

# Should Liberalism be a Part of Openness to Experience as its Facet?

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## Abstract

Both the HEXACO model and the Big Five model of personality suggest that the trait Openness to experience is a complex construct, whereby in some conceptualizations of the Big Five model, such as the IPIP-Big Five, the construct comprises the facet Liberalism. The aim of this research was to examine the relationship between Liberalism as a facet from IPIP Big Five Model Openness and other facets of Openness from two personality models – Big Five and HEXACO. Items related to Openness from the IPIP Big-Five factor markers (which consists of two subdomains – Pure Openness and Pure Intellect) and HEXACO-PI-R were administered to the sample of 540 participants. Results show that Liberalism has the lowest correlations with facets from Pure Openness and also showed the lowest correlation with all the facets from HEXACO Openness. Liberalism also shows low correlations with facets from its Pure Intellect subdomain: Adventurousness and Intellect. While other facets from IPIP-Big Five Openness show moderate to high correlations with HEXACO Openness domain, Liberalism correlates weakly. Considering the weak correlations between Liberalism and the other Openness facets it can be concluded that this facet does not fit well into Openness domain, i.e., that Liberalism is not a proper reflection of Openness trait.

**Keywords:** Liberalism; Openness to experience; HEXACO-Openness; IPIP-Openness

## Introduction

Openness to experience is a basic personality trait which in the broadest sense can be described as a preference for different and new things in various life domains (McCrae, 1993-1994; McCrae and Costa, 1985; 1994 as cited in McCrae, 1994). It is one of the factors in both the Big Five and Five-Factor models of personality (Digman, 1990; McCrae, 1994), and more recently in the HEXACO personality model (Ashton, 2013; Ashton & Lee, 2007; Ashton & Lee, 2008).

Both the HEXACO model and the Big Five model suggest that Openness to experience is a complex construct, whereby in some conceptualizations of the Big Five model, such as the IPIP-Big Five, the construct comprises the facet Liberalism (Christensen et al., 2019; DeYoung et al., 2007; Johnson, 2014). HEXACO model proposes that facets of Openness to experience are Aesthetic Appreciation, Inquisitiveness, Creativity and Unconventionality, while in IPIP-Big Five Openness consists of Imagination, Artistic Interests, Emotionality

that form the subdomain Pure Openness, and Adventurousness, Intellect, Liberalism that form the subdomain Pure Intellect (Johnson, 2014; Lee & Ashton, 2018).

Liberalism as a facet in IPIP-Big Five Openness contains items about crime, law, and order, and is a counterpart to NEO-PI-R's Openness to Values (Johnson, 2014). It has been previously shown that Liberalism, Emotionality, and Imagination have weak loadings on Openness to Experience (Kajonius & Johnson, 2019). Also, previous studies show that Liberalism has the lowest correlations with other measures similar to intellectual openness such as variety seeking (Griffin & Hesketh, 2004). On the other hand, compared to other Openness facets, Liberalism has highest correlations with basic social attitudes and orientations such as conservatism and right-wing authoritarianism (Hotchin & West, 2018).

Thus, the aim of this research was to examine the relationship between Liberalism as a facet from IPIP Big Five Model Openness and other facets of Openness from two dominant personality models – Big Five and HEXACO.

## Method

### Sample

The sample consisted of 540 participants ( $M_{age} = 27.50$ ,  $SD_{age} = 9.33$ ; 75.6% females). The participants were recruited via snowball method through social media.

### Instruments

**Openness from the International Personality Item Pool Representation of the NEO PI-R™ (IPIP-NEO-300; Johnson, 2014).** For the purposes of the study, 60 Likert-type items related to Openness from the IPIP-NEO-300 were used. It consists of six facets – Imagination (10 items;  $\alpha = .84$ ), Artistic Interests (10 items;  $\alpha = .76$ ), Emotionality (10 items;  $\alpha = .75$ ) that form the subdomain Pure Openness (30 items;  $\alpha = .86$ ), and Adventurousness (10 items;  $\alpha = .73$ ), Intellect (10 items;  $\alpha = .81$ ), Liberalism (10 items;  $\alpha = .68$ ) that form the subdomain Pure Intellect (30 items;  $\alpha = .83$ ). The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the internal consistency for the whole domain was  $\alpha = .88$ .

**Openness to experience from the HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised (HEXACO-PI-R; Lee &**

Ashton, 2018). For the purposes of the study, 16 Likert-type items related to Openness to experience from HEXACO-PI-R were used. Openness to experience is measured with four facets: Aesthetic Appreciation (four items;  $\alpha = .58$ ), Inquisitiveness (four items;  $\alpha = .52$ ), Creativity (four items;  $\alpha = .75$ ), and Unconventionality (four items;  $\alpha = .47$ ). Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability for the whole domain was  $\alpha = .77$ .

