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This article presents the results of a series of preliminary comparisons, between the Portuguese and Romanian cultural contexts, on the individualism-collectivism (IND/COL) cultural dimension. The IND/COL was evaluated with the Individualism-Collectivism Questionnaire – ICQ –, constructed in New Zealand by Shulruf, Hattie and Dixon (2003, Anonymous Questionnaire of Self-Attitudes – AQSA), and adapted to the Portuguese and Romanian contexts by Ciochină and Faria (2007), using studies of confirmatory factor analysis. The ICQ composed by 26 items, 15 evaluating the IND scale – with three subscales (Uniqueness, Competition and Responsibility) –, and 11 evaluating the COL scale – with two subscales (Harmony and Advice) –, was administered to 395 subjects, 200 Portuguese and 195 Romanian, 10th and 12th graders. On the whole, in the Portuguese and Romanian samples, the multivariate and univariate statistical analyses evidenced the existence of two independent variables – gender and cultural context –, with significant effects, main and of interaction, on the scales and subscales of the ICQ. The results were discussed taking into consideration the specificities of the educational systems in the two cultural contexts, which are inevitably shaped by socio-cultural factors characteristic of the two countries considered in the present study – Portugal and Romania.

Keywords: cultural context, individualism-collectivism, gender.
The fact that individuals live and behave in a particular socio-cultural context makes necessary the analysis of their psychological development in the light of the specificities of this very context. The aim of such an approach is to compare different psychosocial behaviours of individuals from various cultural contexts in order to verify what cultural variation factors influence the expression of these behaviours.

Thus, in the framework of Cultural and Cross-Cultural Psychology studies, the individualism-collectivism (IND/COL) constructs have been considered as essential axes of cultural variation. In this sense, and following the nuclear argument according to which cultural differences are due to differences in the way cultures sample from their environment pertinent information for their functioning, Triandis (1999) points out the distinction between individualistic cultures – which, in order to understand, explain and interpret the experiences of their psychosocial reality, sample predominantly personal and internal attributes of individuals – and collectivistic cultures – which, for that, sample more interpersonal relationships, social roles, duties and obligations of individuals in relation to their in-group.

In fact, this distinctive characteristic between individualistic and collectivistic cultures had already been anticipated by Hofstede (1980) who, starting from his work in the field of Organizational Psychology, used and operationalized the IND/COL constructs, taking as starting point one of the origins he considers to explain the differences between cultures, namely, the role of the individual or of the group in the development of human societies.

Considering the results of his investigations, Hofstede (1980) emphasizes that in the so called individualistic societies the type of relationships constituted in the social system valorises the independence of the individual in relation to his in-group which leads the individual to define his identity starting from his personal attributes. At the same time, the individual represents the main cell of the social organism, the respect for the uniqueness of each person and for his unalienable rights representing essential factors which contribute to the good functioning of the social system.

As regards collectivistic societies, Hofstede (1980) considers that dependence and interdependence relationships construct and develop between the in-group and the individual, which leads the latter to define his identity in terms of group life and group specificities. In this case, the group with its norms and functioning rules stands for the main element which maintains the homeostasis of the social organism in its complexity.

Thus, one can verify that, in Hofstede’s (1980) conceptualization of IND/COL, the emphasis is placed on the relationships of independence vs. dependence/interdependence of the individual in relation to his in-group and on the definition of personal identity based on such relationships.

Adding nuances to Hofstede’s (1980) perspective, Triandis (1995, 1999) underlies that individualism and collectivism can be approached as “polythetic constructs” (1999, p. 128), that is, apart from encompassing universally defining attributes which allows to consider a culture individualistic or collectivistic, the two constructs comprise specific attributes, which differ from one culture to another and which determine distinct types of individualism and collectivism, with different manifestation forms at the cultural and intercultural level, consequently depending on individuals’ action and interaction contexts.

