The Association Between Familism, Academic Achievement, and Risk Taking: The Moderating Effects of Age and Gender

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Introduction

- Familism is an important cultural aspect in Hispanic families and is the foundation of how family members interact with one another (Hartnett & Parrado, 2012).
- Past research has found that familism is beneficial for not only the family, but for the individual and other family members (Campos et al, 2016).
- Familism can reduce adolescent's risk taking behaviors and increase academic achievement (Boyer & Byrnes, 2009; Esparza & Sanchez, 2008).

Hypotheses

In a sample of 1,123 Mexican adolescents:

1. There will be a positive association between familism and academic achievement, and an inverse relationship between familism and risk taking.
2. Gender will moderate the negative relationship between familism and risk taking and the positive relationship between familism and academic achievement.
3. Age will moderate the relationship between familism and academic achievement and the relationship between familism and risk taking.

Methods

Participants

The sample of this study consisted of:

- 1,123 Mexican adolescents from Puebla, Mexico (54% females; 46% males)
- Ages ranged from 12-19 years (M = 15.07)

Procedures

- Data was collected from two public schools in Puebla, Mexico in May and June 2011.
- Students completed self-reported surveys during normal school hours.

Measures

- **Familism** *Cultural Value Scales (*Unger et. al, 2002)
    - 19 items; 1= *Strongly Disagree*, 4= *Strongly Agree*
- **Risk Taking** Adapted measure by Raffelli and Crockett (2003)
    - 6 items; 1= *Strongly Disagree*, 4= *Strongly Agree*
- **Academic Achievement**
    - 9-point scale
    - Response items were reversed so 1= *Mostly A's,* 9= *Mostly F's*
- **Age Group**
    - Group 1= 14 - 15.07 yrs
    - Group 2= 15.08 - 24 yrs
- **Gender**
    - Group 1= Males
    - Group 2= Females

Results

- Four standardized regression analyses were conducted.
- No significant correlation was found between familism and academic achievement, but an inverse relation was found between familism and risk taking (r = -.150, $p < .01$).
- Gender only moderated the association between familism and risk taking (See Table 1). Post hoc analyses revealed that the positive association was stronger for girls than boys.
- Age did not moderate the associations between familism and academic achievement or familism and risk taking (see Table 2).

Table 1 *Summary of Results of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Adolescent's Academic Achievement and Risk Taking Behaviors Moderated by Gender*

	Academic Achievement (n= 1063)		Risk Taking Behaviors (n= 1110)	
	β	$R^2\Delta$	β	$R^2\Delta$
Academic Achievement, Risk Taking Behaviors, and Familism				
Step 1		.002		.025
Familism	.050		-.161**	
Step 2		.012		.027
Familism	.053		-.161**	
Gender	.195**		-.095	
Step 3		.012		.033
Familism	.036		-.088**	
Gender	.195**		-.095	
FamXGender	.032		-.146**	

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 2 *Summary of Results of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Adolescents' Academic Achievement and Risk Taking Behaviors Moderated by Age Group*

	Academic Achievement (n= 1063)		Risk Taking Behaviors (n= 1110)	
	β	$R^2\Delta$	β	$R^2\Delta$
Academic Achievement, Risk Taking Behaviors, and Familism				
Step 1		.002		.023
Familism	.044		-.155**	
Step 2		.002		.023
Familism	.046		-.156**	
Age	.021		-.012	
Step 3		.005		.024
Familism	.217*		-.230*	
Age	.005		-.005	
FamXAge	-.132		.056	

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Conclusion

- Familism may play a different role for girls than boys in respect to risk taking. This may be because of the tendency of boys having less restrictions and greater freedoms whereas girls are encouraged to follow feminine roles of household duties (Raffaelli et al., 2004).
- Factors other than familism, age, and gender may influence academic achievement of Mexican adolescents, such as socioeconomic status.
- Age may have not played a role in this study due to the small range of ages tested in this sample. The sample consisted of only middle school and high school students. Future studies should incorporate students of younger ages.
- Study findings can inform practitioners such as guidance counselors, family therapists, teachers and principals who work with Mexican Youth.

Limitations

- This study did not assess other indicators of academic achievement such as motivation, effort, and drive to succeed.
- Cross-sectional design and participants collected from only two schools can not generalize across Latino adolescents.
- Self reported measures runs the possibility of false reports due to social desirability.
- Future studies should report other areas of academic achievement other than just school grades.
- Future studies should conduct a longitudinal study with participants from various geographical areas.