

**Relationship Between Humor Styles and Risk Propensity Among Politically Active
Students**

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
Bachelor of Science in Psychology

By

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Register No: SB21PSY058

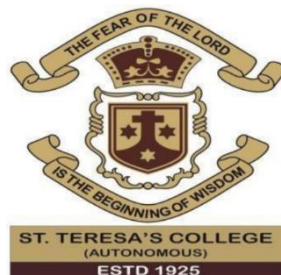
Under the guidance of

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In partial fulfilment of requirement for award of the degree of

B.Sc. PSYCHOLOGY



ST. TERESA'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), ERNAKULAM

Normally Re-accredited at 'A++' level (4th cycle)

Affiliated to: Mahatma Gandhi University

MARCH 2024

Certificate

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Declaration

I, Gouri Nandana A B, do hereby declare that the work represented in the dissertation embodies the results of the original research work done by me in St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam under the supervision and guidance of Ms. Hajira K M, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam, it has not been submitted by me to any other university or institution for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship, title or recognition before.

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Acknowledgement

It is not possible to prepare a project report without the assistance and encouragement of other people. This one is certainly no exception. I would like to express my deep heartfelt gratitude to the Department of Psychology, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam for providing me with the opportunity to undertake the research.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Ms. Bindu John, the Head of the Department of Psychology, for her guidance and support throughout the duration of my project. I am truly thankful for her expertise, unwavering encouragement, patience, and mentorship, which have been pivotal in my academic journey.

I acknowledge my indebtedness and deep sense of gratitude to my research guide, Ms. Hajira K M, Assistant Professor, Psychology, for encouraging and guiding me throughout all the phases of my research.

I extend my sincere thanks to my parents, teachers and my friends who all have supported me throughout the time. I am grateful to each and every one who has given me guidance, encouragement, suggestions and constructive criticisms which has contributed immensely for this project.

Above all, I thank God Almighty for blessing me in all the stages of the project and for helping me complete the project successfully.

Thanking you

Gouri Nandana A B

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Abstract

The current study investigated the relationship between humor styles and risk propensity among politically active students. The sample consisted of 100 politically active college students with at least 2 years of political experience within the age group of 20-25 years. The Data was collected using Humor styles Questionnaire (Martin et al., 2003) and General Risk Propensity Scale (Zhang et al., 2018). Humor styles represent the ways individuals use humor as a strategy for coping as well as shifting their perspectives (Dozois et al., 2009). There are four types of humor styles: affiliative, self- enhancing, aggressive and self- defeating. Risk propensity, also conceptualized as an individual's risk-taking tendency, is defined as an individual's current tendency to take or avoid risks and considered as an individual trait which can change over time as a result of experience (Sitkin and Pablo, 1992; Sitkin and Weingart, 1995). The study was conducted to investigate whether there is a significant relationship between humor styles and risk propensity among politically active students. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used for data analysis. The results revealed that there is a weak negative correlation between affiliative humor style and risk propensity, a weak positive correlation between self-enhancing humor style and risk propensity, a weak positive correlation between aggressive humor style and risk propensity and a weak positive correlation between self-defeating humor style and risk propensity

Keywords: Humor styles, Risk propensity, politically active students, Affiliative humor, Self-enhancing humor, Aggressive humor, Self-defeating humor

“I would rather take a political risk in pursuit of peace, than risk peace in pursuit of politics” (Donald Trump, 2018)

Risk propensity or the willingness to take risks is not inherently good or bad. It depends on the situation and the individual's goals and values. In some situations, a higher risk propensity can lead to innovation and personal growth. Taking calculated risks can be essential for achieving success in various aspects of life, such as starting a business, pursuing new opportunities, or even investing. However, excessive risk-taking without careful consideration or risk management can lead to negative consequences. It's important to balance risk with thoughtful analysis and decision-making. In some situations, lower risk propensity may be more appropriate, such as when dealing with financial investments, safety considerations, or long-term planning. So, it is crucial for individuals to understand their own risk tolerance and make decisions that align with their values, objectives, and the potential consequences of their actions (Tramplin, 2023).

Humor can be simply defined as a type of stimulation that tends to elicit the laughter reflex (Koestler, 2024). It is the ability of a person to be amusing or make others laugh. Humor style is the form of humor that an individual uses which differs from person to person. There are basically 4 types of humor styles namely affiliative, self- enhancing, aggressive and self-defeating humor, which can be classified into two groups as positive (affiliative and self-enhancing) and negative (aggressive and self-defeating) humor styles. Affiliative humor involves telling jokes that everyone likes, helping to have a good relationship. Self-enhancing humor is focused on yourself, and is beneficial as it will help a person to remain positive during hardships and is a good way to reduce stress. Aggressive humor is directed to an individual in order to mock, bully or manipulate them. Self-defeating humor in which the jokes are directed towards themselves but in a negative way. It is like putting themselves

down by making jokes. Maslow in 1954 and Allport in 1961 gave distinctions between types of humor that are psychologically healthy and psychologically harmful. A sense of humor is associated with increased life satisfaction and a pleasurable and engaged life (Ruch, Proyer, & Weber, 2010).

