



Support for Freedom of Speech and Concern for Political Correctness

The Effects of Trait Emotional Intelligence and Cognitive Ability

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Abstract: Freedom of speech and political correctness are recurrent and contentious topics in contemporary society. The present study ($N = 300$ North-American adults) aimed to advance empirical knowledge on these issues by investigating how cognitive ability and trait emotional intelligence predict individuals' support for freedom of speech and concern for political correctness, considering empathy and intellectual humility as mediating variables. We demonstrate that both trait emotional intelligence and cognitive ability uniquely predict less concern for political correctness and more support for freedom of speech. Mediation through empathy slightly suppressed the effects of cognitive ability and emotional intelligence on concern for political correctness, whereas intellectual humility no longer served as a mediating variable in the overall path analysis. Possible mechanisms, implications, and avenues for future research are discussed.

Keywords: freedom of speech, political correctness, emotional intelligence, cognitive ability, intelligence

Freedom of speech is protected in the universal declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), as well as by the constitution of numerous countries. However, freedom of speech is not absolute and has legal limitations, including “hate speech,” or speech that stigmatizes a group of individuals, and views them as “a legitimate object of hostility” (Pettersson, 2019, p. 938). Politically incorrect speech, however, distinguishes itself from hate speech, for while it might be considered offensive, it does not necessarily provoke hatred toward social groups (Rosenblum et al., 2020). Rather, political correctness is “using language (or behavior) to seem sensitive to others’ feelings, especially those others who seem socially disadvantaged.” (Rosenblum et al., 2020, p. 76). Opponents of political correctness argue that freedom of speech and political correctness are hard to reconcile because political correctness obstructs open debate (Anderson, 1992; Talbot, 2007). Proponents, however, argue that politically correct speech can change attitudes and beliefs, leading to a more equal society (Rix, 2006).

Although freedom of speech and political correctness are contentious topics in many contemporary societies, empiri-

cal research on their relation and determinants is relatively lacking. The present study aims to advance scientific knowledge on these topics by investigating how individuals’ trait emotional intelligence predicts their attitudes toward these issues. To this end we tested a model in which freedom of speech support and concern for political correctness is related to individual differences in cognitive ability and trait emotional intelligence, considering empathy and intellectual humility as potential mediating variables.

The Role of Cognitive Ability in “Speech” Attitudes

Recently, De keersmaecker and colleagues (2021) demonstrated that people with higher (vs. lower) levels of cognitive ability (measured with perceptual/verbal intelligence tests) more strongly support freedom of speech for groups across the ideological spectrum, including, for example, socialists, anti-religionists, racists, and anti-American Muslim clergymen. They conclude that (both liberal and conservative) individuals with higher cognitive ability show

generalized support for freedom of speech, including for proponents of ideas they might disagree with. Moreover, this positive relationship was (partially) mediated by higher levels of intellectual humility: the extent to which an individual recognizes that his or her ideas might be incorrect (Leary et al., 2017), thereby also showing an increased openness to revise one's ideas and to listen to other's ideas (Krumrei-Mancuso & Rouse, 2016). De keersmaecker and colleagues (2021) explicitly focused on cognitive abilities or the 'cognitive' side of intelligence. Yet, it has been argued that to understand people's attitudes in interpersonal and intergroup domains, one should also consider emotional intelligence (e.g., Onraet et al., 2017). The question thus arises whether support for freedom of speech, and additionally, concern for political correctness, may also be influenced by emotional intelligence, whether it has unique effects, and whether it may interact with cognitive abilities.

The Potential Role of Trait Emotional Intelligence in "Speech Attitudes"

In the present research, we focus on the trait of emotional intelligence, a personality trait that captures the individual's tendency to manage, interpret, and identify their emotions (Petrides & Furnham, 2006). Unlike ability-based emotional intelligence which attempts to measure maximum performance, trait emotional intelligence refers to typical (i.e., everyday) performance (see e.g., Siegling et al., 2015). Because we deem this typical performance captured by trait emotional ability as most relevant to people's general, everyday behavior and attitudes, and because the alternative, ability-based measures of emotional intelligence poorly distinguish between emotional and cognitive ability (e.g., Qualter et al., 2012), we focus on trait emotional intelligence in the present study.