In other words, with regard to the fact that one can be individualistic or independent in a particular context and collectivistic or dependent/interdependent in other context, Ciochină and Faria (2006c) point out that: “… some aspects illustrating collectivism or individualism can lose their essence and relevance as a function of the situation and of the exterior context: for example, one may feel the necessity to ask for others’ opinion in order to make a decision about a problem which involves his/her family, whereas, in the group work, the same person may prefer to base herself on her own ideas and ways of dealing with a particular subject, without asking for the help of other in-group members.” (p. 159).

In this sense, it is worth noticing that, as concluded by Oyserman, Coon and Kemmelmeier (2002) in their meta-analysis of the literature produced in the last 20 years on the IND/COL dimension, there are studies which refer to IND/COL as a bipolar construct (thus measuring the greater or lesser degree of individualism vs. collectivism), whereas other refer to IND/COL as orthogonal constructs (thus measuring the individualism and collectivism).

**Individualism-collectivism: Theoretical and methodological framework**

We start by presenting the attributes of IND/COL, considered by Triandis (1995, 1999) as universal, basing our presentation on his theorization, since it represents the result of numerous investigations conducted in this field (Voronov & Singer, 2002). At the same time, we shall complete his conceptual perspective with descriptive elements established by other authors, who have also dwelt with the subject of the IND/COL cultural variable.

More concretely, Triandis (1995, 1999) considers that the IND/COL constructs have four universal attributes, as follows: definition of the self, structure of goals, emphasis on attitudes vs. emphasis on norms and emphasis on rationality vs. emphasis on relatedness.

Regarding the definition of the self, Triandis (1995, 1999) emphasizes that in individualistic cultures the self is viewed as autonomous and independent from the in-group, whereas in collectivistic cultures the self is viewed as interdependent. Consequently, in interpersonal relationships and in the explanation of various psychosocial products (for example, success), individualists sample personal attributes such as attitudes, competencies and type of personality, whereas collectivists sample interpersonal relationships, social roles...
and group norms (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1999; Triandis, McCusker & Hui, 1990).

Regarding the structure of goals, Triandis (1995, 1999) and Schwartz (1992) bring into highlight that, generally, individualists have goals which are not compatible with in-group goals, whereas goals of collectivists are generally correlated with in-group goals. Moreover, even if goals of collectivists are not compatible with in-group goals, the latter tend to have priority. With respect to this, Neto (1995) observes that it is necessary that one refers to central tendencies, since “This does not mean that in collectivistic cultures individuals never subordinate in-group goals to their personal goals.” (p. 23).

As far as the emphasis on attitudes vs. emphasis on norms are concerned, Triandis (1995, 1999) mentions that, in the case of individualists, the cognitions which determine and guide the social behaviour follow the logics of personal necessities and attitudes, of individual rights and social contracts, whereas in the case of collectivists, these cognitions focus on norms, obligations and social duties.

In this sense, we can add Schwartz’s perspective (1990, in Schwartz, 1992) who, describing this conceptual segment of the IND/COL cultural variable emphasizes that individualistic societies are contractual societies, comprising types of social relationships in which, by means of negotiations, individuals treat their obligations in such a way that they can obtain or alter a determined social status. In other words, extrapolating to Triandis’s description, such negotiations constitute processes which altogether question and reassert personal attitudes, necessities and individual rights.

Regarding collectivistic societies, Schwartz’s (1990, in Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2002) perspective also presents a relevant parallelism with Triandis’s (1995, 1999) perspective. Concretely, Schwartz (1990, in Oyserman et al., 2002) emphasizes that collectivistic societies are characterized by mutual and diffuse obligations with individuals having pre-determined statuses which they cannot modify. Consequently, it is not surprising that their social behaviour is determined by exterior factors, such as norms, rules and social obligations.

Referring to the same dichotomy – attitudes vs. norms –, Suh, Diener, Oishi, and Triandis (1998) point out that individualists’ well-being is correlated with self satisfaction and its’ consequent emotions, whereas for collectivists well-being implies good relationships with the in-group, as well as conformism with its internal norms. As a result, individualists pay more attention to their own emotions, while collectivists allocate more attention and more mental space to complying with their social obligations.