Political engagement in youth represents a novel, adult-oriented behavior that encompasses potential rewards such as feelings of empowerment, reinforced identity and social capital but also entails potential risks such as failure to influence the government, negative appraisals by others, stress in navigating a new system, physical harm and legal trouble. The novelty, challenges, and uncertainties in political participation may mean that youth with greater preference for risk are more prone to become more involved in politics relative to youth who are more risk averse. Furthermore, activities that seek to explicitly challenge existing political structures such as protesting may entail greater risks for youth than more standard forms of political engagement such as voting and youth with higher risk preference may be more comfortable participating in these behaviors. Additionally, political engagement in general may be more rewarding for youth with greater personal interest in politics, as involvement may support intrinsic motivation, agency, and autonomy for these youth (Almond & Verba, 2000).

Sociologists have long argued that social and political change results in part from generational replacement (Mannheim, 1952; Ryder, 1965); that is, as new cohorts of young people come of age and begin to participate in politics, they bring fresh perspectives on society's pressing issues and are not as bounded by political conventions or as committed to maintaining the status quo. This is likely why youth have been at the forefront of many major social movements in the United States and globally (Costanza-Chock, 2012) and young adults are more likely to engage in social movement activism compared to older adults

(Norris, 2004). Yet, political action, particularly social movement behavior, has always occurred among a smaller subset of youth. For example, during the 1960s civil rights era, a time widely regarded as high in protests and demonstrations, an estimated 15% of youth were engaged in political activism (Hart & Gullan, 2010). Similarly, nationally representative U.S. data from 1976 to 2014 revealed that 3.3%–10.5% of 18-year-olds had already engaged in some form of political action in their lifetime, yet substantially larger proportions of youth who had not yet engaged is intended to participate in these activities in the future (Oosterhoff, Kaplow, Layne, & Pynoos, 2018).

Participation in political activities pose meaningful risks and rewards for youth and those who have a higher propensity for risk taking are more likely to engage in politics. Youth who voice their political perspectives risk being ostracized or marginalized by adults based on perceived deficiencies in political knowledge, skills, and abilities (Gordon & Taft, 2011). Furthermore, political engagement often involves experiencing potentially contentious situations such as discussing controversial issues. For many youths, navigating these situations entails social risks of being rejected by peers, family and other adults (McAdam, 1986), or in modern times, the social media community writ large. Some forms of political engagement involve voicing direct opposition to established norms, social and political institutions, or individuals in positions of power, which may result in injury, being arrested, or being criminally charged. Thus, political involvement may have negative legal, social, physical, or financial consequences (McAdam, 1986).

Simultaneously, it is also possible that political engagement presents meaningful rewards for youth. Navigating the political system may provide youth with novel, complex, adult-like experiences that promote feelings of empowerment, self-competence, or excitement (Ballard & Ozer, 2016). Many political activities provide teens with an

opportunity to interact with like-minded peers, thus building social capital and possibly contributing to greater feelings of belongingness. Consistent with this perspective, prior research indicates that youth who vote or engage in protesting have greater self-reported health and socioeconomic status 4 years later (Ballard, Hoyt, & Pachucki, 2018). Moreover, risk preference may enable youth to have the courage to confront social problems and injustices in ways that make a meaningful impact on community or society (Delgado, 2015). Youth who have greater risk preference may be better able to become politically engaged, despite challenges and uncertainties. Thus, although political engagement may entail important risks for adolescents, it also offers opportunities to garner personal benefits and societal contributions. Youth who have a greater preference for risk taking may be more inclined to engage in political action as means of obtaining possible intrapersonal and societal rewards despite the potential risks.

Risk Propensity

Risk propensity, also conceptualized as an individual's risk-taking tendency, is defined as an individual's current tendency to take or avoid risks and considered as an individual trait which can change over time as a result of experience (Sitkin and Pablo, 1992; Sitkin and Weingart, 1995).

All human endeavors have inherent risk, defined as both the variability of outcomes and prospect of loss or harm. Riding a bicycle, for example, can range from relatively riskless (i.e., riding with protective gear on the sidewalk at a slow speed) to extremely risky (i.e., riding rapidly down a busy intersection with no protective gear). A person's day is filled with situations and decisions where he or she could make a risky choice, where the outcome has greater variability and high potential for harm, or a safe choice, where the outcome is more certain and has little potential for harm. General risk-taking propensity, therefore, is a

person's cross-situational tendency to engage in behaviors with a prospect of negative consequences such as loss, harm, or failure (Schoemaker, 1990).

Theories Associated with Risk Propensity

Dual Process Theory: Dual Process Theory proposes two systems influencing decision-making which is an experiential system driven by emotions and intuition, and a rational system driven by logic and analysis. Risk-taking can be influenced by both systems, favoring intuition or reason depending on the context (Kahneman, 2011).

Prospect Theory: Prospect theory explains how individuals make decisions under uncertainty, often overvaluing losses compared to gains, leading to risk-seeking or risk-aversion based on framing and reference points (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

Protection Motivation Theory: Protection Motivation Theory focuses on fear appeals and risk communication, proposing that perceived threat and coping appraisal influence risk-taking behavior (Maddux & Rogers, 1981).

Social Cognitive Theory: Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of learning, expectations, and self-efficacy in influencing risk-taking behavior, acknowledging the influence of social and environmental factors (Bandura, 1977).

Sensation Seeking Theory- Sensation Seeking Theory proposes that individuals naturally vary in their need for novel, intense, and arousing experiences, influencing their propensity for risky behaviors (Zuckerman, 1979).

Factors Influencing Risk Propensity

Risk propensity can be influenced by various factors such as personality factors, cognitive factors, social factors, gender, age and biological factors.

