



## The Effect of Personality Characteristics on the Development of Interpersonal Communication Skills Through One-Time Training

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**Abstract:** The importance of interpersonal communication skills in the business environment will only increase as the world undergoes trends of globalization and digitization, as well as various crises. The factors that affect interpersonal skills, such as life experience, situational factors, and individual characteristics, are difficult to isolate. Among the prominent antecedents of interpersonal communication effectiveness are personality characteristics. The current study used one-time training to examine how personality traits and interpersonal skills relate among 127 managers from a wide variety of professions in Israel. The current study confirmed the effect of personality characteristics on interpersonal communication skills, albeit weakly. A significant improvement was found in the Emotional stability following the training. Participating in the training changed the way people associate personality traits with Interaction management. An in-depth study of an intervening variable found that those with low extraversion and high conscientiousness improved assertiveness, empathy, supportiveness, openness to experience, and self-disclosure, in contrast to those with less solid personality characteristics who showed a smaller improvement or even decreased in these skills. Our findings have important implications for increasing the effectiveness of interpersonal skills training.

**Keywords:** interpersonal communication skills; interpersonal communication skills training; personality traits; Big-Five; marketing.

**JEL classification:** M16; M31; M53.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Communication skills are some of the most important aspects of everyday life, yet they are among the most difficult to define and assess. In light of this expanding focus and the increasing value expected from communication skills, it is worthwhile to gain a deeper understanding of such precious soft skills. A variety of activities that we encounter daily require interpersonal communication skills: problem solving, resource distribution, creating collaborations, dispute resolution, and promoting important issues in an interpersonal environment at home and in the workplace. A skilled communicator can select key pieces of a complex idea to convey through words, sounds, and images to build shared understanding (Levy and Murnane, 2004). Through social perception, persuasion, negotiation, instructing, and service orientation, skilled communicators negotiate positive outcomes with customers, partners, subordinates, and superiors (Mumford *et al.*, 1999).

Communication skills are vital to the business environment and will become even more important during the transition to the future job market. Timm (2005), cited in Mitchell (2008) observed that in the new global marketplace, employees are expected to interact with others more personally than ever before; therefore, traditional technical skills will not suffice. Soft skills are critically important in the workplace (Robles, 2012). According to this research, hard skills only contribute 15% to success, whereas soft skills account for 85%. In order to demonstrate these skills, one must be able to communicate and interact with others. As these skills have become increasingly important, significant funding is spent on interpersonal communication skills training programs to improve these skills. Educational success in general, as well as the effectiveness of various trainings depend a lot on individual characteristics, especially personality traits (Matthews *et al.*, 2005; Knapp and Daly, 2011; Fowles *et al.*, 2023; Deng and Turner, 2024; Grosz *et al.*, 2024). However, there are very few studies addressing the relationship between models of personality and the affect for education (Matthews *et al.*, 2005), and little research with the Big five personality taxonomy published in communications journals (Knapp and Daly, 2011). The need for the present research thus evolved from a double perspective – a gap in the literature addressing the relationship between the successful training of interpersonal communication skills and personality traits of the trainees, and the practical need of the consulting industry to design appropriate, effective trainings in the field, adapted to personality differences of the trained groups. The novelty of the approach is given by the methodology used – an action research type of approach, quasi-experimental, with real interpersonal communication training offered to real business people.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW: PERSONALITY TRAITS AND INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Interpersonal communication skills tend to be situation-specific behaviors, so finding strong or even significant predictors may be difficult. Because interpersonal skills are influenced by various factors, such as life experience, situational factors, and individual characteristics, it is difficult to isolate them from other influences. Hayes (2002) cited in Klein (2009), identifying strong and consistent demographic or personality predictors may be a difficult task. According to an extensive meta-analysis published by Klein (2009), Several possible antecedents of Interpersonal communication skills have been identified in the literature. Among those most frequently investigated include gender and personality traits.

Based on their findings, Klein *et al.* (2006) concluded that skilled social performance expertise requires competence in a number of different areas, including interpersonal communication skills. A practical framework was provided by these authors to explain how antecedent variables, such as life experience, individual differences, and personality characteristics, as well as situational characteristics, such as goals, tasks, or norms, may contribute to the perception and cognitive activity that occurs during interpersonal skills training. Consequently, the study found that personality characteristics and gender influence interpersonal communication effectiveness (Klein, 2009). Among the personality variables, extraversion showed the strongest associations with interpersonal communication skills. The results indicate a clear, positive impact of Interpersonal communication training programs.

