The Relationship between Emo Subcultural Participation and Values of Chinese College Students

Lili Lan[1,a], Xiaofeng Wang[2,b,*]

[1]School of Business Administration, Shanghai Lixin University of Accounting and Finance, Shanghai, China
[2]Counseling and Psychological Services Center, Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, Shanghai, China
[a]bluelan8211@163.com, [b]lndafeng@163.com
[*]Corresponding author

Abstract: Existing research has explored characteristics of emo subculture and its impact on youth development. However, there is little discussion has been had on the relationship between emo subcultural participation and values identification. This study investigated emo subcultural participation with a sample of 500 college students from two universities in Shanghai, China. Participants completed the Emo Subcultural Questionnaire, Participation Questionnaire, the Schwartz' Portrait Values Questionnaire and the Chinese Values Questionnaire to explore the relationship between emo subcultural participation and students' values. Multi-level linear regression analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between emo subcultural participation and values. The results showed that the higher the score of emo subcultural perception, the more likely the Chinese college students were to agree with values of tradition, collective responsibility, and family wellbeing, and the less likely they were to agree with values of self-direction, power, stimulation and hedonism. The higher the score of emo subcultural communication, the more participants agreed with the values of self-direction, universalism, conformity, collective responsibility, rule-abiding and self-improvement, and the less likely they were to agree with the values of power and fashion. Participation in emo subculture predicted both identification with and resistance to particular values, i.e., participants attempted to return to traditional values through emo subculture as a form of resistance to modern values, while reflecting the contradiction between collective and individual values in subcultural participation.

Keywords: Youth subculture; Emo subculture; Subcultural participation; Values; Chinese college students

1. Introduction

1.1. Youth Subculture and Emo Subculture

Emo subcultures, as a special youth subculture, has begun to receive new attention and exploration in academia. To better understand the connotation of emo subculture, however, it is necessary to understand the general concept of youth subculture more broadly. The Chicago School was particularly interested in understanding subculture through deviant behaviours[1], while the Birmingham School emphasized the significance of youth engaging in class resistance within subculture[2]. Alongside increasing consumerism and the rapid development of media technology, post-subcultural theory has shifted focus toward the implications of subcultural participants' pursuit of individual taste and the development of their interests [3].

The term "emo" has been used to refer to a susceptible and impulsive psychological state. As a subculture, emo has existed since the 1990s, referring to a particular combination of punk and indie rock which featured lyrics focusing on scorned love, loneliness, depression, pessimism, and boredom. This evolved from an emotional style of music into a distinct fashion style characterized by a specific visual appearance, exaggerated behavior, and hopeless aesthetics[4],with the stereotypical look including predominantly dark clothing, heavy eyeliner, tight trousers, and dyed hair quaffed to cover one eye[5].

In the current research progress, it is worth emphasizing that emo subcultural participation has been

shown to have a negative impact on one's psychosocial adaptation. Research has found that emo subcultural participants showed more aggressive behaviors[6], and that emotions were related to suicidal thoughts, extreme loneliness, and self-injurious behaviors[7].A study found that found that a high incidence of suicide, depression, and self-injurious behaviors was related to goth emotional subcultural participation and identification[8]. Furthermore, Another study showed that young people identifying with goth subculture might be at increased risk for depression and self-harm[9].Therefore, further in-depth research on emo subcultures will be significant both for enriching the field of youth subcultures and for realistic youth education guidance and work practices.

1.2. Emo Subcultures in the Media Field and Emo Subcultural Participation

Undoubtedly, digital technology for media has increasingly been important to young people, and it has become an important space for them to engage in cultural practices[10]. And media productions provide much of the core material used in the formulation of subcultural elements and contemporary youth subculture tend to be media characteristics and consumption practices[11], and highlighting more "fluid" and "tribal" associations between subcultural groups.

