

INDIVIDUALISM–COLLECTIVISM AND RELATED VALUE DIMENSIONS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PAKISTANI AND POLISH STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

The study compared the cultural patterns in terms of collectivism-individualism dimension and related values namely, humanism, materialism, liberalism, family function/structure and religiosity between Polish and Pakistani young adults. Ninety Pakistani and Polish students drawn randomly were administered Singelis, et al Individualism-Collectivism Questionnaire and Emic Culture Values and Scripts Questionnaire (ECVSQ) developed by Boski. Findings show that Polish sample scored higher on horizontal scales of both individualism and collectivism dimensions indicating them to be more humanist and less religious than the Pakistani subjects are. The Pakistani students are more religious and have strong family ties. Pakistani profile appears to be evenly distributed across the four cultural patterns with collectivist responses more pronounced than the individualistic ones. The hypotheses confirmed the existence of significant mean differences between collectivism-individualism and values dimensions between Polish and Pakistani samples. The results confirm the assertion that all humans have both individualist and collectivist values and response tendencies, but the cultural milieu and situation in which they find themselves determine the tendencies they will emphasize. The same is the case with Polish and Pakistani societies that both have a mixture of four cultural patterns and are

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in transformation stage. However, this current situation may lead, in future, towards individualistic dimension.

INTRODUCTION

The influence of culture on personality has come to the forefront in social sciences. The concept of culture is diffused and lacks explanatory power; however, it can be tied to specific “dimensions of culture” that mediate culture-personality relationships. There are number of cultural dimensions that have been recognized, but the dimension of Collectivism-Individualism (C-I) dominates current theoretical and measurement efforts. The C-I construct has been increasingly used worldwide to measure cultural differences in cross-cultural research (Triandis, 2001, 1990, 1993; Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Hui & Triandis, 1986; Bochner & Hesketh, 1994; a few names).

Understanding cultural behavior and attitude of individuals from other cultures is important in identifying appropriate human service systems. For example, differences in both personal and work-related values, self-concepts, interactions with family and community, all have been found to vary in different cultural groups. A thorough critical analysis of these factors could lead to understand human behavior for healthier interactions among different cultures. Especially in the context of recent rapid technological advancement that create a world into a "global village". As a result people living in different regions of world are closer to each other. This also places greater emphasis on people in the global village to understand each other's cultural, religious norms and values for the harmonious and friendly relations.

Pakistani society is a relatively collectivistic, people place great emphasis on social acceptance, conformity, group identity, smooth interpersonal relations, close and reciprocal obligations. It is interesting to indicate that the Polish society was also considered a collectivistic society at one time, but the sudden breakdown of socio-political system in Eastern and Central Europe resulted in dramatic changes in 1989. One could argue from a psychological perspective that looking at the changes in Eastern and Central Europe; one notices that the most salient characteristic is move away from collectivist form of societal organization and mentality toward individualist form (Rekowski, 1994).

In recent years the dimension of individualism-collectivism has been used as an explanatory variable in several research studies. Hofstede (1991) defined collectivism-individualism as: “individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose; every one is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people birth onwards is integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s life time continue to protect them; in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (p. 51). According to Triandis (1994) individualism entails giving priority to personal goals over the goals of the in-group, whereas the collectivism entails giving priority to in-group goals over personal goals. Studies found that collectivism has been associated with the values of

cooperation, equality, honesty, self-sacrifice, politeness, and family security, whereas individualism has been associated with the values of competition, enjoyment, pleasure, and exciting life, a varied life, self-reliance, social recognition, freedom, equity, and broad-mindedness (Preston et al., 1993; Triandis et al., 1985; 1990).

Some attributes are emphasized in one culture more than they are stressed in other cultures, so that unique configurations of collectivism and individualism emerge. One of the more important distinctions between types of collectivism and individualism is their horizontal or vertical aspects of social relationships (Triandis, 1995). In *Horizontal Collectivism (H-C)* individual sees the self as an aspect of an in-group, all of whom are extremely similar to each other. Equality is the essence of this pattern. *Vertical Collectivism (V-C)* is a cultural pattern in which the individual sees the self as an aspect of an in-group, but the members of the in-group are different from each other, some having more status than others. Inequality is accepted in this pattern, and people do not see each other as the same. Serving and sacrificing for the in-group is an important aspect of this pattern. *Horizontal Individualism (H-I)* is a cultural pattern where an autonomous self is postulated, but the individual is more or less equal in status with others. *Vertical Individualism (V-I)* is a cultural pattern, in which an autonomous self is postulated, but individuals see each other as different, and inequality is expected. Competition is an important aspect of this pattern.

