

Summary

The recent social and political changes that have taken place in South Africa, particularly the integration of the universities, makes this an ideal setting for the study of students' attitudes and perceptions of their own and other cultural groups. A limitation of existing attitude studies in South Africa and abroad is that these studies have focussed minimally on identifying cultural perceptual processes that underlie intergroup attitudes. In addition, these studies tend to focus mainly on the attitudes of single ethno-cultural groups towards one or a few specific ethnic target groups. The variation of group attitudes of each other across diverse cultural orientation groups has thus mostly been neglected.

In order to address such problems, this study aimed at examining cultural group attitudes and core value-orientations (Individualism and Collectivism) amongst 1st and 2nd year psychology volunteer students at RAU. More specifically, this study aimed at determining the variation of group attitudes and value-orientations in terms of a number of independent variables, and the correlation between group attitudes and core value-orientations.

The study employed a questionnaire survey with a sample of 541 1st and 2nd year psychology volunteer students at RAU. The sample included male and female students from the broad cultural orientation groups (Western, African, Middle-Eastern (Muslim) and Indian/Asian cultural orientation groups), and the three main language groups (English, Afrikaans and African languages), as well as resident students and day-students from various faculties and academic years of study.

The assessment instruments comprised of an Individualism and Collectivism Likert Scale (IS/CS) (Gudykunst, 1995), designed to measure generalised core value-orientations, and a Semantic Differential Scale (SDS) (Nieuwoudt, 1973), designed to measure attitudes towards five broad cultural orientation groups, namely: Western-Afrikaans, Western-English, Indian/Asian, Middle-Eastern (Muslim) and Indigenous African groups. The independent variables included in the analyses of the data were: gender, resident vs. day-students (intimacy and frequency of contact variable), cultural group membership/identity, and first language.

The construct validity and the internal reliability of the I/CS and SDS were investigated by means of principal axis factor analysis and Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients. Independent t-tests were used to identify statistically significant differences between the IS/CS and SDS scores of the male and female respondents and the resident students and day-students. ANOVA and subsequent Scheffé or Dunnett T₃ post-hoc tests were used to identify the group similarities and differences in the scores for the five cultural-identity groups and the three language groups. Finally, Pearsons' product-moment correlations were used to identify significant correlations between the IS/CS and SDS scores.

Important findings were the following:

- Females indicated significantly stronger Individualism and Collectivism scores than males.
- Day-students indicated significantly stronger Collectivism scores than resident students.
- Statistically significant differences were identified in the IS/CS scores of the five cultural-identity groups and the three language groups.
- Males and females differed significantly from one another in terms of their perceptions of Indian/Asian cultural groups.
- Resident students and day-students differed significantly from one another in terms of their perceptions of Western-Afrikaans and African cultural groups.
- The five cultural-orientation groups and the three language groups differed significantly from one another in terms of their perceptions of Western-Afrikaans, Western-English and African cultural groups.
- Significant correlations for the Collectivism scores and the SDS scores for the perceptions of the Western-English, Indian/Asian, Middle-Eastern and African cultures were identified. These correlations were however extremely low, indicating that conducting a regression analysis of the SDS attitude scores in terms of the IS/CS scores was not feasible.

Theoretical implications were discussed and recommendations were made for future research in this field.