Risk propensity can be influenced by personality traits such as sensation seeking, impulsivity and optimism. Sensation seeking is the desire for novel, intense, and arousing experiences (Zuckerman, 1979). Impulsivity is the tendency to act quickly without considering consequences (Whiteside & Lynam, 2001). Optimism is the belief in positive outcomes, leading to underestimation of risks (e.g., Weinstein, 1980).

It can also be influenced by cognitive factors such as risk perception, heuristics and biases. Risk perception is the subjective assessment of the likelihood and severity of potential negative outcomes (Slovic, 1987). Heuristics and biases are mental shortcuts that can lead to systematic errors in judgment, underestimating risks (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981).

Risk propensity can also be influenced by social factors such as peer influence, role models and socioeconomic status. Peer influence is the pressure to conform to group norms, even if risky (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). By observing role models people engage in risky behaviors to increase their own propensity (e.g., Bandura, 1977). Limited resources and opportunities can lead to risk-taking for survival or upward mobility (e.g., Wilson & Daly, 1997).

Risk propensity can also be influenced by gender, age and biological factors. There are differences in risk-taking propensity between genders, though complex and context-dependent (Eagly & Wood, 2014). Youth often exhibit higher risk propensity due to developmental factors (e.g., Steinberg, 2004). Genetic and neurobiological influences on risk-taking behavior are being explored (e.g., Beaver et al., 2010).

Humor Styles

Humor styles represent the ways individuals use humor as a strategy for coping as well as shifting their perspectives (Dozois et al., 2009). There are four types of humor styles: affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive and self-defeating. Affiliative humor is the tendency to share humor with others such as telling jokes and funny stories, amuse others, make others laugh and enjoy laughing along with others. Self-enhancing humor is the tendency to maintain a humorous outlook on life even when not with others, use humor in coping with stress, cheers oneself up with humor. Aggressive humor is the tendency to use humor to disparage, put down, or manipulate others; use of ridicule, offensive humor; compulsive expression of humor even when inappropriate. Self-defeating humor is the tendency to amuse others at one's own expense, self-disparaging humor; laughing along with others when being ridiculed or put down; using humor to hide one's true feelings from self and others (Rod A. Martin 2003).

Theories Associated with Humor Styles

Social-Cognitive Model: Social-Cognitive Model proposed four humor styles based on social and cognitive processes (Martin et al., 2003). Affiliative humor style involves using humor to connect with others (e.g., jokes that build rapport), Self-deprecating humor style involves making fun of oneself (e.g., self-disparaging jokes), Aggressive humor style involves using humor to put others down (e.g., sarcastic remarks, insults) and Self-enhancing humor style involves using humor to boost one's self-image (e.g., bragging humor).

Dispositional Theory: The Dispositional Theory examines humor through the lens of an individual's underlying dispositions or personality traits (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985). This theory suggests that our appreciation of humor depends on our pre-existing attitudes and

feelings towards the target of the humor. In other words, we find humor funnier when it aligns with our existing dispositions. The theory proposes three main humor styles: Hostile humor which involves targeting others with hostility or aggression, aimed at putting them down and potentially eliciting negative emotions. Enjoyment stems from feeling superior to the target, aligning with aggressive dispositions. Benign humor focuses on creating positive social connections and shared laughter, often through lighthearted jokes or puns.

Appreciation is linked to positive and prosocial dispositions. Self-defeating humor focuses on making fun of oneself, potentially stemming from low self-esteem or a desire to deflect attention. Enjoyment might be linked to self-deprecating or self-critical dispositions.

Dispositional Theory offers a simple and intuitive explanation for humor appreciation based on existing dispositions. It helps explain why humor can be subjective and culturally dependent. However, it can be criticized for being overly simplistic and potentially neglecting cognitive processes involved in humor appreciation. The proposed humor styles might not encompass the full spectrum of humor types.

Appraisal Theory: The Appraisal Theory emphasizes the individual's cognitive appraisal of the humorous stimulus (McIntyre, 2003). This theory suggests that humor appreciation is driven by the individual's evaluation of three key aspects of the joke or humorous situation: Appraisal of incongruity: How unexpected or surprising is the humorous element? Does it violate expectations in a way that's amusing? Appraisal of target: Who or what is the target of the humor? Is it acceptable or appropriate to laugh at it?

Appraisal of coping potential: Does humor help us deal with difficult emotions or situations? Does it provide relief or insight? The theory proposes that individuals go through these appraisals sequentially: Incongruity detection: Notice something unexpected or out-of-the-ordinary. Target evaluation: Determine if the target is appropriate and socially acceptable to laugh at. Coping potential assessment: Decide if the humor helps manage any negative

emotions or offers a new perspective. If all three appraisals lead to positive evaluations (e.g., finding the incongruity funny, the target acceptable, and the humor helpful), then amusement and laughter occur. This theory offers a unique perspective on humor by focusing on the individual's cognitive evaluation process. It acknowledges the importance of context and social norms in humor appreciation. However, the theory might be complex and less intuitive than other models.

Factors Influencing Humor Styles

Humor styles can be influenced by factors such as personality traits, cognitive factors, social and cultural factors, mood and emotions, gender and age, family environment and media influence.

Individual differences in personality traits play a significant role in shaping humor styles. For example, extroverted individuals may use humor to engage and entertain others, while individuals high in neuroticism might use humor as a coping mechanism. Humor styles can be linked to traits like extroversion (enjoying social humor), neuroticism (using humor to cope with anxiety), and agreeableness (preferring benign humor) (Ruch, 2012; Zillmann & Bryant, 2002). Theories like the Dispositional Theory propose traits like hostility, self-esteem, and prosocial behavior predicting preferred humor styles (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985).

