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INDIVIDUALIST AND COLLECTIVIST ORIENTATIONS ACROSS OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS

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Individualism-collectivism is an important theme of research in the area of cross-cultural psychology. According to Hofstede (1991), individualism pertains to societies in which ties between individuals are loose: Everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in groups, which throughout people's lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for understanding loyalty. Although Hofstede's work was concerned primarily with cultural differences, subsequent researchers have become interested in individualism-collectivism at the individual level as well (Kim, 1994; Triandis, 1994).

There are a number of ways to measure individualism and collectivism, and these measures (Triandis, McCusker & Hui, 1990) suggest the existence of a "cultural syndrome" (Triandis, 1993) — defined as shared attitudes, beliefs, norms, roles and self definitions, and values, centered around a theme found among those who speak similar language dialect, and live in the same historical period and geographic region.

An individualistic culture is described as one in which the goals and needs of the individuals take precedence over in-groups such as extended family, community, work organizations etc., whereas individuals in a collectivistic culture view personal goals and needs as subordinate to the goals and needs of these in-groups. However, it has been noted that differences exist within individualist or collectivist cultures. Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk and Gelfand (1995) made a further distinction between individualism and collectivism (IC), arguing that both individualism and collectivism may be either horizontal (H) — that is emphasizing equality — or it may be vertical (V) — that is emphasizing hierarchy. A brief description of the four patterns at the individual level is as follows:

1. **Horizontal individualist (HI)** people want to be unique and self-reliant, but they are not especially interested in becoming distinguished or having high status.
2. **Vertical individualist (VI)** people try to compete with others for distinction and status.
3. **Horizontal collectivist (HC)** people perceive themselves as an aspect of in-group and emphasize common goals with others, and
4. **Vertical collectivist (VC)** people sacrifice their personal goals for the sake of in-group goals, but the members of the in-group are different from each other, some having more status than others.

The construct validity of HI, VI, HC and VC has been examined by many researchers (Singelis et al., 1995; Oishi, Schimmack, Diener, and Soh, 1998; Triandis, Chen & Chan, 1998; and Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). Singelis et al. (1995) developed 32 attitude items having alphas in the range of .69 to .75, which was later modified and reduced to 16 items by Triandis & Gelfand (1998). This scale also showed the expected pattern of factor loadings on the four dimensions in a sample of South Korean undergraduates. Soh & Leong (2002) also found that the four-factor structure of V-H dimension is invariant across U.S. and Singapore students but they feel that further refinement and testing may enhance the operationalisation of V-H dimension.

In India the measure has mostly been used with student populations. Sinha & Tripathi (1994) have observed the coexistence of individualism and collectivism in Indian culture. Sinha & Verma (1994) found in their study that master's-level students express more idiocentric (individualist) orientations than allocentric (collectivist) due to Western influence, immediate life concerns and exposure to mass media. Verma & Triandis (1999) observed that Indian students were more vertical collectivist than U.S. students. Individualism-collectivism has also been studied in the context of occupations. Morris et al. (1994) found that emphasis on either individualism or collectivism tends to produce less entrepreneurship than a balanced emphasis. Bhawuk & Udas (1996) observed that Nepalese entrepreneurs are both individualists (idiocentric) and collectivists (allocentric), but it depends on the situation (work or family). Wilson (1998) noted that the majority of entrepreneurs fall in the middle of the spectrum of individualism and collectivism, but women tend to be more collectivist in their

approach to business, blending their personal lives with their careers.

In light of the above discussion and Triandis's cultural syndrome example for expecting Indians to be higher in vertical collectivism than many other cultures, the present study was undertaken. The study investigates the pattern of individualist-collectivist orientations across different occupational groups and also in a group of students in the Eastern part of India - West Bengal.

Method

Participants

There were a total of 240 participants in this study. The occupational groups studied were College Teachers, Executives and Entrepreneurs. A group of college students studying in undergraduate classes were also studied. The educational level of the three occupational groups were undergraduates and above. Male/female distributions of the different groups are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Male/Female Distribution of Different Groups

Groups	Teachers	Executives	Entrepreneurs	Students
Male	20	44	32	50
Female	25	6	13	50
Total	45	50	45	100

Most of the participants were from Calcutta and its suburb and were primarily from a nuclear family, middle socio-economic class and urbanized environment. Executives were selected from two organizations each from the Northern and the Southern parts of Calcutta. Students, Teachers and Entrepreneurs were also selected from four Colleges and from different small scale units from the Northern and the Southern parts of Calcutta. Participants were approached individually and after obtaining their willingness, scales were administered.

Measures

Individualism-Collectivism Scale of Triandis and Gelfand (1998) was used in this study. This is a modified version of Singelis et al. (1995) 32-item scale. The coefficient alpha of the scale ranged from .67 to .74. The present scale has 16 items, four items in each of the four dimensions of HI, VI, HC, and VC, having highest factor loadings. A 7-point Likert type scale was used for obtaining responses from the participants.

