



## **Collectivistic Culture Orientation across Age and Gender in a Mizo Society**

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### ***Abstract***

*This study investigated the role of age and gender and their interactions in differentiating Mizo people in terms of their perceived collectivistic cultural orientation by highlighting the discrepancy between normative cultural orientation and perceived evaluation of culture exists among the Mizos. The Cultural Orientation Scale (COS) developed by Brierbrauer, Meyer & Wolfradt (1994) was used and individually administered. 412 Samples were collected from 20 localities in Aizawl City using a multistage random sampling technique with an equal proportion of age and gender. Results of two ways ANOVA revealed significant main effects of age that Young Mizos reported greater normative culture than old Mizos who were higher in their self-evaluation of collectivistic values; no significant gender effect on all dependent variables; and the interaction of age and gender did not significantly affect cultural orientations of the Mizos. The great magnitude of discrepancy between the normative and evaluative perception of culture exists among old adults. Gender comparison of Mizo young adults showed significantly greater discrepancy among young male than young female. Implications for differing culture view between age groups are discussed with the scope of large scale studies comparing rural and urban areas to further explore and enrich the findings.*

***Keywords:*** *Collectivistic Culture, Age, Gender, Normative and Evaluative Orientation, Mizo Society.*

Cultures broadly exist in two dimensions of individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 1980). Hui and Triandis (1986) defined collectivism as " a cluster of attitudes, belief and behaviours toward a wide variety of people". Within each cultural constructs, normative and evaluative assessments of one's culture exist (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis; 1989). Brierbrauer

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and colleagues (1994) posited that the perception of cultural norms and personal evaluation of these norms do not necessarily coexist. They distinguished between perceived norm which reflects the degree to which norms are viewed to exist strongly in one's culture, and personal evaluation of culture values i.e. the extent to which one strongly holds cultural practices and customs as their values.

Collectivistic people are generally known to abide by norms of tradition and religion (Bierbrauer, 1994). It would be appropriate to render values of collectivists to Schwartz's (1992, 2011) description of value orientation of adherence to normative standards, customs, social security, and social conformity. It also reflects the responsibility for helping and concerning the welfare of others. Collectivistic values were also found to be positively related to normative identity styles in which interdependent relationship between assuming the normative identity and pursuing conservative values existed (Berzonsky et al., 2011; Duriez et al., 2012). A conforming, normative identity style depicting respect for authority, and socially approved behaviour was found to be associated with conservative values in a study by Berzonsky & Papini (2014).

### **Age and Collectivistic Orientation**

The need for exploring generational differences in culture studies have been raised by Mishra (1994). Presumptions of individualism to come along with globalization and rising modernity have often been questioned (Kagitcibasi, 1994). And this may be affirmed in a technologically progressive yet collectivist society like the Japanese (Iwawaki, 1986) whose core collective values are known to remain intact (Kim, 1994). On the other hand, the assumption of total collectivism in Indian society presents an interesting contradiction between the young and old generation. Young Indians revealed lesser collectivism than older Indians in a study led by Mishra (1994). However, urban residency moderated the decreasing collectivism in the (south..?) youth Indian population in the same study. Coexistence of individualism and collectivism were found in the whole Indian sample. Mixed findings with regards to Mizo collectivism were found in a few research studies. Fente & Singh (2007) found the existence of perceived collectivism among Mizo samples, which contradicted recent findings by Ralte & Fente (2017) that revealed the coexistence of individualism and collectivism across Mizo adolescents and adults. They differed in forms of independent and interdependent self-construal dimension which is a parallel measure of individualism and collectivism ((Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). Intergenerational conflicts in Mizo society were found wherein adolescents showed greater individualistic attitudes than their parents (Vanlalhraia, 2011). Mizo parents also revealed high behavioural control in their parenting styles which also reflected the typical parenting pattern in collectivistic cultures (Chongthu, 2011).

### **Gender and Collectivistic Orientation**

Gender differences in individualism and collectivism have been addressed in previous researches (Gilligan, 1982; Maccoby, 1990; Singelis, 1994; Kashima et al., 1995). Women are normally seen in nurturing roles and fitting to sensitive traits in understanding others (Gilligan, 1982; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Collectivistic determinants like sociability,

social accountability and a sense of relatedness to others are often seen in the traits of women (Wellman, 1992; Wethington, McLeod & Kessler, 1987; Marcus & Lehman, 2002; Rosenberg, 1989; Cramer, 2000). In general, women are believed to show greater collectivistic personalities than men as often proved in gender researches (Cross & Madson, 1997; Hofstede, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). On the other hand, men were characterized with individualistic traits such as competitiveness (Gaeddert & Facticeau, 1990), egocentrism (Clancy & Dollinger, 1993) and separate self-description from other social agents (Lyons, 1983) in various studies. A Mizo study revealed female to be more individualistic than men, and women with greater problems of interpersonal conflicts (Vanlalhruaia, 2011). Other Mizo study found men to be more altruistic than women and female to have higher religiosity than men (Sailo, 2015), both of which indicated collectivistic values.

