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A study of the relationship between self-confidence and communication willingness

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Abstract: This paper aims to explore the relationship between self-confidence and communication willingness. Method: we use Willingness to Communicate Scale (WTC) to assess the WTC of participants. Also, after they watched the video, we asked them to self-report to measure changes in their confidence. Results: the positive video increased participants' social self-confidence and enhanced their willingness to communicate, while the negative video had the opposite effect in both experiment groups. In the control group, the videos did not significantly impact on the participants' self-confidence level and willingness to communicate.

Keywords: self-confidence; willingness to communicate; video

1. Introduction

Good communication enables individuals to access more information and cultivate positive social relationships with others, leading to the acquisition of social support. This has significant implications for personal career success and psychological well-being. (Hirokawa, 1983) suggested that effective communication can facilitate problem-solving. Kaplan, Cassel, and Gore (1977) also emphasize the potential benefits of social support in promoting health and preventing diseases. Individuals with strong social support networks may experience better health outcomes, lower mortality rates, and reduced risk of certain diseases. This study aims to explore the relationship between self-confidence and individuals' willingness to communicate, as well as to identify factors influencing individuals' communication willingness. By studying the relationship between self-confidence and communication willingness, valuable insights can be gained, leading to the development of strategies and interventions to enhance individuals' communication skills.

2. Literature Review Related to Self-Confidence and WTC

General self confidence is better defined as self esteem. Self esteem is an emotions-based assessment about one's self worth or value (Erol & Orth, 2011). A study found a negative correlation between self-esteem and social anxiety, suggesting that increasing individuals' self-esteem can effectively reduce their anxiety in social situations (Yali ZHANG, 2019). Specific self confidence is a belief in one's ability to undertake a specific action to achieve an outcome (Bandura, 1977; Chemers, et al., 2000). In all cases the definition addresses the belief in one's ability (Bandura, 1988, 1993). As this research is examining specifically the relationships between confidence and willingness to communicate, therefore, in this article, we primarily focus on social self-confidence. In a previous study,

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communication skills training has been shown to significantly increase individuals' willingness to communicate with others (Kalantari, 2017). Furthermore, mastery of social skills may enhance individuals' social confidence. From these pieces of literature, it can be inferred that there might be a relationship between individuals' self-confidence and their willingness to communicate. In a prior experiment conducted in 1993, it was found that individuals with higher self-confidence demonstrated a stronger willingness to engage in communication and discussed a broader range of topics, rather than being limited to a single subject (Manning & Ray, 1993). This investigation suggests a potential correlation between self-confidence and willingness to communicate. Although studies conducted abroad have preliminarily indicated a relationship between self-confidence and willingness to communicate, research in this area is relatively limited in China. Therefore, our study aims to contribute to addressing this research gap.

3. Theoretical Framework

Bandura and Adams in 1977 have developed a concept of self-efficacy that they believe affects whether or not a person will attempt a specific behavior. Individuals with high self-efficacy are more proactive and demonstrate greater persistence when faced with difficulties. (Erozkan, 2013) suggested that social self-efficacy is positively related to constructive problem solving and an insistent-persevering approach. (Bandura, 1997) differentiated between self-confidence and self-efficacy. The article states that self-efficacy represents the affirmation of one's abilities in a certain area, as well as the strength of belief in this affirmation, based on extensive social cognitive theory and empirical data. On the other hand, confidence is a concept that is relatively vague and lacks a theoretical foundation, primarily referring to the strength of certainty in one's self-perception and performance. However, in fact, there is still a certain correlational relationship between self-efficacy and self-confidence. (Leary & Atherton, 1986) mentioned that individuals with high self-efficacy exhibit less social anxiety when interacting with others. This may be because individuals with high self-efficacy have greater motivation to engage in communication with others and exhibit less fear of rejection during interactions.

Deci and Ryan (1985, 2012) proposed the self-determination theory, which suggests that when people have their basic needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy fulfilled, they naturally develop a desire for personal growth and exhibit internalization and intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation, as explained by Deci and Ryan (1985), stems from the need for competence and autonomy. They hypothesized that when individuals choose to engage in an activity voluntarily, they actively seek interesting opportunities that present challenges. Fulfilling these psychological needs boosts individuals' confidence and increases their inclination to engage in communication. A study conducted by Peng and Woodrow in 2010 provided empirical evidence supporting a direct relationship between motivation, confidence, and the willingness to communicate.

