

Gender & Education Determinants of Individualism – Collectivism: A Study of Future Managers

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This paper aims to explore current positions in the individualism- collectivism dimension of male and female students in undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The study was based on primary data and the respondents were selected from undergraduate and post graduate students perusing management courses. The findings of the study ran counter to those of previous studies concerning individualism- collectivism in that the female students in undergraduate and postgraduate courses had high collectivist behaviour while their male counterparts showed low collectivist behaviour. This reflects that group behaviour in females is effective and if channelized properly, this inherent trait of group conformity can help female managers to effectively handle the teams along with sound peer relationship.

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Individualists-Collectivists Societies

Individualism-Collectivism refers to the social connectedness among individuals. The concept of collectivism emphasizes interdependence between the self and one's group or community, implying that collectivists place more value on group goals and are guided more by group norms and traditional authority figures (Oyserman, Coon & Kimmelmeier 2002, Triandis 1995). Cross-cultural studies have shown that members of collectivist societies are more concerned about conforming to social norms than are members of individualist societies. According to Hofstede (1991), Individualism stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose; everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family only. Collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Traditionally, individualism has been identified as "the habit or principle of being independent and self-reliant: self-centred feeling or conduct; egoism" (Jewell & Abate

2001). People with strong individualistic values emphasize autonomy, independence, and individual initiative (Hofstede 1980). Individuals with strong collectivistic values tend to favour group solidarity, obligations, security, obedience, duty, and personalized relationships (Triandis 1994a). Collectives consist of individuals who are bound together by a number of different relationships (Etzioni 1968). Additionally, individuals with a strong collectivistic orientation tend to belong to a select few in groups such as families and friendship circles (Triandis et al. 1988). Due to the stability of these in groups, collectivists generally discriminate against out group members and favour in group members. On the cultural dimension of Individualism-Collectivism (I-C), Indian national culture shows a strong emphasis on collectivism (Hofstede 1992). But even within same cultures the approach of individuals towards individualism and collectivism vary because of various reasons like gender differences, racial differences, caste differences, modernization etc.

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According to the “gender-centred” hypothesis (Fagenson 1990), gender differences are expected because of the different ways that women and men are socialized by parents, schools, and mass media, among others. Hence, it could be interpreted that norms, values, and social conventions affect the behavioural

patterns of different sexes. Sex differences in values, attitudes and behaviours arise due to different gender roles, gender stereotypes and gendered social structures that influence self concept and self presentation (Konrad et al. 2000). Various studies show that traditional value system indicates the males are of more individualistic and less collectivistic approach as compared to females. Individualism and Collectivism has been associated with different behaviours and personality attributes like gender differences, cultural differences, racial differences etc. Present study focuses on whether gender differences affect Individualistic-Collectivist behaviour among students of graduate and postgraduate courses.

Literature

What is often interpreted as differences in I-C can be accounted for by demographic variables such as education, type of employment and urban versus rural environment (Kagitcibasi 1997). Markus and Kitayama (1991) suggested that people in collectivist societies tend to have higher interdependent and lower independent self-construal, whereas the opposite relationship is expected in individualistic societies. Individuals describe categories, such as ethnicity, to themselves, and these categorizations provide a basis for their self-definition or self-concept. Through these identities, specific values, attitudes, and needs are translated to goals for behaviour (Cropanzano et al. 1992, Markus & Wurf 1987) and the values of individualism and collectivism or the extent to which indi-

vidual initiative versus interdependence are favoured in a culture (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis 1994a). Given that an individualistic orientation emphasizes autonomy, independence, individual initiative, and a collectivistic orientation emphasizes group solidarity (Triandis et al. 1988), Triandis 1994b) it is identified that in collectivistic cultures, job characteristics such as task interdependence and affiliation could be more important than task variety, task identity, task significance, and autonomy. Cox et al (1991) found that ethnically diverse groups with people from collectivist cultural traditions tended to be more cooperative than groups composed of only individuals from individualistic traditions. Similarly, Earley (1989) found that social loafing did not occur in groups with collectivistic beliefs (i.e., Chinese managers). Subsequently, Earley's (1993) research indicated that the performance of collectivists is highest when working in an in-group.