### 2.1 Interpersonal communication competence scale (ICCS)

Communication competence is defined by Jablin and Sias (2001), cited in Payne (2005) as the set of skills at a communicator's disposal. As a strategic, goal-oriented approach to competence, this definition emphasizes both knowledge and ability. Rather than focusing solely on communication, the definition emphasizes two essential aspects: understanding of communication and context, as well as the ability to accomplish goals (skill). According to Spitzberg and Cupach (1984), It is an individual's competence to choose appropriate behaviors to achieve interpersonal communication goals in a particular situation. The complexity of the communication process creates a challenge in every measurement issue. The definitions of communication competence are becoming more specific as the issue of context is considered more closely (Payne, 2005). The difference between skills and traits is that skills can be improved and change with instruction. In contrast, traits are relatively stable qualities that cannot be taught (Rubin and Martin, 1994). Competence conceptualizations among researchers is commonly based on the original criteria proposed by Spitzberg and Cupach (1984): appropriateness and effectiveness. Interpersonal communication competence (ICC) refers to a judge's perception of an individual's abilities to communicate effectively in social situations (Rubin and Martin, 1994). There has been a strong association between ICC and the ability to adapt to new situations. This brief, self-report questionnaire measures ten ICC skills and is useful for self-assessment. After examining the leading assessment tool (Spitzberg and Cupach, 1984) for several years, this tool obtained ten variables that constitute a valid measure of interpersonal skills. Compared with previous measures, the ICCS has greater content validity, since it taps into the multiple facets of ICC found in the literature of interpersonal relationships. Several studies (Hullman *et al.*, 2010; Wilkins *et al.*, 2015; Pichler *et al.*, 2018; Xu *et al.*, 2018), have found that it is extremely useful for interpersonal communication training.

The extant literature already mentioned recognizes ten dimensions of competence:

- *Self-disclosure* - Openness, the ability to reveal personality traits through communication. It is the basis for establishing interpersonal relationship. It must be appropriate to the person and the situation.
- *Empathy* - the ability to understand another person's perspective through emotional response to their internal state.
- *Social relaxation* - the ability to feel comfortable in social situations without anxiety, apprehension, or stress. the ability to deal with others' criticism or negative reactions without getting overwhelmed by it.

- *Assertiveness* - Standing up for one's own rights without denying any other person's rights.
- *Interaction management* - the ability to handle rituals in everyday conversation. It involves skills such as negotiating topics for discussion, taking turns, starting, and ending conversations, and developing conversation topics.
- *Alter centrism* - the ability to Understand what others say and how they talk and recognizing spoken and unspoken messages.
- *Expressiveness* - the ability to express feelings through nonverbal behaviors, such as facial expressions, gestures, and vocal modulations. Recent theory proposes that expressiveness is also based on communicating thoughts and feelings through speech (Rubin and Martin, 1994).
- *Supportiveness* - the ability to confirm the other in a descriptive (not evaluative), provisional (not certain), spontaneous (not strategic) way. orientation towards solving a problem (not controlling), empathic (not remote), and egalitarian (not superior) communication style (Bochner and Kelly (1974), cited in Rubin and Martin (1994)).
- *Immediacy* - the ability to be seen as approachable and available for communication. "Immediacy is often communicated through nonverbal behaviors such as facing the other directly, adopting an open stance, having a pleasant facial expression, using direct eye contact, and leaning forward, as well as nonverbal behaviors that convey a feeling of interpersonal warmth, closeness, and affiliation" (Spitzberg and Hurt, 1987).
- *Environmental control* - the ability to meet predetermined goals and satisfy needs, to handle conflict situations and solve problems in a cooperative environment, and to gain compliance from others.

## 2.2 Big-Five personality inventory

The Big-Five Inventory (BFI) was developed in the late 1980s (John *et al.*, 1991) as an extremely short measure of personality traits based on the characteristics Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Intellect or Openness to Experience. Introverted individuals are less talkative, assertive, outgoing, and shy than their extraverted counterparts. Often termed neuroticism, it is characterized by poor emotional adjustment resulting in stress, anxiety, and depression. Being agreeable involves attributes such as being courteous, cooperative, and trustworthy. Finally, conscientious individuals are described as being meticulous, thorough, organized, and well-planned (Rowold, 2007).

The Big-five factor model appears to capture some of the most important and enduring personality traits, despite new traits being identified regularly (Maccroskey and Daly, 2011). These five factors tap dimensions of personality found in many other instruments. The Big-Five conceptual framework has played a significant role in theory development and still does (Rowold, 2007; De Raad and Mlačić, 2015). Several studies have used the Big-Five as a variable in the study of interpersonal skills, with mixed results (Dean *et al.*, 2006; Kuntze *et al.*, 2016; Sims, 2016). Due to limited assessment time, a demand for super-short measures increased, and even researchers using the BFI requested a shorter version. Several samples indicate that, given its brevity, the BFI-10 has acceptable psychometric properties (Rammstedt and John, 2007). An extremely short version of the variable was successfully validated by Gosling *et al.* (2003).

Several studies have examined ways to measure and assess the effectiveness of different forms of training to improve interpersonal skills (Bedwell *et al.*, 2014). With a one-time training program, the present study examined how personality characteristics affect interpersonal communication skills.

### 3. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Human personality variations can be explained by the Big-Five across many cultures and languages. Furthermore, the Big-Five's biological basis has been demonstrated within different fields of study, including neuropsychology, developmental psychology, and evolutionary psychology (Sims, 2016). Social relationships are influenced by traits of the Big-Five, according to a growing body of research (McCrae and Sutin (2009); Malouff *et al.* (2010); Hahn *et al.* (2012); DeYoung (2015), cited in Sims (2016)). In addition, the Big-Five have been linked to a variety of interpersonal behaviors during first interactions (Berry and Hansen (2000); Cuperman and Ickes (2009) cited in Sims (2016)). Numerous researchers have empirically explored the relationship between the Big-Five personality traits and interpersonal performance (Klein, 2009). In her study, Sims (2016), using the Big-Five model, explain differences in communication ability between individuals. An understanding of manifested IPS may require knowledge of personality traits. This suggestion is currently being empirically examined by researchers (Klein *et al.*, 2006). As an example, Ferris *et al.* (2001) found that the five-factor traits explained about 20% of the variance in social skills.

