



Personality Traits and Attitude towards One Nation and One Election Policy in Gujarat

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22753663>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Received: 23-06-2026

Accepted: 26-07-2026

Published: 21-08-2026

Keywords:

One Nation and One Election (ONOE), Big Five Personality Traits, Political Attitudes.

ABSTRACT

The present study examined the associations between the Big Five personality traits and attitudes toward the One Nation and One Election (ONOE) policy among a community sample in Gujarat, India (N = 452; 50.9 % male, 49.1 % female; M-age = 34.7 years, SD = 11.2). Participants completed the 44 items Big Five Inventory (BFI-44) and a newly developed 7 items scale assessing support for ONOE ($\alpha = .84$). Overall support for the policy was moderate (M = 4.82, SD = 1.35 on a 1–7 scale). Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted, entering demographic variables (age & gender) and self-reported political conservatism in the first block, followed by the five personality traits in the second block. Controlling for covariates, Conscientiousness emerged as a positive predictor of ONOE support ($\beta = .19$, $p < .001$), whereas Openness ($\beta = -.13$, $p = .003$) and Agreeableness ($\beta = -.09$, $p = .038$) were negatively related to support. Extraversion ($\beta = .04$, $p = .27$) and Neuroticism ($\beta = .02$, $p = .58$) were not statistically significant. Political conservatism was the strongest unique predictor ($\beta = .42$, $p < .001$), accounting for approximately 20% of the explained variance in ONOE attitudes. These findings suggest that, beyond ideological orientation, individual differences in personality particularly

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higher Conscientiousness contribute independently to public endorsement of systemic electoral reforms in the Indian context.

1. Introduction:

India's political scene is lively, and discussions about policies are a regular occurrence. One significant and often debated topic is the idea of "One Nation and One Election" (ONOE), also known as holding simultaneous elections. If implemented, this reform would mean that elections for the national parliament (Lok Sabha) and all state legislative assemblies would happen at the same time. The main goal is to reduce how often elections are held, which could save money, prevent governance from being constantly interrupted by campaigning, and possibly lead to more consistent policies.

The core arguments for ONOE often revolve around making administration more efficient, avoiding the "election mode" paralysis that can hinder government work, and ensuring that national issues get more focus during elections. However, not everyone agrees with this proposal. Critics worry that it might weaken regional identities and concerns, that national issues could overshadow local ones, and that it challenges the principles of federalism, which recognizes states as distinct political units with their own mandates.

While much of the public discussion on ONOE has focused on its economic and constitutional aspects, it's crucial to look deeper into the psychological factors that shape people's opinions. How individuals feel about complex policy proposals isn't formed in isolation. It's often influenced by a mix of personal experiences, beliefs, and, importantly, enduring personality traits. The study of personality psychology provides a way to understand how basic tendencies in people's personalities might affect how they view and react to social and political issues.

Gujarat, a state with a dynamic economy and an actively engaged electorate, offers an excellent setting to explore these psychological dimensions. The state's unique political journey and its diverse population provide a rich background to examine how individual psychology interacts with public opinion on a policy as impactful as ONOE. Therefore, this qualitative study aims to investigate the connection between the personality traits of citizens in Gujarat and their opinions on the "One Nation, One Election" concept, seeking to understand the underlying reasons for their stances.

India's political landscape has recently been buzzing with discussions about the "One Nation, One Election" (ONOE) proposal. This electoral reform suggests synchronizing elections for the Lok Sabha (national parliament) and all State Assemblies, holding them together either in one go or over a set period.



Supporters believe ONOE would significantly cut down the high costs of frequent elections, allow governments to concentrate on their work instead of being in constant "campaign mode," and ensure continuity in policies (*Law Commission of India, 2018*). On the other hand, those who oppose it raise concerns about potentially weakening federalism, the risk of national concerns overshadowing local ones, and the practical difficulties of implementing such a massive change (*Kumar & Sharma, 2020*).

