

# PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS AND POLITICAL AFFILIATION

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**Abstract:** *the aim of the study was to examine the relations of dimensions of attitudes and knowledge to political affiliation. Adorno's and Eysenck's attitude scale and three achievement tests (of election information, political information and general information) were used. 200 students participated in the survey. The comparisons showed that attitudinal characteristics were not related to political affiliation (the only exception was religiousness), but knowledge significantly differentiated between the groups of students who voted for different parties.*

**KEYWORDS:** attitudes, political knowledge, political affiliation, political parties, college students, Slovenia

## OSEBNOSTNE ZNAČILNOSTI IN POLITIČNA PRIPADNOST

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**Povzetek:** *Raziskava ugotavlja odnos med stališčinimi dimenzijami in znanjem ter politično pripadnostjo. Stališčne dimenzije so bile izmerjene z Adornovo in Eysenckovo stališčno lestvico, znanje pa s tremi testi informiranosti (testom volilne informiranosti, testom politične informiranosti ter testom splošne informiranosti). Sodelovalo je 200 študentov. Rezultati kažejo, da stališčne dimenzije niso povezane s politično pripadnostjo (edina izjema je religioznost), informiranost pa pomembno razlikuje študente, ki so glasovali za različne stranke.*

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** stališča, politično znanje, politična pripadnost, politične stranke, študenti, Slovenija

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## INTRODUCTION

*Political affiliation has been related to many personality variables, such as traits, sex, age, values, attitudes etc. The influence of some personality characteristics (e.g. authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, toughmindedness and close-mindedness) has been studied by Adorno (1950), Eysenck (1954), Rokeach (1960) and other authors decades ago, and it is not certain that the relations they discovered are still valid. The contemporary relevance of Adorno's conclusions has been criticized (Eros 1995).*

One characteristic that has been quite neglected is political knowledge, although it is one of the strongest cognitive factors influencing various aspects of behavior. It could be supposed that political decisions (e.g. voting for a party) without relevant knowledge are more influenced by such external factors as propaganda, suggestion, imitation, conformity than by internal factors such as reasoning, autonomous values and standards (as they are described by Kohlberg, 1981).

The aim of the study was to examine two relations:

1. Between dimensions of attitudes (which were studied by Adorno and Eysenck) and students' political affiliation with various political parties.
2. Between knowledge and political affiliation with various parties.

Slovenia has many political parties (the number is changing), yet only 7 succeeded in entering the parliament: 5 bigger and 2 small parties. They are: Liberal Democrat party (LDP), Slovenian People's party (SPP), Social Democrat Party (SDP), Slovenian Christian Democrats (SCD), United List of Social Democrats (ULSD), Slovenian National Party (SNP) and Democrat Party of the Pensioners (DPP). Because this party was not ever chosen by the students, it will not be mentioned any more. This rank order of parties corresponds to their success at the last election in 1997.

It is very hard to group the Slovenian parties into the usual political categories because they change their political orientations and their programs are not consistent. We can only roughly and not accurately divide them along the left-right scale (left are more supporting equality, social care, tolerance towards past communist regime and right are more supporting nationalism, private property, denationalization and religiosity). Left are ULSD, DPP and partially LDP and SNP, and right are: SDP, SCD and SPP.

## METHOD

### Participants

200 male and female students from various colleges of the University of Ljubljana participated in the study.

### Procedure

Seven dimensions of attitudes were measured by Eysenck's scale. They are: permissiveness - strictness, racism - anti-racism, religiousness - non-religiousness, socialism - capitalism, liberalism - anti-liberalism, reactionary - progressive, pacifism - militarism. Authoritarianism was measured by the reversed Adorno F scale (California scale). Some questions were slightly modified and adjusted to the Slovenian situation (e.g. instead of Jews, who are extremely rare in Slovenia, Roms were named). The scale consists of 176 questions.