There is generally agreement that the Big-Five personality traits are the gold standard criteria for all personality tests. Based on the theory discussed above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Personality traits are positively correlated with interpersonal communication improvement

*H1: Big-5 personality traits will be positively related with improvement of interpersonal communication skills*

*H1.a: Agreeableness will be positively related with improvement of interpersonal communication skills*

*H1.b: Conscientiousness will be positively related with improvement of interpersonal communication skills*

*H1.c: Emotional stability will be positively related with improvement of interpersonal communication skills*

*H1.d: Extraversion will be positively related with improvement of interpersonal communication skills*

*H1.e: Openness to experience will be positively related with improvement of interpersonal communication skills*

### 4. METHODOLOGY

In the current study, the goal was to examine the relationships between personality traits and the ability to improve interpersonal skills through one time training. Quantitative research was used. The design is a combination of action research and quasi-experimental “before and after” research. Careful content design of the training was assured, based on the consulting

experience of one of the article authors, who delivered the workshop; the whole setting was established after a thorough analysis of previous research in the field, most of the studies being from the medical sector (Leung and Bond, 2001; Karsenty, 2011; Zait, 2016; M. *et al.*, 2018; Alhassan, 2019; Efrat and Zait, 2022; Fowles *et al.*, 2023; Lombardo *et al.*, 2023; Mercan *et al.*, 2023; Deng and Turner, 2024; Grosz *et al.*, 2024; Verojporn and Luna, 2024). In line with the study hypothesis, well-established and validated reflective scales from the literature were used to measure the constructs (BFI-5 items, ICCS-10 items) (Rubin and Martin, 1994; Rammstedt and John, 2007). An online questionnaire was applied to collect the data, before and after the training, as detailed below. BFI was used as independent variables and ICCS as dependent.

#### 4.1 Research tools

The methodology was action oriented. A training focused on the ten interpersonal competence skills enumerated in Rubin's work (Rubin and Martin, 1994). Training involved didactic teaching separated by demonstrations of specific communication skills and their consequences, discussion of difficulties in changing behavior, sharing experiences, identifying good and less effective communication skills from scenarios, and rehearsing effective communication skills in everyday scenarios. The participants completed a four-hour training session. The participants in the training completed the questionnaires twice: before and after the training. Assessment of interpersonal skills was based on self-reporting.

#### 4.2 Measuring scales

ICCS's: The research questionnaire used the Likert scale (1-5). The variable and dimensions were calculated by averaging the scores in the items of each dimension, creating a new scale of the quasi-interval type whose range is between 1-10.

BFI: The research questionnaire used the Likert scale (1-5). The variable and dimensions were calculated by averaging the scores in the items of each dimension, creating a new scale of the quasi-interval type whose range is between 1-5.

#### 4.3 Research population and data collection

In this study, managers from diverse professional fields, managing level and experience backgrounds within business organizations of different sizes in Israel who manage interpersonal interactions, including internal and external factors, as part of their responsibilities were selected. Several training sessions were held on several dates during July 2022, November 2022, December 2022, January 2023, and February 2023 for the participants to voluntarily participate. Each training had between 18-25 participants due to its effectiveness limit. A total of 160 people attended the training. A total of 127 respondents completed the survey twice: 71 women and 56 men.

## 5. FINDINGS

**Hypothesis 1:** Personality traits are positively correlated with interpersonal communication improvement

To examine the effect of personality traits on interpersonal communication skills, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used and compared between before and after the training.

**Table no. 1 – Pearson's correlation coefficient between Personality traits and Interpersonal communication skills**

Interpersonal communication skills	Personality traits									
	Extraversion		Agreeableness		Conscientiousness		Emotional stability		Openness to Experiences	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Self-disclosure	.350**	.217*	.066	.086	.002	.092	.062	-.026	.126	-.020
Empathy	-.068	.177*	.252**	.265**	-.122	.164	.192*	.289**	.235**	.250**
Social relaxation	.249**	.262**	.182*	.208*	.150	.228**	.296**	.335**	.387**	.246**
Assertiveness	.085	.034	-.133	-.027	.121	.038	.107	.094	.141	.076
Alter centrism	.200*	.131	.039	-.005	-.050	-.137	-.064	-.011	.126	.093
Interaction management	.139	.140	.052	.143	.132	.197*	.173	.181*	.202*	.266**
Expressiveness	.226*	.210*	.131	.154	-.017	.185*	.111	.124	.278**	.162
Supportiveness	.034	.153	.425**	.434**	.172	.097	.265**	.165	.172	.192*
Immediacy	.192*	.111	.377**	.401**	.134	.210*	.301**	.258**	.281**	.253**
Environmental control	.160	.099	.068	.201*	.064	.105	.268**	.291**	.265**	.302**