Finally, as regards the fourth defining attribute of the IND/COL constructs – the emphasis on rationality vs. the emphasis on relatedness, Triandis (1999) highlights the idea that individualists value rationality and collectivists relatedness. To mention that rationality is based on the judicious analysis of the costs and benefits of interpersonal relationships, while relatedness involves the belief that interpersonal relationships must be favoured and maintained even when they imply disadvantages, always being necessary to take into consideration others’ necessities.

All this descriptive framework of the individualism and collectivism constructs has been progressively enriched during the last decades, the 80’s being considered “the decade of IND/COL in Cross-Cultural Psychology” (Kagitçibasi, 1994, p. 52): and if the plethora of studies conducted in this field contributed to the conceptual exhaustiveness of the two constructs, it seems that, paradoxically, it also turned them more confusing as to their respective methodological approach.

Thus, one of the most controversial issues that the IND/COL dimension arises is related to the levels of analysis taken into consideration in the studies conducted on the two constructs: indeed, the two levels of analysis most frequently debated upon by investigators are the cultural level vs. the individual level, at which the IND/COL dimension should be considered.

Regarding this aspect, Hofstede (1980) considers that intercultural comparisons are valid provided the data collected result from cultural indexes, such as, Gross National Product (GNP), whereas when the data are based on individual indexes, such as attitudes or personal values, the results obtained should be interpreted in the light of an intra-cultural analysis.

However, as Kim (1994) points out, these two levels of analysis – cultural and individual –, interact through social structures, such as institutions, organizations, beliefs and norms, in such a way that there may exist an important congruence between a phenomenon situated at the cultural level and its corollary at the individual level. In this sense, in the particular case of the IND/COL dimension, it is worth noting that, at the individual and psychological level, Triandis, Leung, Villareal, and Clark (1985) proposed constructs parallel to IND/COL, among which, in the personality field, it is to remark the idocentrism-allocentrism. Other authors used a different terminology, maintaining however the same universe of significance: the independent self vs. the interdependent self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) or the private self vs. the collective self (Trafimow, Triandis & Goto, 1991).

Thus, the existence of such conceptual models for the individual corollaries of the IND/COL cultural variable turns out to be significantly relevant, since it has stimulated and still stimulates the realization of intercultural comparisons in this field, through a methodology based particularly on attitudinal questionnaires.

Nevertheless, as Realo and Allik (1999) noticed, intercultural comparisons on IND/COL have limited themselves to using sample from North America and East Asia, as prototypes of individualistic and collectivistic cultures.
As such, by means of the present study, we aim to enlarge the range of cultures typically analysed in studies of intercultural comparisons on the individualism-collectivism dimension, the cultural contexts involved in this investigation being the Portuguese and the Romanian one.

At the same time, we refer that this study is situated at the individual level of analysis, since its purpose is to capture individual values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. However, considering that all these are transmitted and fostered socially and also due to the similarities and differences between the two cultural contexts analysed in this investigation – similarities and differences which we shall justify and present in detail later on –, it can also be considered that this study is situated at a cultural level of analysis, through the comparisons conducted between the two countries at stake – Portugal and Romania.

In this framework of intercultural comparisons, it is to emphasize that in Hofstede’s (1980) pioneer studies, which led him to the construction of one of the most evoked and used theorizations of IND/COL, Portugal had been included among the 53 countries investigated by the author, having received an IND index of 27, which was placing it on the 33rd/35th positions, that is, among the countries less individualistic and more collectivistic. As to Romania, although also a Latin country, but belonging to Eastern Europe, Hofstede had not included it among the 53 countries which had undergone a dictatorship regime. In this sense, the above mentioned authors observe the following aspect: “Although different in nature (fascism in Portugal and communism in Romania), we can conjecture that such regimes have led, through specific ideological, political, cultural and social mechanisms, to the implementation of a collectivistic mentality” (Ciochină & Faria, 2006b, p. 178).