Over the past several decades, China has transformed dramatically to become a highly technical media society. Especially with the impact of Internet technology, the emo subculture characterized by Sang subculture, Buddhist youth, Tang ping and Bai lan subcultures has gradually evolved to become a popular symbolic and virtual form of subculture[12], which usually expresses a feelings of despair, disappointment and pessimism, with lack of effort, loss of curiosity, enthusiasm and initiative. For example, Tang ping nationality taps into youths' emotional need to relieve pressure, while Buddhist youth embrace advocate life goals and values of no competition, no winning, and no possessions.

In recent years, cultural participation has been a hotly debated cultural issue because of its assumed social and individual impacts on personal well-being, and its supposed enhancement of human development[13]and contribution to social inclusion[14], as it can reduce feelings of social isolation and loneliness. Cultural participation refers to the experiencing of a shared general code of communication via any context and channel, which increases one's own informational and cultural understandings, with both senders and receivers conscious of not only the content but also the form of messages[15]. Different cultural participation reflects differences in individual tastes, values, and behaviors, and that may be linked to social structural factors such as class and gender. Jenkins (2006) emphasizes that the Internet encourages a participatory cultural experience, highlighting individual initiative and creativity[16]. Indeed, young people are using various platforms on the Internet (using Microblog, WeChat, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube as communication tools) to produce and disseminate different virtual and digital expressions and subcultural symbols, such as "Sad Frog", "Loser", and "Little True Luck", which have witnessed the widespread and active participation of young people in the emo subculture.

1.3. Emo subculture and Values

Important reasons why emo subcultures are so popular among young people are related to the fact that a specific social mentality and their easy-to-use style of tools available today, and technology facilitates wider cultural awareness and exposure. Studies also have found that social anxiety, relative deprivation, anxiety, depression, and compromise are all related to the prevalence of emo subculture in China[17]. Social mindset consists of social emotional tone, social consensus and social values, and social mindset possesses the functions of perception, information sharing and emotional infection [18], In other words, social mindset is used as a conceptual system that influences youth's choice and even participation in subcultures. Meanwhile, there are other studies showing that emo subculture has also conveyed defensive and pessimistic attitudes, perceptions, and values to society[19].

Furthermore, we speculate that there is an unexplored relationship between emo youth subculture and values. As a core element of culture. Values are abstract life goals, reflecting what is most important in people's lives. Values can guide behaviors, and form a decisive evaluation of people and events, and the self [20]. Equally, subcultures encompass the attitudes and perceptions, hopes and expectations of the participants.

This may be a key factor in the prevalence of emo subcultures among young people and their negative impact on youth development. Perhaps some insight can be gained from the results of the current study on the general relationship between youth subcultures and values. One study noted that the distinction of a subculture is that it is a distinct sub-group within the larger society norms and value

systems[21]. Chinese scholars argue that subculture reflects one's struggle for the right to speak about mainstream culture and to resist mainstream values, which can impact core socialist values and incite negative social emotions[22]. Subculture participation is a way to express one's value orientation or resist social norms and advocate the values of freedom and tolerance. Through subculture, young people acquire certain values, social norms, and attitudes towards life which are expressed through their value identity [23].Specifically, People who identify with hip-hop culture show a more significant materialistic value orientation[24]. Participating emo subculture is a way to advocate the value orientation of nihility and escape, or express a potential narcissistic value orientation.

1.4. Overview of the Present Study

In the current study, we speculated that there was a relationship between emo subcultural participation and certain values. We divided emo subcultural participation into two dimensions: emo subcultural perception and emo subcultural communication. Emo subcultural perception refers to the exposure or acceptance of external factors such as discourse, information, and symbols of the subculture by the subcultural subject, including basic perceptions of the subculture, such as attitudes and impressions. Emo subcultural communication refers to the process of subcultural subjects establishing or creating certain cultural products with the help of media tools or other means to promote and disseminate them to the external environment or other participants, which is a process involving continuous information communication, feedback, exchange and interactive links between different participating subjects. Together, emo subcultural perception and emo subcultural communication represented subjects' different processes and levels of participation and involvement in emo subculture. We hope to make a distinction between the characteristics and roles of both in the performance of emo subcultural involvement, to examine the relationship between emo subcultural involvement and values as a whole, and thus to provide empirical data for predicting the trends in the relationship between subcultures and values in general.