Hofstede (1980) found that collectivistic cultures placed greater emphasis on having training opportunities, good working conditions, and being able to use their skills, while individualistic cultures placed emphasis on having a job which leaves sufficient personal time, gives freedom to perform the job according to the individual's preferences, and having challenging work which gives a sense of accomplishment. Meindl et al. (1989) found that collectivism was related to less emphasis on certain work values such as achievement, independence and growth, and a greater emphasis on other work values such as benefits, security, pay, recognition, and working conditions.

Singelis et. al. (1995) and Triandis (1995) have distinguished two major dimensions of I-C at the individual level, namely the vertical and horizontal components. The vertical dimension can be characterized by a sense of service and sacrifice for the in-group, a primary emphasis on doing one's duty, and an acceptance of the benefits of inequality and rank (Triandis 1995). Earley (1994) examined managers from China and the US and found that regardless of the cultural and geographical differences between the two countries, there were differences among individuals in each group in their level of individualism/collectivism. The study found that those with a high level of individualism performed better in individual-oriented tasks, while those who ranked high in collectivism performed better in group-oriented tasks. Wagner (1995) found that students with a high level of individualism tended to cooperate less in group settings than those with a high level of collectivism.

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Scope & Design of the Study

Research type : Exploratory

Sampling technique: Convenient sampling

Sampling unit: Students of professional courses pursuing BBA and MBA in age group of 18-25 Years at Indore

(MP) region.

Sample size: 50 Male students of BBA course pursuing first year.

50 Female students of BBA course pursuing first year

50 Male students of MBA course pursuing final year

50 Female students of MBA course pursuing final year

Tools for data collection: Questionnaire

To measure individualism and collectivism, 15 items from Oyserman et al. (2002) were taken and a questionnaire was developed on a 5-point scale. The questionnaire has been administered on the students of professional courses pursuing BBA and MBA in the age group of 18-25 Years at Indore (MP) region.

Tools for data analysis: Kolmogorov- Smirnov test, One Way ANOVA and Tukey (HSD) Test.

Objectives

The objectives of the present study are:-

1. To study the impact of gender differences on individualistic-collectivist behaviour among graduate students.
2. To study the impact of gender differences on individualistic-collectivist behaviour among post-graduate students.

3. To study the impact of gender differences on individualistic-collectivist behaviour between graduate and post-graduate students.

Item Total Correlation

Questionnaire adopted in this study consisted of 15 questions; item total correlation was used in order to check the normality of the sample. As the sample size was 200, item with correlation value less than 0.1948 should be dropped. All the items in the study had correlation values more than 0.1948 thus; no item was dropped from the questionnaire.

Reliability of the Measures

Reliability of the measures was assessed with the use of Cronbach's alpha on all the 15 items. Cronbach's alpha is designed as a measure of internal consistency, that is all the items within the instrument measure the same thing. It allows us to measure the reliability of different variables. It consists of estimates of how much variation in scores of different variables is attributable to chance or random errors (Selltiz et al. 1976). As a general rule, a coefficient greater than or equal to 0.7 is considered acceptable and a good indication of construct reliability (Nunnally 1978). The Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire is (0.76). Hence, it is reliable and can be used for analysis.

Kolmogorov- Smirnov test is performed to examine if the values follow normal distribution. This test is essential to compare the averages of respondents. The result of the test (Table 1) show that

values in Individualist and Collectivist behaviours among students follow normal distribution hence ANOVA can be used for comparing means.

Table 1: Result of the One-Sample Kolmogorov- Smirnov Test for Individualist and Collectivist Behaviour

N	200
Normal Parameters (a, b)	
Mean	40.9450
Std. Deviation	7.668
Kolmogorov- Smirnov Z	1.044
Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)	0.223

a. Test distribution is normal. b. Calculated from data

Hypotheses

H_{01} : There is no significant difference between Individualist and Collectivist behaviours of male and female students in undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

H_{02} : There is no significant difference between Individualist and Collectivist behaviours of male and female students in undergraduate courses.

H_{03} : There is no significant difference between Individualist and Collectivist behaviours of male and female students in postgraduate courses.

H_{04} : There is no significant difference between Individualist and Collectivist behaviours of male students in undergraduate courses and female students in postgraduate courses.

H_{05} : There is no significant difference between Individualist and Collectivist behaviours of female students in undergraduate courses and male students in postgraduate courses.