To our knowledge, no previous studies investigated whether emotional intelligence is related to freedom of speech, or political correctness. Nevertheless, previous research may shed some light on how emotional intelligence is relevant to 'speech attitudes'. Interestingly, however, these findings give rise to opposing predictions.

On the one hand, interpersonal sensitivity is an important aspect of emotional intelligence, and individuals higher in emotional intelligence have been shown to recognize emotions in others faster (Petrides & Furnham, 2003). Therefore, these individuals could be more attuned to the potential harm done to others by free speech, or the offense taken by politically incorrect speech. Furthermore, Cowan and Khatchadourian (2003) found that connected knowing, which involves trying to understand another's perspective when evaluating an argument (Galotti et al., 1999), and which is related to emotional intelligence, is positively

associated with the perceived harm of hate speech. If concerns for political correctness are indeed centered on avoiding harm to others and sensitivity to the feelings of others, they can be considered an extension of the perceived harm of hate speech. Additionally, Onraet and colleagues (2017) found that individuals high in trait emotional intelligence show less racial prejudice and this relationship is mediated by higher levels of empathy. Since racial groups are typically among those most targeted by politically incorrect or harmful free speech (Downs & Cowan, 2012), we might expect individuals high in emotional intelligence to be warier in their support for freedom of speech, and more concerned with political correctness.

The latter study suggests that empathy, which refers to cognitive and emotional reactivity to the observed experience of others (Davis, 1983), may be an important mediator in the effects of emotional intelligence. Indeed, emotional intelligence is positively related to perspective-taking and empathic concern (e.g., Fernández-Abascal & Martín-Díaz, 2019). Moreover, Cowan and Khatchadourian (2003) found that individuals with lower levels of empathy show greater support for freedom of speech, whereas those higher in empathy perceived hate speech as more harmful. Additionally, having compassion for others is an important aspect of the empathic concern facet of the empathy construct (Davis, 1983), and is argued to lay the basis of political correctness (Moss & O'Connor, 2020).

Based on these findings, one could reasonably expect people's level of trait emotional intelligence to be positively related to concern for political correctness and negatively to support for freedom of speech, with empathy mediating these relationships. As such, the effects of emotional intelligence (through empathy) would show the opposite relationship observed for cognitive ability (through intellectual humility) reported in De keersmaecker and colleagues (2021).

On the other hand, however, individuals high in emotional intelligence show a stronger psychological (verbal) reactance to the restriction of their freedom (Middleton et al., 2015). Psychological reactance is a motivational state that is aroused when free behavior is threatened (Brehm, 1966). The restriction of freedom of speech, and by extension, political correctness, are both prominently associated with the restriction of free behavior. For example, Conway and colleagues (2017) showed that focusing on political correctness can backfire because of the emotional reactance individuals experience in the face of restrictive communication norms. They found that priming political correctness norms caused increased support for Donald Trump, especially among those who feel an emotional reactance to these norms.

Additionally, Jarvinen and Paulus (2017) argued that more adequate emotion regulation predicts individuals'

greater openness to opposing views. Therefore, emotional intelligence, conceptually related to emotion regulation, may also be positively related to intellectual humility, which in turn has been demonstrated to increase freedom of speech support (De keersmaecker et al., 2021). Along similar lines, increased black-and-white moral thinking has been shown to go hand in hand with more politically correct attitudes (Moss & O'Connor, 2020). Such moral absolutism stands in opposition to intellectual humility, as also demonstrated by the negative relationship between intellectual humility and dogmatism (Leary et al., 2017). Therefore, intellectual humility can be expected to serve as a mediating variable in the effects of emotional intelligence on concern for political correctness and freedom of speech support, in a way similar to the effects of cognitive ability on these outcomes.

