



## The location of three dispositions towards ridicule in the five-factor personality model in the population of Slovak adults



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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study is the location of gelotophobia (fear of being laughed at), gelotophilia (the joy of being laughed at) and katagelasticism (joy of laughing at others) in the five-factor personality model. In the sample of 425 Slovak adults, gelotophobes can be described as introverted neurotics with lower inclination to openness. Personality factors explained 46.7% of the variance in gelotophobia. Gelotophilia is related to extraversion, low neuroticism and low conscientiousness. The personality predictors accounted for 21.3% of the variance in gelotophilia. Katagelasticists could be described by extraversion and low agreeableness and conscientiousness. The explained proportion of the variance in katagelasticism is 37.3%. The explained variance of gelotophobia and gelotophilia is comparable to previous German and Taiwanese findings. However, there is a higher explained variance in katagelasticism in Slovakia than in the samples of Germans and samples of Taiwanese. Suggestions for future research are given.

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### 1. Introduction

Psychology of humour has been a neglected field of study in Slovakia for a long time, however several publications (e.g. Heretik, 2013; Heretik & Heretiková Marsalová, 2011; Hřebíčková, Ficková, Klementová, Ruch, & Proyer, 2009) in previous few years showed the increasing interest of psychologists to fill this gap. The aim of this study is to examine the location of three dispositions toward ridicule and being laughed at (namely: gelotophobia, gelotophilia, and katagelasticism) in the framework of five-factor personality model.

Gelotophobia was first described by Michael Titze as a pathological fear of appearing to social partners as a ridiculous object (Titze, 1996). The primary characteristic of gelotophobes is their enhanced fear of being laughed at. Gelotophobes do not appreciate laughter and smiling as something positive (Ruch & Proyer, 2008, 2009a,b). Ruch and Proyer (2009a) proposed another two dispositions toward ridicule and being laughed at – gelotophilia and katagelasticism. Gelotophiles enjoy being laughed at and make others voluntarily laugh at themselves. They do not feel ashamed when sharing embarrassing mishaps (Ruch & Proyer, 2009a).

Katagelasticists enjoy laughing at others. They seek and establish situations in which they can laugh at others. Katagelasticists do not feel that there is anything wrong in laughing at others (Ruch & Proyer, 2009a). Ruch and Proyer (2009a) developed a questionnaire for the measuring the three dispositions towards ridicule and being laughed called PhoPhiKat-45 (Pho, Phi, Kat stands for gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism, respectively).

The five-factor model delineates five broad traits that encapsulate most of the differences in personality across individuals. Costa and McCrae (1992) relate neuroticism (N) to the extent to which individuals exhibit anxiety, depression, and hostility as well as feel self conscious, act impulsively, and experience a sense of vulnerability, unable to accommodate aversive events. Individuals who exhibit extraversion (E) are gregarious, assertive, warm, positive, active, and they seek excitement. Openness (O) relates the extent to which individuals are open to fantasies, aesthetics, feelings, novel actions, ideas, and values. Persons high in agreeableness (A) trust in other individuals, are straightforward and honest in communication, behave altruistically and cooperatively, they are modest, tender, and sympathetic. And finally, conscientiousness (C) relate to the degree to which individuals are competent, methodical, dutiful, motivated to achieve goals, disciplined, and deliberate or considered (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The five factors could be measured by the variety of questionnaires. For the purpose of the current research we have chosen the NEO-FFI ((NEO Five-Factor Inventory) by Costa and McCrae (1992).

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The three dispositions to ridicule and being laughed at have already been studied in the framework of the five-factor personality model – using Saucier Mini Markers (Chen, Chan, & Chiu, 2009; Chen, Chan, Ruch, & Proyer, 2011; Hsu, Chan, & Chiu, 2009) or Bipolar Adjective rating Scales (BARS17; Ruch, Harzer, & Proyer, 2013). However, none of the studies utilized the NEO-FFI, which is validated across many countries and is based on a model with balanced structure. This will allow relating the dispositions to laughter and ridicule in a well-established reference. Furthermore, the location of gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism in the five-factor model is well known for German speaking countries and Taiwan. The present study gives answer to the question, if results from German speaking countries and Taiwan can be used in Slovakia.

According to Hofstede dimensions (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2007) samples of Slovaks scored very high in power distance and masculinity, higher than samples of Germans and samples of Taiwanese. Samples of Slovaks scored intermediate on the dimensions of individualism and uncertainty and it shows no clear preference on these dimensions. Samples of Germans scored higher in individualism than samples of Slovaks and samples of Taiwanese scored lower than samples of Slovaks (Taiwan is a collectivistic country). Both, samples of Germans and samples of Taiwanese scored higher on uncertainty than samples of Slovaks. Samples of Slovaks scored high in pragmatism and low in indulgence, these scores are lower than scores of samples of Germans and samples of Taiwanese. Societies with low score in indulgence have a tendency to cynicism and pessimism (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2007).

