



IDENTITY COMMITMENT IN A COLLECTIVISTIC SOCIETY: THE ROLE OF CULTURAL ORIENTATION AND RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT AMONG MIZO YOUNG ADULTS

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Abstract : The present study examines the role of cultural orientation (individualism and collectivism) and religious commitment in predicting identity commitment among Mizo young adults. A total of 158 participants aged 18–30 years completed standardized measures including the Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (DIDS), Individualism–Collectivism Scale (INDCOL-16), and Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10). Correlational analysis indicated that religious commitment had the strongest association with identity commitment, followed by individualism, while collectivism showed the weakest relationship. Multiple regression analysis revealed that religious commitment was the strongest predictor of identity commitment, followed by individualism, whereas collectivism was not a significant predictor. The findings suggest that identity commitment in a collectivistic society is influenced not only by cultural values but also significantly by personal belief systems.

Keywords : *Identity Commitment, Collectivistic Culture, Religious Commitment, Mizo Young-Adults*

I.INTRODUCTION

Identity refers to a sense of self that defines who a person is. It can be one's name, nationality, ethnicity, religion, personality, hobbies. Identity is not formed the moment we are born, it was gradually constructed by us, and may even change throughout the lifespan. Identity can be understood as a personalized, internal framework, a "self-theory" created by an individual that acts as a guide for interpreting experiences and understanding who they are (Czyzowska, N). According to Jane Kroger (2007), identity is built upon internal psychological factors such as personal emotions, interests, and defensive mechanisms that create a consistent

sense of self regardless of external changes. She explained that our internal “I” is nurtured by one’s social and cultural environment which serves as a platform for the biological and psychological traits to be expressed and acknowledged. So, in order to understand a person, aside from the personal qualities that make them unique as an individual, we must also know their cultural and societal background.

Erikson (1968) stated that a person’s ego identity is formed by three interacting elements: the biological characteristics, psychological elements, and the social and cultural environment. He commented that the social and cultural contexts serve as a platform to express and identify the biological and psychological capacities and interests. He asserts that a desirable identity development must include finding social roles and positions within the community that align with an individual’s biological and psychological capacities and interests.

Erikson proposed in his fifth stage of Psychosocial model, Identity vs Role Confusion, that the main developmental task of ages 12-18 is forming a coherent identity. He believed that this stage is filled with difficult choices regarding every aspect of life such as, career, education, sexuality, friendship, relationship, interest, political ideology etc. According to Erikson, if a person finds an answer to the central questions of life, “Who am I ? ” in the adolescent stage, identity formation is successfully achieved. Forming a coherent identity in this stage is vital for forming an intimate relationship in adulthood. (Arduini-Van Hoose).

Marcia (1966) elaborated Erikson’s two dimensions of identity on the basis of exploration and commitment. When a commitment has not yet been made, it indicates a state of Identity Diffusion. When a commitment has been made without exploration, it indicates Identity Foreclosure. Identity Moratorium is a state where the individual explores but has not made any commitment. Lastly, Identity achievement indicates that the individual has made an exploration and has made a commitment (Meeus, 2021).

Crocetti and colleagues proposed a three - factor model to understand the continuing process of how people develop and modify their identity over time. Their model includes three factors : Commitment, In-depth Exploration and Reconsideration of Commitment. Commitment refers to the persisting decisions the individual has made and the levels of confidence in the decisions. In - depth Exploration means the extent to which the individuals have revisited their commitment and ruminated upon them. Reconsideration of commitment refers to the search for an alternative commitment due to dissatisfaction with the current commitment. They proposed that the interchange between commitment and reconsideration of commitment is the foundation of identity formation.

1.1 Identity Formation in Young Adulthood

The period of young adulthood or emerging adulthood has been defined and redefined by multiple theorists. Erikson proposed the age range of early adulthood as approximately 19 years to 25 years. Daniel Levinson proposed the ages between 17- 45 as the era of Early Adulthood. Jane Kroger defined early adulthood as a period between 23 and 39 years of age (Identity Development : Adolescence through Adulthood p. 140). Arnett (2000) explains that the period of emerging adulthood can extend up to age 29, as many people do not fully settle into adult roles until around age 30. Therefore, the present study considers ages between 18 and 30 as young adults to reflect these differences in life transitions.

According to Erik Erikson, young adults are in a stage of forming intimacy versus being in isolation. The young adults must successfully form an intimate relationship and must learn to deal with the fear of losing a sense of identity while establishing a committed relationship. (Hoffnung, Lifespan Development, p- 39). If a stable sense of identity has developed, young adults are presented with many lifestyle choices that allow them to express themselves and seek fulfillment in adulthood.

