

Individualism-collectivism and Well-being

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It suggested that individualism-collectivism is possibly the most important and most widely used dimension to analyse culture at the individual level. The present study was planned to examine the reporting of well-being of people endorsing individualistic and collectivistic orientations. People of 15 to 70 years age from urban and rural parts of eastern Uttar Pradesh were included in the study. World Health Organization Quality of Life Questionnaire (26 items), Life Satisfaction Scale (5 items), and Individualism and Collectivism Measure (30 items) were used to collect the responses. Analysis revealed that people with collectivistic orientations are reporting better quality of life and higher level of satisfaction comparing to those endorsing individualistic orientations. The findings of the study will be discussed in light of empirical evidences and available literature.

Keywords: Individualism-collectivism, quality of life, life satisfaction

Matsumoto (2000) defined culture as “a dynamic system of rules - explicit and implicit – established by the groups in order to ensure their survival, involving attitude, belief, norms, and behavior shared by a group but harbored differently by each specific unit within the group, communicated across generations, relatively stable but with the potential to change across time” (p. 39). Triandis, Bontempo, Leung, and Hue (1990) distinguish three levels of culture: the cultural level, demographic level, and individual level. Ratzlaff, Matsumoto, Kouznetsova, Raroque and Ray (2000) suggested that individualism-collectivism is possibly the most important and most widely used dimension to analyze culture at the individual level.

The dimension of individualism and collectivism has received greatest attention of psychologists specializing in cross-cultural research. Cultural values of individualism and collectivism differ in their relative emphasis on independence

versus interdependence with one's group (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In individualistic cultures, people are viewed as independent and possessing a unique pattern of traits that distinguish them from other people (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). In contrast to such independence and uniqueness, people in collectivistic cultures view the self as inherently interdependent with the group to which they belong. Therefore, people in individualistic cultures often give global and abstract descriptions of themselves (e.g. I am optimistic), whereas people in collectivistic cultures might ask how they could possibly describe themselves in the absence of information about a particular situation (Bachnik, 1994).

The present study

Research has showed that “the two (collectivism and individualism) can coexist and are simply emphasized more or less in each culture”

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4 / Individualism-collectivism and Well-being

(Triandis, 1994, p. 42). Probably, Indians emphasize both which coexist and jointly influence the way Indians define themselves, relate to others, decide priorities in conforming to social norms or seeking pleasures, and engage in exchange or communal behaviour. Keeping in mind above assertion, it was planned to examine how the individualism and collectivism linked with well-being in Indian culture.

Method

Participants

The present study was included 426 participants drawn from the urban and rural settings of Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Male (N = 212) and female (N = 214) participants, aged 15 to 70, were included in the present study. The total sample consists of 208 participants from urban and 218 participants from rural settings. A quasi random sampling procedure was used to select the participants for the present study.

Measures

World Health Organization Quality of Life Questionnaire (WHOQOL- BREF, 1995)

WHO group (1995) was developed this questionnaire to assess the QOL of an individual. The original scale contains 100 items, which assess six domains of QOL. The WHOQOL-BREF is a shorter version of the original WHO scale. The Hindi version of the scale used in this study was developed by Saxena, Chandiramani and Bhargava (1998). This scale contains 26 items, which measure four domains of QOL, namely physical health, psychological states, social relationships, and environment. Out of 26 items of the scale, only 24 items are scored. Items 1 and 2 are used as fillers, and not scored. The reliability (r = Cronbach's Alfa) of this scale was calculated and it ranges from .59 to .85. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFI) revealed a very high validity index of physical health (0.957), psychological states (0.982), social relationships

(0.972) and environment (0.922) domains.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985)

This scale was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin to measure the life satisfaction of an individual. The scale contains 5 items that assess satisfaction with life as a whole. This scale was given to participants to know how satisfied they were with their life. All 5 items are keyed in positive direction. The inter-item correlations for the five items were: 0.81, 0.63, 0.61, 0.75, and 0.66.

Individualism-Collectivism Orientation Measure (Mishra, 1994)

Drawing upon the ideas of Triandis (1988), a new measure to assess individualistic and collectivistic orientations of people in India. The measure consists of five decision areas (marriage, occupation, treatment, selling of property, and buying household goods) and six individuals/groups (spouse, family, friends, relatives, neighbors, and self) which are considered important by people both in the rural and urban areas of Varanasi. We used the scale in this study with slight modifications in the original procedure. Every participant was asked about the importance of each group in each decision area.

Besides collecting data with above mentioned scale, information regarding the participant's age, residence, family background, mobility and participation in various activities were also obtained.

Results

Mean, SD and t – test were calculated to analyze the reporting of respondents from urban and rural areas.

Individualistic-collectivistic orientations and Life satisfaction

Table 1 presents the mean scores, SD and t -ratio of respondents with individualistic and collectivist orientations. Mean scores are graphically presented in Figure 1.

