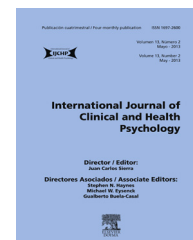




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## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

### Personal value orientations as mediated predictors of mental health: A three-culture study of Chinese, Russian, and German university students



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study

**Abstract** Previous studies of traditional and modern value orientations in individuals found mediated predictive relationships of these values on particular mental disorders. The aim of this study with samples from three countries (Germany, Russia, and China) is to extend findings on mental health (MH) and value orientations to broader MH indicators and two types of mediators, i.e. social support and resilience in accordance to a theory of values and modernization/postmodernization. The multisite study was conducted in the three countries. A path-model with traditional values predicting MH mediated by social support, and modern values predicting MH mediated by resilience was tested in all three countries. As expected, value orientations were for the most part strongest in China, followed by Russia and Germany. Structural equation modeling supported the assumption of mediated prediction of MH by value orientations by and large. The traditional value benevolence predicts social support whereas the modern value self-direction predicts resilience. Value orientations are a sensitive tool to empirically describe cross-cultural differences. The findings indicate that personal value orientations are meaningful predictors of MH. The analysis of personal values shows promise in linking public health, cross-cultural and modernization issues.

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**PALABRAS CLAVE**

Valores personales;  
Orientaciones de  
valor;  
Salud mental;  
Psicología  
transcultural;  
Estudio descriptivo  
de poblaciones

## Orientaciones de valor personal como predictores mediadores de la salud mental: un estudio transcultural con estudiantes universitarios de China, Rusia y Alemania

**Resumen** Estudios previos sobre orientaciones de valores tradicionales y modernos encontraron relaciones predictivas mediadas con trastornos mentales particulares. El objetivo de este estudio con muestras procedentes de tres países (Alemania, Rusia y China) es ampliar los resultados indicadores más amplios de salud mental (SM) y dos tipos de mediadores (apoyo social y resiliencia), de acuerdo a la teoría de los valores y la modernización/postmodernización. Se probó en los tres países un *path-model* con valores tradicionales prediciendo la SM mediada por el apoyo social y valores modernos prediciendo la SM mediada por la resiliencia. Como era de esperar, las orientaciones de valores eran en su mayor parte más fuertes en China, seguido por Rusia y Alemania. Modelos de ecuaciones estructurales apoyaron la hipótesis de la predicción de la SM mediada por las orientaciones de valores en general. La benevolencia de valores tradicionales predice el apoyo social, mientras que el valor autodirección moderna predice la resiliencia. Las orientaciones de valores constituyen una herramienta sensible para describir empíricamente las diferencias interculturales. Los resultados indican que las orientaciones de valores personales son predictores significativos de la SM. El análisis de los valores personales se muestra prometedor en la salud pública transcultural y cuestiones de modernización.

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Basic value orientations recently received increasing interest in studying occupational health issues (e.g., [Diaz Bretones & Gonzalez, 2011](#); [Wang, Lu, & Lu, 2014](#)), health consequences of migrants ([Vecchione, Caprara, Schoen, Castro, & Schwartz, 2012](#)) or mental health in military service ([Zimmermann et al., 2014](#)). Basic or cultural values refer to things that individuals believe are worth desiring in life and thus guide their behavior. According to [Rokeach \(1973\)](#), value orientations include cognitive, affective, and behavioral components; value orientations are cognitions of the desirable that foster emotions and motivate behavior. In the present study, value orientations are examined using [Schwartz's model \(1992\)](#), which was developed based on the work of Rokeach. Schwartz views value orientations as the criteria people use to select and justify actions and to evaluate people and events. Value orientations thus serve as one's own guidance of behavior and the evaluation of behavior of others.

[Maercker et al. \(2009\)](#) proposed to group the ten single value orientations by Schwartz into traditional (security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, universalism) versus modern (self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power) values and to introduce both as basic *cultural* value orientations in mental health research. Traditional cultural values stress collectivism, submissive self-restriction, preservation of traditional practices, protection, and stability. Modern cultural values represent motivations to pursue personal success and dominance over others or gratification for oneself. For trauma and stress-related disorders it has been shown that modern values are protective against posttraumatic stress via mediating social sharing processes, while traditional values increase this stress via the same mediation pathway ([Maercker et al., 2009](#)). This contradicted the popular long-standing assumption that traditional values are better for health preservation while modern values derogate health (cf.

[Graham, 2010](#); [Kleinman & Good, 1985](#)). However, a subsequent study suggested that these effect patterns are partly affected when other types of health outcome and particular age groups of adults are concerned ([Müller, Forstmeier, Wagner, & Maercker, 2011](#)).

The present large-scale multi-national survey of student mental health and its predictors allows broadening the scope towards broader indicators of mental health, namely positive mental health and depression. At the same time, the survey study allows the study of broader health-promoting factors of social support and resilience as potential mediators of the cultural value—mental health relationship. It is part of a larger research program investigating predictors, transcultural aspects and time course of mental health in a series of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies (BOOM research program; [Margraf & Schneider, 2014](#)).

Based on theories of social belongingness by [Baumeister \(2005\)](#) and the role of autonomy in resilience ([Richardson, 2002](#)), as well as own previous findings ([Maercker et al., 2009](#)) we hypothesize a prediction model in which traditional values mainly take effect on mental health via social support while modern values do so via the individuals' capacity for resilience.

According to [Baumeister \(2005\)](#), all human beings are in need of a certain minimum quantity of regular, satisfying social interactions. He argues that traditional human culture is compelled and conditioned by pressure to belong and that this belongingness is relevant for the promotion of psychological wellbeing. This has been supported in various lines of research (e.g., depression in children, caregivers of demented individuals, psychoeducational health interventions) (for a review see [Kawachi & Berkman, 2001](#)). However, it has been shown that from the actor's perspective, social ties may also entail psychological costs in the sense of indebtedness and obligation ([Cohen, 2004](#)).

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