

Conservatism as a General Factor of Social Attitudes*

Janko Mededović

Institute of criminological and sociological research, Belgrade, Serbia

Previous studies showed the existence of general factors in cognitive abilities, personality traits, and psychopathology symptoms. We hypothesized a similar factor on the apex of social attitudes' hierarchy; furthermore, we assumed that this factor reflects a conservatism-liberalism dimension. This hypothesis is tested by factorizing the space of "isms" – a broad and comprehensive model of social attitudes obtained by the lexical paradigm, in an online study ($N = 380$; $M_{age} = 32.34$ [$SD = 11.74$]; 66.8% females; participants were of Serbian nationality). A General factor is obtained and it was positively loaded by Tradition-oriented Religiousness (.76), Unmitigated Self-Interest (.76), and Subjective Spirituality (.34), with negative loadings of Communal Rationalism (-.53) and Inequality Aversion (-.46). Afterwards, we explored the nomological network of this factor: it correlated positively with the Social Dominance Orientation measure of Social Domination, Social Conservatism, Conservation Values, and Binding Moral Foundations; it also had negative associations with the Social Dominance Orientation measure of Egalitarianism, Self-transcendence Values, Individualizing Moral Foundations, Openness to Experience, Support for EU Integrations, Kosovo Independence, and Immigrants' Integration. The obtained nomological network is congruent with the

Corresponding author: janko.medjedovic@fmk.edu.rs

Acknowledgments. The idea of a General Factor of Social Attitudes was conceived in numerous talks the author had with his friend and colleague Boban Petrović. Author would also like to express his gratitude to his students who participated in this research as initial disseminators of the survey.

Data Availability Statement. Data used in the analyses for this manuscript can be found on this link: <https://mfr.osf.io/render?url=https%3A%2F%2Fosf.io%2Fv75a4%2Fdownload>

Conflict of interest. The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

* This is an early electronic version of the manuscript that has been accepted for publication in Psihologija journal. Please note that this is not the final version of the article and that it can be subjected to minor changes before final print. Please cite as: Mededović, J. (2023). Conservatism as a General Factor of Social Attitudes. *Psihologija*. Advance online publication. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2298/PSI210512012M>

interpretation of the General factor as conservatism. The data suggest that lay people have a singular core attitudinal dimension which they use to interpret and make sense of societal events and this fundamental dimension is conservatism-liberalism.

Keywords: social attitudes; general factor; isms; conservatism; personality

Highlights:

- We hypothesized the existence of the General factor of social attitudes (GFA).
- GFA is extracted from the space of lexical social attitudes (isms).
- Loadings of attitudes on GFA suggested that it reflects conservative attitudes.
- This is further confirmed by its relations with other attitudinal and personality variables.

Social Attitudes

Attitudes represent complex dispositional constructs with the function to evaluate an (attitudinal) object and consequently, generate a consistent response towards the object of evaluation. If they are oriented towards social phenomena, they are labeled social attitudes. They may be defined as sets of beliefs regarding objects of relevance in religious, economic, political, ethnic, and other societal areas (Kerlinger, 1972). Attitudes are complex because they incorporate perception and information processing of the social phenomena, emotional reactions, and behaviors related to the social events that are evaluated (Kerlinger et al., 1976). Since they are indispensable for understanding societal events and predicting behavior, attitudes were a frequent topic of research in social sciences. The most studied social attitudes are authoritarianism (Adorno, et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1981; Duckitt et al., 2010), dogmatism (Rokeach, 1954), conservatism (Wilson, 1973), traditionalism (Bouchard, 2009), religiousness (Saucier & Skrzypińska, 2006) and others.

Consequently, researchers tried to map the whole space of social attitudes as well. These analyses yielded inconclusive results: some authors described this space using two dimensions like Radicalism vs. Conservatism, and Tough-mindedness vs. Tender-mindedness (Eysenk, 1954). Other solutions obtained a higher number of social attitudes including five (Guilford, 1959) and six dimensions (Sidanius, Ekehammar, & Ross, 1979). Heterogeneity of the models regarding the number of analyzed attitudes is the consequence of initial attitudinal dimensions which were explored: different authors started with different sets of more narrow attitudes and this resulted in a large number of factor solutions. Still, there is some congruence between all of the social attitudes' models: most of the solutions extracted attitudes like conservatism, religiousness, nationalism and humanism (Petrović, 2020). The other attitudes are more heterogeneous between the models.

A Lexical Model of Social Attitudes: the Taxonomy of “isms”

