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**AUTHORITARIANISM AND ATTRIBUTION OF
RESPONSIBILITY**

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Abstract

The relationship between authoritarianism and personality traits was studied in a sample of people (N=401, .9% – females) aged 18-78 (M = 26.58, SD = 12.91). Measures: 1) abbreviated questionnaire of right-wing authoritarianism by B. Altermeyer (RWA), adapted by the authors of the current study; 2) Level of Subjective Control (LSC) questionnaire and 3) the Free Will and Determinism scale (FAD Plus), shortened and adapted by the authors. Males have higher authoritarianism than females. Authoritarianism is related to some extent with the structure of the parental family. Age-related changes in the level of authoritarianism are non-linear. Gender differences in locus of control are only observed in internality in the area of achievement (it is higher in males). Females assess the freedom of will and unpredictability of the world higher than males. There are no age differences in these characteristics. No influence is found of the structure of parental family on the indicators of responsibility attribution. The parameters of the internal locus of control are mainly related to conventionalism: the internal locus of control corresponds to a higher level of authoritarianism. It is shown that the link of authoritarianism to internality is partly due to internality in family relations. The links between the indicators of determinism and authoritarianism are similar in their content to the links between authoritarianism and the locus of control, which is quite natural since the indicators of the locus of control and determinism are interrelated.

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Keywords: Authoritarianism, authoritarian submission and aggression, conventionalism, locus of control, attribution of responsibility, freedom of will.



1. Introduction

The current notion of authoritarianism in differential psychology is based on studies of Altemeyer (1981), who in turn referred to the theory of the authoritarian personality by Adorno et al., (1950). Authoritarianism is treated as a psychological characteristic that satisfies certain criteria of personality traits featuring a normal distribution, normative stability, cross-situational consistency, etc. Authoritarianism is understood as a tendency to recognize the authority of any power and blind submission to it. Initially, nine manifestations of authoritarianism were considered but Altemeyer (1996) identified three basic components in it: authoritarian submission (desire to obey the structures of authority), authoritarian aggression (aggression against those who criticize power or demonstrate insubordination to it) and conventionalism (orientation to traditional norms and values).

2. Problem Statement

Much of the research on authoritarianism of the last three decades was devoted to socio-political issues – the relationship of authoritarianism to liberal and conservative dispositions, social prejudices, religious fundamentalism, etc. (Altemeyer, 1988; Doty, Petersen, & Winter, 1991; Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Lavane et al., 1999; Lavane et al., 2002; Peterson & Gerstein, 2005). To date, a number of works have appeared where authoritarianism is considered in the context of the psychology of individual differences, and the structure of links of authoritarianism and different personality traits is analyzed (Altemeyer, 1996, 1998; Ludeke, 2016; Ludeke, Hebbelstrup, Rasmussen, 2016; Akrami, Ekehammar, 2006; Leone et al., 2012; Desimoni, Leone, 2014; Silvia et al., 2014; Billings, Guastella, 1993).

When analyzing the relationship between authoritarianism and dispositional personal traits (the Big Five) it is noted that authoritarianism correlates negatively with the Openness to new experience and positively with Conscientiousness (see for example the meta-analysis of Sibley, Duckitt, 2008).

Since high level of Conscientiousness presupposes high degree of organization, discipline, dependence on the opinions of others, a tendency to follow directions, observance of social norms, both Conscientiousness and authoritarianism correlating with it are associated with the attribution of responsibility. Conservatives and people with high authoritarianism tend to attribute to individuals responsibility for the quality of their lives. Social inequality in that case is seen as a consequence of differences in individual abilities, persistence and perseverance. Respectively, it is true in that logic that decent and hardworking people have the right for more reward (Napier, Jost, 2008; Halkjelsvik & Rise 2014; Skitka, Tetlock, 1993).

The possible connection between authoritarianism and meritocratic attitudes allows one to expect authoritarianism to be related to the internal locus of control, since both (attributing success solely to those who deserve as well as internality), place the responsibility for success or failure with the person and not with the circumstances. Indeed, authoritarianism manifests connections with the internal control locus, as a rule (e.g., McCollaum, Lester, 1995). In support of the same assumption the relationship of authoritarianism to negative stereotypes of the relatively poor (lazy, irresponsible, uneducated, rude, drinkers, etc.) is mediated by internal (instead of external or cultural) attributions (Cozzareli et al., 2001).