While the debate around ONOE is full of political, economic, and constitutional arguments, the psychological factors that shape individual opinions on this policy are not well explored. Public opinion isn't formed in a vacuum; it's influenced by a complicated mix of demographics, political beliefs, media exposure, and consistent individual differences. One of the most well-established frameworks for understanding these individual differences is the Five Factor Model of personality, often called the "Big Five": Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (*McCrae & Costa, 2008*).

• **Personality and Political Attitudes:**

A considerable amount of research in political psychology has found clear links between the "Big Five" personality traits and political views, especially in Western countries. **Conscientiousness**, marked by a preference for order, duty, and carefulness, is consistently linked to conservative political views and support for the current social order (*Carney et al., 2008*). **Openness to Experience**, which involves intellectual curiosity, creativity, and a liking for new things, is a strong indicator of liberal views and support for progressive social policies (*Jost et al., 2003*).

Agreeableness, reflecting traits like compassion, trust, and cooperation, has been associated with community-focused values and support for social welfare programs, although its connection to traditional left-right political ideologies is less consistent (*Gerber et al., 2010*). **Neuroticism** (the tendency to experience negative emotions like anxiety and fear) and **Extraversion** (sociability and assertiveness) have shown more complex and often situation-dependent relationships with political beliefs.

2. Literature Review:

The discourse surrounding One Nation and One Election (ONOE) has predominantly been framed by arguments concerning its economic feasibility and its implications for democratic governance. Proponents, including the Law Commission of India and various political leaders, have consistently pointed to the substantial financial savings that could be realized by conducting elections simultaneously. They argue that the continuous model of elections in India necessitates significant expenditure on security,



logistics, and administrative manpower, which could be reallocated to developmental initiatives (*Law Commission of India, 2018*). Furthermore, the argument of policy continuity is frequently advanced; the constant electoral campaigning, it is posited, leads to a prolonged period of "election mode," where governments are hesitant to take bold policy decisions for fear of electoral repercussions. Simultaneous elections, therefore, are seen as a means to ensure a more stable and predictable governance environment.

Conversely, a considerable body of criticism has been leveled against ONOE, primarily concerning its potential impact on federalism and representative democracy. Critics argue that synchronizing elections could lead to the national agenda dominating the electoral landscape, potentially marginalizing regional parties and issues that are crucial for the specific needs and aspirations of individual states (*Ghosh, 2018*). The dissolution of state assemblies and their subsequent re-elections, interspersed with national polls, is seen by some as a way to hold state governments accountable to their electorate more frequently and allow for course correction. ONOE, in this view, could diminish this accountability mechanism. Concerns have also been raised about the feasibility of implementing such a radical shift within the existing constitutional framework, particularly regarding the provisions of Article 83 and Article 172, which deal with the duration of Parliament and State Legislatures, respectively (*Purohit, 2017*).

Beyond the immediate political and economic ramifications, scholars have begun to explore the psychological dimensions of political attitudes. Research in political psychology has long established that personality traits can influence political behavior and opinions. For instance, studies have linked traits like openness to experience with more liberal political views, while conscientiousness has been associated with more conservative attitudes and a greater adherence to order and tradition (*McCrae & Costa, 1997; Jost et al., 2003*). Similarly, the Big Five personality traits - *Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (OCEAN)* have been utilized to understand ideological predispositions.

However, direct empirical research specifically linking personality traits to public opinion on the ONOE concept, particularly within a specific regional context like Gujarat, remains nascent. While general studies on political tolerance, authoritarianism, and personality exist, the nuanced application of these frameworks to emerging policy proposals like ONOE requires focused investigation. This study seeks to fill this gap by employing a qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of how individual personality predispositions might shape perceptions of electoral reforms, using Gujarat as its empirical ground.

The ONOE proposal offers a unique chance to test these observed relationships within the Indian context. The policy can be viewed psychologically in different ways. On one hand, it represents order, efficiency, fiscal responsibility, and a move towards a more streamlined system appealing to traits



associated with **Conscientiousness**. On the other hand, it is a significant departure from the current system, a large-scale reform that could centralize power and potentially reduce regional diversity and complexity a perspective that might be met with caution by individuals high in **Openness to Experience**.