The problem of providing a broad and comprehensive taxonomy of social attitudes is similar to other factor-analytic studies: a vast and heterogeneous sample of initial attitudes should be factorized in order to obtain a taxonomy which should cover the most important social attitudes. However, there was no agreement on what this initial pool of attitudes should be composed of. The solution was offered by Saucier (2000): He proposed a lexical approach, similar to the one that provided the taxonomies of basic personality traits. The terms which may reflect social attitudes are the ones with the “ism” suffix, like communism, liberalism, or patriotism. A recent study in English language (Saucier, 2013) extracted five factors of social attitudes based on isms terms: *Tradition-oriented Religiousness* (traditionalism, authoritarianism, and belief in God), *Unmitigated Self-Interest* (hedonism, selfishness, and materialistic value orientation), *Communal Rationalism* (trust in institutions, reason, and a belief that human nature is inherently good), *Subjective spirituality* (mysticism, spiritual individualism), and *Inequality Aversion* (egalitarianism, liberalism, and social justice). Other emic research of social attitudes (i.e., the research that examined the structure of social attitudes in specific languages separately) showed that this structure is partially replicable in different languages but with important differences stemming from a cultural and historical context. The research in Romania revealed that the attitudes toward the Romanian Communist party loaded on Unmitigated Self-Interest (Krauss, 2006); the studies in China and Taiwan (Chen, Hsu, Zhou, & Saucier, 2018) revealed additional factors like support for the Communist Party in mainland China and striving for happiness in Taiwan; finally, the study in Serbia (Petrović, 2020) revealed the emergence of a sixth factor which was interpreted as Nationalism. Hence, the isms structure of social attitudes captures not only universal dimensions of social attitudes, but cultural idiosyncrasies as well.

Is there a General Factor of Social Attitudes?

Structural models of human individual differences describe taxonomies of various traits, and measures operationalized in these models tend to correlate between themselves. Consequently, it is usually possible to extract the higher-order factors including the General factor – a single trait at the top of a hierarchy of personality traits. Previous research showed that a single factor can be found in the taxonomies of cognitive abilities (Carroll, 1993), psychopathological symptoms (Lahey et al., 2012) and personality traits (Van der Linden et al., 2010). Furthermore, empirical research showed that General factors are quite robust in all these three domains of human individual differences (Jensen, 1998; Rushton & Irwing, 2009a, b, c, d; Smith et al., 2020). Is there a General Factor of Social Attitudes? One candidate for such a general factor could be Traditionalism, or obedience to traditional authority – this broad social attitude was viewed

as a common factor that encompasses authoritarianism, conservatism, and religiousness (Bouchard, 2009; Ludeke et al., 2013). On the other hand, the other prominent candidate may be the conservatism-liberalism dimension. Conservatism was found as a broad and general dimension of social attitudes which captures the common variance in lexical social attitudes, both on the individual (Stankov, 2009), and the country level (Stankov & Lee, 2009).. In recent emic research of lexical social attitudes in Serbia, a hierarchical factor analysis of these attitudes showed a singular latent dimension at the top of a hierarchy which was interpreted as conservatism-liberalism as well (Petrović, 2020). Hence, the possibility of a General Factor of Social Attitudes is indeed plausible.

Goals of the present research

General factors are powerful explanatory constructs, even if their interpretation is not unequivocal, which is the case with a General Factor of Personality (GEP; Revelle & Wilt, 2013), although the majority of researchers believe that GFP is substantive psychological construct that captures social effectiveness (van der Linden et al., 2016; Van der Linden et al., 2021). Social attitudes are epistemic categories that individuals use in order to understand the social world. If there is a singular dimension of social attitudes, it may represent a core process which serves as a fundamental axis for evaluating socially relevant phenomena. Hence, research on a General Factor of Social Attitudes can have major scientific benefits. We believe that the isms taxonomy represents the most suitable model for a search for the General Factor of Social Attitudes since it provides a broad and comprehensive structure of social attitudes. Our key hypothesis is that the General factor can be extracted from the structure of isms. Furthermore, we assume that the content of such a factor closely corresponds to the conservatism-liberalism dimension. The rationale for our second hypothesis comes from the previous empirical data on conservatism as a general dimension that captures the common variance of social attitudes (Petrović, 2020; Stankov, 2009; Stankov & Lee, 2009).

The main goal of the present study is to extract the general factor from the Isms structure of social attitudes; consequently, the content of this factor needs to be evaluated by exploring its nomological network. Assuming that the General factor represents the conservatism-liberalism dimension, we can hypothesize its associations with other attitudinal and personality characteristics. We used the following measures for the exploration of the General factor's nomological network:

- 1) We measured other social attitudes like Conservatism (Everett, 2013), Social Dominance Orientation (SDO: Ho et al., 2015) and Religiousness (Bouchard, 2009). Positive relations between the General factor and these constructs are expected (SDO consists of an egalitarianism scale as well – we expected negative relations between this measure and the General Factor).

- 2) We assessed basic human values (Schwartz, 2003). The General Factor is assumed to positively correlate with Conservation values and negatively with Openness to change.
- 3) Moral foundations are explored as well (Graham et al., 2011). the General Factor is hypothesized to positively correlate with the Binding Foundations – Ingroup, Authority, and Purity (Van Leeuwen & Park, 2009).
- 4) Basic personality traits have known relations with conservatism and we assessed six broad personality traits identified in a study based on the lexical paradigm (Milojev et al., 2013). The General Factor should positively correlate with Conscientiousness and negatively to Openness to experience (Sibley et al., 2012).
- 5) Finally, we explored some specific attitudes relevant to the current political situation in Serbia, since the research is conducted in this country – we measured positive attitudes toward joining the European Union, independence of Kosovo, and immigrants; the General Factor of Social Attitudes is assumed to negatively correlate with all these measures.

