

## **HOW WE COME TO BELIEVE: A CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATION OF POLITICAL IDEOLOGY FORMATION**

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### **Abstract**

Political ideology is a complex concept, commonly defined as a set of beliefs and values that shape an individual's political views and opinions. The formation of political ideology is a critical area of study, offering insights into the evolving political landscape. Understanding the factors that influence an individual's political ideology is, therefore, a key research concern. This study identifies a theoretical gap in comprehensively conceptualizing the multifaceted factors that contribute to ideological formation. To address this gap, a structured review was conducted with the aim of examining key influences such as personality traits, gender differences, personal economic status, media exposure, childhood experiences, and cultural values. The review also explores exogenous, mediating, and moderating factors that shape ideological development. A keyword-based search, subject and abstract screening, and full-text review were used to identify relevant academic literature. The review process followed a systematic approach adapted from Webster and Watson (2002), which emphasizes organizing existing knowledge to build conceptual clarity. The major contribution of this study is the development of a conceptual framework that explains how various factors interact in shaping political ideology. The findings aim to strengthen academic understanding of ideological formation and offer practical insights for policymakers seeking to foster informed and engaged citizenship.

*Keywords:* Conceptual Framework; Exogenous Factors; Ideological Formation; Mediating Factors; Political Ideology.

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## **1. Introduction**

A wide range of beliefs, values, and principles that influence people's perspectives on the world and the organization of society are referred to as political ideologies. Political ideology is fundamentally concerned with issues of power, authority, and governance. It seeks responses to questions such as: who ought to lead, what objectives does the government have? and which roles do people and groups play in society? (Harrison, display, 2018).

Political ideology, however, is more than just a function of preference. It affects how societies are set up and how we deal with the problems we face today in the actual world. For instance, the policies we support and the steps we take will be influenced by our opinions on healthcare, education, and the environment (Holcombe, 2021). Therefore, political ideology is not merely a function of personal preference. It is also influenced by the more powerful historical, cultural, and economic influences. For instance, the 20th century saw the birth of neoliberalism, which was influenced by both the ideological conflicts among various factions and the prevailing economic troubles of the time (Eshel & Filc, 2022). Political ideology is moreover more than simply a collection of theoretical concepts. It affects people's life in the actual world. For instance, conservative government policies in the US and UK have been associated with increasing income inequality and decreasing social mobility, whereas socialist government policies in Scandinavia have been associated with high levels of social welfare and economic equality. (Harrison & Boyd, manchesteropenhive, 2018) Political ideology, to sum up, is a complicated and varied idea that represents our values, convictions, and experiences (Martin, 2015). It influences how we perceive the function of the state, the economy, and individual rights and has practical ramifications for how we set up our communities and deal with the problems we face today (Frieden, 2020).

There are several political ideologies, each with a distinct set of views and norms. Conservatism, liberalism, socialism, and anarchist are some of the most well-known political ideas (Smith, 2022). While these beliefs appear to be fundamentally opposed, they all share a common goal: to build a more just and equal society. Conservatives place a premium on tradition, stability, and hierarchy. They think that society should be organized on ideas like as individualism and free market capitalism, and that change should be gradual and deliberate (Beteille, 1986). They consider government as a necessary evil whose authority and scope should be minimized. Individual rights, social fairness, and equality are significant to liberals (Freeman, 2017). They believe that government should take a role in ensuring that everyone has access to fundamental necessities such as healthcare, education, and housing (WHO, 2022). They are more receptive to change and feel that collective effort and cooperation may lead to improvement. On the other hand, Socialists take these ideas even further by calling for the capitalist system to be completely reformed. They think that workers should jointly own the means of production rather than a small minority of capitalists (Islam, 1988). Inequality and exploitation are seen as inherent in the capitalist system, and they attempt to establish a more progressive society through democratic planning and control (Fotaki & Prasad, 2015). Anarchists adopt a more radical approach, opposing any hierarchy or centralized power. They think that

without intervention from a centralized government, people should be free to organize and govern themselves. They want to establish a society based on voluntary collaboration and mutual help because they believe that the state is fundamentally restrictive (Angelbeck & Grier, 2012). Finally, political ideology is a complex and complicated term that represents our values, beliefs, and experiences. It impacts our perspectives on the role of government, the economy, and individual rights, and has real-world consequences for how we structure our communities and solve today's difficulties (Harrison, display, 2018).