Cognitive factors, such as creativity and cognitive flexibility, can influence the way individuals perceive and create humor. A person's ability to think outside the box and make novel connections can contribute to their unique humor style. Individuals evaluate the "incongruity", "target", and "coping potential" of humor, influencing appreciation and preferred styles (McIntyre, 2003). Individual differences in thinking styles (e.g., analytical vs. intuitive) might influence humor processing and preference (Ruch, 1990).

Social factors can also influence humor styles. Group dynamics, power structures, and cultural norms shape acceptable and effective humor styles (Martin et al., 2003). Individuals might use specific humor styles to achieve social goals like building rapport, avoiding conflict, or asserting dominance (Martin et al., 2003).

Mood can influence which humor styles individuals find funny (Zillmann & Bryant, 2002). Research suggests potential gender and age differences in humor preferences, though findings are complex and context-dependent (Eagly & Wood, 2014; Steinberg, 2004).

Humor styles can also be influenced by family environment. Children often learn and adopt humor styles from their parents, mimicking the types of jokes they tell and the situations they find funny (Martin et al., 2003). Parents who positively reinforce specific humor styles in their children can inadvertently encourage those styles (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985). Supportive and accepting family environments may foster the use of playful, positive humor styles like affiliative and self-enhancing humor (Ruch, 2012). Open and supportive communication can enable open and honest humor, while restricted or tense communication might lead to more aggressive or self-defeating humor (Martin et al., 2003). Families that handle conflict humorously may encourage using humor to defuse tension or build understanding, while negative conflict resolution might discourage humor use (McIntyre, 2003). Family values and cultural norms influence what humor is considered acceptable and appropriate, shaping individual styles (Ruch, 2012). Some evidence suggests birth order might influence humor styles, with firstborns potentially using more assertive humor and later-borns using more affiliative humor (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985). However, research on this is inconclusive and likely interacts with other factors. Competition between siblings can influence humor use, potentially leading to more aggressive or self-deprecating humor as coping mechanisms (Martin et al., 2003). Children's innate personality traits and dispositions

can influence how they respond to and incorporate humor styles from their family environment (Ruch, 2012). Individual differences in understanding and appreciating humor can impact how family influences shape humor styles (McIntyre, 2003).

Life experiences also influence humor styles. Secure attachment to caregivers lays a foundation for healthy humor use, fostering positive and affiliative styles (Ruch, 2012). Conversely, insecure attachment might influence the development of self-deprecating or aggressive humor as coping mechanisms (Zillmann & Bryant, 2010). Exposure to trauma or neglect can shape humor styles in diverse ways. Some individuals might rely on self-deprecating or dark humor as coping mechanisms, while others might avoid humor altogether (Ruch, 2012; Zillmann & Bryant, 2010). Traumatic experiences can profoundly impact humor use. Some individuals might avoid humor altogether, while others might use dark humor or develop new humor styles as a way to process and cope with their experiences (McIntyre, 2003).

Media can also influence humor styles. Frequent exposure to specific humor styles through media (e.g., sitcoms, stand-up comedy) can lead to increased appreciation and adoption of those styles (Martin et al., 2003). Viewers might identify with characters or comedians, mimicking their humor styles subconsciously (Bandura, 1977).

Statement of the problem

Whether there is a significant relationship between humor styles and risk propensity among politically active students.

Rationale of the study

It was found in the prior researches that individuals who exhibit adaptive humor styles are more willing to take risks whereas individuals who exhibit maladaptive humor styles are less willing to take risks. The constraint lies in the scarcity of studies conducted on individuals who engage in risk-taking behavior in their everyday activities, focusing on the same variables.

Politically active students are characterized by their willingness to take risks. They engage in a variety of activities that involve taking risks, whether personal, social, or legal. Students engage in legal risks such as protest, civil disobedience, or direct action. This can lead to arrest, fines, or legal consequences for activities that may be deemed unlawful. They also face social risks, such as backlash from peers, family members, or the community. They may also pose academic risks, such as potential conflicts with school policies, disciplinary actions, or challenges in maintaining academic performance while devoting time and energy to activism. They also face physical risks if their activism involves participating in protests or demonstrations where confrontations with law enforcement or counter-protesters can occur. Politically active students with certain humor styles may be more inclined to take risks in terms of engaging in public demonstrations, organizing events, or expressing dissent (McAdam, 1986). So, understanding the relationship between humor styles and risk propensity in politically active students can offer valuable insights that may be useful for their engagement in activism.

The literature review is a written overview of major writings and other sources on a selected topic. Sources covered in the review may include scholarly journal articles, books, government reports, Web sites, etc. The literature review provides a description, summary and evaluation of each source.

A study conducted on the topic “The Relationship of Risk Perceptions and Risk-Taking with Humor Styles: Mediating Role of Self-Control” indicated that individuals with high self-control took less risk and used adaptive humor styles whereas individuals who have weak ability to control their feelings took more risk and adaptive humor styles. (Amani, 2020).

In a study investigating how sensation seeking relates to all humor styles, sensation seeking was reported to predict aggressive humor. (Kennison & Messer, 2019).

Studies like “The politics of being funny: Humor styles, trait humorousness, and political orientations” (Kfrerer, 2019) indicates that people with a left-wing orientation are more likely to use affiliative and aggressive humor styles, that a general interest in politics is associated with the use of affiliative and self-enhancing styles of humor and a rejection of an aggressive humor style, and that those on the political left are not inherently more humorous than those on the right. These findings suggest that disparagement theories of humor may be more applicable to liberals and those less likely to take an interest in politics, and that an examination of how humor is used and perceived can broaden our understanding of left-right political differences and political participation. A large part of the sensation seeking literature has emphasized its relation to risk tendencies, making risk tendencies a highly related subject.