Specific hypotheses are developed as follows:

H1: A higher level of self-confidence is positively correlated with a greater willingness to communicate.

H2: There is no significant correlation between individuals' levels of self-confidence and their willingness to communicate.

4. Method

4.1. Overall Experimental Design

We employed a single-factor between-subjects experimental design, with confidence level as the independent variable. There were three experimental conditions: high confidence group, low confidence group, and control group (no manipulation of the independent variable). At the beginning of the experiment, participants completed a willingness to communicate scale to measure their initial communication willingness level. Subsequently, we briefly manipulated participants' confidence levels by playing a video. Prior

to the video, there was an instructional prompt asking participants to attentively watch the video to ensure accuracy of the experimental results and enhance internal validity. The video was 6 minutes long, its purpose was to create a temporal gap that would help participants forget the questions they had answered in the pretest, thus minimizing the pretest effect. Experimental group 1 watched a video designed to enhance social confidence, control group watched an animated film, and experimental group 2 watched a video depicting difficulties in interacting with others. After watching the video, participants completed the willingness to communicate scale again as a post-test. Finally, we examined whether the change between the pretest and post-test was significant to determine if confidence can influence individuals' willingness to communicate.

4.2. Procedure of the Experiment

The study was primarily conducted through online questionnaires using the Question-star platform. The questionnaires were distributed and collected via WeChat. A total of 51 university students aged between 18 and 25 from mainland China and Hong Kong were randomly sampled to participate in the study. Of the participants, 47.1% were male and 52.9% were female. Around 65% of the participants were graduate students, while the rest were undergraduate and vocational college students. They were randomly assigned to three groups, with 17 participants in each group. Prior to distributing the questionnaires, we communicated with the participants and provided them with a consent form, which outlined the basic steps and requirements of the upcoming experiment. Another purpose of the consent form was to seek their support and cooperation, while also informing them of their right to withdraw from the experiment at any time. Throughout the experiment, we included instructions at each section, such as when completing the willingness to communicate questionnaire or watching the video, to clarify the response requirements. After the experiment, participants were provided with a debriefing form, explaining the purpose of the study and which group they belonged to. This ensured the participants' right to be informed about the experiment they were involved in and expressed gratitude for their cooperation. Finally, the collected data was organized in tabular form, and a Paired-sample t-test was conducted using SPSS to obtain the experimental results.

4.3. Scales Used in the Study

Willingness to Communicate Scale (WTC): Developed by McCroskey and Baer (1986), the scale consists of 20 items. Each item represents a communication context, and participants freely choose the percentage of their willingness to communicate within each context, ranging from 0 (never) to 100 (always). To date, the only test-retest reliability assessment is based on a sample of 174 WVU students who were asked to complete the WTC scale twice with an approximately three-month interval between tests. The correlation coefficient between the test and retest scores was 0.79. The internal reliability estimates for the two test administrations were 0.92 and 0.91, respectively. Adjusted test-retest reliability estimate, accounting for attenuation due to internal unreliability, was 0.86. The WTC scale demonstrates highly satisfactory stability.

Self-report: After participants finish watching the video, they are asked to complete a self-report questionnaire to assess the extent of the video's impact on their confidence. Participants select an integer from -10 to 10 (including 0), where negative numbers indicate a decrease in confidence and positive numbers indicate an increase in confidence. The larger the number, the more pronounced the change in confidence level caused by the video.

5. Results

In this experiment, three groups watched the video separately: two experimental groups and one control group, each with 17 participants. The two experimental groups

watched a positive video and a negative video, and the control group watched a neutral video.

Figure 1 shows the participants' attitudes towards the videos they watched. As can be seen from the figure, the participants in the experimental group who watched positive videos show that the video positively influenced their self-confidence levels to a higher degree. The participants in the control group who watched neutral videos in the control group were less affected by the videos. And participants in the other experimental group who watched a negative video showed that the video had a negative effect on their confidence levels.