### **Present Research**

Culture change generally exerts implications for conflicting values in societies. Impact of globalization and modernity as known variables to explain changing society opens great avenues for exploring multiple constructs in culture studies. Mizo society exemplifies a changing society where transactions from collectivism to individualism may be presumed based on studies that highlighted the cultural shift from total collectivism (Ralte & Fente, 2017; Vanlalhruaia, 2011). The direction may not necessarily imply individualism in the whole Mizo population but a recognizable culture dissonance is of great concern which calls for research exploration. Age and gender are common categories based on which people largely differ. Therefore, the present study will explore the effects of age and gender and their interaction on collectivistic cultural orientation. Within the dimension of collectivistic orientation, a separate analysis of the normative and evaluative aspect of Mizo culture values will be explored. The objective is to gain a better understanding of the Mizo culture scenario where culture experience across age and gender may help explain many conflicting behavioural and internal psychological challenges faced by Mizo society. Keeping these in view, the following objectives and hypotheses were formulated:

O1: To study the main effect of age and gender on measures of collectivistic cultural orientation.

H1: There will be a significant effect of age and gender on measures of collectivistic cultural orientation.

O2: To study the interaction effect of age and gender on measures of collectivistic cultural orientation.

H2: There will be a significant interaction effect of age and gender on measures of collectivistic cultural orientation.

### **Methods and Procedure**

In a multistage sampling procedure, localities from 10 Mizoram Assembly Constituencies in Aizawl district were first listed. Community-Based Organization (CBO) members registered in each locality were recorded from Young Mizo Association (YMA),

Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) and Mizoram Upa Pawl (MUP). Secondly, two localities were selected randomly from each constituency. Sampling units were equated using a sampling weight technique. Thirdly, with random numbers generated through SPSS, participants were selected according to gender (male and female) and two age group classifications (Santrock, 2012). Here, young adults (20 to 40 years) and old adults (60 years and above) were separately listed. Accordingly, the required number of participants was tested individually. The final sample for analysis included:- 412 Mizo members of CBOs, in which 206 were young adults (103 male and 103 female) and 206 were old adults (103 male and 103 female). Detailed demographic information regarding age, sex, marital status, educational qualification, employment status, place of upbringing, family size, nuclear/joint family, acculturating experiences in years, and details of social participation was recorded. Appropriate statistical analyses were applied on the 2 X 2 (2 age x 2 genders) factorial design of the study.

**Tools – Cultural Orientation Scale (COS, Bierbrauer et al., 1994)**

Cultural orientation scale (COS) comprising of 13 items was used to measure collectivistic cultural orientation. Each item measured both normative and evaluative aspects independently, totaling up to 26 items in the measure of collectivistic cultural orientation. Each evaluative assessment followed a paired normative assessment. The discrepancy between normative (NORM) and evaluative (EVA) assessment reflected the conflict between perceived norms in culture and the acceptance of those norms. Higher the degree of overall scores, higher will be the perceived collectivistic cultural orientation.

Five items with negative loadings in the item-total correlations were removed from the COS scale. The remaining 21 items revealed an item-total correlation ranging from .11 to .64 for the full-scale - COS and .04 to .74 for NORM and .21 to .66 for EVA sub-scales. The order of reliability coefficient for the full-fledged COS scale showed reasonable alpha ranges between .51 and .77, alpha values from .52 to .61 in NORM, and .50 to .71 in EVA subscales. In the first study conducted on COS, internal consistency of the scale was found to range from  $\alpha=.56$  for Germans and  $\alpha=.70$  for Koreans participants (Bierbrauer et al., 1994). Cautious interpretation of discrepancy scores between normative and evaluative scales was raised because of unequal paired subscale items. However, this will be resolved by using item means in place of score means for further statistical comparison of test scores.

**Results**

Subject scores were first evaluated to determine the normality of sample distribution and homogeneity of variances. Results revealed acceptable values for normality in terms of skewness and kurtosis (Table 2). Levene's test of homogeneity of variances showed non-violation of test assumptions for the use of parametric tests in our analyses. Hartley's Fmax ratio was employed additionally to double-check the violation of homogeneity of variances (Table 1).