Existing studies have already explored subculture theory and patterns, however, little discussion exists on the relationship between subcultural participation and value identity. By exploring this specific relationship between emo subcultures and values, we hope to provide an experimental basis for discovering the relationship between subcultures and values in general. Our literature review highlighted several gaps, which we can summarize in four points. 1. Many previous studies have failed to clearly define values, and the categories and nature of the values involved in emo subcultural research are often vague and even confusing. 2.The relationship between subcultural participation and values has not been discussed comprehensively. Some studies have focused on the relationship between subcultural participation and mainstream values, while others have focused more on non-mainstream values. 3. Much of the existing research results come from foreign countries and cannot reflect the situation of Chinese youth. 4. There has been a lack of domestic empirical research, that is, research in the Chinese cultural context. The lack of research in this area means that we lack an understanding of the mechanism of how subculture affects the development of youth values, which also makes it difficult for us to formulate guidance methods or strategies with consideration of youth subculture. Therefore, the results of this current study can be valuable as an attempt to address these gaps in the current literature.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants and Procedure

The study used convenience sampling to select college student participants from two universities in Shanghai in June 2023. The researcher first informed participants of the name of the project, its purpose, and the study procedures. The researcher then informed participants that their involvement and completion of the questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous, and that the study results would be anonymized and used only for the purposes of this study. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, and the paper-pencil questionnaire was completed during 'Career Development' class (neither researcher was the instructor of the course) under the supervision of a researcher and a teacher. There were 500 questionnaires distributed, in one university we distributed 200 questionnaires and in the other university 300, with 477 valid questionnaires returned in total, with an effective rate of 95.4%. Among these, 130 respondents were male students and 347 were female; 247 were freshmen, 48 were sophomores, and 182 were juniors.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. The Emo Subcultural Participation Questionnaire

Although the criteria for measuring cultural participation are rarely clear[25]. There are still some studies that have extensively discussed the definition, framework, and difficulties of cultural participation[26]. This research has been shaped significantly by Morrone's (2006) interpretive method for participation measurements. They selected a reference framework for measurement work in eight fields, and finally identified three specific dimensions of cultural participation: attending/receiving, performance/production by amateurs, and interaction[27]. Considering the characteristics and patterns of youth subculture expression among Chinese youth, we retained the dimension of "attending/receiving" and renamed it "emo subcultural perception", and modified "the production and interaction" in the participation subculture to "emo subcultural communication", i.e., emotional subculture perception and emotional subculture communication as the two dimensions for implementing this measurement.

Participants' perception and knowledge of the symbols of emo subculture (e.g., words, pictures, videos, emojis, etc.) were assessed using the Emo Subcultural Participation Questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed by the researchers. The measure also assessed the students' behaviors of participating in emo subculture, such as their exposure to it, retweeting, sharing, or producing aspects of emo subculture. The questionnaire was developed based on a compilation of the existing literature and interview results, and initially included 19 items. Two focus group interview sessions were held, each made up of 8 to 10 people, with college students who had previously completed the questionnaire invited to participate in discussions about emo subcultural phenomena, symbols, discourses, behaviors, etc. Then experts in cultural psychology were then invited to evaluate the initial questionnaire, and items with low relevance, repetition, or ambiguity were deleted which resulted in the final, official questionnaire which contained 9 items. Each item was measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (unaware or uninvolved) to 5 (very aware or very willing to participate).

We conducted an exploratory factor analysis of the scores of subculture participation. A Bartlett test revealed that Kaiser-Meyer-Okin measure of sampling adequacy = .78, $\chi2$ = 1001.18, df = 36, p < .001. Items with loadings on two and more factors and a difference between loadings of less than .20, as well as items with factor loadings less than.30 were excluded. Finally, emo subcultural perception (ESP) and emo subcultural communication (ESC) were identified as the two factors of emo subcultural participation, and 9 test items were developed, all of which had high loading values (.50 to .84) on their respective factors, and the explanation rates of the extracted two factors were: 35.11% and 16.68%, respectively(see Table 1).