Another study which explores the relationship between humor styles and risk propensity suggests that individuals who exhibit an aggressive humor style, characterized by sarcasm, teasing, and ridicule, tend to have a positive correlation with risk propensity or risk-

taking behavior. This means that those who engage in aggressive humor may also be more inclined to take risks in various aspects of their lives. (Veselka, L. et al, 2018).

A study on “A further investigation of the relations of aggressive humor to income and sensation seeking and a contemplation of the role of power” found that there is a positive relation between levels of sensation seeking and aggressive humor, as a simple regression analysis showed that sensation seeking significantly predicted aggressive humor (Wang, 2018).

The study on “Relationship of sensation seeking and social desirability with humor styles among Iranian salespersons” (Amani & Shabahang, 2018) showed that income level and gender were significant predictors of the affiliative humor style. Additionally, only sensation seeking was found to be a significant predictor of self-enhancing humor style. The aggressive humor style was predicted by education level, gender, and social desirability. The self-defeating humor style was also predicted by job experience, education level, gender and social desirability. It seems that personality traits such as sensation seeking along with social status can predict humor styles.

Zuckerman & Aluja (2015) in their study elucidates that Both sensation seeking and risk tendencies has been found to have positive relationships with the aggressive humor style. Aggressive humor has also been reported to have associations with more explicit measures of risk appraisals and behaviors.

In a longitudinal study conducted on adolescents, it was found that affiliative humor may serve as a protective factor against engaging in risky behaviors, especially in the face of stress or challenging circumstances. Adolescents who utilize affiliative humor to foster social

connections and alleviate tension may be less inclined to engage in behaviors that carry potential risks (Dozois et al., 2014).

A study conducted by Kelly and Shea in 2014 indicated that individuals who exhibit affiliative, self-enhancing and aggressive humor styles are more likely to engage in bullying.

Another study conducted in 2014 indicates that humor styles can serve as predictors or indicators of individuals' susceptibility to engaging in risky behaviors such as substance use (McVey, 2014).

Research on “Humor Styles, Risk Perception and Risky Behaviors in College Students, Cann and Cann (2013) reported the aggressive humor to be the only humor style of all HSQ constructs with significant relationships to perceptions of risk, individual likelihood to perform risk behaviors and actual risky behaviors. This may further explain why high sensation seekers have been found to have greater inclinations to use the aggressive humor style and can also be interpreted as indicative of the notion that aggressive humor itself may be viewed a risk behavior.

Research on "The Relationship Between Humor Styles and Peer Influence on Hazardous Drinking” (Allen, 2012) explored how different humor styles relate to peer influence on hazardous drinking behaviors which is a risky behavior. The study found that individuals who exhibited self-defeating humor were more susceptible to peer influence on hazardous drinking behaviors. In contrast, those who exhibit self-enhancing humor were less likely to engage in risky drinking behaviors, even under peer pressure. This suggests that humor styles can play a role in how individuals respond to social influences and engage in risky behaviors like hazardous drinking.

The study by Cann et al. (2011) found that there is a positive correlation between self-defeating humor style and risk propensity. Individuals who ingratiate themselves at their own expense may exhibit slightly higher tendencies toward risk-taking behavior.

Another study that explored the relationship between humor styles and risk-taking behavior in college students found that individuals high in self-enhancing humor were more likely to engage in risk-taking behavior across all categories compared to those with lower levels of self-enhancing humor. Additionally, individuals high in aggressive humor were more inclined towards recreational and social risk-taking, while those high in self-defeating humor tended to avoid financial risks but were more likely to engage in social and ethical risks. (Martin et al., 2003).

Study conducted in 2002 on Humor, stress and coping strategies explored relationships between sense of humor, stress, and coping strategies. The result indicated that humor is a strategy to cope with stress in stressors, which can decrease emotional reactions or provide an incentive to change stressed situations (Abel, 2002).

From the researches conducted it was found that self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles are related to low-risk propensity and self-defeating and aggressive humor styles are related to high-risk propensity. There are only limited studies on people who are involved in risky behavior in their everyday lives. So, I intend to conduct the study here, to find the relationship between humor styles and risk propensity in politically active students.

This chapter describes the aim, objectives, study design, sample and sampling design, tools and statistical analysis of the study.

Aim

The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between humor styles and risk propensity in politically active students.

Objectives

To study the relationship between humor styles and risk propensity among politically active students.

Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant correlation between affiliative humor style and risk propensity.

H2: There is a significant correlation between self-enhancing humor style and risk propensity.

H3: There is a significant correlation between aggressive humor style and risk propensity.

H4: There is a significant correlation between self-defeating humor style and risk propensity.

Operational Definitions

Humor styles: Humor styles is operationally defined as the sum total of scores assessed in 32 item Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) developed by Kellum. Rod, A. Martin, Patricia Puhlik-Doris, Gwen Larsen, Jeanette Gray, and Kelly Weir.

Affiliative humor style: The domain affiliative humor style can be operationally defined as the sum total scores obtains in respective items.

Self-enhancing humor style: The domain self-enhancing humor style can be operationally defined as the sum total scores obtains in respective items.

Aggressive humor style: The domain aggressive humor style can be operationally defined as the sum total scores obtains in respective items.