In sum, opposing predictions about the impact of emotional intelligence emerge. Emotional intelligence could be negatively related to freedom of speech support and positively to political correctness because of greater interpersonal sensitivity and higher levels of empathy. But emotional intelligence could also show the opposite relationships, due to the heightened likelihood for psychological reactance, and through higher levels of intellectual humility.

The Present Study

Given the opposing predictions about the effect of emotional intelligence on “speech attitudes,” the present study aims to clarify this relationship, and the role of empathy and intellectual humility therein. To this end, we introduce trait emotional intelligence as a potential predictor of speech attitudes, investigate its unique main effect as well as its potential interaction with cognitive ability, and subsequently test an integrated model in which support for freedom of speech and concern for political correctness are predicted by cognitive ability and emotional intelligence, considering empathy and intellectual humility as potential mediating variables.

Method

Participants

Power analysis for main effects showed that a sample of 300 participants would provide $> .90$ power to detect an effect of $r = .20$. Therefore, three hundred North-American adults completed the study via Amazon Mechanical Turk (38.7% female, 61.3% male). No participants were excluded. Of the participants, 7.3% completed primary education, 26.7% completed secondary education, and 66%

completed or were completing a higher education degree. Nearly all participants (99.3%) indicated English as their native language. In addition, 76.3% identified as White/European American, 9.7% as Black/African American, 1.3% as Native American, 7.7% as Asian American, 4.3% as Latinx/Hispanic American, and 0.7% as other.

Procedure and Measures

After the completion of demographic variables, the following measures were administered:

Cognitive Ability

The Ammons Quick test (Ammons & Ammons, 1962) is a perceptual-verbal intelligence test that has demonstrated high concurrent validity with other tests of verbal as well as general intelligence, such as WAIS-4 (for a recent validation, see Zagar et al., 2013). Participants are presented with four pictures and a list of 50 words. They are instructed to assign each word to one of the four pictures. The sum of correct answers was calculated to operationalize cognitive ability ($M = 36.84$, $SD = 10.58$, $\alpha = .95$).

Emotional Intelligence

The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-sf; Petrides & Furnham, 2006) was employed to measure *typical* emotional intelligence ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.00$, $\alpha = .93$). The scale is comprised of 30 items (e.g., “I often pause and think about my feelings”) rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). This self-report instrument was specifically designed and validated as an efficient measure of global trait emotional intelligence.

Empathy

Participants completed two subscales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1983): perspective taking ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 0.82$, $\alpha = .87$) and empathic concern ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.85$, $\alpha = .87$). Respective example items are: “I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective” and “I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me”. Each subscale is comprised of 7 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Previous studies have also selected these two subscales of the IRI to measure empathy (for a recent example, see Onraet et al., 2017). Both scales correlated highly ($r = .66$), and could not be distinguished in an exploratory factor analysis (see OSF: <https://osf.io/7gkx4/>; De keersmaecker & Roets, 2022).

Therefore, we combined the scales into a single empathy score ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 0.75$, $\alpha = .91$). However, to better understand the relationships of each subscale with the

other variables and hence also their relative contribution in possible mediations, we will also report a model with both subscales included as separate mediators.

Intellectual Humility

Participants completed Leary and colleagues' (2017) 6-item Intellectual humility scale ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.70$, $\alpha = .85$) on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). An example item is: "I accept that my beliefs and attitudes may be wrong".

Concern for Political Correctness

We administered the Concern for Political Correctness scale by Strauts and Blanton (2015; $M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.60$, $\alpha = .95$) on 7-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). This scale consists of items that measure the degree to which an individual becomes upset by politically incorrect speech (e.g., "I get mad when I hear someone use politically incorrect language"), and items that measure the degree to which an individual intends to correct politically incorrect speech (e.g., "I try to educate people around me about the political meaning of their words").