Table 1

Mean scores, SD and t-ratio of respondents with individualistic and collectivistic orientations on Life Satisfaction

| Life Satisfaction | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|------|------------------------|------|--------|
| Psychological orientation | Individualistic (N=186) | | Collectivistic (N=186) | | t |
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | 3.57** |
| | 22.18 | 6.12 | 24.23 | 5.65 | |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

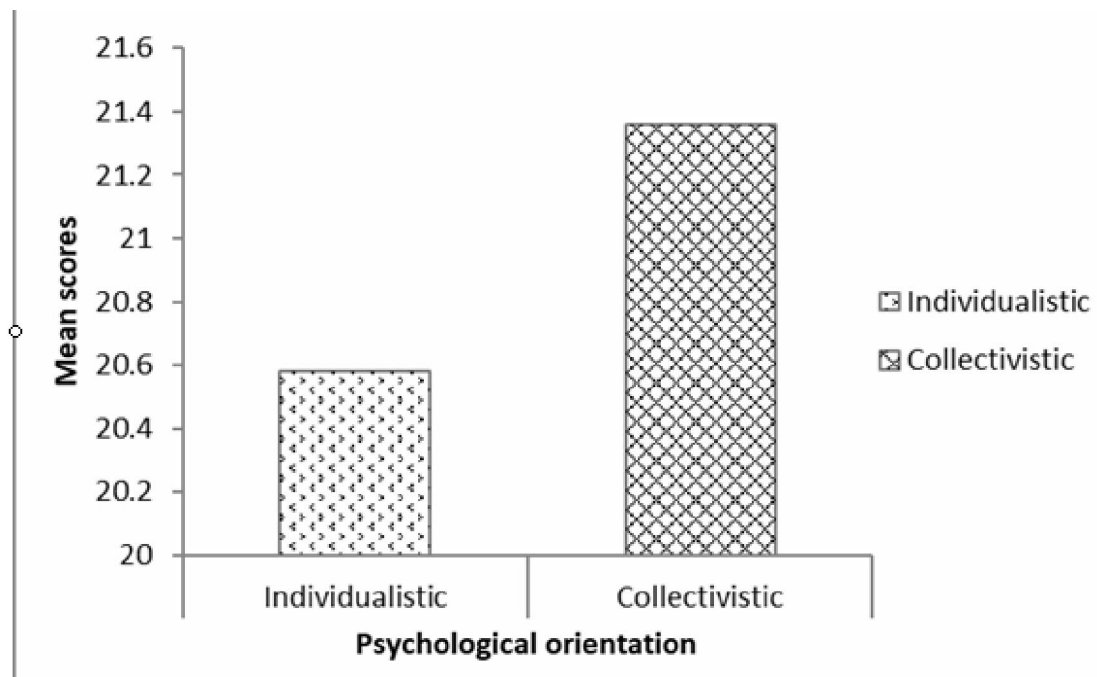


Figure 1: Mean scores of respondents with individualistic and collectivistic orientations on Life satisfaction

Individualistic-collectivistic orientation and quality of life

6 / Individualism-collectivism and Well-being

Table 2 presents the mean, SD, and t-ratio of respondents with individualistic and collectivistic orientations on the overall QOL as well

as different domains of QOL. Figure 2 and 3 present the mean scores of respondents graphically for overall QOL and its different domains.

Table 2

Mean scores of groups with individualistic-collectivist orientations on overall QOL and its domains

| Domains | Individualistic (N=186) | | Collectivistic (N=240) | | d" Score |
|----------------------|-------------------------|------|------------------------|------|----------|
| Physical health | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | 1.83 |
| | 14.64 | 2.88 | 15.08 | 2.03 | |
| Psychological states | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | 5.74** |
| | 13.81 | 2.89 | 15.22 | 2.19 | |
| Social relationships | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | 4.34** |
| | 9.24 | 2.88 | 10.33 | 2.31 | |
| Environment | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | 4.23** |
| | 13.67 | 2.28 | 14.60 | 2.24 | |
| Overall QOL | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | 5.78** |
| | 51.35 | 7.59 | 55.23 | 6.23 | |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Mean scores in table 2 indicate that people with collectivistic orientation score higher than those with individualistic orientations on overall QOL and the difference is statistically significant. Respondents with collectivistic orientation have higher score also on psychological states, social relationships and environment domains of QOL than those with individualistic orientation. The differences are significant in all these domains. No significant difference is present between the groups on the physical health domain of QOL.

