

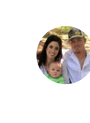
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Cultural Differences in Coping: A Comparison of Vertical and Horizontal Individualism

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Background

Coping is a dynamic process involving the implementation of strategies focused on altering situational characteristics or emotional responses when confronted with threats to goal attainment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987).

Interestingly, research has established that individuals from individualistic cultures demonstrate a preference for adaptive coping responses (i.e., problem-focused), while those from collectivistic cultures show a preference for maladaptive coping strategies (i.e., emotion-focused/avoidance; Bardi & Guerra, 2011; Olah, 1995).

As such, leaders in cross-cultural research have suggested investigators devote increased attention to the importance placed on equality (horizontal dimension) and hierarchy (vertical dimension) during investigations involving culture (Singelis et al., 1995).

Therefore, the current study was designed to investigate if the endorsement of horizontal and vertical aspects of culture influences the coping preferences of those living in an “individualistic” society.

Method

Undergraduate students (N = 89, Female= 87.2%, Caucasian= 70.9%) completed the following in Qualtrics:

Brief COPE Inventory:

a 28-item questionnaire designed to measure the preference for effective and ineffective coping strategies (Carver, 1997).

Horizontal and Vertical Dimensions of Individualism and Collectivism Scale:

- a 32-item scales designed to assess cultural orientation (Singelis et al., 1995).

Procedure:

- Participants completed the materials as part of their involvement in an undergraduate research pool.
- Participants completed the study materials using the Qualtrics survey management platform.

Results

Correlational Analysis

We used a correlational analysis to investigate the relationships among coping and vertical and horizontal individualism. Results of this analysis indicated that horizontal individualism was positively associated with the use of active coping, planning, positive reframing, acceptance, humor, and self-distraction. Further, results indicated that vertical individualism was positively associated with the use of humor, denial, venting, substance abuse, behavioral disengagement, and self-blame.

Coping Strategies	Horizontal	Vertical
Active Coping	0.47*	0.14
Planning	0.36*	0.16
Positive Reframing	0.25*	-0.04
Acceptance	0.31*	0.01
Humor	0.35*	0.28*
Self-Distraction	0.37*	0.20
Denial	0.06	0.33*
Venting	0.16	0.25*
Substance Abuse	0.05	0.31*
Behavioral Disengagement	0.05	0.30*
Self-Blame	0.15	0.30*

Note: * p < .05

Conclusion

Results of a correlational analysis indicated that that horizontal individualism was positively associated with the use of active coping, planning, positive reframing, acceptance, and self-distraction. Results also indicated that vertical individualism was positively associated with the use of humor, denial, venting, substance abuse, behavioral disengagement, and self-blame.

Overall, results revealed that individuals high in horizontal individualism demonstrated a preference for adaptive coping strategies while individuals high in vertical individualism demonstrated a preference for maladaptive coping strategies.

We believe these findings can be attributed to the differential emphasis placed on social comparison and status among those high in vertical and horizontal individualism.

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