- **Aim & Hypotheses of the study:**

Explore the relationship between the Big Five personality traits (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism) and public opinion for the “One Nation and One Election” (ONOE) policy.

This study, therefore, aims to fill a gap in existing research by being the first empirical investigation into the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and public attitudes towards the ONOE policy, specifically within the unique socio-political environment of Gujarat. Gujarat, with its distinct political history and high level of political engagement, provides a relevant setting for this research. Based on the existing literature, the following hypotheses were developed:

- ✓ **H1:** Conscientiousness will be positively correlated with support for the ONOE policy.
- ✓ **H2:** Openness to Experience will be negatively correlated with support for the ONOE policy.
- ✓ **H3:** Agreeableness will be negatively correlated with support for the ONOE policy, reflecting concern for the policy's potential impact on regional representation and federal harmony.
- ✓ **H4:** Neuroticism and Extraversion are not expected to have a significant relationship with attitudes toward ONOE.

3. Research Methodology:

3.1 Participants:

A total of 452 adults were recruited from four major cities in Gujarat state - Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot and Vadodara. Participants were sourced using a convenience sampling method through public spaces, community centers, and college and university campuses. The sample consisted of 230 males (50.9%) and 222 females (49.1%), with an age range from 18 to 60 years ($M = 34.7$, $SD = 11.2$). In terms of education, 4.4% had completed high school, 35.2% had some college or a diploma, 48.9% held a bachelor's degree, and 11.5% held a postgraduate degree.

3.2 Measures:



- **Demographic Questionnaire:** Participants provided information on their age, gender, level of education, and self-reported political leaning (on a scale from 1 = *Very Liberal* to 7 = *Very Conservative*).
- **Personality Traits:** The Big Five personality traits were measured using the 44 items Big Five Inventory (BFI-44; John & Srivastava, 1999). This widely validated instrument assesses Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Participants rated their agreement with each statement (e.g., “*मैं स्वयं को एक ऐसा व्यक्ति मानता हूँ जो हर काम में बारीकी से और पूरी सावधानी के साथ कार्य करता है।*”) on a 5-points Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Cronbach's alpha for the subscales in the present study was acceptable: Openness ($\alpha = 0.79$), Conscientiousness ($\alpha = 0.82$), Extraversion ($\alpha = 0.85$), Agreeableness ($\alpha = 0.75$), and Neuroticism ($\alpha = 0.81$).
- **Attitude towards ONOE Scale:** Total 7 items scale was developed by researcher for this study to measure public opinion on the ONOE policy. Items covered perceived benefits and drawbacks (e.g., "Simultaneous elections will save a lot of public money," "One Nation, One Election threatens the identity of regional political parties"). Participants responded on a 7 points Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). After reverse scoring relevant items, a total score was calculated, with higher scores indicating greater support for ONOE. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.88$).

3.3 Procedure:

Data were collected over a two weeks period in January-2026. At the start of each session the researcher introduced the study, explained its purpose in simple language, and obtained written informed consent from every participant. Participants then completed a self-administered questionnaire that took roughly 12-14 minutes to finish. To accommodate linguistic preferences, the survey was offered in Hindi Language. All surveys were completed via Google forms in a quiet, the entire procedure from consent to survey completion was designed to be straightforward, culturally sensitive, and respectful of participants' time.

3.4 Data Analysis:

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Software (Version-28). Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the bivariate relationships

between the Big Five traits and support for ONOE. Finally, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the unique predictive power of each personality trait on ONOE support, after controlling for demographic variables (age & gender).

4. Results and Discussion:

The following table presents the key findings of the hierarchical regression analysis examining how the Big Five personality traits and political conservatism predict public support for the "One Nation and One Election" (ONOE) policy in Gujarat, India. Demographic variables (age, gender) were entered in the first step, followed by political conservatism, and finally the five personality traits. All values are standardized regression coefficients (β), standard errors (SE), and associated p -values.