***The relationship between an individual's political ideology and a political party's ideology can be complex and multifaceted.;***

A set of beliefs and values that shape an individual's political views and opinions is referred to as political ideology. These beliefs can include ideas about government's function, economic policies, social issues, and foreign policy, among other things (Jacoby, 1991). Childhood, education, socioeconomic class, and life events can all have an impact on an individual's political ideology. A political party's ideology, on the other hand, refers to a collection of views and principles that shape the party's overall political agenda and program. Political parties frequently take views on concerns such as the economy, social policy, foreign policy, and other areas of governance (Harrison & Boyd, 2018). An individual may decide to support and vote for a political party if their political beliefs closely match those of that party in various circumstances. In other situations, a person's political beliefs might not easily fit into any one party's ideology, and they might decide to support the group they think most closely represents their beliefs (Gerber, Huber, & Washington, 2008).

In recent decades, new political developments have added layers of complexity to ideology formation. The global rise of populism—characterized by anti-elite rhetoric, nationalism, and moral dichotomies between 'the people' and 'the elite'—has reshaped party systems and voter alignments in both developed and emerging democracies (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Financial Times, 2024). Populist ideologies often simplify political discourse and catalyze shifts in mainstream ideological boundaries.

Simultaneously, the rise of digital political engagement—via social media activism, online mobilization, and influencer-based discourse—has transformed how individuals acquire and express ideological beliefs. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) offer personalized, emotionally resonant content that bypasses traditional media gatekeeping (Columbia News, 2023). These digital spaces can amplify polarization, foster echo chambers, and facilitate the spread of misinformation (Tucker et al., 2018; Modern Diplomacy, 2023), significantly shaping individual ideological worldviews.

Furthermore, the ideological landscape in non-Western societies challenges conventional liberal-conservative frameworks. In South Asia, political ideology is heavily influenced by caste, religion, and postcolonial state structures (Chhibber & Verma, 2018). In the Middle East, ideology is closely linked to religious authority and authoritarian governance (Mahmood, 2021). Across many African states, political identity is shaped by tribal loyalties, colonial legacies, and economic disparities (Cheeseman, 2019). These contexts require alternative theoretical lenses and caution against applying Western-centric models universally.

As a first stage, a thorough assessment of previous findings was conducted, and related facts were organized to establish the conceptual framework for this study about the formation of political ideology amongst individuals. The methodology selection highlights the theoretical approaches and analytical methodologies used to investigate the many impacts on political ideology. The analysis part investigates the conceptual links between several variables, including socioeconomic status, childhood experiences, and media exposure.

## **2. Literature Review**

In recent times, there has been an emergence of scholarly attention towards the topic of political ideology in the disciplines of political science and psychology (Jost & Amodio, 2012). Highly influential people are becoming more separated along societal and ethnic boundaries. Additionally, academics are attempting to comprehend why people support left or right ideas because they believe that opinions of individuals may be more complex than previously held. Such research in academia generally defines ideology as a one-dimensional continuum, running from liberal to conservative or from left to right (Bardeen & Michel, 2018). Numerous recent investigations commence with a one-dimensional (liberal-conservative or left-right) conceptualization of political ideology. In many cases, this goes beyond being convenient and is actually a component of the conceptual structure. Prior research studies have concentrated on identifying and analyzing the determinants that influence the development of an individual's political ideology with respect to demographic characteristics, socioeconomic factors, and environmental factors (Feldman & Johnston, 2013).

Several studies have shown a strong correlation between personality factors and political ideology. According to research, personality qualities such as openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are linked to political opinions and attitudes (Godø, Bjørndal, Fluge, Johannessen, & Lavdas, 2024). Furthermore, those with high levels of socially aversive personality tend to support more right-wing political ideologies, such as economic conservatism, and vote. Moreover, the mediating role of political liberalism adds complexity to the relationship between personality and political ideology, with openness being connected to COVID-related attitudes and behaviors mediated political ideology (Panish, Ludeke, & Vitriol, 2023). These findings illustrate the complex relationship between personality characteristics and political ideology, underlining the necessity of understanding how individual variations shape political ideas and behaviors. Contrary, personality is a major factor in the formation of political ideologies since it shapes people's views and values (Moshagen, Hilbig, & Zettler, 2024). Previous studies reveal that certain personality characteristics, including a socially awkward disposition, are linked to supporting right-wing political views, economic conservatism, and subsequent voting patterns. Furthermore, self-reported political orientation and specific policy positions are associated with the Big Five personality traits of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness; openness and agreeableness are negatively correlated with party alignment on the right, while conscientiousness is positively correlated with it (Grünhage & Reuter, 2020). Furthermore, the combination of personality characteristics and religiosity in twin samples indicates that personality

has lower of an impact on political beliefs than religiosity does, highlighting the genetic predispositions that underlie the relationship between ideology, personality, and religion (Ksiazkiewicz & Friesen, 2021).