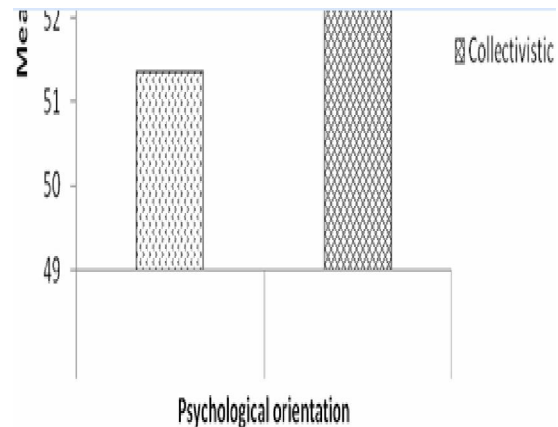


Figure 2: Mean scores of respondents with individualistic and collectivist orientation on overall QOL

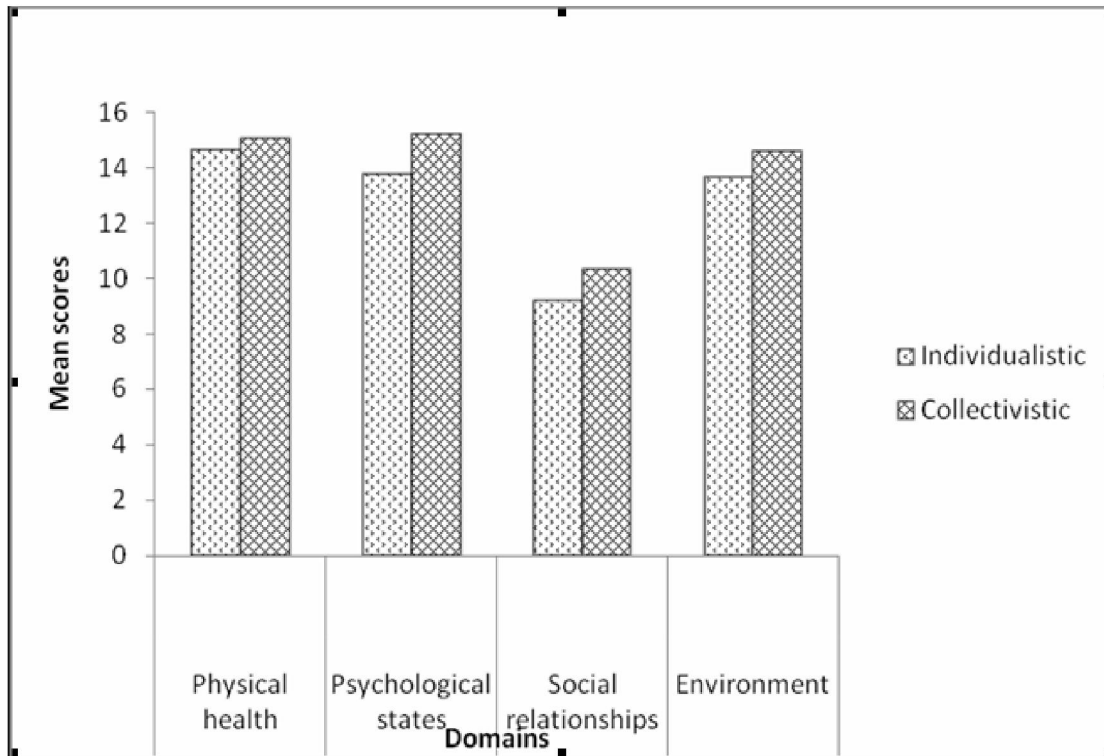


Figure 3: Mean scores of respondents with individualistic and collectivist orientations on the domains of QOL

Discussion

The present study was planned to examine the difference in reporting of well-being among people endorsing individualistic and collectivistic orientations. Results indicated that subjects with a collectivistic orientation indeed showed higher level of LS and QOL, and significantly differed from those with individualistic orientation. Findings of other studies show that people with individualistic orientation are more satisfied than those with collectivist orientation (Ahuvia, 2002; Veenhoven, 1999). Several studies (Hofstede, 1980; Sinha & Verma, 1987; Triandis, 1996; Triandis & Bhawuk, 1997; Verma, 1999; Verma & Triandis, 1998) indi-

cate that Indian culture is predominantly collectivistic, and the majority of people manifest collectivist orientations, values, and behaviours on many different occasions.

They perceive their self as relational and interdependent with ingroup members. Their life goals overlap with those of the ingroup. They generally conform to social norms and meet social obligations rather than seeking out their own pleasures and doing what they like to do, and react emotionally to others rather than carefully calculating costs and benefits of relationships. Thus, people with collectivistic orientation are likely to feel more satisfied when they follow the rules, norms and obligations of group

8 / Individualism-collectivism and Well-being

to which they belong. Results also indicated that respondents with collectivistic orientation significantly differed from respondents with individualistic orientation on overall QOL, as well as psychological states, social relationships and environment domains of QOL. This finding is similar to what we have noted for LS. As discussed earlier, in a collectivistic society social network provides individuals with a variety of supports (e. g., financial, emotional, and infor-

mational) and leads to an enhanced feeling of QOL.

It may be concluded from the findings of the present study that people endorsing collectivistic values have higher level of satisfaction with life and better quality of life comparing to people with individualistic orientations. Such findings suggest that being a part of one's society and aligning with social needs might contributes in positive development.

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