Briefly, horizontal collectivists merge with in-groups (family, tribe, co-workers, and nation) but do not feel subordinate to these in-groups. The horizontal do not use much hierarchy. The Israeli Kibbutz is an example of this type. Vertical collectivists, on the other hand, submit to the norms of their in-groups and even are willing to self-sacrifice for their in-group. The vertical uses hierarchy; the Indian village, with its emphasis on caste structure, is an example. The horizontal individualists do their own thing but do not necessarily compare themselves with others. They do not want to be distinguished. Sweden and Australia provide examples of this variety of individualism. The vertical individualists are especially concerned with comparison with others. They want to be 'the best', win in competitions and be distinguished. This variety is common in the United States and many other Western democracies. There are costs associated with each cultural pattern. The HI pattern can result in social isolation. The VI pattern can result in extreme stress. The HC pattern could absorb much of the individual's energy in social relationships, while the vertical collectivist pattern could result in authoritarian regimes.

One could argue that cultures are not pure; it is assumed that individuals exhibit each of these patterns at different times or in different situations. For example, before 1980s Polish society was considered as collectivistic society but due to changes in the socio-political system, the cultural pattern is also changing now (Rekowski, 1994). Recognizing that context has a strong effect on which orientation is tapped, it is proposed that culture differ in the emphasis and prevalence of the various orientations.

Values as a Way of Understanding Culture

The value preferences prevailing in a society are a key element, in its culture, and the value priorities of individuals represent central goals that relate to all aspects of

behaviour. Studies show that values are directly influenced by everyday experiences in changing ecological and socio-political contexts. Values are therefore, well-suited for examining the ongoing processes of cultural and individual change in response to historical and social changes. Many definitions of values suggest the main features on which most theorists agree (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987):

1. Values serve as standards to guide the selection or evaluation of behaviour, people and events.
2. Values are ordered by importance relative to one another. The ordered set of values forms a system of value priorities. Cultures and individuals can be characterized by their systems of value priorities.

There are hundreds, of values on which societies and other cultural groups could be compared. Some values are relevant in all societies; other is known only in particular societies. Hence, a way must be found to organize cultural values into a limited number of dimensions on which to compare societies effectively. The present study focuses on five values namely; humanism, materialism, liberalism, religiosity and family function/structure; comparing the relative strength of these values in Pakistani and Polish society.

Of all the value dimensions, humanism seems to be important as well as closest to Hofstede's Femininity (Materialism to Masculinity). In feminine cultures, dominant values are caring for others and preservation; and warm relationships are important; sympathy is for the weak; the needy would be helped; welfare society ideal; stress is on equality, solidarity and quality of work life. (Hofstede, 1991). Materialist items are associated with business and money making, while the humanist end embraces a wider range of prosocial concern about social injustice and the well-being of individuals as well as groups

A series of studies has examined relations of the ten Schwartz value types with individual commitment to religion among Catholics, Muslims, Jews and several denominations of Protestants in 13 counties (Roccas & Schwartz, 1997). The same pattern of correlations emerged, with only minor variations, in all groups: religiosity correlated most positively with tradition values, and correlations for the other value types decreased progressively going around the value structure in both directions toward hedonism and stimulation values, which correlated most negatively.

The present study was aimed at exploring the cultural patterns and relative strength of values among Polish and Pakistani young adults. Second, much comparative research on cultural patterns and values of the two nationalities would promote better understanding of each other. It was hypothesized that: (a) there will be significant mean differences between Polish and Pakistani students on Individualism-collectivism Questionnaire; (b) On Individualism-collectivism Questionnaire, Pakistani students will scores higher on Collectivism dimension as compared to Polish students; (c) Polish students will get higher scores on Liberalism as compared to Pakistani students on Emic Culture Values and Scripts Questionnaire; (d) On Emic Culture Values and Scripts Questionnaire,

Pakistani students will scores higher on Religiosity and Family structure and function as compared to Polish students.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

A sample of 90 male and female young adults from Warsaw University, (Poland) and Sindh University (Pakistan) were randomly drawn. The mean age of the Polish and Pakistani students was 22.75 and 21.82 years respectively. Majority of the Polish subjects were Christians (66.66%) and they belonged to urban areas of Poland (86.66%), whereas Pakistani subjects were all Muslims (100%) and most of them belonged to urban areas of Pakistan (68.88%). Table 1 is designed to provide a fairly elaborate picture of the sample source and related information.