In addition to the personality factor, Gender differences have a considerable impact on political ideology, as proven by several research. Previous studies have shown that women perceive and experience more gender inequality than males, with personal and social perspectives changing between genders (Sevincer, Galinsky, & Oettingen, 2023). In terms of political socialization, girls regularly place themselves more to the left than men, demonstrating a gender-generation divide that effects ideology transmission within households (Ditmars, 2022). Furthermore, in Indonesia, women politicians have a greater impact on citizens' political satisfaction due to better communication and efficacy, emphasizing the importance of women in politics and governance (Amin & Ritonga, 2022). These findings highlight the complex link between gender, political ideology, and public conceptions of equality, emphasizing the significance of taking gender variations into account when evaluating political attitudes and behaviors. Another factor that impacts the formation of political ideology is personal economics. Individual economic beliefs, such as materialism and the value of saving money, might impact political inclinations, especially views on welfare expenditures and income redistribution (Friesen & Hibbing, 2016).

The way that young people build their political ideologies is greatly influenced by the media they consume. Given that social media platforms create echo chambers that reinforce preexisting views, they have a significant impact on the formation of political ideology (Zahran, Nizah, Bakar, & Mokhtar, 2024). The study by Mathews & Orlinski (2022) have demonstrated that Adolescents who mainly make use of social media had lower levels of political awareness than those who depend on television for political news, indicating a relationship between media preference and political consciousness. All things taken into account, the selection of news outlets has an enormous impact on how people form and uphold their political ideologies (Kim, 2017).

In addition to above mentioned factors, One's political viewpoint might be greatly influenced by experiences that occurred during childhood (Dowse & Hughes, 1971). According to research, early experiences, such as childhood health, have a significant impact on adult political opinions and conduct. According to the existing researches, children with greater health under the age of 10 tend to lean toward conservative political ideas in maturity, whereas those with weaker health are less likely to acquire liberal ideologies later in life (Kannan, Pacheco, Peters, Lapham, & Chapman, 2022). Furthermore, prior personality characteristics, particularly those associated to negative bias, have been associated with political ideology in adulthood, however the supporting data for a direct relationship is weak and inconsistent (Fasching, Arceneaux, & Bakker, 2023).

Cultural values have an important influence in creating political ideology, as proven through numerous research articles. A study by Touseef, Khan, Ali, Abbas, & Raza, (2023) has highlighted that the liberal political orientations are predicted by progressive values like secularism and multiculturalism, while conservative political orientations are predicted by adherence to traditional cultural values like nationalism and religiosity. Furthermore, political ideology is linked to consumer choices for food

values, with conservatism emphasizing naturalness and tradition while opposing harmful environmental impacts (Tiganis, Chrysochou, & Krystallis, 2023). Furthermore, cultural political values explain more diversity in political conduct than ideology and partisanship, with the cultural theory having greater explanatory power than the cultural cognition theory (Swedlow & Johnson, 2019). Understanding the relationship between cultural values and political ideology serves as essential for understanding people's political actions and attitudes, emphasizing the importance of policies and democratic procedures that respect different cultural perspectives (Michaud, Carlisle, & Smith, 2009).

In addition to above mentioned factors, Muradova & Arceneaux, (2022) have identified that situational factors, Individual differences and Motivations impact the formation of political ideology of an individual. As such, genetic factors (Beattie, 2016), environmental factors (Beattie, 2016), mental health (Quzh, 2013), self education, Parents' authoritarian attitudes (Fraley, Griffin, Belsky, & Roisman, 2012), political learning & political learning in college (Huckestein, Mikulic, & Bernstein, 2018), Genetic variance in personality traits (Kandler, Bleidorn, & Riemann, 2012), Political events in adolescence (Stewart & Healy, 1986), Religious values (Chornopyska, 2023), historical experience & endowment structure (Qi & Mingxing, 2005), Sociological and psychological factors (Stradling & Zureik, 1970) have been identified as the factors affecting on the formation of political ideology of an individual.

The formation of political ideology has been extensively studied across disciplines including political science, psychology, sociology, and communication studies. Traditionally, scholars have emphasized the role of psychological traits, early-life socialization, economic conditions, and cultural environments in shaping ideological preferences (Jost et al., 2003; Caprara et al., 2006).

One of the most influential models in political psychology is the Big Five Personality Theory, which links specific traits to ideological tendencies. Individuals high in openness to experience tend to adopt liberal or progressive views, while those high in conscientiousness are more likely to endorse conservative ideologies (Gerber et al., 2010). These findings underscore the psychological foundations of ideological orientation, suggesting that personality predispositions can shape how individuals interpret social and political information.