We also conducted confirmatory factor analysis on the score of subcultural participation. The results showed that $\chi2$ = 78.02, df=24, $\chi2$/df=3.25, GFI=95, TLI=.92, RMSEA= .07. The internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's αs) of the two dimensions in this study were .76 and .67, respectively.

Table 1: Rotation Component Matrix of Maximum Variance

	Factors	
	ESP	ESC
Are you familiar with emo subculture slang, such as "heart pricking" ?	.838	
Do you know emo subculture expressions, such as sad frog, or salted fish?	.826	
Do you know about emo subculture?	.725	
Have you ever watched emo subculture shows, such as BoJack Horseman?	.616	
Do you think emo subculture is popular among young people?	.507	
Will you or have you introduced emo subculture to others?		.767
Have you ever participated in emo subcultural trends?		.711
Do you express or take part in emo subculture in online communities (i.e., WeChat friends circles, microblogging)?		.593
Do you agree that contemporary young people are more likely to identify with emo subculture?		.583

Note. ESP = Emo subcultural perception; ESC = Emo subcultural communication.

2.2.2. The Portrait Values Questionnaire

The Chinese version of Schwartz' Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) was adopted,the questionnaire is made up of 40 short character descriptions which describing personal goals, ambitions, or hopes, and measures 10 dimensions: achievement, self-direction, security, stimulation, hedonism, power, universalism, tradition, conformity, and benevolence. Sample items include "He/she think that everyone is equal and everyone should have equal opportunities" and "It is important to seize every opportunity to enjoy life and to do things that bring happiness". Respondents are asked to rate how much each item describes themselves using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me). The higher the score, the more the respondent agrees with the particular value. The Cronbach's αs of all dimensions in the current study ranged from .48 to .76.

2.2.3. The Chinese Values Questionnaire

The Chinese Values Questionnaire (CVQ) uses 46 items and measures 8 dimensions: social equality, collective responsibility, rule-abiding, family wellbeing, friendship, self-improvement, fashion, and personal happiness[28]. Sample items include "The most important life goal is family happiness" and "Maintaining harmony in the group is very important". Each item is rated using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me). The higher the score, the more the respondent agrees with the particular value. The scale has been shown to have good reliability and validity in Chinese students[29]. The Cronbach's αs of all dimensions in the current study ranged from .84 to .92.

3. Results

3.1. Statistical Process

SPSS 21.0 software was used for statistical processing of the data. First, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted, including the mean and standard deviations of the two dimensions of ESP and ESC, the 10 PVQ dimensions, and the 8 CVQ dimensions.Then, the multi-level linear regression equation was used to analyze the relationships between emo subcultural participation and the various values. This method focused on verifying the predictive effect of ESP and ESC on college students' value identity after controlling for the role of gender and grade.

3.2. Preliminary Analyses

Table 2 showed the mean and standard deviations of ESP, ESC, the 10 PVQ dimensions, and the 8 CVQ dimensions. A 2 x 4 multivariate ANOVA was done with gender and grade as independent variables and ESP, ESC as dependent variables. The results showed no significant main effect of gender, Wilks' λ = .995, $F_{(2,470)}$ = 1.17, p = .31, $\eta2$ = .01. The main effect of grade was not significant, Wilks' λ =.99, $F_{(4,940)}$ = 1.49, p = .20, $\eta2$ = .01 . The interaction effect of gender and grade was not significant, Wilks' λ = .99, $F_{(4,940)}$ = 1.44, p = .22, $\eta2$ = .01.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviations of Variables M (SD)