## Results

Results showed that Liberalism had the lowest correlations with facets from Pure Openness and also

showed the lowest correlation with all the facets from HEXACO Openness (Table 1). Liberalism also showed low correlations with facets from its Pure Intellect subdomain: Adventurousness and Intellect (Table 1). While other facets from IPIP-Big Five Openness showed moderate to high correlations (ranging from  $r = .30$  to  $r = .73$ , all significant at  $p < .01$  level) with HEXACO Openness domain, Liberalism correlated weakly ( $r = .16$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Table 1: Relationships between examined variables – facet level

Facet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Liberalism (BF)	-									
2. Adventurousness (BF)	.28**	-								
3. Intellect (BF)	.22**	.48**	-							
4. Imagination (BF)	.18**	.25**	.36**	-						
5. Artistic Interests (BF)	.12**	.32**	.36**	.35**	-					
6. Emotionality (BF)	-.04	.13**	.18**	.37**	.41**	-				
7. Aesthetic Appreciation (HE)	.13**	.28**	.36**	.27**	.72**	.29**	-			
8. Inquisitiveness (HE)	.00	.34**	.40**	.15**	.26**	.02	.27**	-		
9. Creativity (HE)	.14**	.41**	.47**	.48**	.48**	.30**	.40**	.21**	-	
10. Unconventionality (HE)	.22**	.39**	.63**	.40**	.35**	.23**	.38**	.27**	.51**	-

Note. BF – IPIP Big Five; HE – HEXACO; \*\*  $p < .01$

In addition, principal component analyses were conducted with number of components to be extracted set to one (Table 2). In the first analysis, when only IPIP-Big Five facets were included ( $KMO = .72$ , Bartlett  $\chi^2 = 540.39$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $p < .001$ ) Liberalism showed the lowest loading. In the second analysis ( $KMO = .81$ , Bartlett  $\chi^2 = 1735.89$ ,  $df = 45$ ,  $p < .001$ ), when IPIP-Big Five and HEXACO Openness facets were included together, only Liberalism showed loading below .30. Therefore, the second principal component analysis provides the evidence for Liberalism allocation out of personality space shaped by Openness domain.

Table 2: Principal component analysis – facet loadings

	IPIP-Big Five Openness	IPIP-Big Five and HEXACO Openness
Facet	Loadings	Loadings
Imagination	.68	.61
Artistic Interests	.71	.73
Emotionality	.53	.45
Adventurousness	.66	.62
Intellect	.72	.74
Liberalism	.38	.29
Aesthetic Appreciation		.69
Inquisitiveness		.46
Creativity		.74
Unconventionality		.73

## Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between Liberalism as a facet of Openness and other facets of Openness from IPIP Big Five and HEXACO. Considering the weak correlations between Liberalism and the other Openness facets it can be concluded that this facet does not fit well into Openness domain, i.e., that Liberalism is not a proper reflection of Openness trait. The lowest loading on the first principal component, that is, the only loading below .30 obtained for Liberalism facet gives support for this conclusion. This is in contrast with the results that Openness to experience is a trait that is highly related to liberal political orientation (e.g., Carney et al., 2008; Klein et al., 2019; McAdams et al., 2013). However, similar results were obtained for the Values facet from NEO-PI-R, with the facet being only moderately correlated with the Pure Intellect subdomain (DeYoung et al., 2007). Although Costa and McCrae (1985) do not equate Openness to values with Liberalism, it can be noted that their Values facet defined as “the readiness to reexamine social, political and religious values” (p.12) subsumes liberalism. Moreover, some other previous finding regarding Values facet are indicating strong negative associations to conservatism and right-wing authoritarianism (Trapnell, 1994). From that point of view, it is not surprising the Values are the only facet from NEO-PI-R Openness domain that correlates below .30 with Openness trait from BFI and TIPI (Gosling et al., 2003). It should be noted that Liberalism is associated with low Conscientiousness, not only with high Pure Intellect or high Pure Openness (Carney et al., 2008). Also, in Goldberg’s (1990) Big Five structure the facet Conventionality is assigned to the Conscientiousness factor. A potential solution to this problem is using Unconventionality facet from HEXACO Openness, which was conceptualized in such a way as to exclude social, political, or religious attitudes (Lee et al., 2005). More precisely, the Unconventionality facet assesses an appreciation of nonconformity and eccentricity and an openness to unusual ideas in general, but it isn’t specified whether such ideas may be traditional or conservative versus modern or liberal. In future studies, it would be useful to do a more in-depth comparison between Liberalism and other socio-cultural variables, such as political party preference, moral judgment, social dominance orientation, etc. (Graham et al., 2009; Hirsh et al., 2010; Kugler et al., 2014). This study indicates that Liberalism does not properly reflect Openness to experience, and that alternative measures that do not include it such as HEXACO-PI-R should be used.

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