Socioeconomic background also plays a critical role. Friesen and Hibbing (2016) found that individuals from economically disadvantaged groups often support redistributive policies and egalitarian ideologies, although this support is conditioned by perceived social mobility and political trust. Similarly, education influences ideology both directly—by increasing political knowledge—and indirectly—by promoting critical thinking and exposure to diverse perspectives (Pew Research Center, 2016).

Cultural values have been particularly emphasized in comparative politics and anthropology. Cultural Theory (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982) categorizes individuals into grid-group cultures (e.g., hierarchist, egalitarian, individualist), which help explain cross-national variations in ideological orientation. In non-Western societies, for example, collectivist cultural norms, religious traditions, and colonial histories create ideological configurations that diverge from the liberal-

conservative spectrum common in the West (Chhibber & Verma, 2018; Cheeseman, 2019; Mahmood, 2021).

Recent studies have increasingly focused on the impact of digital communication and media environments. The proliferation of social media has transformed how political ideologies are developed and reinforced. According to Tucker et al. (2018), digital platforms can amplify ideological extremism by creating algorithm-driven echo chambers that reinforce existing beliefs. Misinformation and disinformation—particularly on platforms like X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and Facebook—have been shown to distort political perceptions and deepen polarization (Modern Diplomacy, 2023; Guess et al., 2019).

The rise of populism further complicates ideological categorization. Populist leaders across regions—including Europe, Latin America, and South Asia—often present themselves as representing the 'true people' against a corrupt elite. This moral dichotomy simplifies complex policy issues and can attract supporters across traditional ideological lines (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Financial Times, 2024). Populism is thus seen not as an ideology in itself, but as a rhetorical style that attaches to both left- and right-wing frameworks, reshaping how citizens understand politics.

In non-Western contexts, ideological development is highly context-specific. In India, ideology is shaped by caste, religion, and the legacy of colonialism (Chhibber & Verma, 2018). In the Middle East, Islamic political movements intertwine religious doctrine with political structure (Mahmood, 2021). In Africa, tribal loyalty, clientelism, and postcolonial governance influence political identity more than standard left-right distinctions (Cheeseman, 2019). These dynamics reveal the limitations of applying Western models of ideology universally and support the need for culturally grounded frameworks.

### **3. Methodology**

To investigate the factors influencing political ideology formation in individuals, This study uses a conceptual approach to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding how political ideology is formed. Instead of collecting new data, it relies on existing research to bring together different perspectives from psychology, sociology, political science, and media studies. This method is based on the systematic review models proposed by Webster and Watson (2002) and Tranfield et al. (2003), which are especially helpful when building theory across multiple disciplines.

To gather relevant studies, the OpenAlex database was used. A targeted keyword search was carried out using terms like “political ideology formation,” “populism and political behavior,” “personality and politics,” “digital political participation,” and “cultural values and ideology.” This process initially identified 134 articles. After filtering out duplicates and less relevant studies, 78 articles were chosen for full review. Of these, 52 high-quality, peer-reviewed studies—published between 2000 and 2024—were selected for final analysis because they directly addressed political ideology and its influencing factors.

Each article was reviewed carefully, and key details were recorded, such as the authors, where and when it was published, the region it focused on, and what theories or variables it examined. These variables were grouped into categories like psychological, cultural, economic, or digital influences, and further labeled based on whether they played an independent, moderating, mediating, or external role in shaping ideology.

The studies were then organized around four main theories that guided this work: Big Five Personality Theory, Social Identity Theory, Cultural Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory. These helped identify common patterns and gaps across different contexts and disciplines. To ensure quality and avoid bias, two researchers independently reviewed the articles and agreed on their relevance and how they were classified. Special effort was made to include studies from non-Western contexts to ensure the model was globally relevant.

Rather than testing a specific hypothesis, this methodology aims to bring clarity to a complex and scattered field. By summarizing and organizing what is already known, the study builds a conceptual framework that reflects both traditional influences and newer trends—like social media, misinformation, and the rise of populism—and is flexible enough to apply across different regions of the world.