Biographical information blank. Participants' biographical information was also obtained with the help of biographical information blank. Age, gender, educational qualification, socio-economic status and type of family were collected through this information blank.

The data were collected from the participants individually or in small groups.

Results and Discussion

The data collected from the participants were scored to get the raw scores for each of the four dimensions. Means and standard deviations for the different groups were calculated and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations (SD) for Different Groups

Dimensions (IC)	Teacher		Executive		Entrepreneur		Student	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
HI	21.60	3.77	19.92	4.44	25.96	2.30	23.84	3.79
VI	18.11	3.91	21.40	3.75	21.78	4.70	20.76	4.59
HC	22.64	2.82	22.68	3.08	22.44	4.20	23.10	3.38
VC	23.11	2.85	24.38	2.59	21.07	6.35	23.18	3.76

Table 2 indicates that the mean scores in different dimensions differed from group to group. Teachers and executives were found to score higher

in vertical collectivism than other dimensions. But entrepreneurs were found to score higher in horizontal individualism. This shows that they appear to be independent but at the same time believe in equality among others. As variations were observed within a group with respect to different I-C dimensions, repeated measure analysis of variance was computed for each group taking the four I-C dimensions as the repeated dependent variable. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Repeated Measure ANOVA Results for Different Groups

Groups	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>
Teacher	21.19*	3, 132
Executive	18.20*	3, 147
Entrepreneur	11.97*	3, 132
Student	13.62*	3, 297

* Significant at .01 level.

The results indicate that all the *F*-values are significant which reveal that within a group there is significant difference among the different I-C dimensions. Teachers and students were found to be significantly low in vertical individualism (Teachers: $F = 58.79$, $p < .01$; Students: $F = 38.36$, $p < .01$) than the other three dimensions. Executives were found to be significantly low in horizontal individualism ($F = 31.95$, $p < .01$) whereas horizontal individualism ($F = 33.50$, $p < .01$) was found to be the dominant pattern of entrepreneurs.

To determine whether there was a significant difference among the four groups or not with respect to I-C dimensions, one way analysis of variance with post-hoc comparisons were computed. The results are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4
One-Way ANOVA Results of Four Different Groups for Different IC Dimensions

Dimensions	F	df
HI	24.87*	3, 239
VI	6.66*	3, 239
HC	0.48	3, 239
VC	5.44*	3, 239

* Significant at .01 level.

Table 5
Multiple Comparisons among Different Groups with respect to Different IC Dimensions

Groups	HI	VI	HC	VC
Teacher-Executive	1.68	3.29*	.04	1.27
Teacher-Entrepreneur	4.36*	3.67*	.20	2.04
Teacher-Student	2.24*	2.67*	.46	.07
Executive-Entrepreneur	6.04*	.38	.24	3.32*
Executive-Student	3.92*	.62	.42	1.20
Entrepreneur-Student	2.12*	1.00	.66	2.12*

* Significant at .01 level.

The results reported above indicate that both teachers and executives were found to differ significantly from entrepreneurs and students with respect to horizontal individualism. Entrepreneurs scored significantly higher than teachers, executives and students with respect to HI which shows that they want to be self-reliant but more or less equal in status with others. Teachers were also found to differ significantly from executives, entrepreneurs and students with respect to vertical individualism and they scored the lowest in this dimension. With respect to VC, a significant difference was observed between executives and entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs and students.

Mean scores for four different items from the I-C dimension were calculated and it shows that there is variation among the groups with respect to their responses. This is presented graphically in Figure 1.

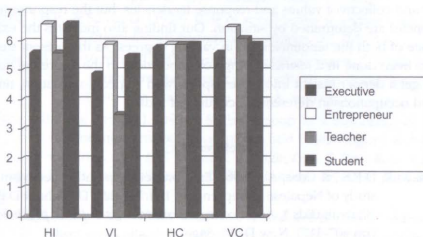


Figure 1. Mean scores of four I-C items for four different groups.

In one VI item namely, "Winning is everything," college teachers scored the lowest than the other groups. The VC item "It is my duty to take care of my family even when I have to sacrifice what I want," depicts high score for executives, teachers and students. Entrepreneurs and students showed more or less similar pattern for HI item, "My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me," whereas the HC item "If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud" shows more or less similar pattern for all the groups.

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that within the Indian culture, different occupational groups and students expressed different degrees of individualist-collectivist orientations. The finding is consistent with studies reported from other parts of India (Sinha & Verma, 1987; Sinha & Sinha, 1990; Verma & Triandis, 1999), which states that both the tendencies coexist in Indian student population. It was also observed with different

occupational groups studied here. But it cannot be said that these results are replicable in other cultures or even within different subcultures of India.

Triandis (1995) emphasized that all individuals have both individualist and collectivist values and response tendencies, but the response tendencies are determined by situation. Our finding also indicates the existence of both the tendencies but in varying degrees. As the present study has been done in a restricted range of population, in the future we need to get a deeper insight into these aspects with respect to situation, time, and occupations in different subcultures of India.

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