Knowledge was measured by three achievement tests: the tests of electoral information, political information, and general information. Each test consists of 50 multiple choice questions. The first test was performed 2 weeks after the election in 1997, and the last two tests in spring, 1998. The tests also asked which party the respondent voted for at the last election. Testing was anonymous. The analyses of variance and correlation coefficients were used.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A) Personality characteristics

*Table 1. Average scores for voters of particular parties and particular dimensions measured by the Eysenck's scale.*

Party	P-S	R-A	R-N	S-C	L-A	R-P	P-M
LDP	103	30	33	158	72	45	57
SPP	90	31	42	161	70	49	57
SDP	100	33	43	155	71	46	53
SCD	91	33	44	160	72	50	51
ULSD	94	35	34	158	70	50	60
SNP	94	32	37	167	71	48	58
Other	97	30	39	163	74	45	57
Abstaining	102	26	35	169	71	44	60

Note: Liberal Democrat party (LDP), Slovenian People's party (SPP), Social Democrat Party (SDP), Slovenian Christian Democrats (SCD), United List of Social Democrats (ULSD), Slovenian National Party (SNP)

Most differences are statistically insignificant. The only significant differences ( $P < 0.02$  or  $0.05$ ) are the differences which are obtained with the scale religiousness - nonreligiousness between the parties with the highest (SCD, SDP, SPP) and the lowest (LDP, ULSD) scores.

The results are surprising. The supporters of all parties are in regard to these 7 dimensions of attitude very similar. Even the voters for the liberal party (LDP) do not have higher scores in regard to liberalism - antiliberalism than the rest of the parties; and even the voters of the nationalist party (SNP) do not have higher score in regard to racism - antiracism than the rest of the parties. The voters of one of the social democrat parties, which originated in the former communist party (ULSD), did not receive higher scores on the scale socialism - capitalism than the parties, which are considered to be »right«.

The only exception is religiousness - nonreligiousness, where the right-wing parties received higher scores. It is in accordance with the quite strong political role of the Catholic Church in Slovenia.

**Table 2.** Average scores measured by the revised Adorno's F Scale

Party	M
LDP	19.2
SPP	15.7
SDP	19.0
SCD	19.3
ULSD	20.6
SNP	20.3
Other	21.1
No one	19.5
Abstaining	18.0

Note: Liberal Democrat party (LDP), Slovenian People's party (SPP), Social Democrat Party (SDP), Slovenian Christian Democrats (SCD), United List of Social Democrats (ULSD), Slovenian National Party (SNP)

The differences among and between groups are not statistically significant.

The differences between males and females are significant; the males have higher score than females. Even the voters of the parties which are considered to be quite right (e.g. SCD) or quite left (e.g. ULSD) do not differ in regard to obtained scores. Perhaps Adorno's conception of authoritarianism, ethnocentrism and fascism is not valid any more or the scale should be changed and modernized.

## Knowledge:

### 1. Test of election information

*Table 3. Average scores measured by the test of election information.*

Party	M	SD
LDP	21.7	6.1
SPP	17.9	6.5
SDP	22.6	4.5
SCD	20.1	6.2
ULSD	22.2	8.5
SNP	15.7	8.7
Other	21.0	7.0
Not known	17.5	8.1
All	20.6	6.9

Note: Liberal Democrat party (LDP), Slovenian People's party (SPP), Social Democrat Party (SDP), Slovenian Christian Democrats (SCD), United List of Social Democrats (ULSD), Slovenian National Party (SNP)

The differences among the eight groups are statistically significant ( $F = 2.10$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). Some parties (SDP, ULSD, LDP) are better informed about the elections than others (SNP, SPP). The differences between males and females are statistically significant ( $F = 42$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Males are better informed about the election than females. There is no significant interactions between these two factors.