Freedom of Speech

Existing measures of freedom of speech usually either focus on specific situations (e.g., online; Shen & Tsui, 2018), or the rights of specific groups (i.e., members of ideological groups; De keersmaecker et al., 2021). Because for the purpose of our study, a more general and comprehensive measure is warranted, we constructed a 9-item scale ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 0.99$, $\alpha = .82$), based on items from three previously reported measures of freedom of speech. All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Three items are adapted from Shen and Tsui (2018). An example item is: "Every individual has the unalienable right to express their thoughts freely". Three items are from Cowan and colleagues (2002). An example item is: "Censorship of speech leaves little room for debate and diverse points of view". Three items are based on a method reported by De keersmaecker and colleagues (2021), who identified three questions in the General Social Survey (GSS) pertaining to freedom of speech. These questions were modified into items, for example: "If a member of any group, regardless of their convictions, wanted to make a speech in your (city/town/community), they should be allowed to speak". The full list of items, as well as their factor loadings, is available at <https://osf.io/7gkx4/> (De keersmaecker & Roets, 2022).

Political Orientation

Participants indicated their political ideology (1 = *very liberal* to 5 = *very conservative*) and political party preference

(1 = *Democrat*, 2 = *Democrat-leaning*, 3 = *Independent*, 4 = *Republican-leaning*, 5 = *Republican*) on a 5-point rating scale. These items showed a high correlation ($r = .72$, $p < .001$) and were therefore combined into a single measure ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 1.22$, distribution from 1 to 5 with 0.5 increments: 16%, 12%, 18%, 12%, 14%, 4%, 12%, 5%, 7%).

Results

First, we tested the unique and interaction effects of cognitive ability and emotional intelligence on speech attitudes, with an additional analysis also controlling for political orientation. Next, we tested a full, integrated model in which support for freedom of speech and concern for political correctness is predicted by individual differences in cognitive ability and emotional intelligence, considering empathy and intellectual humility as potential mediating variables.

We computed zero-order correlations among all variables (see Table 1). Emotional intelligence, cognitive ability, empathy, intellectual humility, and freedom of speech were all positively interrelated. Cognitive ability, emotional intelligence, and freedom of speech were negatively related to concern for political correctness.

Unique and Interaction Effects of Cognitive Ability and Emotional Intelligence

Using linear regression models, we examined the main effects of cognitive ability and emotional intelligence, and their potential interaction, on support for freedom of speech and concern for political correctness. As shown in Table 2, both cognitive ability and emotional intelligence positively predicted freedom of speech support, and negative relationships emerged for political correctness. Emotional intelligence and cognitive ability did not significantly interact in predicting freedom of speech or political correctness.

As an additional analysis, we tested whether these unique effects persist when controlling for political orientation (lower lines in Table 2). Results for an approach testing political orientation as a moderator can be found on the OSF page. These analyses showed no interaction in the relationship between cognitive ability and freedom of speech. For the other relationships, the effects of cognitive and emotional ability were stronger for relatively more right-wing participants, but they were still clearly observable across the ideological spectrum. Only for the most left-wing participants, the effects of cognitive and emotional ability seemed not to play a substantial role in political correctness specifically.

Table 1. Correlations among the study's variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Cognitive ability	–				
2. Emotional intelligence	.35**	–			
3. Freedom of speech	.31**	.28**	–		
4. Concern for political correctness	–.35**	–.23**	–.24**	–	
5. Intellectual humility	.20**	.24**	.25**	.03	–
6. Empathy	.34**	.54**	.20**	–.00	.42**
Empathic concern	.37**	.49**	.13*	.02	.28**
Perspective taking	.25**	.50**	.24**	–.03	.50**

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Table 2. Unique and interactional effects

	Freedom of speech			Political correctness		
	β	CI _{95%}	p	β	CI _{95%}	p
Cognitive ability	.34	[.176, .505]	< .001	–.23	[–.390, –.062]	.007
	.40	[.246, .562]	< .001	–.30	[–.457, –.149]	< .001
Emotional intelligence	.15	[.025, .273]	.019	–.16	[–.279, –.031]	.014
	.16	[.040, .277]	.001	–.17	[–.282, –.051]	.029
Interaction	.13	[–.028, .282]	.107	.10	[–.054, .255]	.202
	.09	[–.062, .233]	.255	.15	[.006, .294]	.041

Note. Effects without (upper lines) and with (lower lines) controlling for political orientation, respectively. β = Standardized Beta; CI_{95%} = 95% Confidence Interval.