Method

Sample

The survey with the study measures was constructed via the Google Forms platform and administered online. The first webpage of the survey contained information about the study and the informed consent statement. The initial disseminators of the survey were students of the Singidunum University in Belgrade who attended the course on Individual differences. They sent the link to the survey to a broad pool of participants via social networks and asked them to fill the questionnaire and send it further. Participation in the research was voluntary, both for students and other participants. The students did not receive extra credits for participating in the survey, but the research data was used for their further education process in this field (data analysis, writing essays and presentations of the results). The final sample consisted of 380 individuals ($M_{age} = 32.34$, $SD = 11.72$, 66% females). Participants were highly educated: 54% finished college, 36% were attending college in the time of data gathering while the rest had finished secondary school.

Measures

The Survey on dictionary-based isms (Saucier, 2013) was used for the assessment of social attitudes obtained via the lexical paradigm. It has 46 items that measure five social attitudes: Tradition-oriented Religiousness, Unmitigated Self-Interest, Communal Rationalism, Subjective Spirituality and Inequality Aversion. For the Serbian version of the inventory see Petrović (2020).

The short measure of **Social Dominance Orientation** (SDO: Ho et al., 2015) was administered. It provides scores on SDO Dominance and SDO Egalitarianism. Both beliefs are measured via 4 items. For the Serbian version of the inventory see Petrović (2020).

Religiousness was measured via the abbreviated **Religiosity scale** (containing five items) taken from the Arizona Life History Battery (Figueredo et al., 2007). For the Serbian version of the inventory see Međedović (2020).

A short measure of **Social Conservatism** based on the work of Everett (2013) is administered. Participants were asked to assess how positive or negative they feel toward the following social phenomena: Abortion (reverse-coded), Family, Religion, Traditional marriage, and Patriotism. For the Serbian version of the inventory see Mededović (2021).

Basic Human Values were measured via a 21-item instrument constructed for the European Social Survey (Schwartz, 2003). This inventory provides scores on ten basic values, however we only used scores on higher-order value dimensions: Openness to change vs. Conservation, and Self-transcendence vs. Self-enhancement. For the Serbian version of the inventory see Petrović (2020).

Moral Foundations were explored using the **Moral Foundations Questionnaire** (Graham et al., 2011). The inventory is divided in two parts with 16 items each which measure five moral foundations: Harm, Fairness, Ingroup, Authority, and Purity. The first two are labeled as Individualizing foundations while the rest are called Binding foundations. For the Serbian version of the inventory see Mededović & Petrović (2016a).

Basic personality traits were explored via the **MINI-IPIP-6 questionnaire** (Milojev et al., 2013) which has 24 items. It represents a hybrid model of personality where the Honesty-Humility scale is added to the Big Five personality traits: Extraversion, Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness. For the Serbian version of the inventory see Mededović & Bulut (2017).

Finally, we asked the participants to express their attitudes regarding certain political issues pertinent to the current political situation in Serbia: 1) support for **Joining the European Union** (Serbia currently has the status of a candidate for membership); 2) support for **Kosovo Independence** (Kosovo proclaimed independence from Serbia in 2008 after violent conflict near the end of 20th century; Serbia did not acknowledge the independence of Kosovo); 3) support for providing asylum in Serbia for **Immigrants**. These three attitudes were measured via single item each. We asked participants to express the agreement with every one of them on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 denotes “Completely disagree” while 5 denotes “Completely agree”. The same response scale was used for all above-mentioned scales.

Results

Correlations between the Isms and the Extraction of General Factor

First, we show the descriptive statistics, reliabilities and the correlations between the Isms scales. Tradition-oriented Religiousness (TR) is positively associated with Unmitigated Self-Interest (USI) and Subjective Spirituality (SS) with negative associations with Communal Rationalism (CR) and Inequality Aversion (IA). USI is negatively related to CR and IA. CR is positively correlated with IA and negatively with SS. Finally, SS and IA are positively associated as well. The effect sizes of detected associations have high variation – from low to moderate magnitude. These associations are shown in Table 1.

Correlation analysis showed that most of the bivariate associations between social attitudes are statistically significant. These associations suggested that the existence of a General Factor in the space of isms is empirically plausible. General factors are usually extracted using the Principal Component Analysis (e.g., Erdle & Rushton, 2010; Veselka et al., 2009) and Principal Axis Factoring (e.g., Van der Linden et al, 2010). We have chosen the first method since this analysis is largely explorative in nature and because of the fact that Principal

Component analysis usually explains more variance of the analyzed original variables. Thus, we extracted the first principal unrotated component from the lexical social attitudes: it explained 35.36% of the variance of original variables with the eigenvalue of 1.77. We would like to emphasize that we conducted Principal Axis Factoring as well. Both the composition of the General Factor, and the subsequent correlation analysis were exactly the same as with the General Factor obtained via Principal Component Analysis (the only difference was reflected in slightly lower variables' loadings on the latent dimension). This is in line with the data showing that General factors extracted via different methods have very high correlations, $\geq .90$ (Van der Linden et al., 2010). Congruently with the correlation analysis TR, USI, and SS had positive, while CR and IA had negative loadings on this latent component. The loadings of Isms scales on this component are shown in Table 1. General factors are frequently extracted from the items of analyzed scales as well. Based on this we also obtained the first principal unrotated component from the Survey on dictionary-based isms items as well: this component explained 12.38% of all inventory items with the λ of 5.70 (if all five components are extracted, the percentages of explained variance for other four components are as following: 9%, 7%, 5% and 4%).