The emerging adults must decide not only on careers, beliefs, and intimate relationships, but also how to divide their time and emotional energy among these areas . In this stage, individuals can still explore their options. As pointed out by Erikson, identity achieved at the adolescent period is not the final identity. It is a framework that serves as a guideline during the transition to adulthood. (Kroger J, 2007).

Although it is noted by Erikson and other theorists that emerging adulthood is a period of forming an intimate relationship, it has been found that it is a period of isolation for most emerging adults (Incavou, 2002). Most people aged between 19-29 tend to spend most of their time in school or work and spend their leisure time alone (Larson, 1990). They have also reported greater feelings of loneliness as compared to adolescents or adults (Rokach,2000) as most of them started living independently due to studying in college or working in distant places. Valliant and Milofsky (1980) noticed that from the early 20s to the mid 30s, many emerging adults focus strongly on building a career. In this stage, they focus upon their work, gaining skills and a sense of achievement in their workplace. (Kroger J, 2007)

We can understand the period of emerging adulthood as a period of finding oneself. Individuals find comfort in having true friendship over more friends in number. They find commitments in relationships, work and society. They learn to become independent from the family while being on good terms. They may find their interests and hobbies and some are committed to them while others are still exploring their options.

1.2 Cultural Orientations and Identity

Hofstede defined culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguished the members of one group or category of people from another.” He believed that culture had a strong influence on its members. He emphasized that identity and culture are two different things. Identity answers the question “Where do I belong?”. It develops through shared images, stereotypes, and emotions connected to the culture such as symbols, heroes, and rituals rather than core values. Within a culture, people with different identities can coexist while holding the same values. (G Hofstede, Culture consequences, pg 10)

Cultural orientations strongly influence how individuals understand and construct their own identity. Hofstede explained in his individualism - collectivism framework that people in individualistic cultures tend to view identity as an independent and separate construct, that is based on personal traits, goals, and internal characteristics. In contrast, collectivist cultures view identity as relational and embedded within enduring social groups. Identity is formed through their roles, relationships, and group memberships (Schwartz et al 2011, p. 251).

In collectivistic culture, the social systems have a high impact on identity formation. Cousins (1989) finds in his research that when the Twenty Statement Test was given with a contextual cue on people belonging to collectivistic cultural orientation (Japanese), they used more trait-based words to describe themselves. Whereas when they were given without context, they gave much fewer trait-based descriptions (Schwartz et al 2011, p. 251). The finding indicates that identity is situational for people belonging to collectivistic culture. They adjust themselves according to their environment, who they are with and the current situation.

Hofstede wrote, “Culture is to a human collectivity what personality is to an individual”. He highlights that culture has norms, ideas, and values that distinguish them from other cultures and determines their actions, reactions and responses to certain things.

1.3 Collectivism in Mizo society

Mizo society is considered to be a highly collectivistic society where community members look out for each other. Y.M.A which stands for Young Mizo Association is the largest Community Based Organization in Mizoram that has been functioning since 1935. Y.M.A operates in every locality in villages and cities. The Central Y.M.A (CYMA) located in Aizawl is the headquarters overseeing all activities. Although Branch Y.M.A occupy the lowest position in the organisational hierarchy, they play a crucial role in implementing the aims and objectives of the organisation (Ralte, 2017).

Other community-based organisations include the Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP), an organisation focused on the welfare of Mizo women of all ages, and the Mizo Upa Pawl (MUP), which serves the elderly population, both male and female.

One prominent example of collectivism in Mizo society can be observed in their funeral rituals. During times of bereavement, the neighbours and Y.M.A members take the responsibility of cooking food for the families, organise ceremonies, bringing chairs, and singing songs to console the grieving family. The young men in the community also take responsibility for digging graves. These practices are integral to Mizo funeral rituals as the Y.M.A motto states “Helping the Helpless, Serving the Community”. The Y.M.A also calls for hnatlang (voluntary communal labour) during times of need. Hnatlang is organised in situations such as natural disasters, house construction for the needy, or search efforts for missing persons, reflecting strong collective responsibility within the community.

1.4 Christianity in the Mizo Society

Geert Hofstede has written in his book Culture's Consequences (p. 249-250) that individualistic societies historically developed in places with monotheist religions, especially Christianity and Judaism whereas collectivistic societies exist in polytheist religions. However, we find an interesting contrast if we look at a Mizo society, where a monotheist religion Christianity operates in this collectivistic society.