Self-defeating humor style: The domain self-defeating humor style can be operationally defined as the sum total scores obtains in respective items.

Risk propensity: Risk propensity is operationally defined as the sum total of scores assessed in 8 item General Risk Propensity Scale (GRiPS) developed by Don C. Zhang, Scott Highhouse, Christopher D. Nye.

Research Design

Correlational research design was opted for the study. A correlational research design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. A correlation reflects the strength and/or direction of the relationship between two or more variables. The direction of a correlation can be either positive or negative.

Sample

A sample of 100 politically active students (50 males and 50 females) with at least 2 years of political experience within the age group of 20-25 participated in the study.

Population

Politically active college students in Ernakulam.

Sampling Design

The sampling design opted for the study was purposive sampling.

Inclusion criteria

- Politically active students (males and females) with at least 2 years of political experience within the age group of 20-25.

Exclusion criteria

- Individuals who are mentally retarded.
- Individuals who are uninterested or uninvolved in politics.
- Students who have newly joined in the political party.

Tools Used

Informed consent was provided.

Socio-demographic data sheet was provided

Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ)

The Humor Styles Questionnaire is a self-report scale, which consists of 32 items, and 8 subitems for each subscale which indicate the four humor styles. Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). It is used in a population of adults and adolescents. Each subscales have items that are reverse scored. Affiliative humor is using humor in order to make others laugh and this helps to have a good relation with others. Self-enhancing humor helps one to be positive and look into life events in a positive manner. It is using humor to cope with everyday problems. Aggressive humor is directed onto others in a negative way in order to discourage or bully them. Self-defeating humor is a negative type of humor used to put oneself down in order to make others laugh. This questionnaire has an internal consistency, indicated by Cronbach alphas that is ranging from .77 to .81 and, has test-retest reliabilities of .80 to .85. Reliabilities for each subscale- the affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating humor scales, were .85, .81, .80, and .82 respectively. It has shown small to medium convergent validity.

General Risk Propensity Scale (GRiPS)

The General Risk Propensity Scale (GRiPS) is a 8 item self-report scale, developed by Don C. Zhang, Scott Highhouse, Christopher D. Nye to assess peoples general tendency to take risks. Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1(strongly disagree) to 5

(strongly agree). The internal consistency of the GRiPS as indicated by Cronbach alpha (0.93) is high. The GRiPS demonstrated good construct validity and content validity.

Procedure

The data in the present study has been collected from the population by giving out questionnaires. An informed consent form was provided at the beginning of the questionnaire to make sure that the confidentiality of the participants data will be maintained. This was followed by a few questions that collected the demographic details of the participant. The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was followed by General Risk Propensity Scale (GRiS). The questionnaires were scored according to the scoring guidelines given in them and the final results were obtained using SPSS software version.

Ethical considerations

- Research participants were not subjected to harm in any ways whatsoever.
- Respect for the dignity of research participants was prioritized.
- Full consent was obtained from the participants prior to the study.
- The protection of the privacy of research participants was ensured.
- Adequate level of confidentiality of the research data was ensured.
- Anonymity of individuals and organisations participating in the research was ensured.
- Any deception or exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the research was avoided.
- Any type of communication in relation to the research was done with honesty and transparency.
- Any type of misleading information, as well as representation of primary data findings in a biased way were avoided.

Statistical analysis

The data collected from the participants was analyzed using SPSS software. As the population is not normally distributed, the correlation analysis was done using Spearman Correlation Coefficient.

Normality testing

Table 1

Summary of Kolmogorov- Smirnov test of normality for various subscales of humor styles and risk propensity

CATEGORY	sig
Affiliative Humor	0.200
Self-enhancing Humor	0.014
Aggressive Humor	0.016
Self-defeating Humor	0.200
Risk Propensity	0.041

The Kolmogrov-Smirnov Test of Normality of Humor Styles and Risk Propensity shows that variables are not normally distributed in the sample ($p < .05$).

The aim of the study was to find the relationship between humor styles and risk propensity among politically active students. A total of 100 participants within the age range of 20-25 with at least 2 years of political experience were recruited for the research. The selection criteria included individuals who fell within the specified age and were willing to participate in the study voluntarily. Participant recruitment will be carried out through university settings or other social setting. Demographic Data Form, Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) and General Risk Propensity Scale (GRiPS) were administered to the participant. In the present study descriptive and inferential statistics were used and analysis was done by IBM Statistical Packages of Social Sciences 22 (SPSS) computer program version 29.0.2.0. Before using statistical analysis, the data were explored by checking certain assumptions to be satisfied.

Descriptive statistics

Table 2

Indicates the descriptive statistics of the dimensions of Humor Styles and Risk Propensity among 100 individuals (50 Males and 50 females).

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Affiliative Humor	39.800	7.940	100
Self-enhancing Humor	33.020	7.190	100
Aggressive Humor	28.690	6.034	100
Self-defeating Humor	29.970	7.437	100
Risk Propensity	27.020	6.399	100

Here, the mean and standard deviation of Affiliative humor style is 39.800 and 7.940, Self-enhancing humor style is 33.020 and 7.190, Aggressive humor style is 28.690 and 6.034, Self-defeating humor style is 29.020 and 7.437 and risk propensity is 27.020 and 6.399 respectively.