Table 1
Correlations and the first principal component obtained on isms social attitudes

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	1	2	3	4	GFA <i>s</i>
1. Tradition-oriented Religiousness	2.56	0.85	.78					.76
2. Unmitigated Self-Interest	2.28	0.57	.63	.45**				.76
3. Communal Rationalism	3.30	0.45	.67	-.21**	-.15**			-.53
4. Subjective Spirituality	3.06	0.68	.69	.22**	.06	-.21**		.34
5. Inequality Aversion	3.29	0.50	.71	-.10*	-.32**	.14**	.13*	-.46

Note. GFSAs – General factor of social attitudes extracted on isms scales; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Nomological network of the General Factor of Social Attitudes

We calculated bivariate associations between the original Isms scales, General factors obtained both on isms scales and items and other measures we collected. These associations are shown in Table 2. General factors extracted on scales and items have very similar patterns of associations with other variables; however, there are a few distinctions between these measures – to highlight the most stable results we will interpret only the associations obtained on both measures of General factors. General Factor of Social Attitudes is positively associated with SDO Domination, Religiousness, Social Conservatism, Conservation Values, Ingroup, Authority, and Purity Moral Foundations. It is negatively associated with SDO Egalitarianism, Self-Transcendence Values, Harm and Fairness Moral Foundations, Agreeableness, Openness and Honesty personality traits, positive attitudes towards joining European Union, Independence of Kosovo, and Immigrants. Once again, the strength of associations was highly variable from low (associations with individualizing Moral Foundations) to high effect sizes (associations with Religiousness and Authority).

Table 2
Correlations between the isms, general factors, and other study measures

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>α</i>	TR	USI	CR	SS	IA	GFA <i>s</i>	GFA <i>i</i>
SDO domination	2.10	0.89	.65	.26**	.33**	-.17**	.05	-.27**	.39**	.39**
SDO egalitarianism	3.83	0.85	.60	-.17**	-.32**	.19**	.00	.42**	-.38**	-.41**
Religiousness	2.20	0.97	.84	.73**	.34**	-.03	.22**	-.03	.52**	.55**
Conservatism	3.48	0.79	.71	.68**	.29**	.02	.06	-.10*	.45**	.49**
Openness to change	4.29	0.93	.76	-.09	.04	.07	.20**	-.03	.01	-.03
Conservation	3.55	0.87	.63	.32**	.18**	.06	-.07	-.09	.21**	.20**
Self-transcendence	5.00	0.75	.69	-.19**	-.23**	.25**	.12*	.21**	-.29**	-.31**
Self-enhancement	3.75	1.04	.73	.01	.18**	.02	.12*	-.21**	.15**	.08
Harm	3.80	0.80	.67	-.03	-.14**	.13*	.12*	.26**	-.16**	-.18**
Fairness	3.79	0.72	.60	-.01	-.12*	.15**	.11*	.31**	-.16**	-.20**
Ingroup	3.08	0.95	.73	.48**	.30**	.05	.12*	-.00	.34**	.33**
Authority	2.71	1.02	.74	.59**	.43**	-.05	.04	-.14**	.50**	.49**
Purity	2.74	1.04	.73	.60**	.32**	-.00	.14**	-.00	.42**	.42**
Extraversion	3.22	0.89	.77	.04	.09	.03	.09	-.07	.08	.02
Agreeableness	4.12	0.68	.70	-.12*	-.19**	.15**	.10	.18**	-.21**	-.28**
Conscientiousness	3.62	0.79	.65	.09	.04	.06	-.06	-.03	.03	-.04
Neuroticism	2.92	0.85	.72	-.13*	-.10	-.16**	.24**	.15**	-.04	-.06
Openness	3.72	0.88	.71	-.19**	-.19**	-.03	.25**	.19**	-.15**	-.14**
Honesty	3.31	0.85	.69	-.22**	-.35**	.11*	-.13*	.22**	-.36**	-.27**
Joining EU	3.23	1.35		-.29**	-.16**	.18**	-.20**	-.02	-.28**	-.30**
Kosovo independence	2.33	1.39		-.36**	-.20**	.04	-.14**	-.07	-.26**	-.27**
Immigrants	2.66	1.34		-.43**	-.34**	.20**	-.07	.19**	-.46**	-.40**

Note. TR – Tradition-oriented Religiousness; USI – Unmitigated Self-Interest; CR – Communal Rationalism; SS – Subjective spirituality; IA – Inequality Aversion; GFA*s* – General factor of social attitudes obtained on isms scales; GFA*i* – General factor of social attitudes obtained on isms items; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Discussion