The Mizo people adapted Christianity into their own culture. According to the 2011 Census, 87.16% of Mizoram's population identifies as Christian. Multiple Christian denominations coexist, each with its own church, often located within close proximity in the same locality. Each church congregation maintains fellowship groups, including children's fellowship. There is also *Kohhran Hmeichhia*, a women's fellowship,

and *Kohhran Pavalai Pawl*, a fellowship for men above 40 years of age. While participation in these groups is not mandatory, being an active member is socially regarded as appropriate and desirable.

Looking at Mizo traditions and cultures, there are some Mizo values that align with the teachings of Christianity. Mizo code of conduct *Tlawmngaihna* that emphasizes placing service above personal interest is the core of Mizo culture. This value has persisted as a defining cultural principle and has been integrated into the Christian ideal of fellowship (Ralte, 2023).

The Mizo traditional culture was not discarded with the introduction of Christianity during the colonial period by the Missionaries as one might have assumed. As Margaret L. Pachuau has explained, Christianity was merged with the existing Mizo cultural patterns. The Mizo community did not strongly resist colonial Christianity, however it did not completely imitate the Western culture neglecting their traditional culture. A hybrid identity emerged where Christianity became an integral part of Mizo identity, but practiced in a Mizo way and not the western way. This is illustrated in the way the dress code for women in the church is accepted to be the traditional wraparound *puan* and the traditional drum *khuang* still being an integral instrument in church service.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

Identity formation during the period of early adulthood is an important period where individuals gradually become less dependent on their families and start to make their own decisions regarding career, relationships, and their belief system (Kroger J, 2007). It is worth considering whether the commitments made during early adulthood after having a bit of autonomy are truly their own or influenced by the community. In societies such as Mizoram, where social and cultural values are being taught through strong communities like the Young Mizo Association (YMA) and church institutions from an early age, identity formation may be deeply embedded within communal and religious structures.

So considering these factors, a question arises. To what extent is the identity commitment made by the young adults belonging to collectivistic society truly their own? Therefore, the present study aims to understand the influence of religion, cultural orientations - specifically individualism and collectivism, on the identity commitment of the young adult.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Identity represents an individual's sense of self, shaped through personal, social, and cultural influences. While Erikson emphasized adolescence as a critical period for identity formation, Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (2000) highlighted emerging adulthood (18–25 years) as an extended phase of identity exploration across domains such as relationships, career, and worldview.

Identity development is a dynamic, lifelong process shaped by social interactions and community engagement. Individuals with stronger identity commitment report higher levels of social participation, belongingness, and civic responsibility, underscoring the importance of group membership in identity formation (Sevinç & Şener, 2023; Crocetti et al., 2022). Social connectedness further contributes to mental well-being, while isolation and environmental stressors negatively affect both identity development and psychological health (Haslam et al., 2024).

Identity processes are also closely linked to mental health outcomes. Identity synthesis functions as a protective factor, whereas identity confusion increases vulnerability to emotional and behavioral difficulties (Potterton et al., 2022). Multiple internal and external factors, including life experiences, coping strategies, and social support, contribute to identity confusion during young adulthood (Zhu, 2023; Hasyim et al., 2024).

Cultural context plays a central role in shaping identity. Individualistic societies emphasize autonomy, whereas collectivistic societies prioritize group cohesion and social roles. However, recent research challenges this binary. Krys et al. (2022) demonstrate that independent self-construals can coexist within collectivistic contexts. Similar patterns are observed in Mizo society, where collectivist norms remain strong, yet individual orientations are increasingly evident among younger generations (Lalkhawngaihi & Fente, 2020).

Religion further contributes to identity formation by fostering belonging and meaning. It operates as a cohesive social force that integrates personal and collective identity. In the Mizo context, Christianity has

been adapted within traditional cultural frameworks, reinforcing values such as Tlawmngaihna and shaping contemporary identity processes (Angom, 2022).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aim

The present study aims to examine the influence of collectivism, individualism, and religion on identity commitment among Mizo young adults.

3.2 Hypotheses

Based on existing literature and theoretical frameworks, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Religious commitment will positively predict identity commitment among Mizo young adults.

H2: Individualism will positively predict identity commitment.

H3: Collectivism will positively predict identity commitment.

3.3 Sample

Participants were recruited using convenience sampling through social media platforms, including Instagram and WhatsApp. A total of 159 responses were initially collected. However, one response was excluded as the participant did not identify as Mizo. The final sample consisted of 158 Mizo young adults aged between 18 and 30 years. The gender distribution included 60 males (38.0%) and 98 females (62.0%). This sampling approach may lead to self-selection bias and limit the generalizability of the findings.