#### **4. Conceptual Framework**

##### ***Personality and political ideology***

Gian Vittorio Caprara, Shalom Schwartz, and other researchers have delved into how individual preferences, as rather than social factors, influence voters' choices regarding politics. They specifically addressed the impact of personality traits and personal values on political choice, modeled by the Five Factor Model and Schwartz's theory of basic personal values, respectively. Their research, which was based on data from 3044 voters for the two main coalitions in the Italian national election of 2001, has demonstrated that, largely as estimated, coalition supporters of the two parties had different traits and values. For example, in terms of friendliness and openness, center-left voters was superior to center-right voters, but they ranked lower in terms of energy and conscientiousness. Similarly, center-left voters were less likely to place a high high value on security, authority, achievement, conformity, and tradition but more likely to place a high value on universalism, compassion, and self-direction. The study by Gian Vittorio and colleagues ended up going beyond earlier research and demonstrated that values are more important than traits in predicting a person's political ideology (Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, Vecchione, & Barbaranelli, 2006).

Quantitative research was done by Alain van Hiel, Malgorzata Kossowska, and Ivan Mervielde to evaluate the association between Openness to Experience and political ideology. The research involved two adult samples, one from Belgium (N = 100) and one from Poland (N = 146). In the Polish sample, the study noticed a slight but significant negative relationship between Openness and ideology. Contrary to anticipated, the relationship between Openness and ideology was not observed in the political party sample. Furthermore, the study discovered that Openness to Emotions and Aesthetics were substantially poorer predictors of political ideology, and that the associations between Openness to Ideas and political ideology were inconsistent. Nonetheless, Future study may be guided by the revelation that some Openness



characteristics have greater correlations with ideology than others. (Hiel, Kossowska, & Mervie, 2000). These findings are critical for comprehending the complicated link between personality factors and political ideology of an individual.

### ***Gender difference and political ideology***

Previous research studies have shown conflicting results regarding the association between gender difference and political ideology variation (Pratto, Stallworth, & Sidanius, 2011). Researchers have pointed out disparities in men's and women's opinions regarding politics and society. Some of these disparities in views entail components of political ideology (the structure and interrelationships of people's political ideology). For example, women have been found to be more liberal on concerns of war and military policy (Eichenberg, 2016). The empirical study conducted by Marjorie Randon Hershey and John L. Sullivan found that the correlations between sex-role identities and political attitudes are relatively weaker. Specifically, the results of previous studies have indicated that men with liberal political attitudes tend to have a more flexible, androgynous sex-role identity. In contrast, women with liberal political attitudes are consistently associated with a more traditionally masculine sex-role identity. These findings were obtained from the analysis of two independent random samples of Indiana University students during the period of 1974-1975 (Hershey & Sullivan, 1977).

### ***Personal economics and political ideology***

It is critical to understand the factors that influence voting decisions and the formation of individual ideologies. The underrepresentation of the poor and working class by the primary political groups is a recurring problem in American politics. This disparity may be explained by the fact that people with lower earnings tend to be more ideologically and partisan diverse than their richer peers. Understanding the underlying causes of these voting habits and dynamic political ideologies of an individual is so critical (Kulachai, Lerdtomornsakul, & Homyamyen, 2023).

The empirical research conducted by Hill (2017) which was based on a survey of 295 American citizens aged 18 and above, has found a link between Republican support and economic optimism; nonetheless, it emphasized that more data analysis is required to completely understand this relationship between personal economics and political ideology.

### ***Media choice, information exposure and political ideology***

Information exposure is seen as a crucial component in political socialization (Conway, Wyckoff, & Feldbaum, 1981). Deyong Ma & Orion A. Lewis have made a notable contribution to the literature by evaluating the sources of political ideology using survey data from over 10,000 internet users in China. They discover that media exposure and personality attributes are both related to substantial correlation with reflected ideological orientation of an individual. With regard to Deyong Ma's study, media influences have a varying effect on various people, with authoritarian types being more likely to reinforce their ideology and has emphasized significant ways that personality mediates information exposure. (Ma & Lewis, 2019).

### ***Childhood Experience and Political Ideology***

According to Settle, Bond, & Levitt (2011), childhood experiences may have a direct impact on adult political choices, but they may also interact with an individual's personality traits to affect their ideology in later life (Settle, Dawes, Christakis, & Fowler, 2010). Although childhood experiences have a direct impact on adult political outcome, personality factors may also interact with childhood experiences to affect an individual's ideology in later life (Settle, Bond, & Levitt, 2011).

The study by Neve (2014) explored the interaction between personality and environmental factors in the formation of political ideology, opening up new research directions in the field of childhood experience and political ideology. Depending on the personality profile of the responder, a number of childhood events have investigated that can have a varied impact on political ideology. As a result, the researcher discovered that "openness" interacts with "childhood trauma" in predicting ideology. This complex link has examined using mediation analysis (Neve, 2014). These findings offer further support for the idea that variations in individual personalities' nature and nurture are closely linked to variances in political ideology (Gerber A. S., Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2010).