Various taxonomies of human individual differences turned out to be composed of correlated traits. Consequently, higher order factors can be extracted from the structures of personality traits, cognitive abilities, and psychopathology (Carroll, 1993; Lahey et al., 2012; Van der Linden et al., 2010). These general factors are powerful explanatory concepts. For example, they showed the existence of the G factor of intelligence, broad propensity towards mental illness, or a possibility of multivariate directional natural selection on personality traits (Verweij et al., 2012). Hence, they can provide new insights into human individual differences. Our current study was guided by an assumption that a similar General Factor may exist in the space of social attitudes as well. Furthermore, we expected that the General Factor of Social Attitudes (GFA) represents a conservatism-liberalism dimension. The obtained data corroborated our expectations: a General Factor was extracted from the isms social attitudes

and its nomological network suggests that the General Factor is indeed conservatism-liberalism. Social attitudes are epistemic psychological categories: individuals use them to understand and evaluate societal events – hence they are crucial processes that enable individuals to function in a complex social world. The current data suggest that there is one core axis on which societal phenomena are placed and evaluated, a fundamental dimension which serves as a principal guide throughout social world. It may also be viewed as a basic heuristic used to understand and contemplate societal events – this dimension is conservatism-liberalism.

General Factor of Social Attitudes and its Nomological Network

Lexical social attitudes correlate between themselves in the expected manner – similar associations were obtained in previous studies as well (e.g., Petrović & Međedović, 2017; Stankov & Lee, 2016). The pattern of associations suggests that social attitudes are clustered in two groups – the first is composed of Tradition-oriented Religiousness, Unmitigated Self-Interest, and Subjective Spirituality, while the other consists of Communal Rationalism and Inequality Aversion. These two clusters are largely negatively correlated. In fact, they represent the opposite poles of a General Factor extracted from these measures. Hence, this latent dimension is in accordance with previously extracted higher-order factor on Isms social attitudes (Stankov, 2009; Stankov & Lee, 2009). This was the first piece of information that suggested that the General Factor may in fact represent the conservatism-liberalism dimension.

Note that the structure of the General Factor is relatively robust – all loadings are $> .30$. However, it is also important to emphasize that Subjective Spirituality has the lowest loading on the factor, implying that this attitude has the lowest contribution to the latent dimension. On the other hand, if we examine the structure of the General Factor extracted directly from the inventory items, we could conclude that the part of variance captured by the first principal component may be relatively low (12.4%). This suggests that the extracted General Factor may be less robust than the ones extracted in the other domains of human individual differences. Future research is necessary to compare the stability of the GFA solutions obtained in different populations.

Our assumption regarding the interpretation of the General Factor is further corroborated by the bivariate associations between the General Factor and other beliefs, attitudes, and personality traits measured in the present study. The most direct confirmations come from positive correlations with social conservatism, religiosity, and social dominance scales, with a negative relation with egalitarianism measure. These associations clearly suggest that individuals with higher scores on the General Factor of Social Attitudes are positioned on the conservative end of the ideological specter. Furthermore, the General Factor correlates negatively with all three specific attitudes relevant to the current political life in Serbia (attitudes toward Joining the EU, independence of Kosovo, and immigrants), which was expected as well. These findings

corroborate previous data that conservative individuals have more negative attitudes toward the EU (Franceško et al., 2006), immigrant workers and asylum seekers (Gregurović et al., 2016) and more antagonistic and volatile sentiments towards the conflict in Kosovo (Mededović & Petrović, 2016b).

We assumed that the General Factor would correlate positively with Conservation and consequently, negatively with Openness to change values, since they are placed on the opposite sides of the value circumplex model (Schwartz, 2003). Our hypothesis is only partially confirmed. The General Factor indeed correlates positively with the Conservation values, however, the association with Openness to change was not detected in our data. A negative association between the General Factor and Self transcendence values emerged instead. Interestingly, this pattern of associations is completely in line with the previous data on the voters of right and left-wing parties – right-wing voters have significantly higher scores on Conservation and lower scores on Self transcendence compared to left-wing voters (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005). Furthermore, the obtained associations are in line with previously obtained data on the associations between the values and a broad set of core political values that reflects conservative attitudes: traditional morality, blind patriotism, support for law and order and military intervention (Schwartz et al., 2010).

One of the crucial manuscripts regarding the Moral foundation theory is based on the differences between conservatives and liberals on moral foundations – it is asserted that liberals rely more on Harm and Fairness foundations while conservatives tend to endorse all five foundations more equally (Graham et al., 2009). Furthermore, Binding moral foundations (Authority, Ingroup, and Purity) were found to be positively related both to explicitly and implicitly measured conservatism (Van Leeuwen & Park, 2009). This is why we predicted positive associations between Binding foundations and the General Factor. These correlations were obtained as predicted, accompanied by negative relations between the General Factor and Harm, and Care foundations.

Finally, there is another finding which is in accordance with the previous data: General Factor is negatively associated to Honesty-Humility as a basic personality trait; this result replicates the previous one regarding the relation between Honesty and political behavior (Jonason, 2014). Obtained negative relations between the General Factor, Agreeableness, and Openness are in line with existing literature as well (Chirumbolo & Leone, 2010; Zettler & Hilbig, 2010). The only finding that deviated from our hypotheses was the absence of the correlation between the General Factor and Conscientiousness, since a positive association was expected (Sibley et al., 2012). Note that general personality traits are comprehensive and broad behavioral dispositions, while we used short scales to explore them in the present study. In order to achieve high reliability, the items of these scales must be highly correlated and this consequently largely restricts the broadness of their content (Mededović & Bulut, 2017). This may be the reason why the expected association was not detected – it may be captured with a longer and multifaceted personality measure.