Including political orientation in the first step of the regression did show higher support for freedom of speech ($\beta = .31$, $p = .001$) and lower concern for political correctness ($\beta = –.36$, $p < .001$) for relatively more conservative respondents. Statistical control for political orientation, however, did not substantially alter the effects of cognitive ability and emotional intelligence. For freedom of speech, cognitive ability and emotional intelligence were still unique predictors, as was the case for concern for political correctness. The interaction for freedom of speech remained non-significant, whereas the interaction effect for political correctness became significant. The slopes for this interaction indicated that high scores on one predictor merely strengthened the effect of the other predictor.

The Integrated Model

Finally, a path analysis using Maximum Likelihood Estimation (1,000 bootstrap samples) was conducted with the Lavaan package (version 0.5-23; Rosseel, 2012) in R, to test the simultaneous contribution of cognitive ability and emotional intelligence on freedom of speech and concern for political correctness, with empathy and intellectual humility as mediators (see Figure 1). Indirect effects are reported in Table 3 (Model 1).

The results of the full model depicted in Figure 1, revealed significant, unique effects on support for freedom of speech of cognitive ability (total effect: $\beta = .24$, $p < .001$) and emotional intelligence (total effect: $\beta = .19$, $p = .002$).

Similarly, significant, unique effects on concern for political correctness of cognitive ability (total effect: $\beta = –.30$, $p < .001$) and emotional intelligence (total effect: $\beta = –.12$, $p = .033$) emerged. In addition to the direct negative effects of cognitive ability and emotional intelligence on concern for political correctness, there were significant positive indirect effects mediated via empathy. Follow-up analyses testing a model that included empathic concern and perspective-taking as separate mediators instead of the composite measure (Model 2) demonstrated that the indirect effects through empathy were driven by the empathic concern component. The positive effects of cognitive ability and emotional intelligence on freedom of speech and the negative effects on concern for political correctness were not significantly mediated by intellectual humility in the full model. When testing a model with only cognitive ability as the predictor, support for freedom of speech as the dependent variable, and intellectual humility as a mediator, the effect of cognitive ability on higher levels of support for freedom of speech (Total effect: $\beta = 0.31$, $p < .001$), was partially mediated by intellectual humility (Indirect effect: $\beta = .04$, $p = .012$), thereby replicating the findings of De Keersmaecker and colleagues (2021).

Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the effects of cognitive ability and trait emotional intelligence on support for freedom of speech and concern for political correctness,