Table 1
Background Characteristics of Polish and Pakistani Students

| Background Characteristics | Polish N=45 | | Pakistani N=45 | |
|----------------------------|----------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| | N | % | N | % |
| Sample distribution | | | | |
| Male | 20 | 44.44 | 20 | 44.44 |
| Female | 25 | 55.55 | 25 | 55.55 |
| Mean Age | 22.75 | | 21.82 | |
| Childhood Residence | | | | |
| Rural | 06 | 13.33 | 14 | 31.11 |
| Urban | 39 | 86.66 | 31 | 68.88 |
| Education | | | | |
| Graduate | 23 | 51.11 | 21 | 46.66 |
| Undergraduate | 22 | 48.88 | 24 | 53.33 |
| Religion | | | | |
| Christianity | 30 | 66.66 | 00 | 00.00 |
| Islam | 01 | 2.22 | 45 | 100.0 |
| No-Religion | 14 | 31.11 | 00 | 00.00 |

Instruments

1. Emic Culture Values and Scripts Questionnaire (ECVSQ)

The Emic Culture Values and Scripts Questionnaire (ECVSQ) was developed by Boski (1996). Some items were modified and a few added from the Personal Value Scales

(Scott, 1965). The questionnaire consists of five sub-scales that measure the values namely, humanism “I often offer people my selfless compassion and helpful hand”, materialism “I am happy with myself and with my life when I see my bank account grow”, liberalism “I am tolerant of people’s alternative life styles and sexual preferences”, family structure & function “I like to be within my family”, and religiosity “My faith and religious moral principles are the guidelines for me and I do my best to follow them”. Each sub-scale consists of 9 items. The responses were rated on 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from “Strongly Agree” (Score-6) to “Strongly Disagree” (Score- 1).

2. Individualism-Collectivism Questionnaire (ICQ)

Individualism-Collectivism Questionnaire (ICQ) was developed by Singelis et. al. (1995); it consists of 32 items that measure the cultural patterns in terms of collectivism-individualism dimension. The ICQ consists of four sub-scales, i.e., Vertical Individualism (V-I) “Competition is the law of nature”, Horizontal Individualism (H-I) “I often do my own things”, Vertical Collectivism (V-C) “I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group” and Horizontal Collectivism (H-C) “If a co-worker gets a prize, I would feel proud”. Each sub-scale consists of 8 items. The responses were scored on 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from “Strongly Agree” (Score-6) to “Strongly Disagree” (Score- 1).

Procedure

The students were approached individually or in a small group of 2-3 in their leisure time; they were requested to go through the questionnaires and respond to each item of the questionnaires. First, the Polish students were approached for the study when the author was in Warsaw University, Warsaw, Poland. The data from Pakistani Students at the University of Sindh, (Jamshoro) later on.

3 RESULTS

Analysing the findings of the study on the basis of some basic statistical procedures is vital for the interpretation of the results. Table 2 presents means, S.D and t-tests for I-C dimension, for Polish and Pakistani students SPSS package was used.

Table 2

Means, S.D and t-tests for Polish and Pakistani Students on Individualism-Collectivism Questionnaire

| Individualism-Collectivism Dimension | Polish Sample N=45 | | Pakistani Sample N=45 | | t | p |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|------|--------------------------|------|-------|-------|
| | Mean | S.D | Mean | S.D | | |
| Horizontal Individualism | 37.11 | 5.57 | 37.57 | 5.80 | 0.408 | 0.685 |
| Vertical Individualism | 29.33 | 5.41 | 35.75 | 5.00 | 5.674 | 0.000 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| Horizontal Collectivism | 37.46 | 4.76 | 39.31 | 4.27 | 1.912 | 0.062 |
| Vertical Collectivism | 29.97 | 6.08 | 38.40 | 4.97 | 7.554 | 0.000 |

The results indicate that horizontal individualism is non-significant when compared with Polish and Pakistani students. However, the mean differences between Polish and Pakistani societies on other three variables such as vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism and vertical collectivism are differing significantly.

Table 2 shows that Pakistani students are more vertical individualists ($M=35.75$), vertical collectivists ($M=38.40$) and horizontal collectivists ($M=39.31$) as compared to Polish students ($M=29.33$, 29.97 & 37.40 respectively). Highly significant mean differences are found on vertical individualism ($p<.000$) and on vertical collectivism ($p<.000$) between Polish and Pakistani sample.