3.4 Procedure

Data were collected using an online questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The survey link was distributed via social media platforms, including Instagram and WhatsApp. Participants completed the questionnaire anonymously, and responses were recorded automatically for analysis.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to standard ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and they were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. No personally identifiable information was collected.

3.6 Measures

3.6.1 Identity Commitment

The two subscales, Commitment Making and Identification with Commitment from the 25-item version of the Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (DIDS) (Luyckx et al., 2007) were used to measure identity commitment. Both subscale consists of five items. The participants rate their responses on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). In this study, the original responses were collected using a 7-point Likert scale but the responses were transformed to a 5-point scale before the analysis to maintain consistency with the original DIDS.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients in the original study were 0.86 for Commitment Making and 0.86 for Identification with Commitment. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .90 for Commitment Making and 0.89 for Identification with Commitment. They have a combined reliability coefficient of 0.92.

3.6.2 Cultural Orientations

The 16-item Individualism and Collectivism Scale (INDCOL-16) was used to measure the cultural orientations (Individualism or Collectivism) of the participants. There are four sub-scales which are Horizontal Collectivism (HC), Vertical Collectivism (VC), Horizontal Individualism (HI), and Vertical Individualism (VI). Each sub-scales contains four items. The participants rate their responses on a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 9 (Strongly Agree).

The overall Cronbach's alpha of INDCOL-16 given in the original study was .85. The subscale reliabilities were .78 for HC, .81 for VC, .76 for VI, and .77 for HI, which indicates good internal consistency. In the present study, the overall Cronbach's alpha for the full 16-item scale was .74. The subscale reliabilities were .66 for HC, .75 for VC, .75 for HI, and .79 for VI. When we combine Collectivism and Individualism subscales, the reliability for Total Collectivism (HC + VC) was .69, Total Individualism (HI + VI) was .73.

3.6.3 Religious Commitment

Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10) developed by Worthington et al. (2003) was used to measure Religious Commitment. The scale consists of 10 items. The participants rated their responses on a 5-point Likert scale, 1 indicating "not at all true of me" and 5 indicating "totally true of me". Cronbach's alpha of the original study is 0.93. The present study has Cronbach's alpha of .88.

The reliability of each scale are presented in Table 1

Table 1

Scale	Sub Scale	No of Items	Cronbach α
DIDS	Identification commitment	with5	.89
	Commitment Making	5	.90
	Total	10	.92
INDCOL	Horizontal Collectivism	4	.66
	Vertical Collectivism	4	.75
	Total Collectivism	8	.69
	Horizontal Individualism	4	.75
	Vertical Individualism	4	.79
	Total Individualism	8	.73
	Overall Score Total	16	.74
RCI- 10	Total	10	.88

Reliability of the study scales

Results

Descriptive statistics is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Identity Commitment	158	1.00	4.27	3.45	.63
Collectivism	158	3.13	9.00	6.58	1.19
Individualism	158	2.25	9.00	5.92	1.19
Religious Commitment	158	1.10	5.00	3.43	.82

Correlation coefficients are presented in Table 3

Table 3

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Identity Commitment	-			
2. Individualism	.27***	-		
3. Collectivism	.21**	.36***	-	
4. Religious Commitment	.34***	.20*	.51***	-

Correlation Table

Note. $p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .001^{***}$ (two-tailed)

Table 4 presents the regression analyses. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 154) = 8.31$, $p < .001$. The model explained 16.2% of the variance in identity commitment ($R^2 = .162$), indicating a modest explanatory power and suggesting that additional unmeasured variables may also play a role in identity development.

Table 4*Regression Analyses*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p
		B	Std. Error	β		
1	(Constant)	2.02	0.31		6.4	< .001
	Collectivism	-0.01	0.05	-0.03	-0.28	.779
	Individualism	0.12	0.04	0.23	2.88	.004
	Religious commitment	0.23	0.06	0.31	3.57	< .001

Model Summary: $R = .403$, $R^2 = .162$, $F(3, 154) = 8.31$, $p < .001$

IV. DISCUSSION

The present study aims to examine the influence of Individualism, Collectivism and Religious Commitment on Identity Commitment in Mizo young adults between 18 and 30 years of age. The findings reveal that the participants have a relatively high level of Identity Commitment. The descriptive result also shows that Collectivism is higher than Individualism, suggesting the participants are more oriented towards Collectivism. However, the correlation between identity commitment and individualism is higher than that of collectivism. Religious commitment shows the highest correlation with identity commitment.