### ***Cultural values and political ideology***

According to cultural theory, two elements impact social relationship patterns. The first, "group," refers to how well people are integrated into communities or other social groups. The higher the integration, the greater the collective effect on individual decisions and the less choice the individual has (Feldman, 1969). The second variable, "grid," is characterized as a collection of restricting categories that may have an impact on people's behavior and these limits shape the social rules and conventions that govern equality in social interactions (Kingsley & Walter, 2022). In high-grid societies, people's behavior and activities are limited by their family status, gender, race, age, or other factors (Chai, Liu, & Kim, 2009). There are little previous limitations in low-grid societies. Combining these two factors results in four forms (egalitarianism, individualism, hierarchicalism, and fatalism) of social connections, as well as associated worldviews and values (Wildavsky & Dake, 1990).

A study by Kristy, Carlisle, & Eric (2009) has been an influential figure in the study of Relationship between Cultural Values and Political Ideology have looked at survey data on two of such worldviews, egalitarianism and individualism, to better understand their link with ideologies. According to the cultural theory literature, persons with low levels of political education do not appear to have coherent worldviews on these topics. People with high levels of political knowledge, on the other hand, respond to egalitarianism and individualism questions as if they were opposite ends of a single, liberal-conservative continuum, rather than two of four distinct worldviews, and have concluded that cultural theory researchers should take political knowledge into account whenever they investigate worldviews (Kristy, Carlisle, & Eric, 2009).

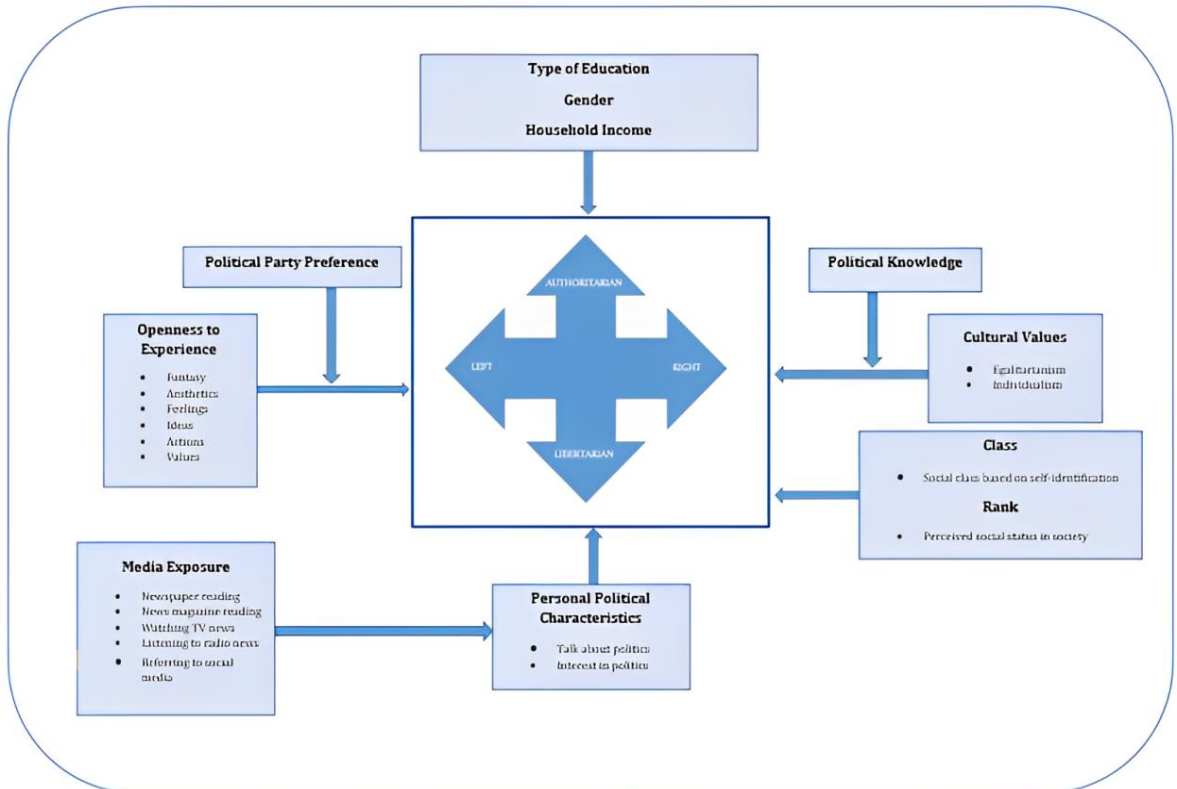
Understanding political ideology will progress if an empirically validated conceptualization of the concept is developed. While political journalists may use terms like liberal and conservative to describe political beliefs, empirical data shows that such labels are unlikely to provide a strong foundation for a psychological or

political evaluation of ideology. To completely comprehend the factors that influence the formation of political ideologies, it will be required to consider the complexity of ideology (Feldman, 1969).

