

Trait openness and agreeableness are related to a left-leaning political orientation but are negatively related to the endorsement of totalitarian ideals

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Introduction

Although relationships between temperament and political orientation are well established [1-2], it is unclear whether they are moderated by opinions on how we should execute our political ambitions, with or without regard to individual liberty. We examined whether prior relationships between personality and political orientation are replicated using a short-form measure of the Big Five, and whether the extent of these relationships differ when including the endorsement of totalitarian ideals in the same model. We also examined whether self-reported dominance was related to the endorsement of totalitarian ideals, which may develop recent theorizing on the role of agentic personality traits in alliance politics and leadership emergence [3-5].

Methods

Participants in this online study ($N = 456$, $M_{age} = 33.01$ years, $SD = 11.25$ years) indicated their political orientation on a 1 (very left) to 7 (very right) scale [6] and completed (in a randomized order) the Ten Item Personality Inventory [TIPI, 7], Mehrabian's 20-item libertarianism-totalitarianism scale [8] and the dominance subscale of the International Personality Items Pool [9]. Simple correlational tests and two regression models were run (one with political orientation as the outcome variable and one with the endorsement of totalitarian ideals as the outcome variable).

Results

A left leaning political orientation was related to the endorsement of totalitarian ideals and high agreeableness. No other relationships between personality and political orientation were significant after alpha correction [see Table: $**p < .01$, $*p < .05$. *significant after correcting for multiple comparisons (28 comparisons, $\alpha = .0018$)].

In a regression model, endorsement of totalitarian ideals (Standardized Beta = $-.41$, $p < .001$), openness to experience (Standardized Beta = $-.13$, $p = .009$) and agreeableness (Standardized Beta = $-.16$, $p < .008$) explained a left-leaning political orientation (Full model explained 23.5% of the variance). In a separate model (i.e., including the same variables), a left leaning political orientation (Standardized Beta = $-.44$, $p = .001$), low openness to experience (Standardized Beta = $-.14$, $p = .009$) and low agreeableness (Standardized Beta = $-.13$, $p = .036$) explained the endorsement of totalitarian ideals (Full model explained 18.9% of the variance).

	Totalitarian	O	C	E	A	ES	Dominance
Political orientation	-.39***	-.12*	.10	-.04	-.18***	.05	.16**
Endorsement of totalitarian ideals		-.08	.01	.04	-.03	.02	-.03
Openness (O)			-.09	.24***	.01	.08	.07
Conscientiousness (C)				.01	-.03	.30***	-.08
Extraversion (E)					-.06	.15**	.24***
Agreeableness (A)						.07	-.57***
Emotional Stability (ES)							.01

Conclusions

By observing correlations between agreeableness, openness to experience and a left leaning political orientation, we replicate some of the prior work on relationships between temperament and proxies for voting intention. Mehrabian's scale is a suitable measure of the endorsement of totalitarian ideals, among left-leaning individuals, which may be important as researchers have tended to focus on authoritarian behaviour as a right-wing phenomenon. Our research provides initial support for the importance of considering both totalitarianism and political orientation when examining its relationship with personality. Although high scores on Mehrabian's scale were related to a left-leaning orientation, agreeableness and openness to experience had relationships with these two outcome variables that went in different directions. These findings may motivate further work on sociality, temperament and alliance politics.

References

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