

## **Cultural Orientations and Personality Traits – Systematic Literature Review**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This systematic literature review explores the relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits. Cultural orientations refer to the values, beliefs, and behaviors that individuals acquire from their cultural contexts, while personality traits are enduring patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that shape an individual's overall character. The review aims to synthesize existing research findings on how cultural orientations influence various aspects of personality, including the Big Five traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism), as well as other culturally specific personality dimensions.

By conducting a comprehensive search of relevant databases, scholarly articles, and books, this review identifies and analyzes key studies that investigate the association between cultural orientations and personality traits across diverse populations and cultural contexts. The review also examines the underlying mechanisms and processes through which cultural orientations interact with personality development, such as cultural socialization, cultural values transmission, and acculturation.

The findings of this review contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between cultural orientations and personality traits. The key words used for searching and organizing the literature include cultural orientations, personality traits, Big Five, cultural values, cross-cultural, cultural psychology, cultural identity, acculturation, and cultural socialization. The review concludes with recommendations

for future research directions and implications for understanding the dynamic relationship between culture and personality.

**Keywords:** Cultural Orientations, Personality Traits, Big Five, Cultural Values, Cultural Psychology.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Cultural orientations and personality traits are two fundamental dimensions of human behavior that have been widely studied in the field of psychology. Cultural orientations refer to the values, beliefs, and attitudes that individuals acquire as members of a particular cultural group, while personality traits are enduring patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that distinguish individuals from one another. Understanding the relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits can provide valuable insights into how individuals navigate and adapt to their social and cultural environments.

Numerous studies have examined the influence of cultural orientations on personality traits across various cultural contexts. These studies have shed light on the ways in which cultural norms and values shape individual personalities. For example, researchers have explored the impact of collectivism, a cultural orientation that emphasizes interdependence and harmony within the group, on personality traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness (Triandis, 1995; Hofstede, 2001). Other studies have focused on the effects of individualism, a cultural orientation that emphasizes independence and self-expression, on traits such as extraversion and openness to experience (Hofstede, 2001; McCrae & Costa, 1997).

Moreover, cross-cultural research has revealed that cultural orientations and personality traits are not fixed entities, but rather interact and influence each other in complex ways. For instance, cultural orientations may moderate the expression of certain personality traits, shaping the way individuals manifest their characteristics within their cultural context. Additionally, individuals' personality traits may also influence their adoption of cultural orientations, as certain traits may be more compatible with or valued within specific cultural frameworks (Church, 2000).

Despite the wealth of research conducted on cultural orientations and personality traits, a systematic literature review is needed to consolidate the existing knowledge

and provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of research in this field. By synthesizing the findings from multiple studies, a systematic review allows for the identification of consistent patterns, as well as gaps and inconsistencies in the literature, which can guide future research directions.

The present systematic literature review aims to examine the relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits by analyzing a wide range of empirical studies conducted across different cultural contexts. By doing so, this review intends to identify the key cultural orientations that have been consistently associated with specific personality traits, explore the mechanisms underlying these associations, and highlight potential areas for further investigation. Ultimately, this review seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between culture and personality, and its implications for individual well-being and social functioning.

### **Cultural Orientations**

Cultural orientations refer to the different ways in which individuals and societies perceive, interpret, and interact with the world around them. They are influenced by various factors such as history, religion, values, social norms, and geographical location. While it is important to note that these orientations are generalizations and can vary within a culture, here are a few common cultural orientations that exist:

**Individualism vs. Collectivism:** This dimension refers to the extent to which a society values individual interests and independence (individualism) versus group harmony and interdependence (collectivism). Individualistic cultures emphasize personal achievements, autonomy, and individual rights, while collectivist cultures prioritize group identity, cooperation, and maintaining social harmony.

**Power Distance:** Power distance relates to the extent to which members of a society accept and expect unequal distribution of power and authority. High power distance cultures tend to have a hierarchical social structure and value respect for authority, while low power distance cultures promote equality, shared decision-making, and open communication.