Correlation analysis

H1: There is a significant correlation between Affiliative Humor Style and Risk Propensity

Table 3

Indicates the correlation between Affiliative Humor Style and Risk Propensity among 100 individuals

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	r
Affiliative Humor Style	Risk Propensity	-0.121

From the table it is understood that the p-value is higher than 0.05 which indicates that the correlation is not statistically significant. The correlation coefficient value $[r=-0.121]$ signifies that there is a weak negative correlation between the two variables. Therefore, one cannot confidently conclude that there is a meaningful relationship between Affiliative Humor Style and Risk Propensity based on the provided data. Hence, Hypothesis 1 is rejected.

A three-year longitudinal study conducted on adolescents to explore the relationship between humor styles and risk-taking behavior by Dozois et al. (2014) indicated a weak negative correlation between affiliative humor style and risk propensity. Adolescents who use affiliative humor as a coping mechanism for dealing with stress were found to engage in less risk-taking behavior over the three-year duration of the study. This suggests that affiliative humor may serve as a protective factor against engaging in risky behaviors, especially in the face of stress or challenging circumstances. Adolescents who utilize affiliative humor to foster social connections and alleviate tension may be less inclined to engage in behaviors that carry potential risks.

H2: There is a significant correlation between Self-enhancing Humor Style and Risk Propensity

Table 4

Indicates the correlation between Self-enhancing Humor Style and Risk Propensity among 100 individuals

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	r
Self-enhancing Humor Style	Risk Propensity	0.033

From the table it is understood that the p-value is higher than 0.05 which indicates that the correlation is not statistically significant. The correlation coefficient value [r=0.033] signifies that there is a weak positive correlation between the two variables. Therefore, one cannot confidently conclude that there is a meaningful relationship between Self-enhancing Humor Style and Risk Propensity based on the provided data. Hence, Hypothesis 2 is rejected.

A study conducted by Cann et al. in 2011 suggests that individuals who exhibited a self-enhancing humor style, characterized by using humor to cope with stress and maintain a positive outlook, showed a weak positive correlation with risk propensity. This means that people who use humor as a coping mechanism were slightly more inclined to take risks. While the correlation was present, it was not very strong, indicating that other factors besides humor style also play a role in determining an individual's propensity for risk-taking behavior.

H3: There will be a significant correlation between Aggressive Humor Style and Risk Propensity.

Table 5

Indicates the correlation between Aggressive Humor Style and Risk Propensity among 100 individuals

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	r
Aggressive Humor Style	Risk Propensity	0.151

From the table it is understood that the p-value is higher than 0.05 which indicates that the correlation is not statistically significant. The correlation coefficient value [r=0.151] signifies that there is a weak positive correlation between the two variables. Therefore, one cannot confidently conclude that there is a meaningful relationship between Aggressive Humor Style and Risk Propensity based on the provided data. Hence, Hypothesis 3 is rejected.

A study conducted by Veselka, L. et al. (2018) explored the relationship between humor styles and personality traits, including risk propensity. The study suggests that individuals who exhibit an aggressive humor style, characterized by sarcasm, teasing, and ridicule, tend to have a weak positive correlation with risk propensity or risk-taking behavior. This means that those who engage in aggressive humor may also be more inclined to take risks in various aspects of their lives. Since the correlation is weak other factors beyond humor style likely play a significant role in determining risk propensity.

H4: There will be a significant correlation between Self-enhancing Humor Style and Risk Propensity

Table 6

Indicates the correlation between Self-defeating Humor Style and Risk Propensity among 100 individuals

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	r
Self-defeating Humor Style	Risk Propensity	0.170

From the table it is understood that the p-value is higher than 0.05 which indicates that the correlation is not statistically significant. The correlation coefficient value [r=0.170] signifies that there is a weak positive correlation between the two variables. Therefore, one cannot confidently conclude that there is a meaningful relationship between Self-defeating Humor Style and Risk Propensity based on the provided data. Hence, Hypothesis 4 is rejected.

A study conducted by Cann et al. in 2011 suggests that individuals who exhibited a self-defeating humor style, characterized by making jokes at their own expense or using humor to ingratiate themselves with others showed a weaker positive correlation with risk propensity. This means that individuals who engage in self-deprecating humor or use humor to ingratiate themselves at their own expense may exhibit slightly higher tendencies toward risk-taking behavior. However, the correlation observed was not strong, indicating that other factors likely also influence risk propensity.

Conclusion

In the study, the aim was to explore the relationship between humor styles and risk propensity among politically active students. Through the analysis of Spearman's correlation coefficients, the aim was to unravel the nuanced dynamics between humor styles and risk propensity among politically active students.

The results of Spearman's correlation analysis indicate that there is a modest positive correlation between self-enhancing humor style and risk propensity, aggressive humor style and risk propensity and self-defeating humor style and risk propensity among politically active students. There also exists a modest negative correlation between affiliative humor style and risk propensity among politically active students. But these correlations are statistically insignificant and the associations are weak. Hence all the hypotheses have been rejected. Hence it could be concluded that politically active students may not be significantly influenced by their humor styles when it comes to their risk propensity. This suggests that factors other than humor styles may play a more significant role in determining the willingness of politically active individuals to take risks. Factors such as political beliefs, values, or other personality traits are stronger predictors of their risk-taking behavior than their humor styles.

Findings

- There is a weak insignificant negative correlation between affiliative humor style and risk propensity.
- There is a very weak insignificant positive correlation between self-enhancing humor style and risk propensity.
- There is a weak insignificant positive correlation between aggressive humor style and risk propensity.

- There is a weak insignificant positive correlation between self-defeating humor style and risk propensity.

