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Title	Authoritarian Tendencies of Chinese People in Different Regions : A Preliminary Comparative Analysis Based on the World Values Survey
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Citation	北海道大学文学研究院紀要, 174, 1 (左) -25 (左)
Issue Date	2024-12-16
DOI	https://doi.org/10.14943/bfhhs.174.l1
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/93785
Type	departmental bulletin paper
File Information	03_174_Ng_Shimizu.pdf



Authoritarian Tendencies of Chinese People in Different Regions: A Preliminary Comparative Analysis Based on the World Values Survey

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Abstract

Under the influence of traditional culture, Chinese people are often perceived to lean towards authoritarianism, characterized by strong obedience to government and resistance to challenging existing power structures. However, it remains unclear whether Chinese individuals across diverse socio-cultural contexts universally exhibit strong authoritarian tendencies. Moreover, are these tendencies varied among Chinese populations in different regions, influenced by social and individual factors? Furthermore, how do authoritarian tendencies among Chinese compare to those among non-Chinese populations? This study aims to address these questions using data from the 7th World Values Survey (2017-2022). It will compare authoritarian tendencies among ethnic Chinese in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia, examining the roles of social and individual factors. Additionally, the study will analyze data from non-Chinese groups in these regions, as well as from Japan and South Korea, to investigate differences in authoritarian tendencies between Chinese and non-Chinese populations. Through these analyses, this study seeks to illuminate both the commonalities and distinctions in authoritarian tendencies among Chinese individuals residing in different regions, providing insights into the broader socio-cultural influences shaping these tendencies.

10.14943/bfhhs.174.11

1. Background

This article represents a preliminary study exploring the relationship between Chinese people and authoritarian tendencies. In both traditional culture and media portrayals, Chinese society often appears closely associated with authoritarianism. Examples such as children's obedience to elders, especially fathers, employees' loyalty to bosses, ordinary citizens' deference to local officials, and the general respect or fear towards government authorities are frequently depicted in Chinese-language films and television. These depictions suggest a pervasive authoritarian ideology within Chinese society.

Furthermore, influenced by traditional Chinese culture, particularly Confucianism, which emphasizes hierarchical relationships, the authority of those in higher positions is often justified. Obedience to authority is often considered crucial for maintaining interpersonal and social stability, and it is frequently upheld as a virtue or moral standard.

Admittedly, equating "Chinese people" with "authoritarianism" seems to fall into the trap of cultural essentialism. However, when compared with other cultures or ethnic groups, it is hard to avoid the feeling that Chinese people seem to inherently value authority more. For example, in families, important decisions are usually made by the older generation; in the workplace, there is the notion of "superior ranks can suppress lower ranks"; and in politics, there is a consciousness of supporting strong governments or strong leaders, while also preferring stability and opposing social unrest. Although these impressions of Chinese authoritarianism may be superficial and lack scientific evidence, they do not seem entirely incorrect. After all, the idea that "Chinese people admire authoritarianism" is not unfamiliar to those of us, including the first author, who has grown up in Chinese society, as it is

based on various real-life experiences.

The starting point of this study is straightforward: to explore the familiar yet seemingly stereotypical relationship between Chinese people and authoritarianism. The study addresses the following specific questions: Do Chinese people across diverse socio-cultural contexts generally exhibit strong authoritarian tendencies? Do these tendencies vary significantly among different regions, influenced by social and individual factors? Is there a discernible contrast in authoritarian tendencies between Chinese and non-Chinese populations?

This research aims to shed light on these questions through quantitative analysis of data from the “World Values Survey,” encompassing mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, and South Korea. The focus of analysis centers on one aspect of authoritarian tendencies: the extent to which citizens accept government control. Individuals with stronger authoritarian leanings typically show deference to symbols of authority—whether out of genuine conviction or societal pressure—such as governmental institutions, superiors, and elders. Therefore, the level of acceptance of government control serves as a key indicator of authoritarian tendencies.