Sources: conducted by authors; (\*\*) p<0.01; (\*) p<0.05

A first objective of the study was to determine if there was a correlation between the numerous factors and the two variables, as well as to determine if there were differences in the correlations, their strength and direction following training. According to the table, there is some significant correlation between Personality traits and Interpersonal communication skills, as follows:

### **Personality traits – Extraversion:**

The higher the level of **Extraversion** before participating in the training, the higher the level of **Self-disclosure**, while after participating in the training the correlation between these two variables is low and not significant. Also, the higher the level of **Extraversion**, both before and after participating in the training, the higher the level of **Expressiveness**. The higher the level of **Agreeableness**, the higher the probability of an elevated level of interpersonal communication skills, as listed: **Self-disclosure**, **Expressiveness**, **Supportiveness**, **Immediacy**, and **Environmental control**.



The findings show that following the training, the strength of the correlations is even higher compared to the correlations obtained in the questionnaire that the subjects filled out before the training.

The higher the level of **Conscientiousness**, the higher the probability of a higher level of interpersonal communication skills of **Social relaxation**, both before and after participating in the training. No significant relationships were found in the other factors of communication skills.

According to the findings, there were no significant correlations between Emotional stability and Interpersonal communication skills prior to participating in the training, whereas after taking part in the training, it was found that **Emotional stability** is correlated with communication skills such as **Expressiveness, Immediacy, and Environmental Control**.

The research also indicates a significant correlation of **Openness to Experiences** with various communication skills of the subjects, in about half of the factors tested. The most prominent figure in this context is regarding **Assertiveness**. Before participating in the training there was a high and significant positive correlation between **Openness to Experiences** and **Assertiveness**, while after the training the correlation was deleted.

Analyzing the changes before and after the training using Personality traits variable as an intervening variable

To examine whether the **personality traits** before the training are intervening variables in the changes of the respondents in the various parameters - **Interpersonal Communication Skills, Trust** and **Negotiation approach**, the sample was divided into two groups according to their ratings in the five dimensions of personality traits.

**Table no. 2 – The distribution of the values of personality traits according to low/high**

Personality traits		N	%
Extraversion	Low (1-4)	71	55.9
	High (4.5-7)	56	44.1
Agreeableness	Low (1-4.5)	40	31.5
	High (5-7)	87	68.5
Conscientiousness	Low (1-5)	24	18.9
	High (5.5-7)	103	81.1
Emotional stability	Low (1-4.5)	37	29.1
	High (5-7)	90	70.9
Openness to Experiences	Low (1-4.5)	39	30.7
	High (5-7)	88	69.3

The findings presented below are limited to those that demonstrate that personality traits variables affect changes in the ratings of respondents following the training.

#### ***Extraversion (Personality traits) variable as an intervening variable***

An analysis was conducted using Dawson (2014)'s approach to examine the regression coefficients associated with low (one standard deviation below the mean) and high (one standard deviation above the mean) levels of Extraversion. A significant interaction was found by **Extraversion** (low/high) in the **Self-disclosure** variable  $F=4.72$ ;  $p<.05$ : The average rating of the **Self-disclosure** among the low Extraversion group increased following participation in the training (from 3.7 to 3.8), while among high Extraversion group the average ratings of **Self-disclosure** decreased following the training (from 4.0 to 3.9). Before the training there



was a significant gap between the two groups in self-disclosure ratings, while participation in the training narrowed the gap to a small difference.

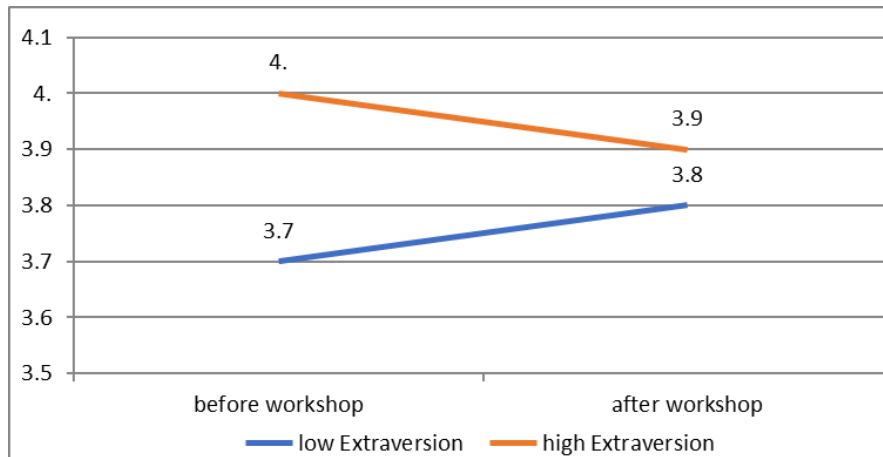


Figure no. 1 – Average rates of Self-disclosure, before and after the training

An interaction was found by **Extraversion** (low/high) in the **Assertiveness** variable  $F=3.58$ ;  $p=.060$ : The average rating of the **Assertiveness** among the low Extraversion group increased following participation in the training (from 3.2 to 3.5), while among high Extraversion group the average ratings of **Assertiveness** decreased following the training (from 3.6 to 3.4). Before the training there was a significant gap between the two groups in **Assertiveness** ratings, while participation in the training narrowed the gap to a small difference.