Younger age groups (adolescents) manifest the connection of the internal control locus with positive attitudes toward the structures of authority as well (Heaven, 1988).

Moreover, the internal locus of control is sensitive to situations of threat, namely, the threat of stereotype, same as authoritarianism. The threat of stereotype is a situation in which a stereotype works to reduce personal self-esteem; for example, while varying experimentally the threat of stereotype the respondent is informed that the group or community to which the respondent belongs (by sex, age, education, etc.) fails to cope with the proposed task, as a rule. Under the threat of stereotype the internal locus of control leads to a decrease in the rate of success in performing the task while the external locus does not (Cadinu et al., 2006).

3. Research Questions

Since an authoritarian personality evolves in a specific social, cultural and historical context, the specificity of authoritarianism inherent in this or that society may be reflected in both behavioral manifestations and interrelationships of various psychological traits. It is suggested that in countries where the internal locus of control acts as a socially desirable value the relationship between authoritarianism and the control locus is tighter than in countries where the attitude to the control locus is ambivalent.

4. Purpose of the Study

In our study we aimed to analyze the relationship between authoritarianism and attribution of responsibility, including attitudes to responsibility for life events (locus of control) and world order (determinism, freedom of will, unpredictability of the world), and assess the extent to which our results correspond to those obtained in other cultural contexts or conflict with them.

5. Research Methods

The sample includes 401 respondents (55.88% of females, ages 18 to 78, $M=26.58$, $SD=12.91$).

5.1. Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism was assessed by the Short Questionnaire of Authoritarianism obtained by shortening and adapting the questionnaire of authoritarianism of the right wing proposed by Altmeier in 1997 (Jost & Sidanius, 2004). Our version of the questionnaire consists of 13 items with an internal coherence (α -Cronbach) of 0.91; in addition to the general indicator of authoritarianism it enables one to retrieve an indicator of authoritarian submission and aggression and an indicator of conventionalism.

Examples of statements that included the “authoritarian submission and aggression” scale with the largest factorial weights – “The situation in our country is getting so serious, the strongest methods would be justified if they eliminated the troublemakers and got us back to our true path”; “The established authorities generally turn out to be right about things, while the radicals and protestors are usually just “loud mouths” showing off their ignorance” Examples of statements belonging to the scale of “conventionalism” include “Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be

done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us.”; “the head of the family should be a male.”

5.2. Locus of control

To diagnose the locus of control the LSC questionnaire (Level of Subjective Control) was used consisting of 44 statements and allowing to evaluate both general internality and its more specific components – internality in the area of achievements, failures, family life, industrial and interpersonal relations and health (Bazhin et al., 1993). The higher the score on the scales of the questionnaire, the higher the level of internality and, the lower the externality, respectively.

5.3. Free Will and Determinism

The study employed the abbreviated version of the Free Will and Determinism Plus scale (FAD Plus) questionnaire shortened and adapted by the authors, which enables evaluating three indicators – fatalism, free will and belief in unpredictability of the surrounding world (Paulhus & Carey, 2011).

While filling in the questionnaires the subjects evaluated their agreement with the statements presented in the questionnaires on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 point corresponded to the answer “totally disagree,” and 5 points to – “agree completely.” The total score obtained for each scale was divided by the number of items making up the scale. Thus, every scale features the same dimensionality (from 1 to 5 points), which simplifies comparing them.

5.4. Data analyses techniques

To estimate the relationship of variables Spearman rank correlation coefficients were used. The differences between the groups were estimated by comparing their averages (after the Student's t test), dispersions (after the F-ratio), effect size (Kohen's d) and performing multiple comparisons (ANOVA). Data processing was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics, version 18.0 statistical system.

6. Findings

6.1. Descriptive statistics

6.1.1. The descriptive statistics of indicators of authoritarianism

The respondents' answers to both subscales of the questionnaire showed a spread of 1 to 5 points, that is, they covered the entire range of possible values. The average on the scale Authoritarian submission and aggression indicates that the respondents are more likely to choose “non-authoritarian” answers ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 0.90$). The average on the scale Conventionalism is somewhat biased toward “authoritarian” answers ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.92$). The average for the total score of the questionnaire falls in the middle of the scale $M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.82$.