The Trouble of Labeling: why Conservatism, why not Traditionalism?

Labeling complex and heterogeneous constructs is always an ungrateful task – the same applies to the current situation. Previous studies suggested that traditionalism may be an attitude that captures the common variance of various other beliefs and values (Bouchard, 2009; Ludeke et al., 2013). This assumption may be in line with the findings of Saucier (2000): the first principal component extracted from the English language isms items indeed reflected traditionally based religiousness. Nevertheless, we have chosen to label the General Factor of Social Attitudes as conservatism-liberalism for several reasons. Firstly, in contrast to traditionalism, conservatism represents a broader term that encompasses wider ideological content. For example, modern definitions of conservatism (e.g., Heywood, 2017) state that conservatism include the terms like traditional social institutions and tradition in general, organic society, hierarchy, authority, and property rights. Hence, the definition of conservatism encompasses traditional values. Secondly, the General Factor extracted from the present data represents a dimension – it has opposite attitudes on its poles. In contrast to conservatism-liberalism which is usually viewed as a similar dimension as well (Petrović, 2020), traditionalism does not have the opposite markers on its reverse pole. Finally, the notion of conservatism as a higher-order factor of social attitudes also has a foothold in existing empirical literature (Stankov, 2009; Stankov & Lee, 2009; Petrović, 2020).

Limitations, Future Directions, and Concluding Remarks

The participants that provided us with data for the current study were more educated than the average; hence, the study findings cannot be easily generalized – these data should be replicated on other samples as well. Several constructs that were explored in the present study were operationalized via short scales – longer scales have various advantages, not only reliability, but higher representativeness of the concept being measured as well. Future research may perform additional tests regarding the nature of the General Factor of Social Attitudes: attempts to discern whether a General Factor is conservatism-liberalism dimension or an another similar attitude may be conceptually very fruitful. If the General Factor is the fundamental dimension people use to understand and evaluate social phenomena then it should be relevant for the process of decision making regarding social events. Hence, the concept of a General Factor of Social Attitudes may indeed help us gain new insights into how people make sense and navigate through complex social contexts. Multi-method and cross-cultural data will further test the robustness and significance of the concept in predicting socially relevant behavioral outcomes.

References

- Adorno, T. W., Frenkel-Brunswick, E., Levinson, D. J., & Sanford, R. N. (1950). *The Authoritarian Personality*. Harper & Row.
- Altemeyer, B. (1981). *Right-wing authoritarianism*. University of Manitoba Press.
- Bouchard, T. J. Jr. (2009). Authoritarianism religiousness and conservatism: Is obedience to authority the explanation for clustering universality and evolution? In E. Voland & W. Scheifenhovel (Eds.), *The biological evolution of religious mind and behavior* (pp. 165–180). Springer.
- Carroll, J. B. (1993). *Human cognitive abilities*. Cambridge University Press.
- Chen, Z. J., Hsu, K. Y., Zhou, X., & Saucier, G. (2018). Chinese isms dimensions in mainland China and Taiwan: Convergence and extension of American isms dimensions. *Journal of Personality*, 86(3), 555–571. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12336>
- Chirumbolo, A., & Leone, L. (2010). Personality and politics: The role of the HEXACO model of personality in predicting ideology and voting. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 49, 43–48. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2010.03.004>
- Duckitt, J., Bizumic, B., Krauss, S. W., & Heled, E. (2010). A tripartite approach to Right-Wing Authoritarianism: The Authoritarianism-Conservatism-Traditionalism model. *Political Psychology*, 31, 685–715. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2010.00781.x>
- Everett, J. A. (2013). The 12 item social and economic conservatism scale (SECS). *PloS one*, 8(12), e82131. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0082131>
- Erdle, S., & Rushton, J. P. (2010). The general factor of personality, BIS–BAS, expectancies of reward and punishment, self-esteem, and positive and negative affect. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 48(6), 762–766. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2010.01.025>
- Eysenck, H. J. (1954). *The psychology of politics*. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Figueredo, A. J., Vásquez, G., Brumbach, B. H., & Schneider, S. M. (2007). The K-factor, covitality, and personality. *Human Nature*, 18(1), 47–73. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02820846>
- Franceško, M., Kodžopeljić, J., i Janičić, B. (2006). Prediktori socijalnog identiteta na dimenziji nacionalni-evropski [Predictors of social identity on a national-European dimension]. *Sociologija*, 48(4), 309–326.
- Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(5), 1029–1059. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0015141>
- Graham, J., Nosek, B. A., Haidt, J., Iyer, R., Koleva, S., & Ditto, P. H. (2011). Mapping the moral domain. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(2), 366–385. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015141>
- Gregurović, M., Kuti, S., & Župarić-Iljić, D. (2016). Attitudes towards immigrant workers and asylum seekers in Eastern Croatia: Dimensions, determinants and differences. *Migracijske i Etničke Teme*, 32(1), 91–122. <https://doi.org/10.11567/met.32.1.4>
- Guilford, J. P. (1959.). *Personality*. McGraw-Hill.
- Heywood, A. (2017). *Political ideologies: An introduction*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Ho, A. K., Sidanius, J., Kteily, N., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Pratto, F., Henkel, K. E., ... & Stewart, A. L. (2015). The nature of social dominance orientation: Theorizing and measuring preferences for intergroup inequality using the new SDO scale. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 109(6), 1003–1028. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000033>
- Jensen, A. R. (1998). *The g factor: The science of mental ability*. Praeger/Greenwood.
- Kerlinger, F. N. (1972). The structure and content of social attitude referents: A preliminary study. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 32, 613–630. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447203200305>

