

Personality and Voting

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Abstract

We examined the relationship between the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality and voting behavior. Participants completed an online survey in Qualtrics assessing voting behavior and presenting the IPIP-50. Past research shows conflicting correlations between voting behavior and the FFM personality traits. We found positive correlations of agreeableness and openness with likelihood to vote. While this did not support our hypotheses, it does support some previous research.

Introduction

- ❖ The Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality consists of Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism.
- ❖ Previous research focused on political participation and personality, while this study focuses on likelihood to vote.
- ❖ Previous research suggests that individuals scoring high on agreeableness, extraversion, and openness are more likely to be involved in political activity which may include voting (Blais & St. Vincent, 2011; Fowler & Kam, 2007; Ubig & Funk, 1999; Gerber et al., 2011; Denny & Doyle, 2008; Vecchione & Caprara, 2007).
- ❖ Other research suggests individuals scoring high on neuroticism are less likely to be involved in such acts (Denny & Doyle, 2008).
- ❖ Research on conscientiousness shows that likelihood to engage in political activity depends heavily on the specific activity, but Denny and Doyle (2008) found that individuals scoring high on conscientiousness are more likely to vote (Mondak et al., 2010; Gerber et al., 2011).
- ❖ This study further explores the relationship between FFM traits and likelihood to vote.

Hypotheses

- ❖ Individuals who score high on conscientiousness will be more likely to vote than those who score low on this trait.
- ❖ A positive correlation between extraversion and likelihood to vote.

Methods

- ❖ A Qualtrics survey sent to students enrolled in psychology courses or in common majors yielded 297 undergraduate students who either received extra credit or were entered into a raffle to win one of three gift cards.
- ❖ Participants completed the IPIP-50 and nine questions related to voting formulated by the student researchers.
- ❖ Correlational analyses examined the relationship between each of the FFM traits and six of the nine voting questions. Three binary voting questions about voter registration and eligibility were not included in the analysis.

Table 1

Correlation matrix

	E	A	C	N	O
Likelihood to vote in primary election	.01	-.14*	.09	-.02	.05
Likelihood to vote in general election	-.06	.10	.05	-.01	.09
Encourage others to vote	.05	.17**	.07	-.03	.13*
Thought given to upcoming election	.02	.16**	.04	-.02	.32**
Knowledge of polling place	-.07	-.13*	-.16**	-.11	.05
Vote in previous general election	.04	.12	.08	-.12	-.12

Note. $N = 297$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Results

- ❖ The analysis yielded a small positive correlation of likeliness to vote in a primary election with agreeableness and openness (See Table 1).
- ❖ The amount of thought given to the upcoming general election correlated positively with agreeableness and openness as well.
- ❖ Knowledge of polling place location correlated positively with agreeableness and conscientiousness.
- ❖ No correlation was observed between likelihood to vote in a general election or voting participation in the November 2016 presidential campaign and any of the FFM traits.

Discussion

- ❖ Participants who scored high on agreeableness and openness were more likely to vote than those with other personality traits. This suggests our sample may perceive voting as a conflict-avoiding act and one that is beneficial to the community. Our participants also may have been more likely to vote based on their curiosity and intellect, which aligns with the trait of openness.
- ❖ Personality traits did not correlate with previous voting behavior. This may have been due to the age of our sample; many participants were not old enough to vote in the last election.
- ❖ Despite our results, previous research suggests correlations between other FFM traits and likelihood to vote that align with our hypotheses.
- ❖ Participants may have been confused by some of the questions and/or terminology we employed.
- ❖ Understanding why people may or may not vote can help politicians, political advocates, marketers, and politically involved organizations to encourage more people to vote, including those who usually are not inclined to vote based on their personality traits.