## 2. Test of political information

**Table 4.** Average scores measured by the test of political information.

Party	M	SD
LDP	17.67	2.08
SPP	16.50	5.04
SDP	17.57	4.41
SCD	17.25	3.30
ULSD	17.90	4.33
SNP	13.33	4.16
Other	18.55	3.86
No one	16.50	4.36
Abstaining	13.46	4.50
All	17.11	4.05

Note: Liberal Democrat party (LDP), Slovenian People's party (SPP), Social Democrat Party (SDP), Slovenian Christian Democrats (SCD), United List of Social Democrats (ULSD), Slovenian National Party (SNP)

The differences among eight groups are statistically significant ( $F = 2.10, P < 0.05$ ). Some parties (ULSD, SDP, LDP) have better political knowledge than others (SPP, SNP). The difference between males and females is statistically significant ( $F = 42, P < 0.01$ ). The males are better informed about politics than females.

## 3. Test of general information

**Table 5.** Average scores measured by the test of general information.

Party	M	SD
LDP	19.26	4.61
SPP	18.75	4.63
SDP	19.71	4.73
SCD	19.25	4.35
ULSD	20.8	4.08
SNP	20.33	3.51
Other	21.05	3.36
No one	19.5	3.51
Abstaining	18.0	3.11
All	19.61	4.13

Note: Liberal Democrat party (LDP), Slovenian People's party (SPP), Social Democrat Party (SDP), Slovenian Christian Democrats (SCD), United List of Social Democrats (ULSD), Slovenian National Party (SNP)

The differences among the eight groups are not statistically significant. It means that the political knowledge of voters is not related to their political affiliation. The difference between males and females is statistically significant ( $P < 0.01$ ). The males have better general knowledge than females. There is no significant interaction between these factors.

Table 6. Correlations between the variables.

<b>All subjects:</b>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
test 1 and test 2	0.27	0.05
test 1 and test 3	0.20	not significant
test 1 and F-Scale	0.26	0.05
test 2 and test 3	0.47	0.01
test 2 and F-scale	0.15	not significant
test 3 and F-scale	0.04	not significant
<b>males:</b>		
test 2 and test 3	0.34	0.01
test 2 and F-Scale	-0.19	0.05
test 3 and F-Scale	-0.03	not significant
<b>females:</b>		
test 2 and test 3	0.58	0.05
test 2 and F-scale	0.20	0.05
test 3 and F-scale	0.10	0.05

The correlation between test 1 and test 2 could be expected, though it is not high. The significant correlation between test 2 and test 3 is inconsistent with the insignificant difference between the same tests. It means that both factors are related, in spite of the insignificant difference, and that general knowledge does correspond to political knowledge. Personality characteristics, measured by Eysenck's and Adorno's scales, do not differ among various political groups of voters, except religiousness. But knowledge differs and could be a factor that partially predicts and explains electoral success or failure.

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Table 6. Correlation between test 1 and test 2.

Group	test 1 and test 2	test 2 and test 3	test 1 and test 3
All subjects	0.34	0.25	0.28
males	0.30	0.20	0.25
females	0.38	0.30	0.34
ULSD	0.42	0.35	0.40
SNP	0.30	0.25	0.28
Other	0.25	0.20	0.22
No one	0.20	0.15	0.18
Abstaining	0.15	0.10	0.12

Note: Liberal Democrat party (LDP), Slovenian People's Party (SPP), Slovenian Democratic Party (SDP), Slovenian Christian Democrats (SCD), United List of Social Democrats (ULSD), Slovenian National Party (SNP).

The differences among eight groups are statistically significant (F-test,  $P < 0.05$ ): Some parties (ULSD, SDP, LDP) have better political knowledge than others (SPP, SNP). Women have better political knowledge than men.

The correlation between test 1 and test 2 could be expected through a high high. The significant correlation between test 2 and test 3 is inconsistent with the significant difference between the same tests. It means that both factors are related in spite of the insignificant difference and that general knowledge does correspond to political knowledge. Personality characteristics, measured by Eysenck's and Adorno's scales, do not differ among various political groups of voters, except religiousness. But knowledge differs and could be a factor that partially predicts and explains electoral success or failure.

ULSD	4.08	3.75
SNP	3.51	3.18
Other	3.36	3.03
No one	3.51	3.18
Abstaining	3.13	2.80
All	3.15	2.82