In spite of these similarities between Portugal and Romania, if we proceed from Hofstede’s (1980) observation, who found a positive correlation between the individualism level and a high GNP, to which there is associated an economy based on individual interests, our hypothesis is that, considering their actual political and economical status – Portugal being part of the European Union since 1986, while Romania adhered to European Union only in 2007 –, the individualistic life model, with its characteristic functioning norms, has been assimilated by the Portuguese society in a higher degree than by the Romanian society.

Finally, in this study we aim to verify some of the results which have been obtained in the area of Cultural Psychology, in numerous investigations which dwell with the IND/COL constructs, results which, as McAuliffe, Jetten, Hornsey and Hogg (2003) delineate, point to the fact that individualism is prevalent in North America, Australia and Western Europe and collectivism is more illustrative for countries from East Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

More concretely, we shall analyse comparatively two countries, one occidental – Portugal –, and one from Eastern Europe – Romania –, in order to establish what differences and similarities exist in the manifestation forms of IND/COL, considered in the present study as orthogonal constructs.

Method

Participants

Participants are 200 Portuguese students and 195 Romanian students (Table 1), selected as a function of cultural context (Portugal vs. Romania), grade (10th and 12th), gender (feminine vs. masculine) and socio-economical status – SES – (high, medium and low). To emphasize that, in both samples, the medium SES participants are predominant (38.7% in the Portuguese sample and 62.6% in the Romanian sample). Also to notice that, contrary to what occurs in the Portuguese sample, in the Romanian sample the low SES participants are insufficiently represented, due to administration conditions of the questionnaires in the Romanian cultural context, which allowed the access only to classrooms with high and medium SES students. As such, we decided to exclude the SES variable from further analyses, the analysis of its role and of its implications in the IND/COL dimension remaining to be investigated in future studies.

The age mean of the Portuguese participants is 17.6 years (SD=1.86) and of the Romanian participants is 17.1 years (SD=1.02).

Table 1
Characterization of the subsamples by cultural context, grade and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Fem.</th>
<th>Masc.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instrument

The individualism-collectivism dimensions were measured using the Individualism-Collectivism Questionnaire – ICQ –, adapted to the Portuguese and Romanian contexts by Ciochină and Faria (2007), using studies of confirmatory factor analysis and starting from the Anonymous Questionnaire of Self-Attitudes – AQSA –, constructed in New Zealand by Shulrf, Hattie and Dixon (2003, 2007).

We chose to use the questionnaire of Shulrf et al. (2003, 2007) since it represents one of the most recent instruments constructed for the measurement of the IND/COL constructs, bringing innovatory aspects at the methodological and conceptual levels.

Thus, at the methodological level, Shulrf’s and collaborators’ instrument uses a Likert frequency response scale, the authors considering that behavioural and attitudinal models related to IND/COL vary in different contexts and thus it is more adequate to use frequency rather than agreement scales, that is, participants should be asked to answer about the frequency and not about the intensity of such values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours illustrative for IND/COL.

Further on, at the conceptual level, Shulrf et al. (2003) excluded familialism dimension from this questionnaire, dimension which refers particularly to the fact that individuals favour the interests of their nuclear family which, as authors such as Oyserman et al. (2002) suggest, is possible to represent a distinct domain, not related to the IND/COL dimension.

The ICQ has two scales, the individualism scale (IS) and the collectivism scales (CS). The IS comprises three subscales – uniqueness (items 2, 12, 22 and 26), competition (items 1, 6, 7, 14, 21, 23 and 25) and responsibility (items 5, 11, 17 and 19) –, whereas the CS comprises two subscales – harmony (items 4, 9, 16 and 20) and advice (items 3, 8, 10, 13, 15 18 and 24).