The structure of this paper includes: (1) a review of existing literature and research on Chinese people and authoritarianism; (2) formulation of hypotheses derived from this review for testing; (3) an introduction to the “World Values Survey” data and the analytical methods employed; (4) presentation and interpretation of the analysis findings; (5) critical examination of the results; and (6) conclusions and avenues for future research. Given the preliminary stage of this study, limitations and gaps in the literature review and initial analysis are duly acknowledged and emphasized.

2. Chinese People and Authoritarianism

In *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), Adorno and colleagues proposed nine characteristics of the authoritarian personality: adherence to conventions, submission to authority, authoritarian aggression, denial of subjectivity, superstition, stereotypical thinking, desire for power, destructiveness and cynicism, projection of emotions onto others, and exaggerated concern with sexuality. Additionally, Duckitt et al. (2010) developed the Authoritarianism Scale based on right-wing authoritarianism, which measures three dimensions: Authoritarian Aggression, Conservatism, and Traditionalism. Furthermore, Altemeyer (1981; 1996) categorized the authoritarian personality into three parts: submission to authority, criticism of non-conformists, and adherence to traditional values, developing the Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale. This study focuses specifically on the aspect of “submission to authority,” highlighted in previous research, especially examining scenarios where obedience to authority may involve sacrificing personal freedom.

Research on Chinese society often highlights that under the influence of Confucianism, which emphasizes hierarchy and obedience, authoritarian tendencies are prevalent (Liang, 1949; Hwang, 2012). Many scholars have applied frameworks proposed by Western scholars to interpret these tendencies as inherent Chinese characteristics (Wright, 1962; Li and Yang, 1972; King, 1979). However, as Chien (2016) have argued, these studies tend to use Western theoretical models rooted in individualism, which may not fully capture the complexities of Chinese culture, emphasizing the need to consider cultural differences.

Moreover, Dien (1999), in comparing authoritarianism and collectivism between China and Japan, highlighted differences in upbringing, education, and socio-cultural systems, suggesting stronger authoritarian tendencies

among Chinese compared to Japanese. This underscores that despite both countries' deep Confucian influence, local social and cultural contexts shape distinct authoritarian inclinations. Therefore, understanding authoritarian tendencies necessitates careful consideration of local social and cultural factors alongside broader theoretical frameworks.

Furthermore, scholars have frequently noted that attributes such as age, gender, education, and income—representing socio-economic status—significantly influence people's behaviors and attitudes. It is commonly perceived that individuals become more conservative and place greater value on authority as they age. Higher levels of education are often associated with greater support for liberal democracy and opposition to authoritarianism. Those with higher social status often expect greater obedience from others, and in patriarchal societies, men typically hold stronger authoritarian views. However, the accuracy of these perceptions requires verification through scientific methods.

3. Hypotheses

Based on general impressions and related previous studies on Chinese people and authoritarianism, this article proposes the following hypotheses for analysis and verification:

H1: Compared to non-Chinese people, Chinese people have a stronger tendency towards authoritarianism. (Based on previous studies and general impressions)

H2: Males, older individuals, and those with lower educational levels have a stronger tendency towards authoritarianism. (Influence of patriarchal thinking, generational effects, educational effects)

H3: Individuals with stronger authoritarian tendencies are less likely to support social movements and radical methods for promoting social

reform. (Based on previous studies and general impressions)

4. Data and Variables

4.1 Data

The World Values Survey (WVS) is a globally recognized research initiative that evolved from the European Values Study in 1981. Conducted across multiple waves spanning from 1981 to 2022, the survey has engaged over 120 countries or regions, representing nearly 95% of the world's population. It explores a wide array of topics encompassing society, politics, international relations, economy, public health, demographics, religion, values, family, education, and work. This study specifically utilizes data from the seventh wave of the survey, conducted between 2017 and 2022. This wave involved participation from 64 countries or regions and gathered responses from over 80,000 respondents globally. The data from the World Values Survey, including that from the seventh wave used in this study, is publicly accessible and can be downloaded from their official website (<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>)

Furthermore, each country or region conducts the survey in its official language to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness across diverse contexts. In this article, survey questions are presented in English, aligning with the format on the World Values Survey official website for clarity and ease of understanding by readers. The countries or regions analyzed in this study encompass mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, and South Korea. Table 1 summarizes the sample sizes and percentages utilized in this analysis.