Table 1: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

	F	df1	df2	Sig.	Fmax ratio
NORM	4.063	3	408	.007	1.70
EVA	2.915	3	408	.034	1.78
COS	1.786	3	408	.149	

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups. a. Design: Intercept + AGE + GENDER + AGE \* GENDER

Table 2: Mean, SD, Skewness, Kurtosis and standard errors in Collectivistic, Normative and Evaluative cultural orientation

	AGE	GENDER	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error	
COS	Young adults	Male	103	5.21	.403	-.384	.238	.211	.472	
		Female	103	5.18	.459	-.352	.238	.030	.472	
		Total	206	5.19	.431	-.376	.169	.126	.337	
	Old adults	Male	103	4.95	.370	.206	.238	-.464	.472	
		Female	103	5.07	.362	-.106	.238	.016	.472	
		Total	206	5.01	.369	.043	.169	-.340	.337	
	Total	Male	206	5.08	.406	-.037	.169	-.407	.337	
		Female	206	5.12	.417	-.174	.169	.050	.337	
		Total	412	5.10	.411	-.103	.120	-.192	.240	
	NORM	Young adults	Male	103	4.87	.512	.045	.238	-.316	.472
			Female	103	4.91	.495	-.316	.238	-.312	.472
			Total	206	4.89	.503	-.129	.169	-.358	.337
Old adults		Male	103	3.74	.627	.215	.238	-.623	.472	
		Female	103	3.85	.646	.029	.238	-.695	.472	
		Total	206	3.79	.637	.123	.169	-.692	.337	
Total		Male	206	4.31	.805	-.158	.169	-.723	.337	
		Female	206	4.38	.783	-.318	.169	-.678	.337	
		Total	412	4.34	.794	-.237	.120	-.716	.240	
EVA		Young adults	Male	103	5.41	.455	-.384	.238	.087	.472
			Female	103	5.35	.536	-.211	.238	.043	.472
			Total	206	5.38	.497	-.306	.169	.103	.337
	Old adults	Male	103	5.70	.467	.102	.238	.520	.472	
		Female	103	5.82	.401	.002	.238	.119	.472	
		Total	206	5.76	.438	.003	.169	.373	.337	
	Total	Male	206	5.56	.483	-.092	.169	.470	.337	
		Female	206	5.58	.528	-.414	.169	.305	.337	
		Total	412	5.57	.505	-.267	.120	.360	.240	

The results of univariate analysis of variance (two way ANOVA) in the 2 age groups X 2 gender factorial design of the study showed significant main effects of age in normative, evaluative and collectivistic cultural orientation (Table 4). There were no significant effects of gender and no interaction of age and gender were found in all the dependent variables. Mean comparisons across age in Normative Cultural Orientation (NORM) showed young adults (M=4.9, SD=.503) to score higher than old adults (M=3.8, SD=.64). In the age comparison of Evaluative cultural orientation (EVA), old adults (M=5.8, SD=.44) revealed a significantly greater mean score than young adults (M=5.4, SD=.54). The significant main effect of age on collectivistic cultural orientation showed young adults (M=5.2, SD=.43) to have a higher mean score in comparison with old adults (M=5.01, SD=.37). In the total Mizo

sample, a mean score of 5.1 on a 7 point Likert type scale indicated low high score in overall perceived collectivism (Table 1). A very low (in male and female) and insignificant negative correlation (in the male) appeared in the relationship between normative and evaluative cultural orientation among old adults (Table 3). In the young sample, normative and evaluative cultural orientation correlated significantly. Both significant correlations across gender in the young Mizo sample revealed greater coherence between perceived norms and culture value acceptance in young female (.52) as compared to young male (.38).

Table 3: Correlations between Normative and Evaluative Cultural Orientation

COS subscales	YOUNG ADULTS (MALE)		YOUNG ADULTS (FEMALE)	
	NORM	EVA	NORM	EVA
NORM	1		1	
EVA	.38**	1	.52**	1
	OLD ADULTS (MALE)		OLD ADULTS (FEMALE)	
	NORM	EVA	NORM	EVA
NORM	1		1	
EVA	-.05	1	.07	1

Table 4: Univariate analysis of variance depicting the main effect of age and gender and their interaction on all dependent variables

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
AGE	NORM	123.834	1	123.834	375.87	.000	.480
	EVA	15.030	1	15.030	68.832	.000	.144
	COS	3.392	1	3.392	21.148	.000	.049
GENDER	NORM	.537	1	.537	1.630	.202	.004
	EVA	.064	1	.064	.295	.587	.001
	COS	.205	1	.205	1.278	.259	.003
AGE * GENDER	NORM	.123	1	.123	.374	.541	.001
	EVA	.793	1	.793	3.632	.057	.009
	COS	.499	1	.499	3.109	.079	.008

## Discussion

The main objective of the study was to explore age and gender differences in collectivistic cultural orientation among Mizo sample. It was hypothesized that there will be a significant main effect of age and gender and their interactions in all measures of collectivistic cultural orientation. Results from ANOVA proved the hypothesis of significant age effect on collectivistic cultural orientation. But refuted the hypotheses of gender and interaction effect of both independent variables (age X gender).