Figure 1 and 2 further elaborate that the Polish society prefers horizontal aspect of individualism-collectivism dimension. It may be seen that HC cultural pattern is their first choice and HI is preferred as second choice. Contrary to this Pakistani student prefers HC as first and VC second.

Figure 1
Horizontal & Vertical Individualism and Collectivism of Polish Students

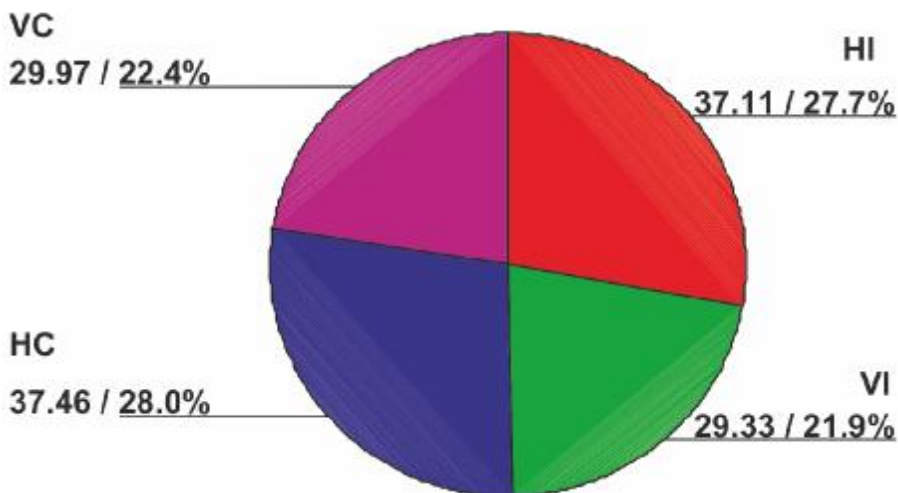


Figure 2
Horizontal & Vertical Individualism and Collectivism of Pakistani Students

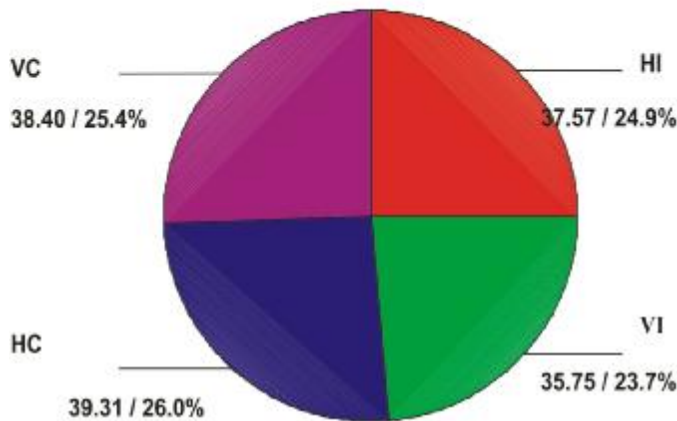


Table 3

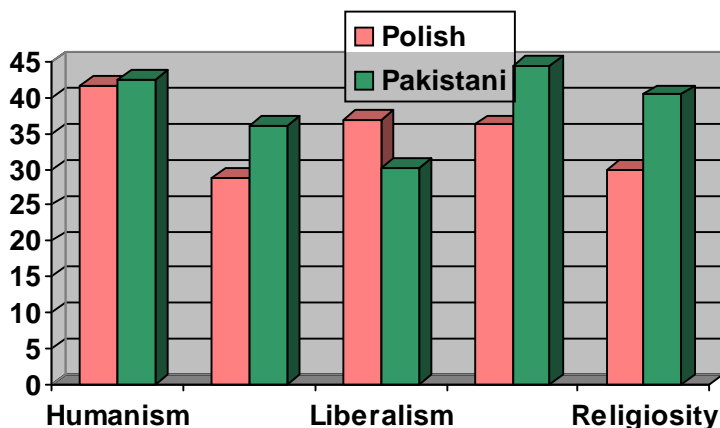
Means, S.D and t-tests for Polish and Pakistani Students on Emic Culture Values & Scripts Questionnaire (ECVSQ)

| Values | Polish Sample N=45 | | Pakistani Sample N=45 | | t | P |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------|--------------------------|------|-------|-------|
| | Mean | S.D | Mean | S.D | | |
| Humanism | 41.55 | 4.26 | 42.37 | 5.90 | 0.759 | 0.452 |
| Materialism | 28.86 | 7.83 | 36.06 | 7.93 | 4.568 | 0.000 |
| Liberalism | 36.97 | 6.28 | 30.06 | 6.59 | 4.923 | 0.000 |
| Family structure/function | 36.20 | 5.19 | 44.37 | 5.23 | 7.587 | 0.000 |
| Religiosity | 29.82 | 11.95 | 40.73 | 6.64 | 5.761 | 0.000 |

