



Big Five Personality Traits and Assertiveness do not Affect Mastery of Communication Skills

Jeroen Kuntze^{a,*}, Henk T. van der Molen^b, Marise Ph. Born^c

^aDepartment of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Open University, The Netherlands

^bFaculty of Social Sciences, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands

^cDepartment of Psychology, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Received 19 January 2016; accepted 19 January 2016

Available online 4 May 2016

Abstract

Background: Mastering communication skills is often emphasized as an important aspect of job or academic performance. However, research into the relationships between personality factors and these skills is scarce.

Purpose: This study investigated whether the big-five personality factors and assertiveness predict mastery of communication skills before and after following communication skills training.

Method: The skills level of 143 psychology students was assessed after two communication skills courses, namely a basic and an advanced communication skills training. Personality factors were assessed with the Five Factor Personality Inventory and the Scale for Interpersonal Behavior.

Results: Participants showed substantial progress in their mastery of the communication skills after both courses. Surprisingly, none of the personality factors predicted the level of mastery of these skills.

Discussion: This seems to imply that trainees can become professional communicators, regardless of their scores on these personality factors.

© 2016 King Saud bin AbdulAziz University for Health Sciences. Production and Hosting by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Keywords: Communication skills; Personality; Assertiveness; Training; Assessment

1. Introduction

One of the aims of personality research is to improve procedures for personnel selection, career or school

counseling and educational methods. Therefore, during the past decade many researchers have been interested in using personality measures to predict job and academic performance.^{1–8} Meta-analyses suggest that some personality factors, for instance agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion, are reasonably good predictors for job or academic performance.^{9–13} Although, mastering communication skills is often emphasized as an important aspect of job or academic performance,^{14–20} studies about the relationship between personality factors and the mastery of

*Correspondence to: Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Open University of the Netherlands, Studiecentrum Utrecht, Vondellaan 202, 3521 GZ Utrecht, The Netherlands. Tel./fax: +31 30 2518254.

E-mail address: jeroen.kuntze@ou.nl (J. Kuntze).

Peer review under responsibility of AMEEMR: the Association for Medical Education in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

communication skills are scarce. Therefore, this study aims to investigate possible relationships between the mastery of communication skills and the big-five factors extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability (vs. neuroticism)^a and autonomy, and assertiveness.

The results of the few studies into the relationship between personality factors and communication skills are mixed. For instance, one study found non-significant correlations between on the one hand the big-five factors extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and autonomy and on the other hand the adequate use of communication skills.²¹ Another study found no relationship between self-efficacy and the level of mastery of communication skills after a course in these skills.²² However, a negative correlation was found between an instrument that measures a person's tendency to be closed-minded and rigid on the one hand and a self-report measure of basic communication skills on the other hand.⁸ Interrogation skills of police interviewers correlated positively with extraversion and conscientiousness and negatively with neuroticism.²³ Also self-report measures of assertiveness and communication skills were found to relate positively.²⁴

In this study we concentrate on the big-five factors extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and autonomy and on a measure of assertiveness. Persons scoring high on assertiveness are often characterized as experiencing little social anxiety and performing adequately and frequently in interpersonal behavior.^{25–27} Consequently, assertiveness is often associated with having adequate social skills.²⁷ Therefore, and because of the positive relationship found between assertiveness and self-reported experience in communication skills,²⁴ this study examines whether assertiveness has a positive relationship with the mastery of communication skills.

The subjects for investigating the relationships between the above-mentioned personality factors and the mastery of communication skills were psychology students who had followed a training program in communication skills. Many psychology curricula give attention to training communication skills, because mastering oral communication skills is one of the requirements that lead to the diploma of a registered European psychologist.²⁸ An effective training program for acquiring communication

skills is the microcounseling method.^{29–32} Several studies^{33–37} and meta-analyses^{38–41} reported medium to large overall effect sizes for this training method.

We assessed the mastery level of communication skills of first and second year undergraduates in a Dutch psychology curriculum who followed a basic and advanced training program in these skills, respectively. The trainees' mastery of these skills was assessed with a behavioral measure, namely a video test.

The communication skills that are dealt with in these training programs are also known as microskills.^{29–32,42} In these training programs the complex skill of professionally interviewing a client is disentangled into small meaningful communication skills, e.g. concreteness or paraphrasing. Table 1 shows an overview of these microskills, and Appendix 1 gives a more detailed definition of these skills.

The communication skills, displayed in Table 1, fit within the helping model developed by Egan.^{43–44} This model consists of three stages: (1) problem clarification, (2) gaining new insights and (3) strategies for treatment. The first stage, problem clarification, aims at clarifying the clients' problem. The second stage, gaining new insights, aims at helping clients gain new insights in their situation. Having discussed the problem(s) in the first and second stage, the client and helper formulate strategies to solve these problems in the third stage, in which strategies for treatment are developed. The seven basic communication skills are mainly used in the first stage and the five advanced communication skills in the second stage. In the third stage the helper uses the skills giving advice, techniques for behavioral change and dealing with resistance.⁴⁵

European psychology curricula offer a three-year bachelor program. Students follow general psychology courses in the first two years of this bachelor program, such as introductions in social psychology, personality psychology, developmental psychology, clinical psychology, work and organizational psychology, history of psychology and methodology and statistics. In the third year they follow a minor and after that they need to choose a specialized program, for instance clinical psychology or biological and cognitive psychology, and they need to write a bachelor thesis. After the third year they can continue with a specialized master program of one year, in which they follow advanced courses, do an internship and write a master thesis. These psychology curricula often provide a course in basic communication skills in the first or second bachelor year and a course in advanced communication skills in consecutive years. Accordingly, the psychology students who participated in the present study received a

^aThe personality questionnaire used in this study labels one of the big-five personality factors as 'emotional stability'. This factor is also known by its negative pole 'neuroticism'. In the remainder of this paper this factor will be referred to as 'emotional stability'.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/2685315>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/2685315>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)