Age-related changes in authoritarianism are rather obscure. Authoritarianism decreased from adolescence to middle age, reaching a minimum between 31 and 40 years of age, and then started to grow. The highest indicators of authoritarianism were found in the senior age group. Thus, the average score was 3.00 points on the scale “authoritarian submission and aggression,” 3.47 points on the

“conventionalism” scale, and 3.21 on the general authoritarian index in the subgroup of the youngest participants in the study (aged 18-20). The middle age subgroup (aged 31-40) featured the respective rates of 1.95; 2.88; 2.37 while the elderly (aged 61-78) scored 3.08; 3.75; 3.39, respectively.

When comparing males and females, a higher level of male authoritarianism is revealed in every indicator of the questionnaire: the average figures for males and females are 2.87 vs. 2.50, $p < 0.001$ on authoritarian submission and aggression; 3.48 vs. 3.20, $p < 0.01$ on conventionalism; -3.15 vs. 2.83, $p < 0.001$ on the cumulative index. The effect size (Cohen's d) when comparing males and females is -0.43 on Authoritarian submission and aggression, -0.30 on Conventionalism and -0.42 on the cumulative score.

When comparing single children to those who have siblings, it was shown that single children are less authoritarian (Cohen's d -0.35 vs. -0.39). Respondents with siblings show a higher level of authoritarian submission and aggression (2.78 vs. 2.45, $p < 0.001$), conventionalism (3.42 vs. 3.08, $p < 0.001$) and authoritarianism in general (3.07 vs. 2.74, $p < 0.001$). Meanwhile the number of siblings and the order of their birth do not affect the level of authoritarianism.

Descriptive statistics of indicators of the locus of control and the Free Will and Determinism scale

The average of the subjective control level was 3.39 by the integral scale with the standard deviation of 0.37. As for the separate parameters of the locus of control, their averages range from 3.15 (internality in the area of family relations) to 3.54 (internality in the area of interpersonal relations). The standard deviation varies from 0.49 to 0.70 for different scales. Thus, the sample demonstrates a slight bias towards the internal locus of control.

Despite the fact that the full spectrum of answers to questions of all three scales of the Free Will and Determinism questionnaire (from “completely agree” to “completely disagree”) was spanned, subjects were less likely to talk about the determinism of the world ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.17$), or believed that a human being has free will ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.80$) and chose answers indicating the existence of ideas on unpredictability of the world a little more often ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.05$).

Gender differences in LSC were only observed with respect to internality in the area of achievement (3.34 in females vs. 3.45 in males, $p < 0.05$). On the scale of the Free Will and Determinism females value free will (4.31 vs. 4.10 $p < 0.01$) and unpredictability of the world (3.37 vs. 3.09 $p < 0.01$) higher than males.

There are no age differences in these characteristics. No influence of the structure of parental family on indicators of attribution of responsibility were found.

Links of authoritarianism with attribution of responsibility and determinism

When comparing authoritarianism and the locus of control, it is shown that conventionalism is significantly associated with the internal locus of control, including general internality, internality in achievement and failure and internality in the area of family relations (although correlations are low – from 0.10 to 0.18 with $0.05 < p < 0.001$). Thus, the study confirms the notion that conservatism and orientation on traditional views imply and assume a certain level of responsibility.

The second indicator of authoritarianism reveals only one significant link: the higher authoritarian obedience and aggression, the higher the externality in the area of industrial relations, which is logical: submission assumes delegating responsibility to the person managing the subject (see Table 1).

Table 01. Links of authoritarian indicators with the locus of control and determinism (Spearman's r)

Indicator	Authoritarian submission and aggression	Conventionalism	Authoritarianism
Locus of control			
Cumulative internality indicators:			
General	-07	11*	03
Achievement oriented	09	18***	17***
Failure oriented	-04	10*	05
Internality in various areas:			
Family relationships	03	16***	12**
Industrial relations	-18***	-05	-12**
Interpersonal relations	-02	08	04
Health	-04	09	00
Determinism			
Freedom of will	08	27***	20***
Fatalism	30***	14**	24***
Belief in unpredictability of the world	24***	15**	22***

The links between the indicators of determinism and authoritarianism are similar in content to the links of authoritarianism and the locus of control, which is quite natural, since the indicators of the locus of control and determinism are interrelated: the higher the total internality index, the higher the index of free will (0.37, $p < 0.01$) the index of fatalism (-0.37, $p < 0.01$) and the lower one's belief in unpredictability of the world (-0,35, $p < 0,01$). Conventionalism, which reveals links with the internal control locus, has the highest correlation with free will, and the indicator of authoritarian submission and aggression associated with externalities in the area of industrial relations does not show any significant correlation with free will but is positively associated with fatalism and belief in the unpredictability of the world.