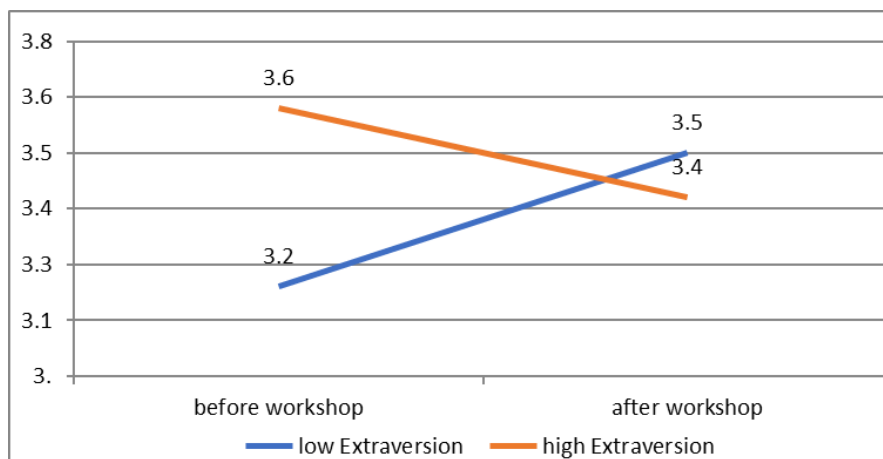


Figure no. 2 – Average rates of Assertiveness, before and after the training

An interaction was found by **Extraversion** (low/high) in the **Empathy** variable  $F=3.39$ ;  $p=.068$ : The average rating of the **Empathy** among the low Extraversion group decreased following participation in the training (from 4.2 to 4.1), while among high Extraversion group the average ratings of **Empathy** increased following the training (from 4.2 to 4.3). Before the training there was no gap between the two groups in **Empathy** ratings, while participation in the training increased the gap between the groups.

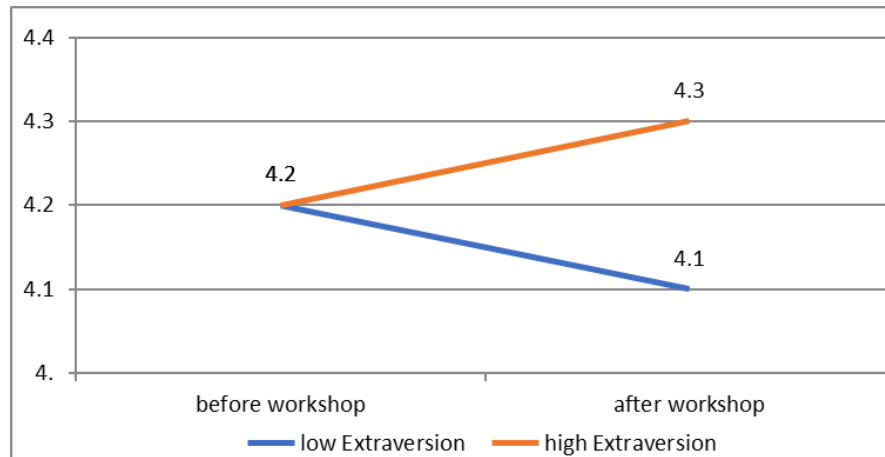


Figure no. 3 – Average rates of Empathy, before and after the training

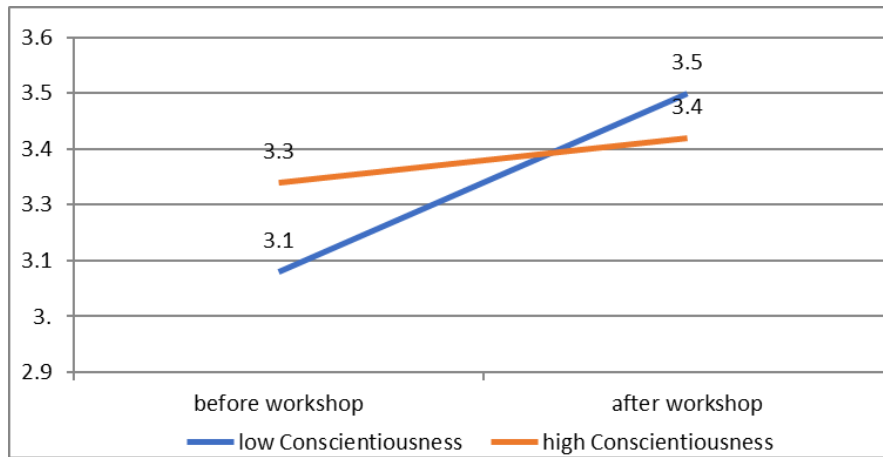
#### *Agreeableness (Personality traits) variable as an intervening variable*

An analysis was conducted using Dawson (2014)'s approach to examine the regression coefficients associated with low (one standard deviation below the mean) and high (one standard deviation above the mean) levels of Agreeableness. No significant interactions were found at all according to Agreeableness as an intervening variable in the changes in the ratings of the respondents following the training.