Results & Discussion

Table 2 depicts that the F value for the groups is 95.962 and p value is .000 therefore, null hypothesis H_{01} is rejected at 1% level of significance. It means that Individualist and Collectivist behaviours of male and female students in undergraduate and postgraduate courses significantly differ in their mean values. Females in undergraduate and postgraduate courses are having highest mean values of 3.11, hence have high collectivist behaviour while mean values of males in postgraduate and undergraduate courses are 2.45 and 2.23 respectively which represent low collectivist behaviour in males of postgraduate courses and least collectivist behaviour in males at undergraduate level.

Table 2: Results of One Way ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6962.295	3	2320.765	95.962*	.000
Within Groups	4740.100	196	24.184		
Total	11702.395	199			

* The mean difference is significant at .01 level.

In order to find out the difference between four groups (male and female students of undergraduate courses; male and female students of post graduate courses; male students of undergraduate and female students of postgraduate courses and female students of undergraduate and male students of postgraduate courses) is significant Turkey test was applied as indicated in Table 3. It was

found that p value in the case all the groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 is almost zero, which means that null hypotheses 2, 3, 4 are rejected at 1% significance level. It can be inferred that there is significant difference between the Individualist and Collectivist behaviours of male and female students at undergraduate, postgraduate and between undergraduate and post graduate levels.

Table 3: Post Hoc Test

	(I)	(J)	Mean	Std.	Sig.	99% Confidence Interval	
			Difference (I-J)	Error		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Tukey HSD	MALE UG	FEMALE UG	-13.2400*	.98355	.000	-15.7886	-10.6914
	MALE PG	FEMALE PG	-13.1800*	.98355	.000	-15.7286	-10.6314
		MALLE UG	-3.2800*	.98355	.006	-5.8286	-.7314
	FEMALE UG	MALE PG	13.2400*	.98355	.000	10.6914	15.7886
		FEMALE PG	.0600	.98355	1.000	-2.4886	2.6086
		MALE PG	9.9600*	.98355	.000	7.4114	12.5086
	FEMALE PG	MALE UG	13.1800*	.98355	.000	10.6314	15.7286
		FEMALE PG	-.0600	.98355	1.000	-2.6086	2.4886
		MALE UG	9.9000*	.98355	.000	7.3514	12.4486
	MALE PG	MALE UG	3.2800*	.98355	.006	.7314	5.8286
		FEMALE UG	-9.9600*	.98355	.000	-12.5086	-7.4114
		FEMALE PG	-9.9600*	.98355	.000	-12.4486	-7.3514

* The mean difference is significant at .01 level.

The differential nature of gender roles, gender stereotypes and gendered social structures is attributed to (a) the

division of labour between women and men and (b) the greater status and power of men that emerges in the control of

women's general behaviour (Wood & Eagly 2002). The traditional value systems attributed to males and females make males more individualistic and less collectivistic than females. Hence, it was expected that males will score high on individualistic behavioural patterns while females will score on collectivist behavioural patterns. It was also expected that due to modernization cultural values are changing but the results pointed out that males scored low on facets of collectivism as compared to females. Despite of modernization in the Indian society which is represented by strong cultural ties among individuals and groups, the behavioural pattern among different genders is expected to be the same which is clearly shown by the present study.

The traditional value systems attributed to males and females make males more Individualistic and less Collectivistic than females.

Conclusion

This paper seeks to examine Individualist and Collectivist behaviour of male and female students in undergraduate and postgraduate courses. This type of orientation is necessary in the present scenario, when the standard of living, education level and mindset of Indian society is changing drastically. This has resulted in the changing roles of Indian males and females in both personal and professional fronts and in turn has transformed their individual and collective behaviour. Individualism-Collectivism has been associated with different behaviour patterns and personality at-

tributes and the present study clearly revealed that gender differences affect Individualistic- Collectivist behaviours among students at graduate and postgraduate courses. Female students in undergraduate and postgraduate courses are characterized by high collectivist behaviour while males in postgraduate and undergraduate courses showed low collectivist behaviour. This reflects that group behaviour among females is effective and if channelized properly, this inherent trait of group conformity can help female managers to effectively handle the teams along with sound peer relationship.

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