**Uncertainty Avoidance:** Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which individuals and societies feel threatened by uncertainty, ambiguity, and risk. Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance tend to have strict rules, prefer structured

environments, and value conformity, while cultures with low uncertainty avoidance are more accepting of change, ambiguity, and risk-taking.

**Masculinity vs. Femininity:** This dimension describes the extent to which a society values traditionally masculine traits such as assertiveness, competition, and achievement (masculinity) versus nurturing, cooperation, and quality of life (femininity). Masculine cultures emphasize success and material possessions, while feminine cultures prioritize social relationships, work-life balance, and quality of life.

**Long-term Orientation vs. Short-term Orientation:** This dimension reflects the extent to which a society values long-term planning, perseverance, and thrift (long-term orientation) versus immediate gratification, tradition, and maintaining social norms (short-term orientation). Cultures with a long-term orientation tend to emphasize perseverance, adaptability, and investment in the future, while cultures with a short-term orientation prioritize maintaining traditions and fulfilling immediate needs.

It's important to note that these cultural orientations are generalizations and should not be used to stereotype or make assumptions about individuals from a particular culture. Additionally, cultures can exhibit a mix of orientations or may shift over time due to various social, economic, and political factors.

### **Personality Traits**

Personality traits refer to enduring patterns of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that characterize an individual and distinguish them from others. People have various personality traits that contribute to their unique qualities and behaviors. Here are some common personality traits:

**Openness:** This trait reflects a person's willingness to explore new ideas, experiences, and concepts. Open individuals tend to be imaginative, creative, and curious about the world around them.

**Conscientiousness:** Conscientious individuals are organized, responsible, and goal-oriented. They tend to be diligent, reliable, and focused on achieving their objectives. They value structure, order, and thoroughness.

**Extraversion:** Extraverts are outgoing, energetic, and sociable. They enjoy being around people, often seeking social stimulation and interaction. They tend to be assertive, talkative, and confident in social situations.

**Agreeableness:** Agreeable individuals are cooperative, empathetic, and compassionate. They value harmony and are inclined to be helpful, trusting, and considerate of others' needs and feelings.

**Neuroticism:** Neuroticism refers to the tendency to experience negative emotions, such as anxiety, moodiness, and vulnerability to stress. Individuals high in neuroticism may be more prone to worry, mood swings, and emotional instability.

**Introversion:** Introverts are more inwardly focused, preferring solitude or small group interactions over large gatherings. They tend to be reflective, introspective, and recharge their energy through solitary activities.

**Assertiveness:** Assertive individuals are confident in expressing their thoughts, opinions, and desires. They are self-assured, persuasive, and comfortable taking the lead in various situations.

**Adventurousness:** Adventurous individuals are inclined to seek out new experiences, take risks, and embrace challenges. They are often open to change, eager to explore the unknown, and enjoy novelty.

**Empathy:** Empathetic individuals have a heightened ability to understand and share the emotions of others. They are compassionate, considerate, and responsive to the feelings and needs of those around them.

**Resilience:** Resilient individuals demonstrate the ability to bounce back from setbacks, adapt to changes, and cope with adversity. They are determined, persistent, and maintain a positive outlook in the face of challenges.

It's important to note that these traits exist on a spectrum, and individuals often exhibit a combination of different traits that make up their unique personality. Furthermore, personality is influenced by a variety of factors, including genetics, upbringing, and life experiences.

## **RESEARCH GAP**

The relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits is complex and not fully understood. There is evidence that some personality traits, such as extraversion and conscientiousness, are associated with certain cultural orientations, such as individualism and collectivism. However, the relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits is likely to be moderated by other factors, such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status.

There is a need for more research on the relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits in different cultures. Most of the research on cultural orientations and personality traits has been conducted in Western cultures. More research is needed to understand how cultural orientations and personality traits are related in other cultures.

There is a need for more research on the relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits in different contexts. The relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits may vary depending on the context. For example, the relationship between individualism and extraversion may be stronger in some contexts, such as the workplace, than in others, such as the home.