Belief in free will presupposes greater involvement in social interactions and expectation of responsible, predictable (i.e., conservative to some extent) behavior from others (Carey & Paulhus, 2013). Persons featuring respective attitudes tend to be less tolerant of those who violate the rules and constitute a threat to public order. (Kammrath and Scholar (2011)

Proceeding from the fact that authoritarian values require an active parental position and precise fulfillment of family responsibilities within the scope of one's gender role, we assumed that the relationship between internality and authoritarianism may largely be a consequence of internality in the area of family relations. To verify that assumption all points related to family relationships were removed from the locus of control scale and cumulative points (the total, the ones for achievement and failure) were calculated, scaled down to such a reduced scale. When comparing the new indicators of the control locus with the indicators of authoritarianism, a certain decrease was revealed in the tightness of links between authoritarianism and internality. E.g., the link of the two indicators of the locus of control to conventionalism dropped to insignificant (i.e., its connection with internality disappeared) while on the contrary the link of the two indicators of the locus of control to submission and aggression increased to significant (i.e., the connection with externality strengthened).

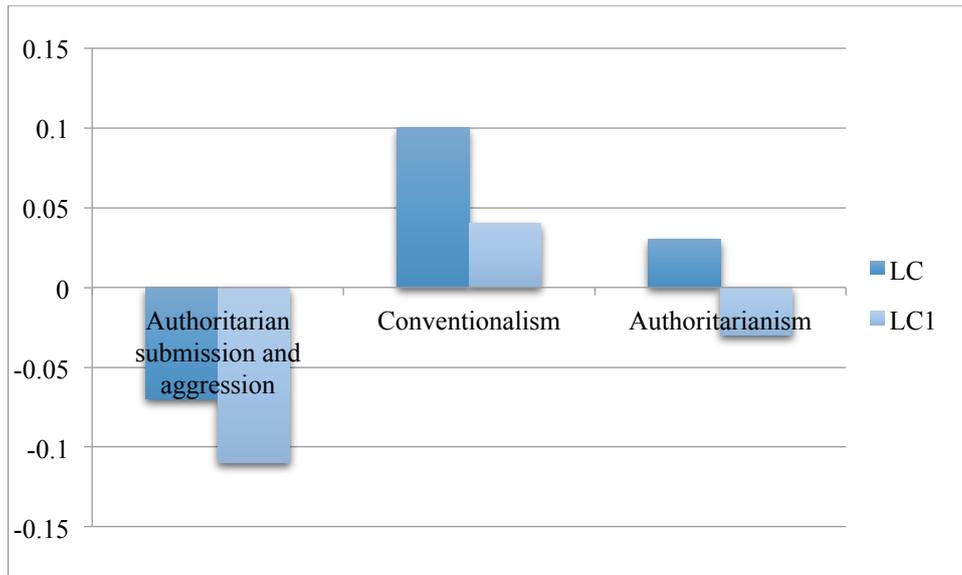


Figure 01. Correlations between the indicators of authoritarianism and the two indicators of the locus of control: the total score (LC) and the total score minus points for family relations (LC1)