- Kerlinger, F. N., Middendorp, C. P., & Amón, J. (1976). The structure of social attitudes in three countries: Tests of a criterial referent theory. *International Journal of Psychology*, 11(4), 265–279.
- Krauss, S. (2006). Does ideology transcend culture? A preliminary examination in Romania. *Journal of Personality*, 74, 1219–1256. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2006.00408.x>
- Lahey, B. B., Applegate, B., Hakes, J. K., Zald, D. H., Hariri, A. R., & Rathouz, P. J. (2012). Is there a general factor of prevalent psychopathology during adulthood? *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 121, 971–977. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0028355>
- Lindeman, M., & Verkasalo, M. (2005). Measuring values with the short Schwartz's value survey. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 85(2), 170–178. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa8502_09
- Ludeke, S., Johnson, W., & Bouchard, T. J. (2013). "Obedience to traditional authority:" A heritable factor underlying authoritarianism, conservatism and religiousness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 55, 375–380. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2013.03.018>
- Mededović, J. (2020). Examining the link between religiousness and fitness in a behavioural ecological framework. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 52(5), 756–767. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021932019000774>
- Mededović, J. (2021). Conservatism and religiousness participate in fast life history dynamics via elevated reproductive motivation. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 183, 111109. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2021.111109>
- Mededović, J., & Bulut, T. (2017). The Mini IPIP-6: Short, valid, and reliable measure of the Six-factor personality structure. *Primenjena Psihologija*, 10(2), 185–202. <https://doi.org/10.19090/pp.2017.2.185-202>
- Mededović, J., & Petrović, B. (2016a). Can there be an immoral morality? Dark personality traits as predictors of Moral foundations. *Psihologija*, 49(2), 185–197. <https://doi.org/10.2298/PSI1602185M>
- Mededović, J., & Petrović, B. (2016b). The militant extremist mind-set as a conservative ideology mediated by ethos of conflict. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 22(4), 404–408. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000175>
- Milojev, P., Osborne, D., Greaves, L. M., Barlow, F. K., & Sibley, C. G. (2013). The Mini-IPIP6: Tiny yet highly stable markers of Big Six personality. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 47(6), 936–944. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2013.09.004>
- Petrović, B. (2020). *Leksički model socijalnih stavova: studija na srpskom jeziku [Lexical model of social attitudes: the study in Serbian language]*. Institut za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja.
- Petrović, B., & Mededović, J. (2017). Temporal changes in the evaluation of political parties: Does evaluation of political parties reflect attitudinal ideologies? *Primenjena Psihologija*, 10(4), 499–520. <https://doi.org/10.19090/pp.2017.4.499-520>
- Revelle, W., & Wilt, J. (2013). The general factor of personality: A general critique. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 47(5), 493–504. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2013.04.012>
- Rokeach, M. (1954). The nature and meaning of dogmatism. *Psychological Review*, 61, 194–204.
- Rushton, J. P., & Irwing, P. (2009a). A general factor of personality (GFP) from the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 47, 571–576. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2009.05.011>
- Rushton, J. P., & Irwing, P. (2009b). A general factor of personality in 16 sets of the Big Five, the Guilford–Zimmerman Temperament Survey, the California Psychological Inventory, and the Temperament and Character Inventory. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 47, 558–564. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2009.05.009>
- Rushton, J. P., & Irwing, P. (2009c). A general factor of personality in the Comrey Personality Scales, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2, and the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 46, 437–442. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2008.11.015>