The relationship of gelotophobia to five-factor model of personality has been studied more intensely than the relationships of gelotophilia and katagelasticism to five-factor model, because gelotophobia has been introduced to psychology earlier than the later two dispositions to ridicule. Gelotophobes can be described as introverted neurotics (Hřebíčková et al., 2009; Proyer & Ruch, 2010; Ruch, Hofmann, Platt, & Proyer, 2014; Ruch & Proyer, 2009b; Ruch, Proyer, & Popa, 2008; Ruch et al., 2013; Vanno, 2009) with relation to low agreeableness and low openness and with no relation to conscientiousness (Hřebíčková et al., 2009; Ruch et al., 2008). The big five personality factors explained 53% of the variance in gelotophobia in the German sample (Ruch et al., 2013) and 37.8% in the Taiwanese sample (Hsu et al., 2009). According to Ruch et al. (2013) gelotophiles are stable extraverts with low conscientiousness. Personality accounted for 26% of the variance in gelotophilia in the German sample (Ruch et al., 2013) and for 21.4% in the Taiwanese sample (Hsu et al., 2009). Katagelasticists can be characterized by low agreeableness and low conscientiousness (Ruch et al., 2013). With regard to katagelasticism, five factors of personality accounted for 25% of the variance in German sample (Ruch et al., 2013) and for 18.6% in the Taiwanese sample (Hsu et al., 2009). We assume that the results in the current Slovak sample will be similar to the previous German findings.

The current study is the first approach to locate gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism in the five-factor personality model in the adult population of Slovakia. This study is part of the broader research project aimed at adaptation of PhoPhiKat-45 questionnaire to Slovak conditions.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Sample

Altogether 2000 adults received an e-mail with the link to the questionnaires and 425 adults filled them out (21.25%). The total sample consisted of 425 Slovak adult volunteers, 92 men (21.6%)

and 333 women (78.4%). Their mean age was 28.07 years ( $SD = 10.12$ ; 18–69). More than half (54.4%) of the respondents were students from various fields of study (231 participants), the other 45.6% (194 participants) were adults employees from various fields. Respondents were from all of the eight regions of Slovakia: Bratislava 36 (8.5%), Trnava 43 (10.1%), Nitra 31 (7.3%), Trenčín 30 (7.1%), Banská Bystrica 30 (7.1%), Žilina 135 (31.8%), Košice 54 (12.7%), and Prešov 66 (15.5%).

### 2.2. Instruments

The PhoPhiKat-45 (Ruch & Proyer, 2009a) is a 45-item questionnaire for the assessment of gelotophobia (“When they laugh in my presence I get suspicious”), gelotophilia (“When I am with other people, I enjoy making jokes at my own expense to make the others laugh”), and katagelasticism (“I enjoy exposing others and I am happy when they get laughed at”). Each scale comprises 15 positively keyed items. It utilizes a four-point answer format (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree) and demonstrates high reliability coefficients (all alphas  $\geq .84$ ) and high retest-reliabilities  $\geq .77/\geq .73$  (3/6 month interval). Cronbach’s alphas for the present study were .83 for gelotophobia, .84 for gelotophilia, and .81 for katagelasticism.

The NEO-FFI (NEO Five-Factor Inventory) by Costa and McCrae (1992) measures neuroticism (N), extraversion (E), openness (O), agreeableness (A) and conscientiousness (C). Ruisel and Halama (2007) adopted this scale to Slovak conditions. The NEO-FFI consists of 60 items, 12 items for each factor. For each item, respondents express agreement or disagreement on five-point Likert type scale ranging from “completely disagree” (0) to “fully agree” (4). The psychometric characteristics of the Slovak version of the scale are satisfactory, with Cronbach’s alphas .74 for N, .75 for E, .64 for O, .66 for A and .83 C (Ruisel & Halama, 2007). Cronbach’s alphas for the present study were .86, .83, .71, .74, and .86 for N, E, O, A, and C, respectively.

### 2.3. Procedure

Adult inhabitants of Slovakia have been approached to take part in the Internet based research. Respondents were informed about the main aim of the study and that the completion and submission of the questionnaires will be taken as informed consent with their participation in the research. The participants were also informed that they could quit the survey any time without consequences. After that they completed the questionnaires and provided information on demographic characteristics. The respondents were not paid for their participation in the research. Data collection took place between December 2013 and February 2014.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Descriptive statistics of PhoPhiKat-45 and NEO-FFI

Descriptive statistics were computed for the scales of the PhoPhiKat-45 and the NEO-FFI. Reliability (Cronbach alpha) and correlations with demographics were computed as well (see Table 1). The results show that 46 (10.82%) participants exceeded the cut-off point for the slight gelotophobia, 13 (3.06%) participants for marked gelotophobia and 2 (0.47%) for extreme gelotophobia. In total 61 (14.35%) participants showed at least a slight expression of gelotophobia.

All scales were normally distributed. Gelotophobia is not related to gender and is lower among the older. Gelotophilia and katagelasticism are higher in males and not related to the age. Gelotophobia is related to gelotophilia ( $r = -.37$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ) and

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