Emo Subcultural Participation		PVQ Values		CVQ values	
ESC	4.05 (.58)	Self-direction	3.86 (.71)	Rule-abiding	4.22 (.72)
ESP	2.80 (.64)	Hedonism	3.85 (.78)	Social equality	4.07 (.83)
		Achievement	3.79 (.79)	Self-improvement,	3.91 (.71)
		Conformity	3.73 (.71)	Family wellbeing	3.82 (.95)
		Universalism	3.72 (.69)	Friendship	3.75 (.83)

		Security	3.72 (.67)	Collective responsibility	3.72 (.72)
		Benevolence	3.50 (.74)	Personal happiness	3.70 (.90)
		Stimulation	3.46 (.86)	Fashion	2.84 (.99)
		Power	3.20 (.77)		
		Tradition	3.11 (.63)		

3.3. Regression Analysis of Emo Subcultural Participation and Values

Multi-level linear regression analysis was performed, with the values of the 10 PVQ dimensions and the 8 CVQ dimension values were set as the dependent variables, and gender, grade, ESP and ESC were set as the independent variables. The results were showed in Table 3 and Table 4. ESP and ESC had some predictive effect on the resulting values. For example, the results showed that in the multi-level linear regression, self-direction value was set as the independent variable and ESP, gender and grade were set as the dependent variables: $R2 = .04$, $F = 6.04$, $P < .001$; $\beta(gender) = .14$, $t(gender) = 1.95$, and $P = .51$; $\beta(grade) = .06$, $t(grade) = 1.83$, and $P = .07$; $\beta(ESP) = -.15$, $t(ESP) = -3.21$, and $P = .01$. When the self-direction value was set as the independent variable and ESC, gender, and grade were set as the dependent variables, the results showed that $R2 = .03$, $F = 5.53$, $P = .01$; $\beta(gender) = .17$, $t(gender) = 2.34$, and $P = .02$; $\beta(grade) = .05$, $t(grade) = 1.32$, and $P = .19$; $\beta(ESC) = .14$, $t(ESP) = 2.97$, and $P = .03$.

We did test the results for homogeneity and normality of all the multi-level linear regressions. For example, in the multi-level linear regression, collective responsibility value was set as the independent variable and ESP, gender and grade were set as the dependent variables. The results showed that Durbin-Watson = 1.91, and the residual histogram, standard P-P plot of regression-standardized residuals, and the scatterplot of standardized predicted values-standardized residuals were made to test homogeneity and normality. These results proved that the residual independence, normality, and variance homogeneity of the regression equations satisfied the conditions.

On the PVQ, ESP positively predicted tradition and negatively predicted power, stimulation, hedonism, and self-direction; meanwhile, ESC positively predicted universalism, conformity, and self-direction, and negatively predicted power. As for the CVQ, ESP positively predicted collective responsibility and family wellbeing, while ESC positively predicted collective responsibility, rule-abiding, and self-improvement, and negatively predicted fashion.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Emo Subculture on PVQ – β (SE)

	S-D	Un	Tr	Co	Po	St	He	Se	Be	Ac
ESP	-.15** (.05)	.01 (.05)	10* (.05)	.03 (.05)	-.21** (.05)	-.17** (.06)	-.11** (.06)	.04 (.05)	.07 (.05)	-.04 (.06)
ESC	.14** (.06)	.14** (.05)	.07 (.05)	.12** (.06)	-.13** (.06)	-.04 (.07)	.03 (.06)	.07 (.05)	.04 (.06)	.06 (.06)

Note: * p < .05 ** p < .01, the effects of gender and age were controlled in regression analysis, same as below. S-D=Self-direction, Un=Universalism, Tr=Tradition, Co=Conformity, Po=Power, St=Stimulation, He=Hedonism, Se=Security, Be=Benevolence, Ac=Achievement.