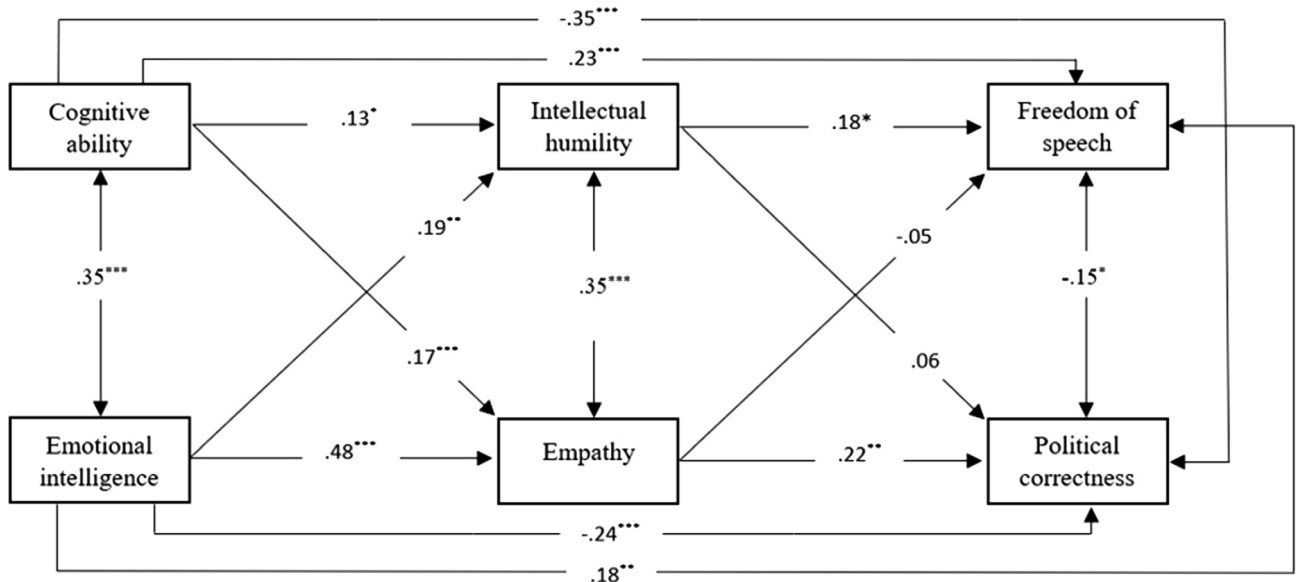


Figure 1. Model with Standardized β estimates. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Indirect effects via empathy and intellectual humility

Independent variable	Mediator	Dependent variable	Indirect effect					
			Model 1			Model 2		
			β	CI _{95%}	p	β	CI _{95%}	p
Cognitive ability	Intellectual humility	Freedom of speech	.02	[.002, .060]	.100	.02	[-.001, .054]	.195
Emotional intelligence	Intellectual humility	Freedom of speech	.04	[.005, .087]	.101	.03	[-.000, .078]	.191
Cognitive ability	Intellectual humility	Political correctness	.01	[-.009, .030]	.409	.02	[-.002, .044]	.203
Emotional intelligence	Intellectual humility	Political correctness	.01	[-.015, .040]	.365	.02	[-.003, .054]	.147
Cognitive ability	Empathy	Freedom of speech	-.01	[-.040, .023]	.574			
	Empathic concern					-.04	[-.084, -.003]	.061
	Perspective taking					.01	[-.005, .040]	.347
Emotional intelligence	Empathy	Freedom of speech	-.02	[-.116, .057]	.570			
	Empathic concern					-.07	[-.147, -.007]	.054
	Perspective taking					.06	[-.031, .143]	.168
Cognitive ability	Empathy	Political correctness	.04	[.012, .071]	.015			
	Empathic concern					.07	[.029, .115]	.002
	Perspective taking					-.01	[-.028, .009]	.512
Emotional intelligence	Empathy	Political correctness	.11	[.036, .188]	.007			
	Empathic concern					.12	[.057, .197]	.001
	Perspective taking					-.03	[-.119, .049]	.415

Note. Model 1: Empathy as a composite measure. Model 2: Empathic concern and Perspective taking as separate mediators. β = Standardized Beta; CI_{95%} = 95% Confidence Interval.

with empathy and intellectual humility as potential mediators. Support for freedom of speech and concern for political correctness can be considered in conflict with one another (Anderson, 1992; Talbot, 2007) if one regards political correctness as a restrictive communication norm. The present data, however, show a relatively modest negative correlation between these two variables, suggesting that participants did not consider them as mere opposite poles of a continuum. Nevertheless, the observed effects of cog-

nitive ability and emotional intelligence on these variables were consistently in the opposite direction, indicating that they have common antecedents at the individual level.

Critically for the aim of the present study, in addition to cognitive ability, emotional intelligence uniquely predicts speech attitudes, with the nature of the effects being similar to those of cognitive ability: less concern for political correctness and more support for freedom of speech. These relationships with emotional intelligence may likely

be explained by previous insights into the increased tendency of individuals with high emotional intelligence to develop psychological reactance when confronted with restrictions of freedom (Middleton et al., 2015). Indeed, along similar lines, individuals with higher private self-consciousness, which reflects awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, and motives, exhibit greater reactance responses to coercive communication attempts and a restriction of freedom of choice (Carver & Scheier, 1981).