The conceptual framework of this study includes several categories of variables, as shown in Table 1. This framework's dependent variable (DV) is political ideology. The independent variables (INV) are sex role identity, political knowledge, self-identified social class (CLASS), perceived social status in society (RANK), cultural values (e.g., egalitarianism and individualism), household income, and demographic factors such as gender and type of education. Political party preference and political expertise are the framework's moderator variables (MOVs). Furthermore, personal political qualities are recognized as the mediator variable (MEV). Together, these factors help to explain how people's political ideologies are formed and influenced.

- Dependent variable (DV): Political ideology
- Independent variables (INV):
  1. Sex role identity
  2. Political knowledge
  3. CLASS: Social class based on self-identification
  4. RANK: Perceived social status in society
  5. Cultural value:(Egalitarianism, Individualism)
  6. Household income
  7. Demographic factors: Gender, Type of education
- Moderator variables (MOV):
  1. Political party preference
  2. Political knowledge
- Mediator variable (MEV): Personal political characteristics

This research seeks to explore the links between numerous personal, societal, and psychological elements and an individual's political ideology as shown in the figure 1. The key dependent variable is political ideology, which is measured on a scale ranging from left to right or liberal to conservative. Independent factors include receptivity to new experiences, gender role identification, media exposure, socioeconomic class, and perceived social position. Openness to experience is tested utilizing characteristics such as imagination, aesthetics, sentiments, ideas, behaviors, and values, whereas sex role identification is measured using standard masculinity and femininity measures.

**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

Source: Compiled by the author

Respondents self-identify their socioeconomic class and perceived social position, whereas media exposure takes into account the frequency and diversity of political news intake. Moderating factors, including political party choice, political knowledge, and personal political qualities, are thought to impact the connection between independent variables and political ideology. Political party preference is measured by agreement with party policies, political knowledge by a scale of right responses to particular questions, and personal political traits by interest and participation in politics. This conceptual framework offers a systematic approach to understanding how these elements may combine to create political ideology, with the goal of contributing to a better understanding of political behavior and its underlying causes.

Table 1 summarizes necessary propositions drawn from the conceptual framework for understanding the factors affecting on the formation of political ideology. Proposition 1 proposes that greater openness to experience correlates with more liberal views, which is confirmed by previous studies on personality factors. Proposition 2 argues that conventional sex roles influence political ideology, with masculinity associated with conservatism and femininity with liberalism. Proposition 3 emphasizes the moderating influence of media exposure on the link between individual qualities and political ideology, implying that different media sources

serve to shape more complex political views. Propositions 4 and 5 discuss the role of social class and perceived social status in shaping political opinions, with higher social classes and status frequently associated with conservatism. Proposition 6 claims that political party preference influences the strength of the association between personality traits and political ideology. Proposition 7 highlights the need of political knowledge in mitigating the effects of media exposure on political attitudes. According to Proposition 8, personal political engagement mediates the relationship between independent factors and political ideology. Proposition 9 explains how cultural values like equality and individualism affect political ideology, whereas Proposition 10 relates family wealth with political ideology, with greater earnings being associated with conservatism. These propositions form a thorough framework for investigating the multidimensional nature of political ideology.

**Table 1: Propositions of the conceptualized framework**

| S/N | Proposition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Reference                                                              |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Higher levels of openness to experience are positively associated with more liberal political ideologies. Individuals scoring high in facets such as fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, ideas, actions, and values are expected to lean towards liberal beliefs.                       | (Alain van Hiel, Malgorzata Kossowska, Ivan Mervielde, 2000)           |
| 2   | Traditional sex role identities characterized by high masculinity are positively associated with more conservative political ideologies, while high femininity is positively associated with more liberal ideologies.                                                              | (Marjorie Randon Hershey, John L. Sullivan, 1977)                      |
| 3   | Greater media exposure to diverse political news sources moderates the relationship between individual traits (e.g., openness to experience and sex role identity) and political ideology. Exposure to a wider range of media sources leads to more nuanced political beliefs.     | (Deyong Ma & Orion A. Lewis, 2019)                                     |
| 4   | Social class (self-identified as lower, working, middle, or upper) influences political ideology, with higher social classes more likely to align with conservative ideologies and lower social classes with liberal ideologies.                                                   | (Dempsey, 1990)                                                        |
| 5   | Perceived social status, as self-assessed on a scale of 1 to 10, affects political ideology, where higher perceived social status correlates with more conservative beliefs and lower perceived status with more liberal beliefs.                                                  | (Dempsey, 1990)                                                        |
| 6   | Political party preference moderates the relationship between personal characteristics (e.g., openness to experience, sex role identity) and political ideology. Favouring a particular political party strengthens the correlation between personal traits and political beliefs. | (Alain van Hiel, Malgorzata Kossowska, Ivan Mervielde, 2000)           |
| 7   | Political knowledge levels (low, moderate, high) mediate the relationship between media exposure and political ideology. Higher political knowledge enhances the influence of media exposure on shaping political beliefs.                                                         | (Kristy E. H. Michaud, Juliet E. Carlisle & Eric R. A. N. Smith, 2009) |

