation but negatively related to ideological beliefs while female's scores were positively related to private self and collective self. Hedonistic value was negatively related to interdependent self-construal for males while positively related to interest for female participants. The scores on power value for male participants were negatively related to social identity. Males scores on family prestige value were negatively related to independent self-construal and also negatively related to interest for female participants. It was also observed that females scores on health value were negatively related to interdependent self-construal.

Discussion

Most of the current knowledge about self has been based on the western studies and therefore explicit the view of self as found in that cultural tradition where the individual is viewed as an independent, self-reliance, self-contained and autonomous entity. Western scholars

presumed that Indian self is predominating as interdependent. The present results however, do not indicate the predominance of interdependence of self-construal. Instead, the present finding supports the view of Misra and Giri (1995). The present findings indicate a different mode of self-construal in which interdependent and independent, both construal are present. In the Indian social structure as Ramanujan (1986) has remarked subordinating one's individual needs to the interest of the group is upheld as a virtue. In Indian society, the individual is a part of the corporate system. But this merger of self should not be constructed as a total merger of individuality without any scope for individual expression. In gender perspective, finding indicates that females were more independent as well as interdependent than males. Past research has shown that women's self-construal shaped and formed through gender social interactions, gender typed social roles and gender related expectations (Domarr and Hart, 1988), As Cross and Madson (1997) have noted, multiple social influences promote independent ways of thinking, feeling and behaving for women. A more independent self-construal in females reveals a novel aspect of Indian femininity. Increased opportunity for education to express one's attributes on opportunity to test their potential could be bringing a chance in their self-system. The females in the present study reported interdependent self-construal, which emphasizes inter-connectedness, emphasis on fluid flexible relationship, attempt to fit with others, to fulfil and create obligation and to become a part of various interpersonal relationships are dominant(Girt, 1998). The finding of the present study questions the simplified perspective, which extends the cultural well as gender stereotype model of self-experience.

The pattern of self-construal was also examined using the Twenty Statement Test (TST) in the present study. Many researchers have shown that these variables play a significant role in a person's views of the self and the world (Cross nu Medson, 1997; Maccoby and Jacklin, 1987). With regard to TST (Twenty Statement Test) measures, female participants made more reference to collective self, public self, social identity, ambitions than males participants while males made more reference to private self, ideological beliefs and interest categories than female participants. This finding may be analysed in terms of their socio-cultural context, social norms, values, occupation, expectation etc., to reinforce different skills, abilities and behaviour among males and females. The present study finding also indicated that the females are more striving to fulfil or achieve their aspiration, desires, goals, self-assurance and self-identity in society.

In values perspective finding indicates that females reported more religious and democratic values than males while males reported more hedonistic, power and health value than females. We see that boys and girls live to the same extent in different social worlds. They experience different social expectations, different opportunities and different constraints. As Gilligan (1982) argues that males are socialized to be independent and achievement oriented and thus preoccupied with issues such a fair return, equality of treatment and the application of abstract principles to resolve conflicts of interest. Females are and to maintain a sense of responsibility towards others. This means that males socialize directed towards reasoning and female socialization directed toward morality. In the period of globalization female beliefs, thoughts and feelings are changed. Now they believe more in democracy and try to achieve those stages were males predominant. The correlational analysis revealed mixed pictures. Some categories to self-construal positively related with some personal values while some are negatively related. In general, personal findings revealed that the values and life styles in India have been undergoing change during the past several decades due to urbanization, industrialization and migration of population. Some values like religious, social, democratic values are shared with parents. But some values are influenced by friends, educational institutes and modern technology and need to survive in a global perspective. Therefore, economic, power and family prestige values are governed by materialistic desire and approach.

Conclusion

The present study suggests that Indian self is a complex structure, which has both elements of independence as well as interdependence. Autonomy and connectedness both have a place in this configuration of self. Self cannot be considered as a static trait of the person. It is predominantly experiential in nature and subtracts from fluctuations.

The present study also suggests that values orientation among youth is in a complex structure. They believe in social norms, tradition, obligation and spirituality on the one hand and place importance on economy, power and prestige etc on the other hand. The Indian society today is in fact a child of two cultures i.e., Indian and western. In-fact what seems to have happened to most

of the people is that they have accepted modernity in their professional work and do not care to extend it further in other spheres of lives. They continue to be traditional such as in values to religion or family ties, kinship behaviour and attitudes unless some personal gains or status motives are involved.

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