

The Correlation between Personality Trait and Social Curiosity

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Abstract: Social curiosity is a form of curiosity that has significant roles in establishing and maintaining human relationship. Curiosity is frequently related with personal trait. The previous study about variety of curiosities finds correlation with openness to experience. However, there is correlation with extraversion in social curiosity. The previous study only correlates with three traits of Big Five personality trait, which are Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Agreeableness. Therefore, previous study does not discover the correlation of other traits than those three. This study aims to discover the correlation between five traits of Big Five personality trait. This study spreads two questionnaires to collect the research data, which are Social Curiosity Scale (SCS) and Big Five Inventory (BFI) 44. There is correlation between social curiosity with extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience in 136 participants in this research.

1 INTRODUCTION

Social curiosity is desire to achieve new information about how other people behave, think, and feel which is representing basic motivational behavior system (Hartung and Renner, 2011; Hartung and Renner, 2013; Renner, 2006). Social curiosity has significant role in social interaction and human relationship (Han, Li, Warren, Feng, Litman and Li, 2013). Interpersonal relation is the basic and theme of human life, that is most human behavior happened in the context of relationship with other people (Kasdhan, Stikma, Disabato, McKnight, Bekier, Kaji and Lazarus, 2013). Therefore, information about other people is indispensable in daily life.

Social curiosity is one form one form of curiosity that originated from internal motivation (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). Curiosity happened because human has congenital desire to handle uncertainty (Hsee and Ruan, 2016). This makes curiosity considered as powerful basic human motive (Kasdhan, Stikma, Disabato, McKnight, Bekier, Kaji and Lazarus, 2013). As powerful basic human motive, curiosity is frequently related with personality trait. Personality trait is being assumed as mindset and acquired behaviour, which is only found in organism with sophisticated cognitive system (McCrae, Costa, Ostendorf, Angleitner, Hrebickova, Avia, Sanz, Sanchez-Bernardos, Kusbil,

Woodfield, Saunders and Smith, 2000). Trait has significant role to predict and understand the variety of human behaviours (Fleeson and Gallagher, 2009; Paunonen, 2003; Paunonen and Ashton, 2001). It also can be used to understand the variety of exploration behaviours in satisfying general curiosity as well as social curiosity.

Generally, traits that are related with curiosity are openness to experience, neuroticism, and conscientiousness (Hunter, Abraham, Hunter, Golberg and Eastwood, 2016; Kashdan, Afram, Brown, Birbeck and Drvoshanov, 2011; Kashdan, Rose and Fincham, 2004; Kashdan and Steger, 2007). Among the traits that are correlated with curiosity, neuroticism correlated negatively with it (Kashdan, Rose and Fincham, 2004; Kashdan and Steger, 2007). The type of curiosity that is correlated with personality trait shows different results such as the correlation between entrepreneurial curiosity with openness to experience (Jeraj, Maric, Todorovic, Cudanov and Komazee, 2015), the correlation between epistemic curiosity with extraversion (Hunter, Abraham, Hunter, Golberg and Eastwood, 2016) the weak correlation between interpersonal curiosity with personality trait, and neuroticism as the highest correlation with interpersonal curiosity among other traits (Litman, Robinson and Demetre, 2016).

Social curiosity has correlation with extraversion, whereas the sub scales of general

social curiosity correlated with extraversion and the sub scales of covert social curiosity correlated with neuroticism (Paunonen, 2003). However, the result of correlation between social curiosity with personal trait cannot be determined because the previous study is only correlating social curiosity with three out of five traits in Big Five personality trait, which are extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness. Based on the result of this study, it cannot be as certain that social curiosity is only correlated with extraversion. Social curiosity is potentially having correlation with openness to experience and conscientiousness. The correlation between curiosity with openness to experience is highly possible because curiosity is attached to openness to experience (Kasdhan, Stikma, Disabato, McKnight, Bekier, Kaji and Lazarus, 2013). Openness to experience characterizes people who are willing – often excited – to deal with any kind of ideas, feelings, and activities; preference towards variety and novelty (McCrae and Greenberg, 2014; Woo, Chernyshenko, Longley, Zhang, Chiu and Stark, 2014). Openness to experience has a role in friendship and social relationship by searching similarity with others. The problem between interpersonal relationship is related with lack of openness to experience. Closed individuals are hard to understand and adapt towards others perspective, which is representing no flexibility (McCrae, 1996). Openness indicates the readiness of people to adapt their attitude and behaviour when dealing with new idea and situation (Onraet, Van Hiel, Roets and Cornelis, 2011).