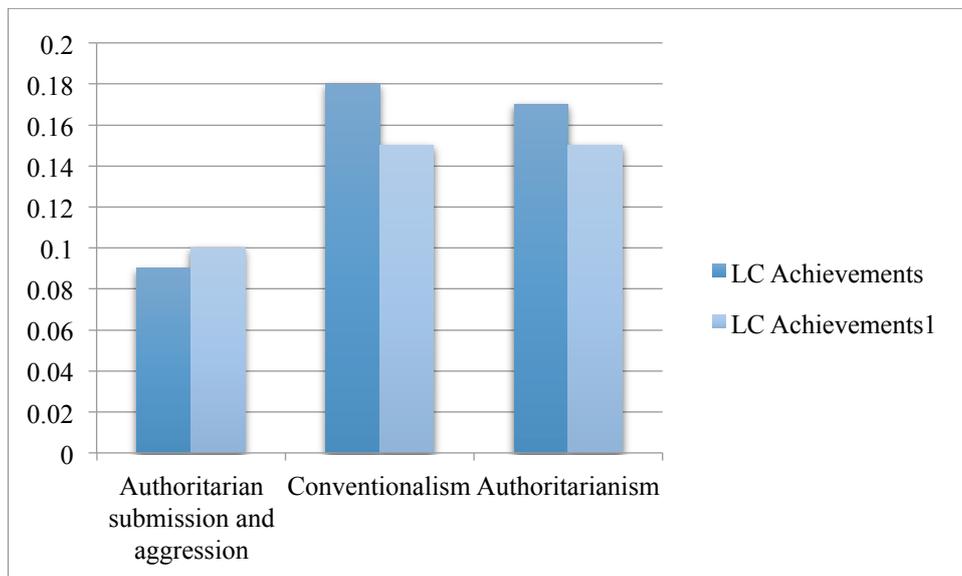


Figure 02. Correlations between the indicators of authoritarianism and the two indicators of the the locus of control: internality on achievements (LC Achievements) and internality on achievements minus points for family relations (LC1 Achievements)

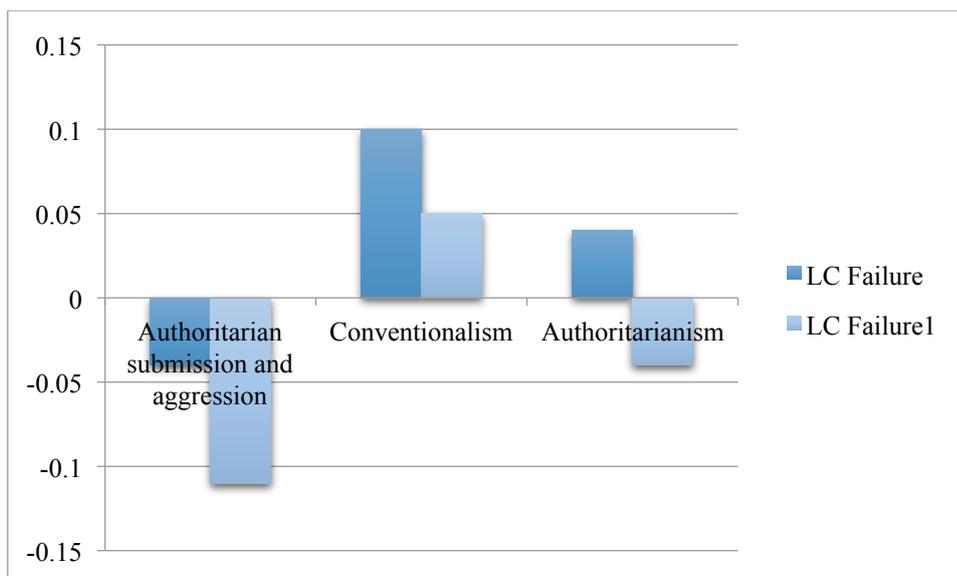


Figure 03. Correlations between the indicators of authoritarianism and the two indicators of the the locus of control: internality on failure (LC Failure) and internality on failure minus points for family relations (LC1 Failure)

As seen from the diagrams presented in Figures 1 to 3, 8 cases out of 9 testify that the change in the links between authoritarianism and the locus of control weakened the link with internality, so the assumption of a significant role of family internality in the relationship of authoritarianism and general internality was confirmed.

7. Conclusion

Parameters of the internal locus of control are mainly connected with conventionalism: the internal locus of control corresponds to a higher level of authoritarianism. It is shown that the relationship of authoritarianism with internality is partly due to internality in family relations. In their content, the links between the indicators of determinism and authoritarianism are similar to the links of authoritarianism and the locus of control, which is quite natural, since the indicators of the locus of control and determinism are interrelated. The data obtained correspond in general to the ideas by B. Altemeyer on the authoritarian personality and data from foreign studies.

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