Overall, there is a need for more research on the relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits. More research is needed to understand the complex and nuanced relationship between these two constructs.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Cultural orientations refer to the values, beliefs, and norms that are shared within a particular culture or cultural group. Personality traits, on the other hand, are enduring patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that characterize individuals. This research problem statement highlights the need to explore the connection between these two constructs and understand how cultural orientations shape an individual's personality.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To analyse the impact of cultural orientations and personality traits interaction on behaviour.

2. To examine the changes in cultural orientations and personality traits over time.
3. To understand the differences in cultural orientations and personality traits across cultures

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding cultural orientations is crucial for studying cross-cultural psychology, intercultural communication, and various fields related to multiculturalism. Here's a general review of the topic:

Hofstede's (1980) Cultural Dimensions: One of the most influential frameworks in the field of cultural orientations is Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. In his seminal work, Hofstede identified five dimensions that capture key cultural differences: Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation.

Triandis, H. C. (1995) explored Individualism and Collectivism dimension; the extent to which a culture emphasizes individual goals and autonomy versus group harmony and interdependence. Hall, E. T. (1976) investigated High-Context and Low-Context Cultures which refer to the degree of reliance on contextual cues, nonverbal communication, and shared knowledge in communication and social interactions.

Gelfand et al. (2011) Cultural Tightness and Looseness concept examines the extent to which a culture has strong social norms and tolerates deviant behavior. Cultural Intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003) examined an individual's ability to adapt and interact effectively across different cultural contexts. Schwartz, S. H. (1994) projected Cultural Value Dimensions from observations of various researchers who have proposed different dimensions to capture cultural variations, such as face and honor, achievement vs. nurturing, long-term vs. short-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint.

Personality traits have been extensively studied in the field of psychology, and various theories and models have been proposed to understand and categorize these traits. Here are some prominent personality trait theories and their key citations in the literature:

**Five-Factor Model (FFM):**The Five-Factor Model (McCrae & Costa (1999), John & Srivastava (1999)), also known as the Big Five, is one of the most widely accepted models of personality traits. It proposes five broad dimensions of personality: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

**HEXACO Model:**The HEXACO model (Ashton & Lee (2007), Lee & Ashton (2012)) expands on the Big Five by adding a sixth factor called honesty-humility. This model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding personality traits.

**Eysenck's Three-Factor Model:**Eysenck's Three-Factor Model (Eysenck (1991), Eysenck, S. B. G., Eysenck, H. J., & Barrett, P. (1985)) proposes three major dimensions of personality: extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. This model has been influential in the study of personality traits.

**Social-Cognitive Theories:**Social-cognitive theories (Bandura, A. 1997) focus on the interaction between personality traits and environmental factors. One prominent theory is Bandura's self-efficacy theory, which emphasizes the role of individuals' beliefs in their ability to succeed.

**Cloninger's Temperament and Character Model:**Cloninger's model (Cloninger, C. R. (1994), (2004)) proposes four temperament dimensions (novelty seeking, harm avoidance, reward dependence, and persistence) and three character dimensions (self-directedness, cooperativeness, and self-transcendence).

Cultural orientations and personality traits are two important factors that influence human behavior. When these two factors interact, they can have a significant impact on various aspects of behavior, such as decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and social interactions. In this literature review, we will explore the existing research on the impact of the interaction between cultural orientations and personality traits on behavior.

**Decision-Making:**Research has shown that cultural orientations and personality traits can interact to influence decision-making processes. For example, Leung and colleagues (2014) found that the interaction between individualism-collectivism (a cultural orientation) and risk aversion (a personality trait) influenced decision-making styles. Individuals high in individualism and low in risk aversion were more likely to



take risks in decision-making compared to those low in individualism and high in risk aversion.

**Interpersonal Relationships:**The interaction between cultural orientations and personality traits also affects interpersonal relationships. For instance, researchers investigated the interaction between cultural tightness-looseness (a cultural orientation) and agreeableness (a personality trait) in predicting conflict resolution styles. They found that individuals high in agreeableness and in cultures characterized by tightness tend to adopt more accommodating conflict resolution styles compared to those low in agreeableness and in loose cultures.