Table 1: Number and Percentage of Respondents by Region and Ethnicity Used in the Analysis

Base Society	Ethnic Group(s)	N	Percent
China	Chinese	3036	29.9
Taiwan	Hakka / Minnanese / Mainlander / China	1181	11.6
Hong Kong	Chinese	2037	20
Malaysia	Chinese	327	3.2
	Malay	884	8.7
	Indian	102	1
Singapore	Chinese	1549	12.8
	Malay	236	1.9
	South Asian	190	1.6
Japan	ALL	1353	13.3
Korea	ALL	1245	12.2
Total		10165	100

4.2 Variables

Authoritarianism Orientation

As mentioned earlier, this study focuses on an important aspect of authoritarianism orientation: whether citizens are willing to comply with government control, even at the potential cost of sacrificing personal freedoms. This variable is constructed based on the following questions:

Government has the right to...?

Q196: Keep people under video surveillance in public areas

Q197: Monitor all e-mails and any other information exchanged on the Internet

Q198: Collect information about anyone living in [COUNTRY] without their knowledge

Respondents are asked to choose the most appropriate option for each question, including:

- I. Definitely should have the right
- II. Probably should have the right
- III. Probably should not have the right
- IV. Definitely should not have the right

Social Movement Participation

In the survey, respondents are queried about their engagement in four categories of social movements (Q209-Q211): signing petitions, participating in boycotts, joining legal and peaceful demonstrations, and participating in non-union-supported strikes. They select from three options: “Have participated” (=2), “Would consider participating” (=1), or “Would never participate” (=0) for each category. This study computes the average of respondents’ responses across these four social movements to create a variable termed “social movement participation.”

Acceptance of Radical Methods for Promoting Social Reform

In Q42, respondents choose one of the following three options that best reflects their views on social reform:

Q42 Basic kinds of attitudes concerning society

- I. The entire way our society is organized must be radically changed by revolutionary action
- II. Our society must be gradually improved by reforms
- III. Our present society must be valiantly defended against all subversive forces

Option 1 supports promoting social reform through radical means, option 2 supports moderate reforms, and option 3 opposes any subversive forces. In the analysis, these options are treated as dummy variables.

Other Variables

To explore the relationship between authoritarianism orientation and socio-economic attributes, the analysis also includes the following variables: gender (male=0, female=1), age, marital status (married=1, other=0), education (using the International Standard Classification of Education, ISCED), income (on a scale of 1-10; 1 being lowest, 10 being highest), employment in government or public institutions (yes=1, no=0), subjective social status (on a scale of 1-5; 1 being lowest, 5 being highest), use of standard Chinese (Mandarin or similar) at home (yes=1, no=0), and race (virtual variables referencing ethnic groups such as Malay in Malaysia, Indian in Malaysia, South Asian in Singapore, Malay in Singapore, with ethnic Chinese as the reference group for each country).

Analysis Method

This study employs a structured approach. Firstly, descriptive statistics are provided for the observed variables. Secondly, following the method by Ciecuch et al. (2018), the study examines whether the three items measuring 'authoritarianism orientation' (Q196 to Q198) exhibit consistent factor structures across all countries or regions. Alignment optimization methods, as outlined by Ciecuch et al. (2018) and Asparouhov and Muthén (2014), are then utilized to enhance the reliability of factor mean comparisons across diverse contexts. Thirdly, multiple regression analysis is conducted to investigate the relationship between authoritarianism orientation and socio-economic variables within each country or region. This methodological framework ensures a thorough exploration of authoritarianism orientation while considering potential variations across different socio-cultural settings.

5. Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Due to space constraints, this section will focus on presenting key results for the most relevant variables in the analysis: “Authoritarianism Orientation,” “Social Movement Participation,” and “Acceptance of Radical Social Reform.”