Conscientiousness reflects mindset, feeling, and behaviour that relatively settled, automatically differs one person to another, and appears through a situation that will encourage the trait (Paunonen and Ashton, 2001). Conscientiousness has proactive and inhibitive aspects. Proactive aspect related with the behaviour of successful work, whereas inhibition related with self-control and restriction (Costa and McCrae, 1998; Costa, McCrae and Dye 1991). Even though conscientiousness is frequently related with academic achievement and work performance, it can be also associated with social curiosity, because of the significant role in developing and maintaining successful relationship (Baker and McNully, 2014). Conscientiousness is also associated with better interpersonal relationship and great motivation to solve the relationship problem (Jensen-Campbell, Knack and Gomez, 2010).

Openness to experience and conscientiousness have correlation potential with social curiosity. To prove what trait that is correlated with social

curiosity, it is necessary to do a study to see the correlation of social curiosity with five traits of Big Five personality trait. This topic will be the focus of this study.

2 METHOD

2.1 Participant

Participant in this study consist of 136 participants in emerging adulthood group. This age group is being used in this research because according to the previous study, they show high level of social curiosity than the older group (Renner, 2006). There are 40 male participants (29.4%) and 96 female participants (70.6%). The age of participants ranged between 18-25 years old ($M:20.31$, $SD: 1.93$).

2.2 Procedures

This study uses quantitative method and spreads research questionnaire to gather the data. Research questionnaire spreads by online to the students of Bina Nusantara University and for general population between 18 until 25 years old, that matched with emerging adulthood age group (Arnett, 2007).

Therefore, there are only participants who are willing to fill the research questionnaire. Research questionnaire consist of two parts, which are firstly, the profile of participants (age and gender) and the second part contains two research questionnaires that had to be filled

2.3 Measurements

2.3.1 Social Curiosity

Social Curiosity Scale (SCS; $\alpha: .764$) that is developed by Renner (Renner, 2006) to measure social curiosity being used in this study. SCS consists of two sub scales, which are General Social Curiosity (SCS-G; $\alpha: .725$) and Covert Social Curiosity (SCS-C; $\alpha: .805$) sub scale that contains 5 questions of each. SCS-G explains curiosity in others' habits, feeling, and thought. For example, *'I'm interested in people'*. SCS-C consists items such as overheard others' conversation or observing others quietly. For example, *'I like to look into others' lit of windows'*. SCS uses Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree) (Hartung and Renner, 2013).

2.3.2 Personality Trait

Big Five Inventory (BFI) 44 that is developed by John and Srivastava (John and Srivastava, 1999) being used to measure the personality trait. BFI 44 consist of 44 items with Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Example of its items are '*is talkative*', '*is helpful and unselfish with others*', '*does a thorough job*', '*is depressed, blue*', '*is original, comes up with new ideas*'. Reliability of BFI 44: α Openness: .657, α Conscientiousness: .746, α Extraversion: .840, α Agreeableness: .702, and α Neuroticism: .732.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

There is correlation between social curiosity with extraversion in this study ($p < .05$, $r: .215$), conscientiousness ($p < .05$, $r: .209$), and openness to experience ($p < .05$, $r: .207$). General sub scales of social curiosity correlated with agreeableness ($p < .05$, $r: .369$), extraversion ($p < .05$, $r: .322$), conscientiousness ($p < .05$, $r: .289$), and openness to experience ($p < .05$, $r: .001$). Covert sub scales of social curiosity correlated with conscientiousness ($p < .05$, $r: -.182$) and neuroticism ($p < .05$, $r: .225$).