Limitations

- The study employed a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to establish the relationship between humor styles and risk propensity. Longitudinal studies allow to track changes over time.
- Another such limitation could be its small sample size. There were not enough participants to make strong reliable conclusions.
- Participants may have provided responses that they perceived as socially desirable. This could lead to response biases and an overestimation or underestimation of the true relationships between variables.
- The study did not examine potential mediating or moderating variables that could influence the relationship between humor styles and risk propensity.

Implications

- Despite the limitations of the study, it carries significant implications for both research and practice. Insights gained from this research could inform the development of policies aimed at encouraging or discouraging certain behaviors among politically active individuals.
- Student leaders could use this knowledge to design workshops or programs that help politically active students better understand their own humor styles and risk propensities. This could lead to self-awareness and responsible decision-making.
- This research could deepen our understanding of the interplay between personality traits, such as humor styles and risk propensity, within specific social contexts, such as political activism.

- Lastly, the finding of a modest negative correlation between affiliative humor style and risk propensity and a modest positive correlation between self-enhancing, aggressive and self-defeating humor styles with risk propensity were not statistically significant and hence its weak magnitude suggests that humor styles alone may not fully mitigate risk propensity. This highlights the need for future studies to get a deeper understanding about factors other than humor styles influencing risk propensity such as personality traits, cognitive biases, social and cultural influences, past experiences, emotional states, risk perception, perceived reward, perceived threats and time pressure.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent form

You are invited to participate in a research study on “Relationship between humor styles and risk propensity among politically active students”. Before deciding to participate, please read the information given below and ask any questions you may have.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between humor styles and risk propensity among politically active students. Your contribution will help to an understanding of these aspects.

Procedure:

You will be asked to complete 2 questionnaires. Please ensure you answer the questions according to your true feelings and experiences. Your honest and open responses are crucial for the success of this study. There are no right or wrong answers, everyone possesses their views. Your participation is valued and your Candor will contribute to the meaningfulness of the research.

Confidentiality and Voluntary Participation:

Your responses will be strictly confidential. No personally identifiable information will be disclosed in any reports or publications resulting from this research. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

Consent:

I have read and understood the information provided above. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

Participant's Name/ Initials:

Signature:

By signing this form, you acknowledge that you have been allowed to ask questions and that you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

Sociodemographic Data:

Name (Initials only) :

Age :

Gender :

Institution name :

Number of years active in politics:

Appendix B

Humor Styles Questionnaire

Below is a list of statements describing different ways in which humor might be experienced. Please read each statement carefully, and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it. Please respond as honestly and objectively as you can.

1- Totally disagree

2- Moderately disagree

3- Slightly disagree

4- Neither agree nor disagree

5- Slightly agree

6- Moderately agree

7- Totally agree

1. I usually don't laugh or joke around much with other people.

2. If I am feeling depressed, I can usually cheer myself up with humor.

3. If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease them about it.

4. I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should.

5. I don't have to work very hard at making other people laugh -- I seem to be a naturally humorous person.

6. Even when I'm by myself, I'm often amused by the absurdities of life.

7. People are never offended or hurt by my sense of humor.

8. I will often get carried away in putting myself down if it makes my family or friends laugh.

9. I rarely make other people laugh by telling funny stories about myself.

10. If I am feeling upset or unhappy I usually try to think of something funny about the situation to make myself feel better.

11. When telling jokes or saying funny things, I am usually not very concerned about how other people are taking it.
12. I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults.
13. I laugh and joke a lot with my friends.
14. My humorous outlook on life keeps me from getting overly upset or depressed about things.
15. I do not like it when people use humor as a way of criticizing or putting someone down.
16. I don't often say funny things to put myself down.
17. I usually don't like to tell jokes or amuse people.
18. If I'm by myself and I'm feeling unhappy, I make an effort to think of something funny to cheer myself up.
19. Sometimes I think of something that is so funny that I can't stop myself from saying it, even if it is not appropriate for the situation.
20. I often go overboard in putting myself down when I am making jokes or trying to be funny.
21. I enjoy making people laugh.
22. If I am feeling sad or upset, I usually lose my sense of humor.
23. I never participate in laughing at others even if all my friends are doing it.
24. When I am with friends or family, I often seem to be the one that other people make fun of or joke about.
25. I don't often joke around with my friends.
26. It is my experience that thinking about some amusing aspect of a situation is often a very effective way of coping with problems.
27. If I don't like someone, I often use humor or teasing to put them down.

28. If I am having problems or feeling unhappy, I often cover it up by joking around, so that even my closest friends don't know how I really feel.

29. I usually can't think of witty things to say when I'm with other people.

30. I don't need to be with other people to feel amused -- I can usually find things to laugh about even when I'm by myself.

31. Even if something is really funny to me, I will not laugh or joke about it if someone will be offended.

32. Letting others laugh at me is my way of keeping my friends and family in good spirits.

Appendix C

General Risk Propensity Scales

Below is a list of 8 statements measuring people's general propensity to take risks across situations. Please read each statement carefully, and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it. Please respond as honestly and objectively as you can.

- 1- Totally disagree
- 2- Moderately disagree
- 3- Slightly disagree
- 4- Neither agree nor disagree
- 5- Slightly agree

- 1. Taking risks makes life more fun.
- 2. My friends would say that I'm a risk taker.
- 3. I enjoy taking risks in most aspects of my life.
- 4. I would take a risk even if it meant I might get hurt.
- 5. Taking risks is an important part of my life.
- 6. I commonly make risky decisions.
- 7. I am a believer of taking chances.
- 8. I am attracted, rather than scared, by risk.