Table 2 presents the basic findings for Authoritarianism Orientation. For the question “Should the government have the right to use video surveillance systems in public places?” (Q196), mainland China exhibited the highest percentage at 82%, followed closely by Taiwan at 77%. Malaysians (Malay and Chinese), South Asians and Chinese in Singapore, and Japan recorded percentages ranging between 60% and 70%. Hong Kong, Malays in Singapore, and Korea reported percentages below 60%. In contrast, responses to the question “Should the government have the right to monitor all email and other Internet communication?” (Q197) generally decreased across regions, with mainland China at 62% and other regions below 40%. Similarly, responses to the question “Should the government have the right to collect information about anyone living in [COUNTRY] without their knowledge?” (Q198) showed a similar trend to Q197, with mainland China at 53% and Malays in Malaysia at 47%, relatively high compared to other regions which were below 35%. Therefore, in terms of obedience to authority, Chinese people do not necessarily exceed non-Chinese populations.

Table 3 presents the basic results of social movement participation. Three key points are highlighted. Firstly, Singaporeans, including Chinese, Malay, or Indian ethnicities, demonstrate relatively lower levels of social movement participation compared to other regions. Secondly, Hong Kong stands out with 20% of respondents reporting participation in “legal and peaceful demonstrations,” which contrasts with other areas. Thirdly,

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Table 2: Authoritarianism Orientation

Government has the right to...?	China		Taiwan		Hong Kong		Malaysia			Singapore			Japan	Korea	
							Chinese	Malay	Indian	Chinese	Malay	South Asian			
Q196 Keep people under video surveillance in public areas															
Definitely / Probably SHOULD have the right	82%	77%	56%				66%	71%	64%	68%	59%	70%	63%	51%	
Definitely / Probably SHOULD NOT have the right	18%	23%	44%				34%	29%	36%	32%	41%	30%	37%	49%	
Q197 Monitor all e-mails and any other information exchanged on the Internet															
Definitely / Probably SHOULD have the right	62%	37%	23%				24%	40%	31%	26%	29%	32%	25%	23%	
Definitely / Probably SHOULD NOT have the right	38%	63%	77%				76%	60%	69%	74%	71%	68%	75%	78%	
Q198 Collect information about anyone living in [COUNTRY] without their knowledge															
Definitely / Probably SHOULD have the right	53%	27%	17%				31%	47%	34%	22%	21%	25%	13%	20%	
Definitely / Probably SHOULD NOT have the right	47%	73%	83%				69%	53%	66%	78%	79%	75%	87%	80%	

Table 3: Social Movement Participation

Q209-Q211 Political actions	China		Taiwan	Hong Kong	Malaysia		Singapore			Japan	Korea
					Chinese	Malay	Indian	Chinese	Malay	South Asian	
Q209 Signing a petition											
Have done	7%	20%	21%		33%	27%	42%	16%	10%	15%	18%
Might do	45%	40%	44%		35%	30%	28%	30%	23%	21%	47%
Would never do	48%	40%	35%		32%	43%	29%	54%	67%	64%	35%
Total	3013	1181	2030		327	884	102	1539	234	185	1211
Q210 Joining in boycotts											
Have done	3%	10%	9%		10%	13%	9%	2%	2%	2%	5%
Might do	36%	40%	40%		42%	30%	38%	20%	9%	14%	47%
Would never do	61%	51%	51%		48%	57%	53%	78%	89%	84%	48%
Total	3007	1181	2030		327	884	102	1537	234	187	1056
Q211 Attending lawful/peaceful demonstrations											
Have done	1%	7%	20%		14%	11%	16%	2%	2%	3%	10%
Might do	32%	42%	41%		46%	35%	42%	24%	19%	28%	49%
Would never do	67%	52%	39%		39%	54%	42%	75%	79%	70%	41%
Total	3013	1181	2032		327	884	102	1530	233	185	1077
Q212 Joining unofficial strikes											
Have done	2%	1%	3%		4%	4%	5%	0%	0%	1%	2%
Might do	25%	34%	42%		33%	24%	35%	12%	8%	9%	45%
Would never do	73%	64%	55%		63%	72%	60%	88%	92%	90%	53%
Total	3008	1181	2028		327	884	102	1531	232	187	1037

Malaysians generally exhibit higher levels of social movement participation. These findings likely reflect local socio-political contexts and historical backgrounds. However, further detailed investigation is beyond the scope of this presentation due to space limitations.