Table 4: Regression Analysis of Emo Subculture on CVQ – β (SE)

	Col	Fam	R-A	S-I	Fas	Soc	Fri	Per
ESP	.13** (.05)	16** (.07)	-.02 (.05)	.01 (.05)	-.09 (.07)	.03 (.06)	.08 (.06)	-.09 (.06)

ESC	10* (.06)	.09 (.08)	.09* (.06)	.13** (.06)	-.14** (.08)	.07 (.07)	.03 (.07)	-.07 (.07)

Notes: Col=Collective responsibility, Fam=Family wellbeing, R-A=Rule-abiding, S-I=Self-improvement, Fas=Fashion, Soc=Social equality, Fri=Friendship, Per=Personal happiness.

4. Discussion

The current study explored the relationship between emo subcultural participation (perception and communication) and the values of Chinese college students. Results showed that the more that participants perceived emo subculture, the more they identified with the tradition value in Schwartz's PVQ, and the more they identified with the values of collective responsibility and family wellbeing in the CVQ. Meanwhile, the more participants perceived emo subculture, the less they identified with the values of self-direction, power, stimulation, and hedonism in the PVQ; The more participants identified with communicating emo subculture, the more they identified with the values of self-direction, universalism, conformity from the PVQ, and the more participants identified with the collective responsibility, rule-abiding, and self-improvement values in the CVQ, Meanwhile, the more participants communicated emo subculture, the less they identified with the power value in the PVQ, the less they identified with the fashion value in the CVQ. Through this exploratory study, we hope to identify characteristics and trends in the value identity of contemporary Chinese youth.

4.1. Perception and Communication of Emo Subculture

According to cultural participation theory, cultural participation can be a process, an intentional act[30], a capacity, or a possibility. In emotional subcultural participation, emo subcultural perception and emo subcultural communication constitute important dimensions. Emotional subcultural perception reflects one's general participation, exposure, and low level of acceptance of various elements of the subculture. Some symbols, words, or behaviors may stimulate anxiety or depression in the individual, which reminds them of their need to cope and adapt by evoking certain values[31], at which point traditional values such as those of family or collective responsibility can become appropriate options. In reality, intense and continuous competition stimulated by today's economic environment places stress and challenges on the development of young people. To cope with these pressures, these individuals have turned to subcultures as a way to responding to the difficulties and competition they face in mainstream society. This is done by discovering, practicing, experiencing, interacting with, and spreading subculture via text, pictures, videos, and other ideographic media to construct a symbolic and feasible identity which helps them dispel their anxieties and uncertainties brought about by modern society.

Emo subcultural communication involves a specific ways of producing, transmitting, and interacting with subcultural products. It can be that, for those engaged in subcultures, other subcultural elements such as ideas, values, and meanings provide more diverse and differentiated experiences and mental stimulation to the participating individuals; therefore, these participants' value identification is more complex, in that they show a tendency to identify with a variety of values, including traditional, cosmopolitan, and self-oriented values, influenced by a myriad of social change processes. Indeed, with the rapid development of new media and Internet information technology, the Internet and social networks have become increasingly important as mediums for interaction within subcultures, and youth are more willing to share information, make friends, and share their interests with the help of media tools as a means to alleviate their emotional conflict and stress during their own personal growth and development[32]. The Internet provides young people with accessible ways to adopt and develop their cultural identity and maintain social relationships with their peers. We could speculate that college students' happiness from their subcultural participation comes from the psychological recognition and sense of achievement brought about by the instant interactions, feedback, and praise received from other subculture members.

4.2. Relationships between Emo Subcultural Participation and Students' Values

4.2.1. Recognition and Resistance of Values: Trying to Return to Traditional Values as a Form of Resisting Modern Values

The relationships between the two dimensions of emo subcultural participation and the PVQ and

CVQ values demonstrated a tendency towards "resisting modern values and seeking protection from traditional values", such as increased emo subcultural participation predicting an increased identification more with the values of tradition and family wellbeing, and less with power. Subcultures usually express specific value orientations, identifying with certain value tendencies while at the same time signaling disagreement with other value systems. First, the existence of subculture as a social practice which is alien to the dominant culture of general society implies and articulates participants' resistance to the dominant cultural values[33]. Along with the rapid developments of the social economy, advocacy and pursuit of competition, efficiency, and personal development have all become important values for achieving personal goals and social progress. For emo subcultural identity groups, subcultures not only naturally embody concepts and meanings that differ from the ideologies advocated by the dominant class of society, but more importantly, they act as resistance to power, with modern values appearing through trends, which become embedded in the representational system of emo subculture through transgressive intentions and motives.