Table 3 shows that there are significant mean differences on the variables of ECVSQ, except humanism. Pakistani students have cohesive family structure/ function (M=44.37), are more religious (M=40.73), materialists (M=36.06), and less liberal (M=30.06). Whereas the Polish are more liberal (M=36.97) and; less materialists (M=28.86) and religious (M=29.82) as compared to Pakistani students (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Mean Scores of Polish and Pakistani Students on Value Dimensions



4 DISCUSSION

The findings indicate (see Figure 1) that Polish subjects scored higher on horizontal aspect of Individualism and Collectivism (HC 28% & HI 27.7%) than the Pakistani subjects. They are more humanists, more liberal and less religious. The present findings support that humanism is a central value of Polish society (Boski, 1996). Triandis (1995) emphasizes that all humans have both individualist and collectivist values and response tendencies, but the situations in which they find themselves determine the tendencies they will emphasize. In case of Polish society, results indicate that Polish society has both cultural patterns because transformation process is on going. The past socialist government advocated a society based on the assumption that the ‘socialism’ is the highest for the organization and the highest social value of all. Society was ideally depicted as one harmonious whole; everyone was expected to take care for the state as a moral imperative. The state, in turn, was obliged to care for everyone. Over the past 15 years, the Polish state’s ability to provide services to its citizens has gradually deteriorated. At the same time ideas of individual responsibility for one’s own lot has gained popularity. Consequently, one notices that the most salient characteristic is the move away from collectivist forms of societal organization and mentality toward the individualist form (Reykowski, 1994).

It is very interesting to note (see Figure 2) that Pakistani profile appears to be evenly distributed (HI 24.9%, VI 23.7%, HC 26% & VC 25.4%) across the four cultural patterns with collectivist responses somewhat more profound to the individualistic ones, and have strong family relations, more religious and are less liberal, which confirm the hypothesis of the present study.

The results of the present study clearly support the assumption that differences exist in collectivism-individualism and value dimensions between Polish and Pakistani students. There are significant mean differences on VI ($p < 0.000$), VC ($p < 0.000$) and HC ($p < 0.062$) between Polish and Pakistani students. Pakistani society appears to be more vertical and horizontal collectivists than the Polish society. The Pakistani society shows clear preference for strong family ties, and embeddedness with the primary in-group, and the people believe in hierarchy and willing to self-sacrifice consistent with some Indian studies (Verma & Triandis, 1998; Sinha & Sinha, 1990). It may be indicated that the Polish society also preferred collectivist dimension. The HC (28%) cultural pattern was their first choice and HI (27.7%) was as their second choice; whereas for Pakistani sample HC (26%) was first and VC (25.4%) second preferred cultural pattern.

The findings of the present study also support the assumption that Polish people are more liberal and less religious as compared to Pakistani sample. However, Pakistanis are more materialists and have more cohesive family bonds than the Polish people are. The results confirm the assertion that all humans have both individualist and collectivist values and response tendencies, but the situation which they find themselves determines the tendencies they will emphasize (Triandis, 1995). Apparently, in collectivistic cultures people express more collectivistic tendencies and in individualistic cultures they express more individualistic tendencies. The same is the case with Polish and Pakistani societies where are mixture of four cultural patterns; and are in transformation stage. In Pakistan, there is rapid urbanization and the access to information technology is affecting the individuals' values and response tendencies which may lead in future towards individualistic dimension.

5 CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the present study was to explore and compare the cultural patterns and values of Polish and Pakistani young adults. It may be seen that Pakistani profile clearly shows the highest percentage of emphasis on the HC dimension, while the VC was the second most frequent response. Pakistani sample are more horizontal collectivists than the Polish are. However, the Polish sample also rated HC and HI dimensions. It may be concluded that despite some similarities, differences do exist in individualism-collectivism and value dimensions between Polish and Pakistani societies to a considerable extent.

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