Regarding “Acceptance of Radically Promoting Social Reform” (Table 4), the majority of respondents across all regions expressed a belief that social reform should proceed gradually. The highest percentages were observed in Mainland China and Taiwan, both reaching 83%. Additionally, compared to other regions, Malaysians and Singaporeans showed relatively higher percentages supporting radical methods for social reform.

5.2 Confirming Measurement Comparability

This analysis employed the method proposed by Ciecuch et al. (2018) to confirm that the three items measuring “Authoritarianism Orientation” (Q196 to Q198) exhibit the same factor structure across all countries or regions, establishing “configural invariance” necessary for international comparative research. However, achieving “metric invariance” or “scalar invariance” is a more nuanced process, which involves verifying if the factor’s measurement remains consistent across different groups. Given the complexities and potential challenges in achieving perfect measurement invariance, this study utilized an alternative approach known as “Alignment Optimization.” Table 5 provides a summary of alignment optimization results. In this table, “x” indicates parameters where measurement invariance was not upheld across each country or region. Alignment optimization aims to minimize the occurrence of “x” markers, ensuring reliable factor scores across diverse contexts. Asparouhov and Muthén (2014) suggest that in international comparative analysis, achieving measurement invariance where less than 25% of parameters lack invariance generally allows for reliable comparisons. In this study, 33% of parameters showed lack of measurement

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Table 5: Results of Alignment Optimization on Authoritarian Orientation

Non-invariant Parameters						
Country / Society	Loadings			Intercepts/Thresholds		
	Q196	Q197	Q198	Q196	Q197	Q198
Andorra				x		
Argentina		x				x
Armenia	x	x				
Australia	x			x	x	
Bangladesh				x		x
Bolivia						
Brazil						
Canada		x	x		x	x
Chile				x		
China	x					
Colombia						
Cyprus	x	x		x		x
Germany			x	x		x
Ecuador						
Ethiopia	x	x	x		x	
Greece		x		x		x
Guatemala			x			x
Hong Kong SAR				x	x	x
Indonesia				x		x
Iran			x	x		x
Iraq					x	x
Jordan						x
Japan					x	x
Kazakhstan						x
Kenya		x				x
Kyrgyzstan				x		x
South Korea	x			x	x	
Lebanon	x	x		x		x
Libya						x
Macau SAR					x	x
Mexico			x		x	x
Myanmar			x			x
Mongolia				x	x	
Morocco		x	x			x

Table 5: Results of Alignment Optimization on Authoritarian Orientation

Non-invariant Parameters						
Country / Society	Loadings			Intercepts/Thresholds		
	Q196	Q197	Q198	Q196	Q197	Q198
Malaysia			x			x
Nigeria						
Nicaragua	x			x		x
New Zealand				x		x
Pakistan			x			
Peru				x		x
Philippines	x			x		
Puerto Rico						
Romania					x	
Russia				x		
Singapore						x
Serbia	x	x				x
Thailand	x					
Tajikistan		x	x			
Tunisia				x		x
Turkey	x	x	x			x
Taiwan ROC				x		x
Ukraine		x				x
United States	x				x	x
Venezuela	x					
Vietnam		x				x
Zimbabwe	x	x			x	x
Num of Invariant Parameters	15	15	12	21	13	35
% of Invariant Parameters	25.0%			41.1%		

invariance, which while not ideal, is considered acceptable for ensuring robust measurement across countries or regions.

Table 6 shows the factor means of authoritarian orientation obtained through alignment optimization for each country or region. There is no significant difference in factor means among countries/societies enclosed within the same box. On the other hand, significant differences in factor

means are observed at the 5% significance level among countries/societies that are not enclosed within the same box. For example, the factor mean of Iraq, which ranks 4th, shows no significant difference compared to the five countries of Pakistan, Tajikistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

In summary, Table 6 ranks countries or regions based on their factor scores of authoritarian orientation from high to low. A higher score indicates a stronger authoritarian orientation in that particular country or region. Two key points emerge:

1) Countries or regions with predominantly Chinese populations do not necessarily exhibit higher scores compared to non-Chinese regions. This suggests that claims asserting “Chinese are more authoritarian” lack scientific support, at least concerning “willingness to obey government control.”

