

## Cultural Orientation as a Moderator between Social Support Needs and Psychological Well-Being among Canadian University Students

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**Abstract :** Universities across Canada have experienced unprecedented growth in international student enrollment from across the world. As cultural diversity in Canada and other countries increases, understanding the social support needs of all students is important for providing them with the assistance they need to thrive psychologically and academically. Those from individualistic cultural orientations tend to seek explicit social support, which involves expressly asking for assistance in times of stress. However, those from collectivistic cultural orientations are more likely to seek implicit social support, where encouragement is obtained from spending time among valued social groups without explicitly talking about problems. This study explored whether the relationship between the type of social support needs (implicit or explicit) and psychological and academic functioning might be moderated by cultural orientations (individualistic, collectivistic) among university students. Participants were 110 university students (70 women, 40 men; mean age = 24.8 years, SD = 6.6). They completed the Individualism and Collectivism Scale (ICS), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL) which assesses implicit and explicit social support, Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) which yields positive and negative experience scores, Flourishing Scale (FS), and reported their grade point average (GPA) as a measure of academic performance. Moderated regression analysis demonstrated that, for those scoring lower on individualism, reporting lower level of implicit support predicted higher levels of perceived stress. For those scoring higher on individualism, lower levels of explicit social support predicted higher levels of perceived stress and a greater number of negative experiences. Generally, higher levels of implicit support were associated with greater satisfaction with life for all students, with the association becoming stronger among students with higher collectivism scores. No other significant findings were found. The results point to the value of considering the cultural orientations of students when designing programs to maintain and improve their sense of well-being.

**Keywords :** cultural orientation, social support, university students, well-being

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