- Rushton, J. P., & Irwing, P. (2009d). A general factor of personality in the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III, the Dimensional Assessment of Personality Pathology, and the Personality Assessment Inventory. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 43, 1091–1095. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2009.06.002>
- Saucier, G. (2000). Isms and the Structure of Social Attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 366–385. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.78.2.366>
- Saucier, G. (2013). Isms dimensions: Toward a more comprehensive and integrative model of belief-system components. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104, 921–939. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0031968>
- Saucier, G., & Skrzypińska, K. (2006). Spiritual but not religious? Evidence for two independent dispositions. *Journal of Personality*, 74(5), 1257–1292. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2006.00409.x>
- Schwartz, S. H. (2003). A proposal for measuring value orientations across nations. *ESS Questionnaire Development Report (Chapter 7)*, 259–290. <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>
- Schwartz, S. H., Caprara, G. V., & Vecchione, M. (2010). Basic personal values, core political values, and voting: A longitudinal analysis. *Political Psychology*, 31(3), 421–452. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2010.00764.x>
- Sibley, C. G., Osborne, D., & Duckitt, J. (2012). Personality and political orientation: Meta-analysis and test of a Threat-Constraint Model. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 46(6), 664–677. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2012.08.002>
- Sidanius, J., Ekehammar, B., & Ross, M. (1979). Comparisons of socio-political attitudes between two democratic societies. *International Journal of Psychology*, 14, 225–240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207597908246734>
- Smith, G. T., Atkinson, E. A., Davis, H. A., Riley, E. N., & Oltmanns, J. R. (2020). The general factor of psychopathology. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 16, 75–98. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-071119-115848>
- Stankov, L. (2009). Conservatism and cognitive ability. *Intelligence*, 37, 294–304. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intell.2008.12.007>
- Stankov, L., & Lee, J. (2009). Dimensions of cultural differences: Pancultural, ETIC/EMIC, and ecological approaches. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 19, 339–354. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2008.09.003>
- Stankov, L., & Lee, J. (2016). Nastiness, morality and religiosity in 33 nations. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 99, 56–66. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.04.069>
- Verweij, K. J., Yang, J., Lahti, J., Veijola, J., Hintsanen, M., Pulkki-Råback, L., ... & Taanila, A. (2012). Maintenance of genetic variation in human personality: testing evolutionary models by estimating heritability due to common causal variants and investigating the effect of distant inbreeding. *Evolution: International Journal of Organic Evolution*, 66(10), 3238–3251. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1558-5646.2012.01679.x>
- van der Linden, D., Dunkel, C. S., & Petrides, K. V. (2016). The General Factor of Personality (GFP) as social effectiveness: Review of the literature. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 101, 98–105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.05.020>
- Van der Linden, D., Dunkel, C. S., & Wu, P. (2021). Is there a meaningful General Factor of Personality? *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 24, Article e9. <https://doi.org/10.1017/SJP.2021.2>
- Van der Linden, D., Scholte, R. H., Cillessen, A. H., te Nijenhuis, J., & Segers, E. (2010). Classroom ratings of likeability and popularity are related to the Big Five and the general factor of personality. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 44(5), 669–672. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2010.08.007>
- van der Linden, D., te Nijenhuis, J., & Bakker, A. B. (2010). The general factor of personality: A meta-analysis of Big Five intercorrelations and a criterion-related validity study. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 44(3), 315–327. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2010.03.003>

- van Leeuwen, F., & Park, J. H. (2009). Perceptions of social dangers, moral foundations, and political orientation. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 47(3), 169–173. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2009.02.017>
- Veselka, L., Schermer, J. A., Petrides, K. V., Cherkas, L. F., Spector, T. D., & Vernon, P. A. (2009). A general factor of personality: Evidence from the HEXACO model and a measure of trait emotional intelligence. *Twin Research and Human Genetics*, 12(5), 420–424. <https://doi.org/10.1375/twin.12.5.420>
- Wilson, G. D. (1973). *The psychology of conservatism*. Academic Press.
- Zettler, I., & Hilbig, B. E. (2010). Attitudes of the selfless: Explaining political orientation with altruism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 48, 338–342. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2009.11.002>

Konzervativizam kao Generalni Faktor Socijalnih Stavova

Janko Međedović

Institu za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja, Beograd, Srbija

Prethodna istraživanja pokazala su da postoje generalni faktori kognitivnih sposobnosti, crta ličnosti i psihopatoloških simptoma. Postavili smo hipotezu da isti takav faktor postoji na vrhu hijerarhije socijalnih stavova; štaviše, pretpostavljamo da ovaj faktor predstavlja dimenziju konzervativizam-liberalizam. Tu hipotezu smo testirali ispitivanjem faktorske strukture prostora "Izama" – širokog modela socijalnih stavova koji je dobijen korišćenjem leksičke paradigme. U sprovedenoj onlajn studiji ($N = 380$; $M_{starost} = 32.34$ [$SD = 11.74$]; 66.8% žena; ispitanici su bili srpske nacionalnosti) dobijen je Generalni Faktor koji je pozitivno zasićen dimenzijama Tradicionalno Usmerene Religioznosti (.76), Sebičnih Interesa (.76), i Subjektivne Spiritualnosti (.34), a negativno zasićen dimenzijama Društvene Racionalnosti (-.53), i Averzije ka nejednakosti (-.46). Potom smo ispitali nomološku mrežu dobijenog faktora: otkrivene su pozitivne korelacije sa merama Društvene Dominacije, Socijalnog Konzervativizma, Konzervacije i Vezujućih Moralnih Osnova; Generalni Faktor je takođe pokazao negativne korelacije sa merama Egalitarizma, vrednostima Samoprevazilaženja, Individualizujućih Moralnih Osnova, Otvorenosti za iskustvom, podrškom EU integracijama, nezavisnošću Kosova, i integracijom imigranata. Dobijena nomološka mreža je u skladu sa interpretacijom Generalnog Faktora kao konzervativizma. Ovi podaci ukazuju na to da laici poseduju jednu osnovnu dimenziju stavova koju koriste kako bi interpretirali i razumeli društvene događaje, kao i da je ova osnovna dimenzija konzervativizam-liberalizam.

Ključne reči: socijalni stavovi; opšti faktor; isms; konzervativizam; ličnost

RECEIVED: 12.05.2021.

REVISION RECEIVED: 17.09.2021.

ACCEPTED: 07.01.2022.

© 2023 by authors



This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike 4.0 International license