2) The ranking of authoritarian orientation among the countries or regions studied is as follows: Mainland China (8th), Taiwan (18th, tied with Japan), Malaysia (21st), Singapore (30th), Hong Kong (35th), and South Korea (39th). Apart from Mainland China’s higher ranking, the other regions range between 18th and 39th. The significant gap in rankings between Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong reflects a notable relationship between authoritarianism and local socio-political culture.

Additionally, Table 6 shows scores for different ethnic groups in Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore. Since they represent distinct “groups” within their respective countries or regions rather than the entire sampled population, they are not strictly comparable to other countries or regions in the sample. However, their scores are still presented in the table for reference.

5.3 Multiple regression analysis

Table 7 presents the results of multiple regression analysis examining the relationship between authoritarian orientation and other variables across

Table 6: Factor Mean of Authoritarian Perspective Computed by Alignment Optimization

RANK	Country Code	Country Name	Factor Mean	RANK	Country Code	Country Name	Factor Mean
1	104	Myanmar	1.328				
2	586	Pakistan	.802				
3	762	Tajikistan	.775	30	702	Singapore	-.752
4	368	Iraq	-.553	-	-	Malaysia (Indian)	-.759
5	50	Bangladesh	.499	31	392	Japan	-.770
6	360	Indonesia	.485	-	-	Singapore (Chinese)	-.781
7	608	Philippines	.387	32	276	Germany	-.827
8	156	China	.341	-	-	Malaysia (Chinese)	-.886
9	400	Jordan	.299	33	496	Mongolia	-.911
10	566	Nigeria	.020	34	643	Russia	-.911
11	231	Ethiopia	.004	35	344	Hong Kong SAR	-.959
12	364	Iran	-.063	-	-	Hong Kong (Chinese)	-.963
13	417	Kyrgyzstan	-.108	36	840	United States	-.981
14	788	Tunisia	-.155	37	51	Armenia	-1.028
15	422	Lebanon	-.269	38	76	Brazil	-1.128
-	-	Malaysia (Malay)	-.385	39	410	South Korea	-1.132
16	434	Libya	-.387	40	152	Chile	-1.204
17	764	Thailand	-.418	41	32	Argentina	-1.225
-	-	Taiwan (Hakka/Minnanese/Chinese)	-.484	42	484	Mexico	-1.228
18	158	Taiwan ROC	-.487	43	504	Morocco	-1.270
19	404	Kenya	-.491	44	716	Zimbabwe	-1.313
20	68	Bolivia	-.520	45	704	Vietnam	-1.384
21	458	Malaysia	-.539	46	124	Canada	-1.404
22	554	New Zealand	-.585	47	642	Romania	-1.419
23	36	Australia	-.588	48	196	Cyprus	-1.446
24	604	Peru	-.591	49	688	Serbia	-1.509
-	-	Singapore (South Asian)	-.595	50	804	Ukraine	-1.560
25	320	Guatemala	-.650	51	862	Venezuela	-1.584
26	398	Kazakhstan	-.685	52	630	Puerto Rico	-1.586
-	-	Singapore (Malay)	-.720	53	558	Nicaragua	-1.595
27	170	Colombia	-.738	54	792	Turkey	-1.621
28	446	Macao SAR	-.742	55	300	Greece	-1.660
29	218	Ecuador	-.751	56	20	Andorra	-1.738

different countries or regions, focusing only on statistically significant correlations.

Mainland China: Older age, lower income, and not using Standard Chinese (Mandarin) at home are associated with higher authoritarian tendencies. Additionally, those who support radical social reforms show lower authoritarian tendencies compared to moderate reformists.