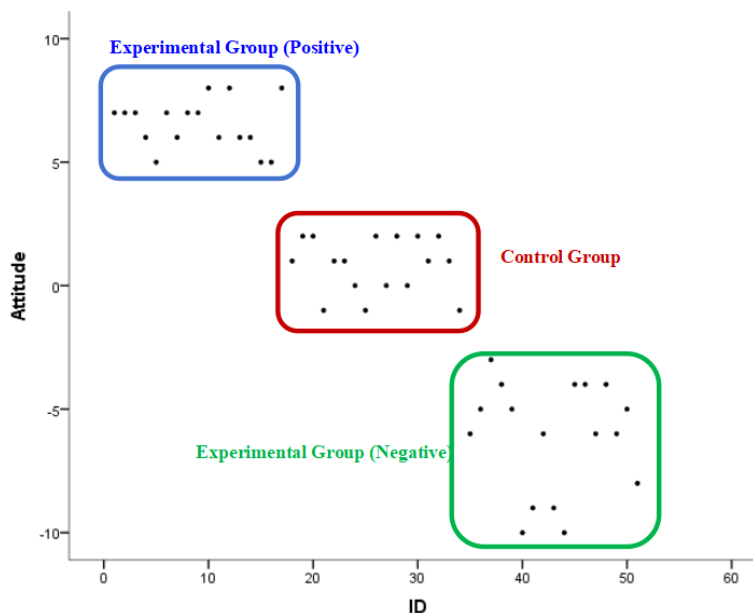


Figure 1. Participants' attitude toward the video.

Note. Participants rated the videos they watched from negative ten to ten, and chose the extent to which the videos affected their self-confidence.

Table 1 shows the participants in the experimental group who watched the positive video and their willingness to communicate before and after watching the positive video. As can be seen from the result, the effect of the positive video on the self-confidence of the participants is significant with $t(16) = -2.932, p = .01 < .05$ (two-tailed).

Table 1. Paired Samples Test-Experimental Group (Positive).

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
Pair 1	PRE_test_1 - POST_test_1	-175.353	246.574	59.803	-302.129 -48.577	-2.932	16	.010

Table 2 shows the participants in the control group who watched the neutral video willingness to communicate before and after watching the positive video. As can be seen from the result, the effect of the neutral video on the self-confidence of the participants is not significant with $t(16) = -1.175, p = .257 > .05$ (two-tailed).

Table 2: Paired Samples Test-Control Group

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 2	PRE_test_2 - POST_test_2	-39.529	138.725	33.646	-110.855	31.796	-1.175	16	.257

Table 3 shows the participants in the experimental group who watched the negative video and their willingness to communicate before and after watching the negative video. As can be seen from the result, the effect of the negative video on the self-confidence of the participants is significant with $t(16)=3.441, p=0.003<.05$ (two-tailed).

Table 3. Paired Samples Test-Experimental Group (Negative).

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 3	PRE_test_3 - POST_test_3	262.529	314.583	76.298	100.786	424.273	3.441	16	.003

In conclusion, in both experimental groups, the videos significantly affected the participants' self-confidence and willingness to communicate; the positive video positively increased self-confidence and willingness to communicate, and the negative video had the opposite effect. In the control group, the videos did not significantly affect the participants' self-confidence level and willingness to communicate.

6. Conclusion

In this study, we explored the relationship between social self-confidence and willingness to communicate among college students. In conclusion, the videos significantly influenced the participants' social self-confidence and communication willingness in both experimental groups. The positive video increased participants' social self-confidence and enhanced their willingness to communicate, while the negative video had the opposite effect. In the control group, the videos did not significantly impact the participants' self-confidence level and willingness to communicate. This suggests that more self-confident college students are more inclined to engage in communication. These findings are consistent with previous Western research. For example, Back et al. (2008) claimed that individuals with higher self-confidence are more proactive in social situations and are more likely to be liked and recognized by others. Additionally, Hirsh et al. (2009) suggested that self-confidence predicts individuals' performance and behavior in social situations, with higher levels of self-confidence associated with greater initiative, confidence, and optimism.

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