



# **Knowing Who I Am to Lead a Meaningful Life: Differentiation of Self as a Predictor of Psychological Flexibility**

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## **Abstract**

Differentiation of Self (DoS) refers to an individual's ability to maintain a continuous understanding of who one is, regardless of internal or external stressful events, whether they're social or emotions based. The DoS theory is presented by Bowen as the outcome of four traits: Emotional Reactivity (ER), I-Position (IP), Emotional Cutoff (EC), and Fusion with Others (FO). Psychological Flexibility (PF), otherwise, refers to one's ability to stay open to new experiences in order to build a significant life, even when that involves tolerating discomfort. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) researchers have presented PF as the product of Openness to Experience (OE), Behavioral Awareness (BA) and Valued Action (VA). While DoS and PF overlap at times, empirical integration of these frameworks remains scarce. In this study, a sample of 494 Brazilian adults (372 women, 101 men, 21 non-binary) with a mean age of 32.88 years ( $SD = 11.82$ ) filled a questionnaire containing the DSI-R-BR and CompACT. A quantitative design was employed using simple and multiple linear regressions, conducted to identify which DoS dimensions explain different facets of PF. A simple linear regression indicated that DoS significantly predicted PF ( $F(1, 492) = 329.81, p < .001$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .400$ ). Multiple linear regressions (*Enter* method,  $p < .001$  for all models) showed that DoS factors accounted for 41.2% of the variance in PF, while specifically predicting OE (15.4%), BA (13.2%), and VA (32.8%). These findings contribute to an embryonic literature seeking to unify Bowenian theory with contextual behavioral sciences.

**Keywords:** Acceptance and Commitment Therapy; ACT; Differentiation of Self Inventory - Revised; CompACT; Quantitative Study