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Table 7: Multiple regression analysis

	China		Taiwan		Hong Kong		Malaysia		Singapore		Japan		Korea		
	β	Std. error	β	Std. error	β	Std. error	β	Std. error	β	Std. error	β	Std. error	β	Std. error	
Sex (female=1)	-0.14	.045	-0.72	.062 *	-0.22	.042 *	.018	.073	.027	.055	.049	.079	.037	.068	
Age	.088	.002	***	.107	.002	**	.140	.002	***	.112	.002	***	.019	.003	
Marital Status (married=1)	-0.27	.058	.017	.066	.026	.044	-0.01	.082	.046	.060	†	.086	.094	*	
Educational level [ISCED 2011]	.007	.015	-0.176	.022	***	-0.34	.014	-0.99	.023	***	-0.42	.019	-0.78	.028	*
Income	-0.40	.015	†	.045	.022	.098	.015	***	-0.55	.021	†	.057	.020	*	
Work for government or public institution	.012	.061	.011	.092	.002	.068	.058	.088	*	-0.25	.072	.044	.126	.017	
Subjective Social Class	-0.05	.035	.022	.042	-0.01	.030	.111	.043	***	-0.26	.038	-0.01	.050	-0.11	
Speak standard Chinese at home	-0.36	.052	†	-0.33	.070	.014	.164	-0.42	.154	.081	.065	**	-	-	
Ethic Group (ref. Chinese)															
Malaysia: Malay						.082	.151	†							
Malaysia: Indian						-0.19	.188								
Singapore: South Asian						.043	.094	†							
Singapore: Malay						.075	.100	**							
Social movement participation	-0.12	.053	-0.59	.068	†	-0.97	.041	***	.011	.068	-0.51	.076	*	-0.48	
Attitudes concerning society (ref. society must be gradually improved by reforms)															
..must be radically changed by revolutionary action	-0.70	.072	***	-0.14	.150	-0.09	.070	.135	.086	***	-0.25	.082	-0.19	.174	
..must be valiantly defended against all subversive forces	.003	.095	.030	.100	.110	.068	***	.034	.111	.009	.087	.088	.104	*	
Adj. Squared R	.014	.079	.1164	.000	.065	.066	.039	.022	.030	.039	.022	.039	.022	.030	
N	2941	.000	1164	.000	1995	.000	1312	.000	1851	.000	754	.000	1244	.000	

Taiwan: Males, older age, lower education, and lower social movement participation tend to have stronger authoritarian orientations.

Hong Kong: Older age, higher income, lower social movement participation, and opposition to subversive forces are associated with stronger authoritarian tendencies.

Malaysia: Younger age is uniquely associated with stronger authoritarianism, contrary to other regions where older age tends to correlate. Lower education, lower income, and being Malay (compared to Malaysian Chinese) are also associated with higher authoritarian tendencies. Furthermore, working in government or public institutions, higher subjective social status, and support for radical social reforms positively correlate with authoritarian tendencies.

Singapore: Older age, being married, higher income, using Standard Chinese at home, and lower social movement participation are associated with stronger authoritarianism. Additionally, compared to Singaporean Chinese, South Asians and Malays in Singapore exhibit stronger authoritarian tendencies, challenging the stereotype that “Chinese are more authoritarian” within this context.

Japan: Being married, lower education, higher income, and opposition to subversive forces are linked to stronger authoritarian tendencies.

South Korea: Older age, unmarried status, lower education, higher income, and lower social movement participation are associated with stronger authoritarian orientations.

6. Analysis

Based on the results presented, the three hypotheses proposed earlier are discussed as follows:

Hypothesis I: Relative to non-Chinese ethnic groups, Chinese individuals

exhibit a stronger authoritarian inclination.

The analysis results uniformly refute Hypothesis I. All findings indicate that Chinese individuals do not necessarily have a higher authoritarian inclination compared to non-Chinese groups. According to the average factor scores of authoritarian orientation (see Table 6), Myanmar ranks highest, followed by Pakistan, while Chinese countries or regions studied here fall within the middle range. Additionally, the results from multiple regression analysis (see Table 7) show that Chinese residents in Malaysia or Singapore tend to have lower authoritarian tendencies compared to other ethnic groups in those regions. Moreover, despite China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong all having predominantly Chinese populations, significant differences in authoritarian scores exist, with Mainland China showing stronger authoritarian tendencies compared to Taiwan and Hong Kong.

In summary, these results indicate that the general perception equating “Chinese equals authoritarianism” does not hold within the scope of this study, particularly when considering the aspect of “compliance with government control.”