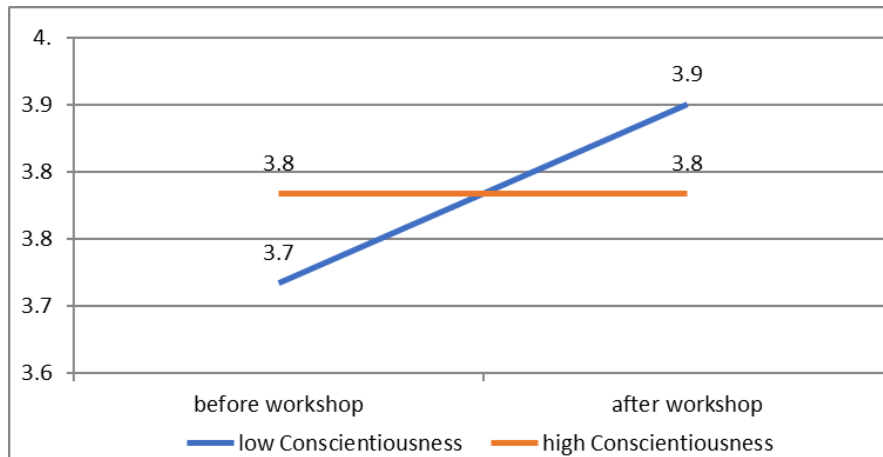
#### *Conscientiousness (Personality traits) variable as an intervening variable*

An analysis was conducted using Dawson (2014)'s approach to examine the regression coefficients associated with low (one standard deviation below the mean) and high (one standard deviation above the mean) levels of Conscientiousness. A significant interaction was found by **Conscientiousness** (low/high) in the **Assertiveness** variable  $F=4.82$ ;  $p<.05$ : The average rating of the **Assertiveness** among the low Conscientiousness group increased following participation in the training (from 3.1 to 3.5), while among high **Conscientiousness** group the average ratings of **Assertiveness** almost didn't change following the training (3.3, 3.4).

An interaction was found by **Conscientiousness** (low/high) in the **Supportiveness** variable  $F=3.78$ ;  $p=.054$ : The average rating of the **Supportiveness** among the low Conscientiousness group increased following participation in the training (from 3.7 to 3.9), while among high **Conscientiousness** group the average ratings of **Supportiveness** didn't change at all following the training (3.8).



**Figure no. 4 – Average rates of Assertiveness, before and after the training**



**Figure no. 5 – Average rates of Supportiveness, before and after the training**

***Emotional stability (Personality traits) variable as an intervening variable***

An analysis was conducted using Dawson (2014)'s approach to examine the regression coefficients associated with low (one standard deviation below the mean) and high (one standard deviation above the mean) levels of Emotional stability. No significant interactions were found at all according to Emotional stability as an intervening variable in the changes in the ratings of the respondents following the training.

***Openness to Experiences (Personality traits) variable as an intervening variable***

An analysis was conducted using Dawson (2014)'s approach to examine the regression coefficients associated with low (one standard deviation below the mean) and high (one standard deviation above the mean) levels of Openness to Experiences. A significant

interaction was found by **Openness to Experiences** (low/high) in the **Self-disclosure** variable  $F=5.81$ ;  $p<.05$ : The average rating of the **Self-disclosure** among the low **Openness to Experiences** group increased following participation in the training (from 3.7 to 3.9), while among high **Openness to Experiences** group the average ratings of **Self-disclosure** decreased a little following the training (from 3.9 to 3.8).

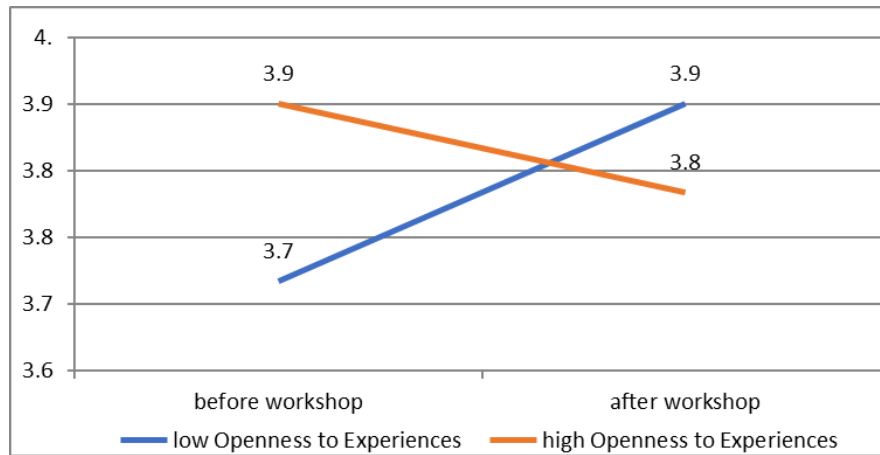


Figure no. 6 – Average rates of Self-disclosure, before and after the training

An interaction was found by **Openness to Experiences** (low/high) in the **Expressiveness** variable  $F=2.83$ ;  $p=.095$ : The average rating of the Expressiveness among the low **Openness to Experiences** group increased a little following participation in the training (from 3.7 to 3.8), while among high **Openness to Experiences** group the average ratings of **Expressiveness** decreased a little following the training (from 4.0 to 3.9). Following the participation in the training, the gap in ratings between the two groups narrowed.