As predicted on research hypothesis, social curiosity is not only correlated with extraversion, but also with openness to experience and conscientiousness. Similar with the result of previous study (Renner, 2006), social curiosity correlated with extraversion. Extraverts are being characterized as assertive, talkative, and motivated to involve with social contact (Tov, Nai and Lee, 2014). People with higher level of extraversion tend to interact frequently and spend a lot of time with others than people with lower level of extraversion (Nezlek, Schutz, Schroder-Abe and Smith, 2011). Extraversion has relation with positive affect (Smillie, DeYoung and Hall, 2014). Both relations happened because extraverts are assertive toward others (Smillie, Wilt, Kabbani, Garratt and Revelle, 2015). Assertiveness as the characterization of extraverts can push them to ask all information about someone who is interacting with them. As we know that assertive people put interest to know others' mind, feeling and behaviour, that can provide positive affect. Curiosity itself have correlation with positive affect (Quevedo and Abella, 2011).

In this research, correlation between extraversion and social curiosity have low correlation. This correlation happens because extraverts are assertive and full of enthusiasm (Gottlieb, Oudeyer, Lopes

and Baranes, 2013), therefore they don't use covert manners, such as overhearing or observing others to satisfy their social curiosity. On the contrary, extraverts will participate actively in their environment. This participation can produce positive affect on extraverts [44], therefore they enjoy interacting with other people directly rather than using other ways. This can be seen by the correlation between sub scale SCS-G with extraversion and no correlation between sub scales SCS-C with extraversion.

Openness to experience correlated with social curiosity can happened because having this trait can drive individuals to learn about other people including their interacting partner. Individuals with openness to experience will spend a lot of time by observing their interaction partner and less talk about themselves. Individuals that open about curiosity and attentive to their surroundings, and in the process to know new people, curiosity will make them to give more attention toward their interacting partner, as an effort to observe about their own partner (McCrae and Sutin, 2009). Therefore, individuals with openness to experience need to improve their social curiosity. It is needed to help people learn about how other people in a community think, behave, and notice what will they do afterward (Hartung and Renner, 2011).

Table 1: Personality trait and social curiosity.

| Trait | SCS | | SCS-G | | SCS-C | |
|------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | <i>p</i> | <i>r</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>r</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>r</i> |
| Openness to experience | .035 | .181* | .007 | .228** | .946 | .006 |
| Conscientiousness | .014 | .209* | .001 | .289** | .034 | -.182* |
| Extraversion | .012 | .215* | .000 | .322** | .532 | .054 |
| Agreeableness | .175 | .117 | .000 | .369** | .331 | -.084 |
| Neuroticism | .603 | .045 | .156 | -.122 | .008 | .225** |

*: $p < .05$

** : $p < .01$

Even though there is correlation between openness to experience and social curiosity, the correlation between them is being considered as low. This happens because openness to experience is more related with cognitive and creativity factors,

such as intellectual curiosity, intellectual interest, perceived intelligence, imagination, creativity, artistic and aesthetic interests, emotional and fantasy richness, and unconventional person (Onraet, Van Hiel, Roets and Cornelis, 2011). Furthermore, from 6 facets of openness to experience (fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas, and values) only one facet is associated with social curiosity, which is values. Individuals with facet openness to values tend to be always questioning about social, political, or religion values (Hartung and Renner, 2011). Association between openness to experience and social curiosity only related with people's effort in learning about social values and norms through other people.

Sub scales of SCS-G correlates with extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness in this study. The explanation of relation between sub scales SCS-G with extraversion and openness to experience is similar with the correlation of social curiosity to those three traits. It happened because SCS-G is approximately had similar meaning with social curiosity, which are curiosity to other people's habits, feeling, and thought (Hartung and Renner, 2013). Agreeableness is correlated with SCS-G because it is indispensable trait in interpersonal relationship compared with the other four traits in Big Five personality trait. Agreeableness characterized as cooperative, friendly, considerate, and helpful (Jensen-Campbell, Knack and Gomez, 2010). Agreeableness people are pro social, which is more likely to keep social harmony (Brutus and Witenberg, 2012). Compassion facet of agreeableness makes it related to the commitment of long-term relationship (Kern, Duckworth, Uruzua, Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 2013). People with agreeableness discover the needs of others to show their affection, being able to work together, as an effort to show friendly attitude, as well as encouragement to help others. This makes people with agreeableness are always motivated to gain information about others.

SCS-G also correlated with conscientiousness. Conscientiousness will shape the quality of long-term relationship. It is possible because people with conscientiousness are capable to manage conflict in a relationship. People with conscientiousness tend to show controlled and organized behaviour, and as a result they rarely being criticized by others (Paunonen and Ashton, 2001). To show controlled and organized behaviour, people with conscientiousness need have information about

knowledge and rules on how to behave (Hartung and Renner, 2011).