Hypothesis II: Men of older age and lower educational attainment exhibit a stronger authoritarian tendency (influenced by patriarchal thinking, generational effects, and educational impact).

The analysis results partially support this hypothesis. Regarding the relationship between age and authoritarianism, positive correlations were observed in Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea, suggesting that authoritarian tendencies may increase with age, or older generations may exhibit more authoritarian inclinations compared to younger generations. Additionally, the negative correlation between education level and authoritarianism was confirmed in Taiwan, Malaysia, Japan, and South Korea, indicating that higher education may expose individuals to different ideologies, potentially reducing reverence for authority.

Regarding gender, only Taiwanese men showed a higher authoritarian tendency, while this association was not confirmed in other countries or regions. However, it prompts further exploration whether this association in Taiwan could be influenced by patriarchal thinking.

Furthermore, due to inconsistent results and even contradictory findings in some countries or regions, it raises an interesting question: there may be regional variations in the relationship between attributes such as gender, education level, age, and authoritarianism. For instance, in Malaysia, younger individuals displayed stronger authoritarian tendencies, which contrasts with expectations. These unexpected results suggest the need for further investigation in the future.

Hypothesis III: People with stronger authoritarian tendencies tend not to support social movements and radical social reforms (based on previous studies and common perceptions).

The analysis results partially support this hypothesis. A negative correlation between social movement participation and authoritarianism was confirmed in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea, indicating that in these regions, individuals with stronger authoritarian tendencies are less likely to support social movements.

This may reflect that authoritarians prioritize maintaining the social status quo and therefore oppose movements that may disrupt existing institutions. Additionally, the negative correlation between radicals and authoritarianism was observed in Mainland China, suggesting that radicals tend to challenge authoritarianism there. Conversely, a positive correlation between conservatives and authoritarianism was found in Hong Kong and Japan. However, the consistent negative correlation between radicals and authoritarianism was not observed universally; Malaysia's results showed a positive correlation between radicals and authoritarianism. This contradicts previous studies suggesting that radicals tend to challenge authoritarianism

while conservatives tend to support it. The question arises: why do radicals in Malaysia show authoritarian tendencies? Could this be related to Malaysia's history of social movements? These questions warrant further investigation.

7. Concluding remarks

This article uses data from the seventh wave of the World Values Survey to analyze the relationship between Chinese people and authoritarianism, presenting the following three points: 1) Chinese people do not necessarily have stronger authoritarian tendencies compared to non-Chinese. 2) In most regions, older age groups (Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea) and lower educational levels (Taiwan, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea) tend to exhibit stronger authoritarian tendencies. However, the positive correlation between males and authoritarianism appears only in Taiwan. This reflects that while there is a certain relationship between individual socioeconomic attributes and authoritarianism, regional differences cannot be ignored. 3) In most regions (Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea), there is a negative correlation between participation in social movements and authoritarianism. This suggests that those with stronger authoritarian tendencies are less supportive of social movements.

The results of this study show that the relationship between authoritarianism and individual socioeconomic attributes exists universally with regional differences. Some variables effectively explain authoritarian tendencies in most regions, thus having a certain universality. However, some variables only explain authoritarian tendencies in very few regions, or the same variable may show a positive relationship with authoritarianism in one place and a negative relationship in others, demonstrating regional differences. This result reminds us once again that while pursuing universal explanations, we cannot ignore cultural, political, economic, and other regional

differences.

Furthermore, as this study is in its early stages, there are several limitations and shortcomings. Firstly, this study focuses on one aspect of authoritarian orientation, namely the degree of acceptance of government control by citizens. Some readers may question whether this aspect fully reflects or measures a person's authoritarian orientation. Therefore, future research needs to construct a more comprehensive variable. Also, this study focuses on the relationship between commonly used socioeconomic attributes and authoritarianism. The influence of other attributes such as religious beliefs, family environment, etc., has not been clarified and awaits exploration in future research.

Acknowledgements:

This study was supported by JSPS KAKENHI, project number 22KK0011. We gratefully acknowledge this financial support.

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