Importantly, previous work showed that empathy mitigates reactant responses when free behavior is restricted (Shen, 2010), which can explain the 'suppressing' mediating role of empathic concern in the present study. Indeed, compassion for others lies at the basis of politically correct speech (Moss & O'Connor, 2020). Therefore, empathic concern for others, especially those targeted by politically incorrect speech, might motivate individuals to show concern for political correctness. As such, although both cognitive ability and emotional intelligence showed overall and direct negative effects on concern for political correctness, the accompanying higher levels of empathic concern also found in those high in cognitive ability and emotional intelligence somewhat suppressed the overall effect.

Our results are, however, not consistent with the idea that lower levels of subtle racial prejudice found in those high in emotional intelligence would straightforwardly translate into more concern for political correctness (and less support for freedom of speech). Indeed, it appears that although both cognitive capacity (e.g., De keersmaecker et al., 2021) and emotional intelligence (e.g., Onraet et al., 2017) predict lower levels of (racial) prejudice, they nevertheless are both also associated with more support for freedom of speech and less concern for political correctness. This does not mean that people higher in cognitive and emotional abilities want to actually promote counterfactual or hurtful discourse, or that they consider free speech without boundaries altogether. De keersmaecker and colleagues (2021) already demonstrated that although people with higher levels of cognitive ability showed relatively higher support for freedom of speech for all target groups, they still showed substantial differences between groups in the extent of their support. Rather, our findings signal that, relative to those lower in cognitive abilities and emotional intelligence, high scorers are more aversive to and cautious about the general idea of external control and censure of what people can say and how they say it. This suggests that individuals high in cognitive ability and those high in emotional intelligence may have a different perspective and/or sensitivity to the "double edge" nature of restrictions to free speech. In fact, although such restrictions are often presented as a way to protect disadvantaged groups, they can be (and are) used as easily to oppress these groups. Indeed, exercising the right to free and non-normative

speech has been an important tool for (disadvantaged) groups worldwide to address social issues and achieve social change (Downs & Cowan, 2012; Gates et al., 1994).

As this is the first study to investigate the link between emotional intelligence, freedom of speech, and political correctness, future extensions and replications are warranted to corroborate these findings and further illuminate the underlying mechanisms. For example, we found that empathy and intellectual humility had only limited impact as mediators in our path analysis. Future studies might therefore want to focus on additional explanatory mechanisms for the effects of cognitive ability and emotional intelligence. A promising path in this regard could be to investigate to what extent greater psychological reactance, but also deliberate motivations about free speech as an instrument for societal change, lie at the basis of greater support for freedom of speech and wariness of political correctness in individuals with high emotional intelligence and high cognitive ability. Additionally, research in a variety of socio-political contexts can help establish the generalizability versus potential context-dependency of the effects.

Furthermore, although widely and successfully used in the literature, the trait emotional intelligence measure assesses subjective evaluations of emotional abilities (Brackett et al., 2011). A limitation of this method is that it may be susceptible to social desirability and self-presentation effects, although this should be less pertinent in completely anonymous, no-stakes situations (Kluemper, 2008) such as the present study. Nevertheless, future studies could benefit from investigating emotional intelligence using performance-based methods (e.g., Mayer, 2002). Such methods do not measure how we typically behave most of the time, like trait measures of emotional intelligence aim to do (see Siegling et al., 2015). However, it may be useful to gain insight into whether "maximum effort emotional intelligence" is also predictive of people's speech attitudes in everyday life.

In sum, while also calling for further research, the present study demonstrates the unique effects of cognitive ability and trait emotional intelligence on speech attitudes, thereby contributing from a psychological perspective to a growing literature on the determinants of support for freedom of speech and concern for political correctness; issues that are at the center of societal debate worldwide.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Open Data

List of items and factor loadings are available at <https://osf.io/7gkx4/> (De keersmaecker & Roets, 2022).

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