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                   |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 8  | Personal political characteristics, such as interest and engagement in politics, mediate the relationship between independent variables (e.g., openness to experience, social class) and political ideology. | (Marjorie Randon Hershey, John L. Sullivan, 1977) |
| 9  | Cultural values (egalitarianism vs. individualism) impact political ideology, with egalitarianism associated with more liberal ideologies and individualism with more conservative ideologies.               | (Dempsey, 1990)                                   |
| 10 | Household income influences political ideology, with higher income levels correlating with more conservative beliefs and lower income levels with more liberal beliefs.                                      | (Winkler, 2017)                                   |

*Source:* Compiled by the author

## 5. Conclusion

Political ideology is a complex construct shaped by a variety of personal, societal, and psychological elements. This study's conceptual framework attempts to highlight these complicated linkages, recognizing the challenge of directly addressing such a complex problem through empirical research alone. This paradigm gives a systematic method to studying how political opinions are shaped by aspects such as openness to experience, sex role identification, media exposure, socioeconomic class, and perceived social position.

The research shows that, while political ideology is frequently reduced to a one-dimensional spectrum, this reductionist perspective fails to convey the entire complexity of the underlying elements. The suggested framework combines findings from personality psychology, social stratification, and media studies to provide a thorough understanding of the impacts on political ideology. This approach emphasizes not just the complex interplay between individual and social influences, but also the significance of taking these elements into account in future empirical investigations.

Given the complexities of political ideology, this research suggests that an advanced, multidimensional analysis is required for a more complete understanding. Future research should expand on this concept by performing empirical studies to evaluate the stated correlations and investigating other factors that may impact political opinions. As political ideology evolves, incorporating these ideas into empirical study will be significant for establishing a more comprehensive and accurate knowledge of political behavior.

Lastly, this conceptual framework serves as a platform for future study, giving a thorough framework for investigating the various elements that influence political ideology. This paradigm seeks to educate more focused and successful empirical investigations in political psychology and behavior by expanding our theoretical knowledge.

Presently, the Department has 21 highly-qualified academic staff including 10 PhD holders. The Mini-Library maintained at the Department Resource Center delivers all the recommended text books and computers facilities to the undergraduates throughout their degree programme. Further, Faculty Information Technology Resource Center (ITRC) provides the students with respect to advanced skills in computer studies and information technology. Additionally, the University

Main Library offers the students with enhanced opportunities for reading and research.

### **Recommendations**

It is extremely important to emphasize that this article aims to provide a conceptual framework for recognizing the complexities of how the factors affecting the formation of political ideology rather than empirical confirmation. Based on the findings, future research should focus empirical verification of the provided propositions to validate and improve the framework. To gain a more comprehensive knowledge of these relationships, researchers should explore developing studies that look into the relationships between personal attributes, media exposure, socioeconomic class, and political ideology. Furthermore, including other methodology, such as longitudinal research and mixed-method approaches, might strengthen the findings. It is also important to investigate how emerging elements, such as digital media influence and shifting society standards, affect ideologies. Developing comprehensive and dynamic models that encompass these factors will be essential for furthering our understanding of political ideology and its causes.

### **Limitations and further study**

Without carrying out any empirical testing, the primary objective of this study was the conceptual framework of political ideology and the factors that are related to it. As such, it is important to recognize certain limitations. Subsequent investigations need to surpass the limitations of this theoretical examination and cover the empirical verification of the suggested propositions. It is suggested that in order to better understand the dynamics of political ideology, future research should use a wider variety of approaches, such as experimental and longitudinal designs. The study should also take into the account a range of demographic variables and modern influences that may have an impact on ideologies, such as digital media and socioeconomic changes.

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