Secondly, another reason that cannot be ignored is that young people's awareness of the emo subculture is largely derived from the tone and atmosphere of one's social mindset during a certain period, that is, common social attitude, emotional experience and intention that people hold towards themselves and the real society, and this social mindset arouses the emotional resonance of these young people[34]. As the pressure of social competition increases during China's rapid social economic development of recent years, young people are struggling to find decent jobs, economic success, and achieve respectable social status due to the limited resources they have available for settling down, thus generating a sense of "status frustration" [35].

Perhaps the embracing of emo subcultures can be a way for young people to relieve their bored or vapid emotions and cope with external setbacks[36]. More specifically, young people involved in emo subcultures need to alleviate or eliminate the psychological conflicts triggered by modern competition, frustration, and stress by reconceptualizing and identifying with family and collective values. This could be related to the long-term influences of traditional Chinese values young people have been taught. The last four decades in China have been marked by reforms and the opening up of the nation, with Chinese cultural values becoming more diversified. Traditional Confucian values (e.g., propriety, righteousness, integrity, shame) have been confronted by modern values (e.g., competition, fairness, efficiency), postmodern values (e.g., individuality, taste), and socialist core values (e.g., freedom, equality, justice, law, patriotism, respect, honesty, and friendliness), and the existence of all of these simultaneously point to the shifting diversity of Chinese people's values. However, Chinese people nonetheless hold onto traditions, such as their deep, structured faith, and these traditional values continue to play a strong role in young peoples' value orientation. From kindergarten to high school, Chinese schools provide systematic programs, activities, and volunteer opportunities intended to teach traditional Chinese culture and values. Traditional Chinese culture focuses on tranquility, harmony, and order throughout society [37], these corresponding value beliefs are generally transmitted to the newer generations through culture, and young Chinese people increasingly seek to re-establish their identification with such traditional values by confirming their existence alongside their individualism. Many Chinese youth seek a sense of psychological stability and security via traditional Chinese values, and this belief in protective and stable values can help them overcome their feelings of anxiety and powerlessness in response to the fierce social competition of the present day.

4.2.2. Conflict and Integration of Values: The Contradiction between Collective and Individual Values as Reflected in Subcultural Participation

The relationships between emo subcultural participation and the values in today's young people revealed in our study showed a tendency towards "conflict and integration: group-self". In the contextual structural framework of multiculturalism, youth subcultures, as microscopic parts of the cultural system, face a variety of diverse value conflicts[38]. Along with the effects of globalization, the characteristics of multiculturalism are becoming more and more prominent, with values in China currently facing intense conflict and confrontation[39]. In other words, the traditional Chinese values represented by Confucianism, modern Western values, and traditional socialist values from before cultural reforms and the opening up of China, and the creation of new values through this same reform and opening up, these four influences coexist, interrogate, and confront one another[40].

Furthermore, the conflict of values caused by social contradictions and friction has become increasingly apparent. One survey on personal values showed that subjects' postmodern values orientation had increased significantly (e.g., individualism, realistic orientation[41], however, competitive values which represented the modern value orientation showed dynamic changes, in subjects' responses, both positively and negatively (e.g., the importance of personal struggle declined

consistently up until 2015). Such signals may indicate that there are contradictions and inconsistencies in the choices and identifications between the different value orientations of Chinese youth. Similarly, there is clear evidence of conflict between the values of the various value orientations in those participating in youth emo subculture, such as some youth focusing on emotive symbolic social interaction, and others championing nihilism[42], or embrace particularly emotional styles of music [43].