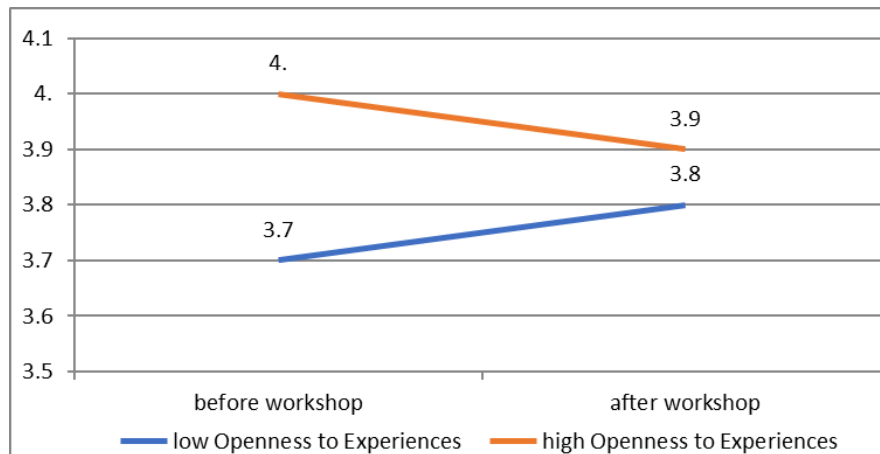


Figure no. 7 – Average rates of Expressiveness, before and after the training

An interaction was found by **Openness to Experiences** (low/high) in the Immediacy variable  $F=3.46$ ;  $p=.065$ : The average rating of the Immediacy among the low **Openness to Experiences** group increased a little following participation in the training (from 4.0 to 4.1), while among high **Openness to Experiences** group the average ratings of Immediacy decreased a little following the training (from 4.4 to 4.3). Following the participation in the training, the gap in ratings between the two groups narrowed.

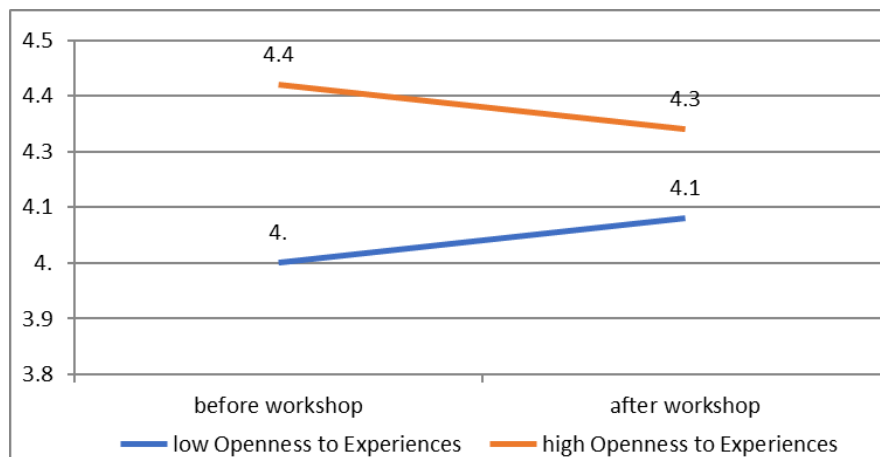


Figure no. 2 – Average rates of Immediacy, before and after the training

## 6. DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Personality attributes show increasing stability with age and experience, which is normal for the idea of traits; differences in temporary states can appear, due to training exposure – and this is what we also registered. Based on the findings, it can be said that the results partially support the hypothesis H1 a-e that personality traits are related to interpersonal communication skills improvement.

A significant improvement was found in the **Emotional stability** following the training.

Participating in the training changed the way people associate personality traits with **Interaction management**.

### Assessing the changes before/after the training, with an Intervening variable

#### *Extraversion (Personality traits)*

- Among people with **Low extraversion**, the level of **Self-disclosure** increased after the training, compared to those with high extraversion who showed the opposite trend. Before the training there was a significant gap between the two groups in the Self Disclosure ratings, while participation in the training reduced the gap to a small difference.

- Among people with **High extraversion**, the level of **Empathy** increased after the training, compared to those with low extraversion who showed the opposite trend. Before the training there was no gap between the two groups in **Empathy** ratings, while participation in the training increased the gap between the groups.

- Among people with **Low extraversion**, the level of **Assertiveness** increased after the training, compared to those with high extraversion who showed the opposite trend. Before the training there was a significant gap between the two groups in **Assertiveness** ratings, while participation in the training narrowed the gap to a small difference.
- Among people with low extraversion, the level of **Competing** did not change after the training, compared to those with high extraversion who showed strong decreased.
- Among people with low Extraversion the level of **Accommodating** didn't change following participation in the training, while among people with high Extraversion the ratings of Accommodating increased following the training. Before the training there was a gap between the two groups in Accommodating ratings, while participation in the training narrowed the gap to a small difference.