To mention also that the items of ICQ are scored on a Likert frequency scales with six points, the frequency of individualistic and collectivistic attitudes and behaviours ranging from never to always. Thus, higher scores on IS and CS indicate a higher frequency of individualistic and respectively collectivistic behaviours and attitudes. At last, it is to notice that, when answering to the items of ICQ, participants must evaluate the frequency of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours in relation to themselves and not in relation to what occurs in their own cultural context.

Finally, regarding the psychometric qualities of ICQ, we verified that, for the individualism scale, Cronbach’s alpha displays a higher value in the Portuguese subsample (0.82) than in the Romanian subsample (0.75), while for the collectivism scale, Cronbach’s alpha has a higher value in the Romanian subsample (0.79) compared with the Portuguese subsample (0.73).

At the level of subscales, in the Portuguese subsample, Cronbach’s alpha displays the following values: 0.75 for the uniqueness subscale, 0.83 for the competition subscale, 0.33 for the responsibility subscale, 0.43 for the harmony subscale and 0.77 for the advice subscale. In the Romanian subsample the values of Cronbach’s alpha are approximately similar: 0.64 for the uniqueness subscale, 0.71 for the competition subscale, 0.36 for the responsibility subscale, 0.60 for the harmony subscale and 0.72 for the advice subscale.

In other words, it appears that in both subsamples the responsibility subscales has very low values. Simultaneously, the harmony subscale displays a higher Cronbach’s alpha coefficient in the Romanian subsample than in the Portuguese subsample. However, such results allowed us to conduct comparisons on the scales and subscales of ICQ between the two samples – Portuguese and Romanian –, as a function of the independent variables, nevertheless being necessary to interpret cautiously the results obtained on the specific subscales.

Procedure

The ICQ was previously validated for the Portuguese and Romanian populations by Ciochină and Faria (2007), using studies of confirmatory factor analysis, after its previous translation (from English into Portuguese and Romanian), back-translation and studies of verbalized reflection of the items translated into Portuguese and Romanian, procedure which aimed to obtain an accurate linguistic and cultural equivalent of the original instrument (Van de Vijver & Hambleton, 1996).

In this study, in both countries there were adopted the same conditions of administration of the ICQ, namely collective administration, altogether with a socio-demographic questionnaire, to whole classrooms, during school schedule, the confidentiality and the anonymity of the answers being guaranteed. The data were collected in two schools from Porto/Portugal and one school from Iaşi/Romania, being afterwards analysed with the statistical program SPSS, version 15.0.

Results and discussion

There were conducted multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) in order to investigate the differences on the IND/COL dimensions (on the individualism and collectivism scales), considered as dependent variables, as a function of the following independent variables: cultural context (Portugal vs. Romania), gender (feminine vs. masculine) and grade (10th vs. 12th).

At the same time, there were conducted one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) with the goal of exploring more thoroughly the main and interaction effects of the independent variables on the above mentioned dimensions – individualism and collectivism.
MANOVAS

In Table 2 there are presented the results of MANOVAS for the two dimensions of individualism-collectivism.

The results show a significant main effect of cultural context and gender and also an interaction effect between cultural context and gender. In order to establish the direction of these effects we used ANOVA which we shall present further on.

ANOVA

Cultural Context

The cultural context effect (Table 3) showed higher individualism for the Romanian participants than for the Portuguese ones (on the individualism scale) and higher collectivism for the Portuguese participants than for the Romanian ones (on the collectivism scale).

Table 2
MANOVAS for the ICQ (individualism and collectivism)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>C. Wilks</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural context</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>13.99</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>9.27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural context * Gender</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.011*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural context * Grade</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender * Grade</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural context * Gender * Grade</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05.

Table 3
Differences on the subscales of ICQ by cultural context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portugal</th>
<th>Romania</th>
<th>ANOVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism**</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>11.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivism**</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>7.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05.
** Higher means correspond to higher individualism and higher collectivism respectively.

