Impact of Culture on Cognition: an Evaluation of Judgment and Choice Processes Through a Collectivist Lens

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT - The marketing and psychology literatures identify a distinction between judgment and choice processes. However, Western (individualistic) perspectives dominate the discussion.

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Impact of Culture on Cognition: An Evaluation of Judgment and Choice Processes Through a Collectivist Lens
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The marketing and psychology literatures identify a distinction between judgment and choice processes. However, Western (individualistic) perspectives dominate the discussion.

Judgment and choice processes, as studied to date, have always looked at likely outcomes in the context of the decision maker alone (the “I” perspective). The objectives in the decision tasks have always been assumed to be self-serving (such as maximizing personal utility; a notable exception to this argument is the study by Park (1982) that discussed the muddling through approach in decision-making in the context of husband–wife dyad. In this study, he showed that the members of the dyad rely on conflict avoiding strategies while making a decision. Thus, maximizing personal utility may not drive the decision task.

In the extant literature, judgment processes have been identified as optimizing procedures where the decision maker may use compensatory strategies. They are associated with extensive information search and critical evaluation of alternatives. Choice, on the other hand, has been shown to be a simplifying procedure wherein the decision maker utilizes non-compensatory strategies. Choice processes involve elimination of alternatives by utilizing attribute-based information processing, thus concentrating on the differences between various alternatives.

This paper argues that the judgment and choice processes will be different if they were examined across individualist and collectivist cultures. Based on current understanding about the individualist and collectivist cultures, this paper argues that cultural orientation would impact the decision objectives. This difference in decision objectives would change the criteria behind the judgment and choice processes, thus changing their structure.

The propositions, if supported, would add new insight to our current thinking about judgment and choice processes. They might show that these two cognitive processes are structurally opposite across individualist and collectivist cultures. We would understand that judgment processes in collectivist cultures are driven by simplifying objectives and involve non-compensatory, attribute-based comparisons. We would also understand that choice in collectivist cultures would be driven by optimizing objectives and would involve compensatory, alternative-based comparisons. Additionally, we would understand that choice processes in collectivist cultures involve extensive information search and are characterized by the addition of others’ perspectives to one’s own.

References