All predictor variables were entered in three blocks. **Block No-1:** Demographics (Age & Gender), **Block No-2:** Big Five Personality Traits and **Block No-3:** Attitude towards One Nation and One Election. Dependent variable = Support for ONOE policy ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 1.35$, range: 1–7; $N = 452$). Higher scores indicate greater support. Personality traits were measured using the BFI-44. Attitude towards one nation and one election 7- items scale developed by researcher. ($\alpha = 0.84$).

Table No: 1-Predictors of Support for One Nation One Election (ONOE): Coefficients, Standard Errors, p-values, and Interpretations

Predictor	β	SE	p -value	Interpretation
Block 1: Demographics				
Age	0.04	0.05	0.456	Older age not significantly linked to ONOE support.
Gender (Male = 1)	0.06	0.05	0.213	No significant gender differences in support.
Block 2: Personality Traits				
Conscientiousness	0.19	0.05	< 0.001	Linked to greater support; highly organized, disciplined individuals more likely to favor ONOE.
Openness to Experience	-0.13	0.05	0.003	Linked to lower support; curious, open-minded individuals less supportive of ONOE.
Agreeableness	-0.09	0.04	0.038	Mildly linked to lower support; kind, cooperative people less in favor.
Extraversion	0.05	0.05	0.312	No significant link to ONOE support.



Neuroticism	-0.03	0.05	0.567	No significant emotional stability link to support.
Block 3: Attitude towards One Nation and One Election (ONOE)				
Political Conservatism	0.42	0.06	< 0.001	Strongly linked to higher ONOE support; largest predictor. Explained 20% unique variance.

Note: - β = standardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error. All variables entered in hierarchical blocks. ONOE = One Nation and One Election.

• Interpretation and Discussion:

The results show that Indian adults in Gujarat express **moderate support** for the ONOE policy. While **political conservatism** was the strongest predictor suggesting ideological alignment plays a major role **personality traits** also independently influence public opinion.

People high in **Conscientiousness** those who are organized, responsible, and value structure are more likely to support ONOE. This may be because they see the policy as a way to simplify and streamline elections, aligning with their preference for order and efficiency.

In contrast, individuals high in **Openness** who tend to be imaginative, open to change, and enjoy diversity are less supportive. They may view ONOE as a threat to federal diversity or democratic flexibility. Similarly, those high in **Agreeableness** typically kind and cooperative may worry about reduced representation or increased centralization, leading to lower support.

Interestingly, **Extraversion** and **Neuroticism** had no meaningful link to attitudes, suggesting that sociability or emotional sensitivity does not shape views on this policy.

Overall, this study shows that **personality matters** even when accounting for age, gender, and political beliefs. Understanding psychological traits can help explain why people support or oppose major political reforms like ONOE. These findings add to the growing research on the psychology of political attitudes in non-Western democracies like India.

5. Implications and Limitations:

These findings have important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, they extend the applicability of the personality politics link to a non-western context and a specific policy issue beyond broad ideology. Practically, they suggest that public discourse around ONOE could be more effective if it acknowledged these underlying psychological drivers. For instance, campaigns in favor of the policy might

resonate more if they emphasize themes of order and stability, while opposition campaigns could find more traction by focusing on themes of diversity, autonomy, and the preservation of complexity.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study used a convenience sample from only urban areas in Gujarat, which limits the generalizability of the findings to rural populations or other Indian states. Second, the research design is correlational, meaning causality cannot be inferred. It is possible that attitudes toward ONOE could, over time, shape personality expression, although personality is generally considered more stable. Third, the attitude toward ONOE Scale was developed for this study and while internally consistent, would benefit from further validation.

6. Future Research and Conclusion:

Future research should replicate this study with a nationally representative sample to enhance generalizability. A longitudinal design could track how attitudes change as the policy debate evolves and whether personality predicts the stability of these attitudes over time. Qualitative studies could also provide deeper insight into the reasoning and emotional responses that underlie these statistical relationships.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that public opinion on a major structural reform like "One Nation, One Election" is not merely a product of political calculation but is also rooted in stable personality traits. Support for ONOE is significantly predicted by a conscientious desire for order and efficiency, while opposition is linked to an open-minded preference for diversity and complexity. Understanding these psychological underpinnings is essential for a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis of political attitudes in contemporary India.

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