Yamaguchi (1994) raised important linkages between age and collectivism. Existing research evidence (Sinha, 1979; Mishra, 1994; Vanlalhruaia, 2011; Chongthu, 2011) showed younger generations to have lesser collectivistic cultural orientation than older generations. A higher perceived collectivistic cultural orientation was significantly reported in the results of young Mizo adults than old adults in our study, thereby disproving the generalization of individualistic traits to the younger population. Recent findings of the coexisting cultural



orientation of collectivism and individualism in the Mizo population (Ralte & Fente, 2017), were significant in pre-determining the dynamic culture orientations of the Mizo people.

Despite the findings in the total measure of perceived collectivism, the internal constructs of collectivism showed greater variations across the age. Interestingly, young Mizo adults revealed greater perceived normative orientation with regards to their culture than older Mizo adults. Similarly, Chinese Americans living in a strict norm-based community reported stronger ethnic orientation (Ying, Han & Won, 2008). A higher normative cultural orientation of young Mizo adults in our study justified behavioural control parenting styles reported by Mizo parents (Chongthu, 2011); which greatly reflected collectivistic conservative values. More noteworthy was the reporting of higher self-evaluation of collectivistic orientation in old Mizo adults in comparison with their young adult counterparts. Intergenerational conflicts based on individualism and collectivism was reported by Vanlalhraia (2011) in his Mizo study. This greatly reflected why young Mizo adults revealed greater perceived norm in our study; and why older Mizo adults reported themselves to be highly collectivistic in their evaluation.

The discrepancy across age was further affirmed in the results of correlations between normative and evaluative cultural orientation in the interaction of age and gender of Mizo people (Table 3). Old male and female experienced extreme discrepancies in their normative and evaluative assessment. The greater discrepancy between perceived norms and values were also found for Koreans who were living in Germany (Bierbrauer et al., 1994). Cultural orientation scale also measures discrepancy experienced by acculturating groups. Accordingly, it may be appropriate to discuss the concept of what may seem like an experience of acculturative stress (Berry, 1970) by older generations in Mizoram. The outcome of acculturation which is the experience of a new culture may yield 'cultural shock' (Oberg, 1960) in the older population of Mizo society. Contemporary culture entails new forms of a technologically advanced society that profoundly affect human lives (Levinson, 1998). The already acculturative young Mizo adults who reported to have either lived or studied outside Mizoram in their demographic reports may have become the agent's of acculturation in Mizoram. Majority of older adults reported being born and raised in rural areas. Therefore, the magnified experience of conflicting norms and values perceived by older adults is justifiable. With regards to young Mizo, the demands of culture rigidity and tightness (Mishra, 1994) may have led to their strong view of cultural norms to be present in Mizo society.

In terms of gender, our findings merely contributed to the variation in researches on gender differences in individualism and collectivism as seen in the work of many researchers (Gabriel & Gardner, 1999; Kashima et al. 1995; Baumeister & Sommer, 1997 etc).

## **Conclusion**

To enrich existing literature on cultural variations in terms of age and gender, the focus of the current study examined the main effects of age and gender and their interactions in explaining a Mizo collectivistic cultural orientation. Mizo society as an epitome of

collectivistic culture is presumed to undergo subtle cultural changes especially in the interaction of individualistic and collectivistic orientations within the broad collectivistic culture. Amidst the contrasting literature that exists in the study of age and gender, these variables were explored in the Mizo sample. Age significantly differentiated the Mizo population in terms of collectivistic cultural orientation. Young Mizo adults affirmed cultural norms to greatly exist in their culture and old adults evaluated their collectivistic values greater than the youths. Alarming discrepancies were experienced by older generations than younger generations in the assessment of cultural norms and personal values.

The present study has crucial implications for more investigations on age effects in Mizo cultural studies. The internal conflicts arising across age in terms of cultural orientation is worthy of a large scale research exploration. The differing view of culture to be normative by young adults and greatly discrepant by older adults explains many possible intergenerational conflicts. The understanding of these dissonances existing in a Mizo society may provide an important basis for professionals dealing with family-related problems and community leaders (CBOs, religious organizations) who operate widely amongst the Mizo people. Since the sample for this study were drawn from the urban population, it would be imperative to explore the same construct across urban/rural setting to reflect a more representative Mizo culture study and for significant comparison purposes.

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