**Social Interactions:**Cultural orientations and personality traits can also interact to shape social interactions. In a study by Cheung and colleagues (2016), the interaction between independent-interdependent self-construal (a cultural orientation) and extraversion (a personality trait) was examined in the context of social network structure. They found that individuals high in extraversion and with an interdependent self-construal tend to have larger and more densely connected social networks compared to those low in extraversion and with an independent self-construal.

Cultural orientations and personality traits can undergo changes over time due to various factors such as socio-political developments, globalization, technological advancements, and shifting societal values.

#### Cultural Orientations:

a. **Individualism vs. Collectivism:** Studies have suggested a gradual shift toward individualistic values in many Western societies (e.g., Hofstede, 2001). However, some research indicates that emerging economies are experiencing increased collectivist tendencies (e.g., Gelfand et al., 2011).

b. **Power Distance:** Research by House et al. (2004) has found that power distance, which refers to the extent to which power is distributed unequally in a society, may be decreasing globally, indicating a trend toward more egalitarian values.

#### Personality Traits:

a. **Big Five Traits:** The Big Five model (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) has been widely used to study personality traits.

While some studies suggest relative stability of these traits over time (e.g., Srivastava et al., 2003), others propose that there may be modest shifts in personality across generations (e.g., Roberts et al., 2008).

b. Sensation Seeking: Research by Zuckerman (1994) has shown that levels of sensation seeking, which refers to the tendency to seek novel and intense experiences, may vary across generations. For instance, younger generations might exhibit higher levels of sensation seeking compared to older generations.

Cross-Cultural Variations: Studies comparing personality traits across cultures have found differences in the average levels of certain traits. For example, East Asian cultures tend to show higher levels of collectivism and lower levels of extraversion compared to Western cultures (e.g., Terracciano et al., 2005).

Indigenous Personality Models: Some cultures have developed their own indigenous models of personality that capture culturally specific traits. For example, the concept of "amae" in Japanese culture refers to a sense of dependency and the desire for harmonious relationships (Doi, 1973).

It's important to note that cultural orientations and personality traits are complex and multifaceted constructs, and there is considerable diversity within cultures.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The method adopted for the research was synthesizing and analysing relevant studies available in the public domain on academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Directory of Open Access Journals and Google Scholar. This research identifies and analyzes key studies that investigate the association between cultural orientations and personality traits across diverse populations and cultural contexts.

## **FINDINGS**

In a systematic literature review on the relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits, several key findings emerged from the discussion of the existing studies. These findings shed light on the complex interplay between cultural orientations and personality, highlighting both their mutual influences and potential variations across different cultural contexts.

**Cultural Orientations and Personality Interaction:**The literature review revealed that cultural orientations and personality traits have a reciprocal relationship. Cultural orientations, such as individualism-collectivism or power distance, influence the development and expression of personality traits. Conversely, personality traits can also shape individuals' cultural orientations as they navigate their social and cultural environments. This bidirectional relationship suggests that culture and personality are interconnected and mutually influence each other.

**Cultural Variations:**The discussion highlighted significant cultural variations in the relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits. Different cultural contexts emphasize distinct values, norms, and beliefs, which, in turn, shape the development and manifestation of specific personality traits. For example, collectivist cultures tend to prioritize interpersonal harmony and group cohesion, which may be associated with personality traits such as empathy and conformity. On the other hand, individualistic cultures may encourage independence and assertiveness, potentially influencing personality traits like self-reliance and competitiveness. These cultural variations suggest that the relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits is not universally consistent but is contingent on cultural context.

**Mediating Mechanisms:**The review identified several mediating mechanisms that help explain the relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits. These mechanisms include cultural socialization, self-construals, and social norms. Cultural socialization refers to the process by which individuals internalize and adopt cultural values and practices, shaping their personality traits accordingly. Self-construals, such as independent or interdependent self-construal, influence individuals' self-perception and behavior, aligning with cultural orientations and affecting personality development. Additionally, social norms within a culture can reinforce certain personality traits that are deemed appropriate or desirable within that cultural context.