The regression analysis shows that Individualism predicts Identity Commitment and Religious Commitment is the highest predictor. However, Collectivism does not have any significant influence on Identity Commitment when Individualism and Religious Commitment were taken into account.

The Mizo society can be considered as a highly collectivist society, that still upholds its traditional values such as Tlawmngaihna, an act of putting others before oneself. They still practiced the funeral rituals where the neighbourhood gathered at the bereaved house, singing songs and consoling them with the Y.M.A taking charge. In such a collectivist society where the cultural values are still highly respected and communities take care of each other, it is not surprising that the descriptive result shows higher collectivism over individualism. The participants also have high Identity Commitment.

The results showing higher correlation between Identity Commitment and Individualism within a collectivist society is noteworthy. But the possibility of "independent forms of selfhood" existing in collectivistic society alongside traditional values has been supported by Kryz et al. (2022). Sharing this viewpoint, Mizo young adults may be using their "independent self-construal" to navigate a modernizing environment, where individualism helps them develop the independence they need to perform the social expectations. Taking modernization into consideration, the higher correlation between Individualism and Identity Commitment can also be due to a shift towards modernization, although the current study provides no evidence for it.

The findings show that Religious Commitment is high and has the highest correlation with Identity Commitment. Additionally, Religious Commitment emerges as the highest predictor for Identity Commitment in the regression analysis. As Mizoram is Christian dominant state, the result is consistent with the finding that young Mizos report a high level of "normative cultural orientation" which is the perception of how one should behave according to societal standards (Lalkhawngaihi & Fente, 2020).

All the participants in the current study identified as Christian. Hofstede has mentioned that monotheistic religions such as Christianity are commonly linked to individualistic societies (Culture's Consequences, p. 249-250). Although Christianity emphasizes personal relationship with God and an individual faith, it still calls for discipleship, being kind to one another and living peacefully with each other. Biblical teachings such as "Carry each other's burdens" (Galatians 6:2) and "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who

mourn” (Romans 12:15) closely align with traditional Mizo values of Tlawmngaihna. It highlights how the traditional values align with the new religion introduced by the "outsiders". As previously mentioned, Christianity has been adapted in the Mizo cultural framework. The aims and objectives of the largest community based organization of Mizoram, Y.M.A includes “To revere Christian ethics” as a third objective along with “Good use of leisure” and “Development of the Mizo society”. This clearly shows how deeply Christianity and the culture has intertwined. The continued use of the Mizo traditional puan as church attire for women, as well as the adaptation of hymns to be sung alongside the traditional instrument khuang, illustrates this cultural integration.

The findings of the present study shows the presence of individualistic tendencies among Mizo young adults within a predominantly collectivistic society. This suggests that the cultural orientation and personal orientation can be different. The higher association between Identity Commitment and Individualism suggest that personal values and independent choices may play a meaningful role in identity formation. At the same time, Religious Commitment being the strongest predictor should be understood within the collectivistic cultural context of Mizoram. However, this does not imply that their faith is merely a product of cultural norms, rather, it may represent both personal beliefs and shared cultural identity operating simultaneously.

4.1 Conclusion

The present study examined the influence of cultural orientation and religious commitment on identity commitment among Mizo young adults. The findings indicate that while participants demonstrated relatively high identity commitment within a collectivistic context, religious commitment emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by individualism, whereas collectivism did not show a significant contribution. These results suggest that identity formation in this context is not solely determined by cultural norms but is also shaped by personal belief systems and individual orientations.

4.2 Limitations

The findings of the present study should be interpreted in light of several limitations.

1. The cross-sectional and correlational design limits the ability to draw causal inferences regarding the relationships between cultural orientation, religious commitment, and identity commitment. Longitudinal research would be better suited to examine developmental changes in identity over time.
2. The use of convenience sampling through online platforms may have introduced self-selection bias and limited the representativeness of the sample. The participants largely consisted of digitally active young adults, which may not fully reflect the broader Mizo population.
3. All participants in the study identified as Christians and belonged to a single cultural group. This homogeneity restricts the generalizability of the findings to other religious, cultural, or demographic groups.
4. The study relied exclusively on self-report measures, which may be subject to common method bias, including social desirability and response consistency effects. This limitation is particularly relevant in collectivistic contexts, where participants may respond in accordance with perceived social norms.
5. Identity development is a complex and multidimensional process influenced by various factors such as family environment, socioeconomic status, education, and peer relationships. These variables were not examined in the present study and may account for additional variance in identity commitment beyond the factors included in the model.

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