#### *Conscientiousness (Personality traits)*

- Among people with **low Conscientiousness** the level of **Assertiveness** increased following the training, while among people with high Conscientiousness the level of Assertiveness almost didn't change.
- Among people with **low Conscientiousness** the level of **Supportiveness** increased following the training, while among people with high Conscientiousness the level of **Supportiveness** didn't change at all following the training.

#### *Openness to Experience (Personality traits)*

- Among people with **low Openness to Experience** the level of **Self-disclosure** increased following the training, while among people with high Openness to Experience the level of Self-disclosure decreased a little following the training.
- Among people with **low Openness to Experience** the level of **Expressiveness** increased a little following the training, while among people with high Openness to Experience the level of **Expressiveness** decreased a little following the training. Following the training, the gap between the two groups narrowed.
- Among people with low Openness to Experience the level of **Immediacy** increased a little following the training, while among people with high Openness to Experience the level of **Immediacy** decreased a little following the training. Following the training, the gap between the two groups narrowed.

Synthesizing, the training in interpersonal communication skills positively affected emotional stability, for all participants. Introverted people increased their self-disclosure and assertiveness, while extroverted people increased their empathy and accommodating tendency, and decreased their competing tendency level. People with high levels of conscientiousness increased their assertiveness, and those with low levels of conscientiousness increased their supportiveness. Finally, highly open to experience participants decreased their level of immediacy, self-disclosure, and expressiveness, while less open to experience participants increased their self-disclosure, expressiveness and immediacy. This shows that different personality traits lead to different effects when training in interpersonal communication skills is delivered, suggesting that such trainings should be designed in accordance with the personality of participants and their precise job needs.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In Klein (2009)'s study, among the personality variables, extraversion showed the strongest relationship with Interpersonal communication skills. It could be argued that extroverts develop stronger social bonds with others through purity number of interactions. At the same time, each of the other personality variables assessed in this research proved worthy of consideration, as each of them were related to various interpersonal skills in important ways. Several other studies, such as Rowold (2007), have provided mixed findings regarding how personality characteristics affect interpersonal skills.

The current study used one-time training to examine how personality traits and interpersonal skills relate among 127 managers from a wide variety of professions in Israel. The manuscript underlined a significant improvement in the Emotional stability following the training process and the way people associate personality traits with Interaction management. As a theoretical contribution, the current study verified the effect of personality characteristics on the improvement in interpersonal communication skills through an interventional quasi-experimental action research. A more in-depth examination of an intervening variable found that those with more solid personality characteristics such as low extraversion and high conscientiousness made an improvement in skills that require more activity such as assertiveness, empathy, supportiveness, openness to experience and self-disclosure, while those with less solid personality characteristics showed a smaller improvement or even decreased in these skills, following the training. These findings confirm those of Hullman *et al.* (2010), which revealed that extraverts, agreeable, conscientious individuals, and individuals with a high degree of self-efficacy, based on their own assessments, exhibit higher levels of self-disclosure, social relaxation, expressiveness, immediacy, and empathy. As such, this set of skills represents half of the competencies examined in the study, in addition to representing a mix of self-oriented and other-oriented skills.

Interestingly, a link emerged between those with an elevated level of extraversion and assertiveness, but a low level of agreeableness and conscientiousness (outgoing incompetence). These variables did not correlate with immediacy, supportiveness, alter centrism, or empathy, as stated by Hullman *et al.* (2010) – so our study contradicts previous findings. In the current study, individuals with high extraversion demonstrated an increase in empathy following the training, as opposed to those with low extraversion, who demonstrated the opposite result. The level of assertiveness increased after the training among individuals with low extraversion, whereas the level of assertiveness decreased among individuals with high extraversion. However, the training narrowed the gap to a small amount.

Therefore, the ability to differently improving interpersonal communication skills justifies identifying the influencing factors, particularly those related to personality, measured through the Big Five inventory. The relationships tested between the big five personality dimensions and the interpersonal communication competencies are a novel theoretical contribution of our study. Also, important managerial implications exist, in terms of designing training services in accordance with the personality structure of the trainees. Because these interpersonal soft skills are more and more important in the labor market, companies invest in these types of training, without being aware of the fact that results can be contradictory, depending on the personalities of their employees. Our study shows that it is necessary to isolate the various influence factors in order to optimize and refine the training so that organizations can gain a high ROI on their investment.



Several limitations have to be inherently considered, as well. We did not control for the different fields of activity of the training participants; when companies order training programs, the participants usually come from one and the same field, and thus both the previous job background and the expectations are more similar than in our case, for which participants had different jobs and company backgrounds; assessment of interpersonal skills was based on self-reporting.

Also, the duration of the training was shorter than in real life, and we only had one training session; longer trainings and repeated sessions might show different relationships.

For future clarifications and advances, several research directions are possible: longer and repeated training exposure, including with groups separated based on personality traits versus mixed groups; manipulation of training content, with different weights for the interpersonal communication competencies targeted to be improved; experimenting with two different trainers, so that we could test the effect of trainer-trainees personality compatibility.

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