Table 4
Differences on the subscales of ICQ by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>ANOVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>10.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>8.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05.
explained by the nature of the two subscales which constitute the collectivism scale – harmony and advice –, because maintaining the in-group harmony and asking for the advice of the members of the in-group seem to characterize more the girls than the boys, as girls are generally less assertive, more reconciling and more dependent on the inter-relational context than boys are when it comes to making decisions. Such results are sustained by studies which, although conducted in their majority in North America (Kashima, et al., 1995), show that women function in an inter-relational dimension more saliently than men, the relational self representing, in Kagitçibasi’s (1994) perspective, the base of the collectivistic life model.

Significant interaction effects
As it can be noticed in Table 5, the only significant interaction effect which was found is between the cultural context and gender on the individualism scale, the Romanian girls being more individualistic than the Portuguese ones – $t(244) = -4.55, p < .001$ (Table 6).

Such results may be explained by the actual tendency of women in the Romanian society to progressively seek to be more independent in the family, in the proximal relationships and in the job market, all this probably as a reaction to the communism desiderate which was to put down women inside the social system.

Table 5
ANOVAs for the Individualism and Collectivism scales of ICQ (interaction effects)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactions</th>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural context * Gender</td>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>7.76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.006*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural context * Grade</td>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender * Grade</td>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural context * Gender * Grade</td>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.060</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$.

Table 6
Means and standard deviations for cultural context x gender interaction on the Individualism scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural context</th>
<th>Masculine M</th>
<th>Masculine SD</th>
<th>Feminine M</th>
<th>Feminine SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>11.36</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>10.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>10.52</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>9.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Higher means correspond to higher individualism.
More specifically, for the cultural context effect on the competition subscale, the independent t-test pointed out that the Romanian participants perceive themselves as more competitive than the Portuguese ones – $M_{\text{PO}}^1 = 25.3$, $SD = 7.09$; $M_{\text{RO}}^2 = 27.9$, $SD = 5.89$. Starting from these results we can advance the idea that, in the case of the Romanian cultural context, competition inside the social system and, implicitly, inside the education system, started to be progressively valorised and stimulated, with the aim of levelling the Romanian society according to the standards of occidental societies.

Thus, at the level of participants’ self-evaluation on the competition subscale, this appears to be more salient for the Romanian participants who chose more radical answers to the items of the competition subscale than the Portuguese participants did, who, living in an occidental society, are assumed to have interiorized the competition spirit, which may have led to its consolidation, but also to its becoming more relative and nuanced, in such a way that the answers of the Portuguese participants on the competition subscale revealed to be less radical.

As to the gender effect on the competition, responsibility and advice subscales, the independent t-test revealed that boys perceive themselves as more competitive than girls – $M_m^3 = 28.6$, $SD = 6.56$; $M_f^4 = 25.5$, $SD = 6.47$ –, that girls perceive themselves as more responsible than boys $M_m^3 = 17.5$, $SD = 2.76$; $M_f^4 = 18.4$, $SD = 2.83$ –, and that girls ask for others’ advice more than boys do – $M_m^3 = 24.9$, $SD = 6.14$; $M_f^4 = 27.7$, $SD = 6.04$.

Regarding the interaction effect between cultural context and gender on the uniqueness subscale, the results indicate that the Romanian girls describe themselves in terms of uniqueness more than the Portuguese girls do – $M_{\text{PO}}^1 = 16.5$, $SD = 4.29$; $M_{\text{RO}}^2 = 18.7$, $SD = 3.73$ –, probably as a consequence of a compensatory effort to make themselves socially visible, since in the Romanian society the tendency of the communist ideological mechanisms has been to homogenize all individuals with the particular intention to place women on an inferior position. As to the Portuguese and Romanian boys there were no differences on this subscale, which might be explained by the fact that boys are less sensitive to the necessity of making themselves socially visible ($M_{\text{PO}} = 17.4$, $SD = 4.71$; $M_{\text{RO}} = 17.5$, $SD = 3.84$).