Similar with previous study (Renner, 2006), this study finds correlation between neuroticism with sub scales of SCS-C. Neuroticism is personality trait that characterized with chronic negative affect, involving sadness, worry, petulant, and self-conscientiousness, which are easily triggered and difficult to control (Ireland, Hepler, Li, and Albarracin, 2014). It makes people with high neuroticism is easy to worry, depressed, and feeling guilty. They are more self-conscious and believing that they have experiencing threatening and stressful event (Kandler, 2012). Neuroticism itself is related to intolerance of uncertainty. On the contrary, people with high intolerance of uncertainty will encounter greater worry in daily hassles (Chen and Hong, 2010). Uncertain condition will encourage people to search information (Gottlieb, Oudeyer, Lopes and Baranes, 2013) and develop curiosity (Jirout and Klahr, 2012). This uncertainty can happen because of no access or no ways to gain expected information directly from the source. It makes people with neuroticism become more curious and increase the stress. Therefore, they are encouraged to use covert way to fulfil their social curiosity. They will purposely overhearing other people's conversation or observing others secretly (Hartung and Renner, 2013).

Correlation between sub scales of SCS-C with neuroticism is being considered as weak. This level of correlation can happen because other than correlating with neuroticism, SCS-C also correlated with conscientiousness. People with neuroticism tends to act impulsively and have difficulty in control (Kandler, 2012). But on the hand, the negative correlation with conscientiousness can create an effort to control the satisfy of social curiosity by using covert ways. This makes people who tries to resolve the uncertainty about other people to not fully express the satisfaction of the curiosity about other people by eavesdropping their conversations or observing their behaviour. People is still trying to control their actions.

Sub scales of SCS-C is not only correlated with neuroticism but also conscientiousness, even though both of it have negative correlation in this study. Conscientiousness can be defined as tendency to follow the norms that are given socially to control the impulse, leads to the aim, to plan, able to postpone satisfaction, also follow the norms and rules (Robert, Jackson, Fayard, Edmonds and Meints, 2009). One of conscientiousness characterizations is ability to postpone satisfaction.

When they are desperately demand some information, including about others, people with conscientiousness are not using any way to satisfy their curiosity. They are not encouraged to do covert social curiosity, which is explained as behaviour to observe or eavesdropping other people (Hartung and Renner, 2013).

Correlation between sub scale of SCS-C with conscientiousness can be classified as weak. This also causes weak correlation between social curiosity with conscientiousness. This correlation can happen because SCS-C is assumed not related with the most common domain of conscientiousness, which is orderliness and industriousness. SCS-C only related with self-control domain from conscientiousness. Self-control is one of the qualities from conscientiousness that related with interpersonal relationship (Renner, 2006). Self-control represent the tendency to control impulsiveness (Kandler, 2012). The impulse that being controlled here is the impulsiveness to not satisfy their social curiosity with covert ways.

4 LIMITATIONS

This study has limitation on the amounts of participants and focus on only one group age, that is emerging adulthood. It needs more research to involve more people and age group. It is needed to test the constancy of relation between social curiosity with extraversion trait, openness to experience, and conscientiousness. As well as the constancy of relation between sub scales of social curiosity with other traits that have correlation in this study. Even though this study has weakness, it also gives benefit to a study about the correlation between social curiosity with personality trait. This study is conducted on different setting of culture with the previous study (Renner, 2006), which is in collectivist culture. The result of this study can give different perspective related with the relation between social curiosity and personality trait that is not universal.

5 CONCLUSION

The result of this study has similar and different results from previous studies. The similarity is on relation between social curiosity and sub scales of SCS-G with extraversion and sub scales of SCS-C with neuroticism. The differences are finding

relation between openness to experience and conscientiousness with social curiosity; relation between openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness with sub scales of SCS-G; and relation between conscientiousness with sub scales of SCS-C. Different findings from previous study induce some implications. First, lot of correlated traits with social curiosity are showing its complexity as applied in the setting of this study, which is in collective culture country. It is different with previous study (Renner, 2006) that applied on individualist culture. Second, related with the first implication, the study about social curiosity in collective culture becomes very relevant. Third, further research is necessary to deeply explore about the form of social curiosity in collectivist culture

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