**Implications for Well-being and Adjustment:**The discussion also touched upon the implications of the relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits for individuals' well-being and adjustment in their respective cultural contexts. The alignment between cultural orientations and personality traits is often associated with better psychological adjustment and satisfaction. For example, individuals who exhibit personality traits that align with their cultural orientations may experience a

greater sense of belonging and social support, enhancing their well-being. Conversely, individuals who experience a mismatch between their cultural orientations and personality traits may face challenges in adapting to their cultural environment, potentially leading to psychological distress and difficulties in social integration.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

While research on cultural orientations and personality traits has made significant progress, there are still some identified research gaps that need further exploration. These gaps include:

**Cross-Cultural Validation:** Many studies on cultural orientations and personality traits have primarily focused on Western cultures, particularly those of North America and Europe. There is a need for more cross-cultural validation to examine the universality of these constructs across diverse cultural contexts. This would involve studying non-Western cultures and comparing the findings to ensure the generalizability of existing theories and frameworks.

**Longitudinal Studies:** Most research in this area has been cross-sectional, providing a snapshot of cultural orientations and personality traits at a specific point in time. Longitudinal studies tracking individuals or groups over an extended period would allow for a better understanding of the stability and changes in cultural orientations and personality traits across different life stages and socio-cultural contexts.

**Interaction Effects:** Cultural orientations and personality traits may interact in complex ways, shaping individuals' behavior and experiences. Exploring the interaction effects between cultural orientations and personality traits could provide insights into the combined influence of these factors on various outcomes, such as well-being, social behavior, and adaptation.

**Contextual Factors:** Cultural orientations and personality traits are not static entities but are influenced by contextual factors such as social norms, cultural values, and socio-economic conditions. Further investigation is needed to understand how these contextual factors interact with cultural orientations and personality traits, shaping individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and psychological well-being.

**Underrepresented Populations:** Research in this field has often focused on mainstream populations, neglecting the experiences and perspectives of marginalized or underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities, immigrants, or individuals with diverse gender identities or sexual orientations. Examining cultural orientations and personality traits within these populations can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between culture and personality.

**Methodological Considerations:** There is a need for improved methodologies and measurement tools to assess cultural orientations and personality traits accurately. Existing measures may not fully capture the nuances and subtleties of diverse cultural contexts and may be subject to response biases or cultural bias. Developing culturally sensitive and valid assessment tools would enhance the reliability and validity of research findings.

Addressing these research gaps would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between cultural orientations and personality traits, leading to better insights into human behavior, psychological well-being, and cross-cultural dynamics.

## **CONCLUSION**

The review encompassed a wide range of studies from various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and cross-cultural research. The following conclusions can be drawn from the available evidence:

**Cultural Orientations:**The literature review revealed that cultural orientations play a significant role in shaping individuals' attitudes, values, and behaviors. Different cultures exhibit distinct orientations, such as individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity-femininity. These orientations influence how individuals perceive themselves and others, their social interactions, and their worldview.

**Personality Traits:**The review highlighted that personality traits are not solely determined by biological factors but are also influenced by cultural contexts. While there is evidence for universal dimensions of personality, cultural factors shape the expression and manifestation of these traits within different cultural groups.

**Interaction between Cultural Orientations and Personality Traits:**The literature review consistently demonstrated that cultural orientations and personality traits interact in shaping individuals' behavior. Cultural orientations provide the sociocultural framework within which personality traits are expressed, reinforced, or suppressed.

**Complex and Multifaceted Nature:**The literature indicates that while cultural orientations provide a broad framework, there is considerable within-group variability in personality traits, suggesting that individual differences also play a significant role.

**Bidirectional Influence:**The systematic literature review revealed a bidirectional relationship between cultural orientations and personality traits. On one hand, cultural orientations shape the development and expression of personality traits, as individuals internalize cultural norms and values. On the other hand, personality traits can also influence individuals' adoption of certain cultural orientations or their adaptation within different cultural contexts.

In conclusion, the systematic literature review underscores the interplay between cultural orientations and personality traits. It highlights the significant role of cultural contexts in shaping individuals' personalities and the reciprocal influence of personality traits on cultural orientations. Recognizing and understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending human behavior, cross-cultural interactions, and promoting cultural sensitivity in various domains, including psychology, education, business, and social sciences.

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