As to the interaction effect between cultural context and gender on the competition subscale, the results indicate that the Romanian girls perceive themselves as more competitive than the Portuguese ones – $M_{\text{PO}} = 23.5$, $SD = 6.50$; $M_{\text{RO}} = 27.6$, $SD = 5.80$.

Finally, the interaction between cultural context and gender on the harmony subscale showed that the Portuguese boys compared with the Romanian ones, try to a greater extent to maintain harmony inside the in-group – $M_{\text{PO}} = 13.4$, $DP = 3.37$; $M_{\text{RO}} = 11.8$, $SD = 3.72$ –, since, as it was shown by Ciochină and Faria (2006a), in the school context the Portuguese pupils valorise more the in-group companionship and group work, which obviously requires the development of the capacity to cooperate with the others, to maintain the cohesion and the in-group harmony.

Conclusions

The results of the present study contradict our hypothesis that the Portuguese participants are more individualistic than the Romanian ones. The question which we arise is the following: is it possible that such results are explained by the fact that the Portuguese society is indeed more collectivistic than the Romanian society, or is it possible that the Romanian society finds itself in an “exacerbated individualism” phase, as a reaction to its communist past and as a model of predominant action in the framework of socio-political and economical changes over the last years?

Indeed, the fact that a higher collectivism appeared in the Portuguese cultural context may be sustained by the following observation belonging to Neto (1995, p. 26): “As an occidental culture, Portugal is probably individualistic. On the other hand, as a relatively homogeneous cultural, with a population density relatively high, it is potentially collectivistic”.

As to Romania, which has recently begun to be economically more developed, such a fact confirms the hypothesis formulated by Triandis, McCusker and Hui (1990) according to which in many countries of the world there exists a tendency of moving from collectivism to individualism due to the economical affluence. However, as far as the manifestation and expression of attitudes and behaviours related to individualism and collectivism are concerned, it appears that the “novelty” effect of such economical changes – in the case of Romania –, is stronger than the “sedimentation” effect of the same changes – in the case of Portugal –, since nowadays, in Romania, the discourse socially favoured and propagated, emphasizes the importance of financial independence of individuals since adolescence.

Nevertheless, the fact that the results of this investigation revealed a higher individualism for the Romanian cultural context, contrary to what had been predicted, may have

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1. PO = Portugal.
2. RO = Romania.
3. m = masculine.
4. f = feminine.
resulted from the limits of the present investigation which are related to the nature of the Romanian subsample composed, as mentioned earlier, of predominantly medium and high socio-economical status participants.

Indeed, students’ SES, defined as a function of parents’ school level and profession, represents undoubtedly an important indicator of the familial model to which parents resort in the education of their sons. Thus, as Kagıtçıbaşı and Ataca (2005) highlight, in the contexts which are socially and economically more developed, the predominant familial education model is the independence model, illustrative for an individualistic culture, whereas in the less developed contexts, such as rural, agrarian contexts, with cohesive interpersonal relationships, the predominant familial education model is the interdependence model, illustrative for a collectivistic culture. Therefore, it is possible that the fact of the Romanian participants belonging in their majority to medium and high SES families oriented their answers in the direction of a higher individualism.

Thus, it is necessary to replicate the present study with a larger and more equilibrated sample from the point of view of the SES, in both contexts here analysed – Portuguese and Romanian —, in order to verify the influence of this variable on the individualism-collectivism dimension and to conduct more valid comparisons between the two cultural contexts, using more sophisticated statistical analyses.

Moreover, it shall be important to proceed to the replication of this study, namely because some of the subscales of the ICQ revealed low Cronbach’s alpha values in both analysed cultural contexts which significantly limited the results.

At the same time, it shall be necessary to relate the IND/COL dimension to the historical, economical and educational specificities of the two countries, Portugal and Romania, under the condition that future studies in this field shall have to resort to complementary methods in order to evaluate more thoroughly the two so controversial constructs as individualism-collectivism appear to be.

References


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