The conflicting nature of collectivistic and individualistic values is the most evidenced in studies so far[44], particularly through the various tangible manifestations and emphases of emo subcultural value orientations. Subcultures highlight the importance of youth identification with collectivity, meaning, and values, with special emphasis placed on collective difference, boundaries, and distinctiveness from wider society, but also among the subcultural participants themselves. Nevertheless, there are studies that illustrate how young people pursue and endorse individuality and individual values within subcultures through differentiated new tribes[45]. Therefore, we conclude that Chinese youth may address these contradictory values of individualism and collectivism differently through a wide variety of emo subcultural perception and communication practices. Specifically, these youth may value their expression of collective demands and problem solving, or they may focus more on the sharing of individual experiences and the elaboration and development of individual interests and tastes through emo subcultural activities.

Some scholars have suggested that while today's numerous value systems may bring about conflict, the coexistence of multiple values is nonetheless a sign of common societal consensus[46]. Emo subculture also reflects youths' current strategies for adjustment and integration of this wide variety of values. In fact, it is possible that the ongoing social changes occurring in many national and regional interactions in political, economic, and cultural systems have led to further integration of diverse values and lifestyles. The pluralist constructivist perspective suggests that while new values, such as individuality and autonomy, have a significant impact on individual attitudes and behaviors, they may not necessarily replace traditional values, but instead may become integrated into the cultural systems of society[47]. Urbanization in China has led to an improvement in self-oriented values, but this does not mean that there has been a decline in group-oriented values, which continue to be held by most young people[48]. Chinese youth possess a unique value system that integrates both traditional and modern values, as youth attempt to integrate subcultural values with those of the dominant culture[49]. Young people attach great significance to the concept of freedom of individual emotional expression through the use of emo symbols or activities, even if they do not like nor want to be labeled by outsiders as someone with emotional disorders. It is through this resistance to group labels, then, that these youth adjust their value identity and achieve a novel balance of the various values within their individual value systems.

5. Conclusion

The findings of the current study showed that the higher the score of emo subcultural perception, the more likely it was that the Chinese college students identified with the values of tradition, collective responsibility, and family wellbeing, and the less likely they were to agree with the values of self-direction, power, stimulation, and hedonism. The higher the score of emo subculture communication, the more likely it was that the students agreed with the values of self-direction, universalism, conformity, collective responsibility, rule-abiding, and self-improvement, and the less likely they were to agree with the values of power and fashion. Participation in emo subculture appeared to show both identification with and resistance to values, to the conflict as well as the integration of values.

6. Limitations and Implications

This study examined the current status of emo subcultural identification among Chinese youth and explored the relationship between emo subculture and values, which further expands the scope of current research on youth subculture and enriches the lack of experimental data in current research on subcultural practices. However, there were several limitations in the present study. First, the current sample of the survey was recruited from only in Shanghai, there may be richer findings and conclusions if the study can be extended to other developed cities in China, such as Beijing and Shenzhen, as well as less developed cities in China, such as the southwest and northwest regions. It is possible that they have more urban resources and opportunities to participate in subcultural groups, broaden their life perspectives and experiences, and enhance their cultural experiences than their non-Shanghai peers. In other words, the level of economic or material development of one's environment

has an impact on their participation in emo subculture. Second, this study was specifically concerned with the relationship between emo subculture and value identity, however, the exploration of the relationship between values and emo subculture identity could be addressed further, and is necessary to attain a comprehensive and systematic observation this relationship; future research should conduct further exploration of this.

These findings offer important insights into current youth value educational efforts. Educators are encouraged to better understand emo subculture in order to utilize it to conduct effective dialogue with youth, particularly its psychological and value characteristics; with this understanding, systematic programs, focus groups, and mental health counseling techniques should be designed to target and address problems and difficulties faced by young people today in constructing their own personal value systems; furthermore, specific value education methods and techniques should be incorporated, such as values clarification, values analysis, circle time, and social justice [50]to help youth develop their own unique, healthy, practical personality and value system.

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