

**INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AS PERSONALITY
VARIABLES IN THE AGED: ASSESSMENT AND
RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PERSONALITY
DIMENSIONS ACROSS LIFE-SPAN**

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INTRODUCTION

Personal relations represent an important part of the psychological functioning of the human being. In the personal relations world one can find almost every psychological fact. In spite of this importance, little has been done to elaborate an integrated model of psychosocial functioning in which dimensions of personal relationships were incorporated to basic and applied research in personality psychology. The traditional "social skills" are, actually, habits of response, with scarce power of generalization and its research has been done independently from personality psychology. From 20 years ago to our days one notes some approximations on both sides. Spivack, Platt & Shure (1976) originally isolated some of those social skills, but the instrumentation used was scientifically very weak and their work remains separate from personality psychology. One point of departure of our research was the suggestions of the Spivack group but

with a theoretical reorientation as "interpersonal skills", within a parameter model of personality (Pelechano, 1973, 1989). Interpersonal skills are interpreted by us as "personality abilities" or "personality competences" (Pelechano, 1984, in press) and developmentally studied from infancy to old age. We elaborate and validate instruments for five different theoretical dimensions through the life span: search for alternatives, causal relationships, consequential thinking, cognitive empathy, and means-end articulation for goals attainment. In this study we present results corresponding to the aged phase and our goal is to present the factor structure of the developed battery for the aged and isolate the relations between interpersonal skills and diverse personality dimensions.

OBJECTIVES

1. To isolate the factor structure of the interpersonal skills in the elderly
2. To show data about reliability of the isolated dimensions of interpersonal skills
3. To show the relationships between interpersonal skills on one side and intelligence, locus of control and achievement motivation on the other.

First study.- FACTOR STRUCTURE OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS IN THE AGED

Sample: 124 human aged subjects (69 women and 55 men) ranging in age from 58 to 92 years old. Low educational level and without severe physical illness.

Instrumentation: Interpersonal skills: Five paper and pencil tests, one for each rational dimension. 15 items per test. The procedure to develop the tests was a mixture between construct and empirical. Each item would represent an actual problem for the aged and, also would be consistent with the theoretical dimension under study.

Procedure: Tests were filled in individually and each subject needed three sessions. All sessions were carried out centers for the aged.

RESULTS

Factor analysis for each test proposed (table I.I) and later a second order factor analysis together with all results from the first order analysis (table I.II) were carried out.

The results demonstrate that we have lost few items in each test (between 5

and 0). We have obtained 5 first order dimensions and, later one second-order factor. These results are different from the factor structure of the same theoretical dimensions in infancy (Pelechano, 1984), adolescence (9 first order factor; Joly, 1988) and adults (4 first order factor and one second order factor; Bethencourt, 1989).

Second study. - INTERNAL AND CONVERGENT VALIDITY OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Sample: 68 aged (14 men and 54 women) ranging from 55 to 95 chronological years, with similar characteristics to the first study previously described.

Instrumentation:

- (i) Battery of interpersonal skills for the aged
- (ii) LUCAN questionnaire of locus of control for the aged**
- (iii) MAEAN questionnaire of achievement motivation for the aged**
- (iv) Raven scale of progressive matrices for intelligence assessment.

Procedure: The tests were individually filled in and with the same procedure as in the first study. Test-retest reliability coefficients for the five first-order factors and one second order factor were computed for 2, 4 and 6 months intervals.

TABLE I.I
FIRST ORDER FACTORS OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS (N = 124)

FACTOR	n° items	alpha
Means-end articulation for goals attainment	11	.81
Cognitive empathy	11	.83
Causal relationships	10	.85
Consequential thinking	14	.84
Search for alternatives	15	.89

TABLE I.II
SECOND ORDER FACTOR ANALYSIS OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS (N = 124)

A) CORRELATION MATRIX

FACTOR	2	3	4	5
Means-end articulation for goals attainment	.55***	.48***	.46***	.58***
Cognitive empathy		.45***	.42***	.48***
Causal relationships			.51***	.61***
Consequential thinking				.73***
Search for alternatives				

*** = $p < .001$

B) FACTOR MATRIX (PRINCIPAL FACTORS)

FACTOR	Loading	h^2
Means-end articulation for goals attainment	.72	.49
Cognitive empathy	.63	.40
Causal relationships	.70	.49
Consequential thinking	.74	.55
Search for alternatives	.87	.76
Eigenvalue	3.12	
% of variance	62.5	

RESULTS

(A). Test-retest reliability of interpersonal skills

Main results are shown in table II.I. These results suggest:

(i) A dynamic process with regard to consolidation-stability of factors

(ii) One can observe three tendencies:

- A high situational context with broad intervals for the means-end articulation for goals attainment factor
- An increase in stability with broad intervals for consequential thinking factor.
- Maintaining stability in relatively short periods (2 and 4 months), and subsequent tendency to wards instability for cognitive empathy and search for alternatives factors.

(B). Relations with other personality variables

Significant correlation coefficients (Pearson) between second order personality factors, interpersonal skills and general intelligence are shown in figure II.I.

TABLE II.I RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS THREE TIMES FOR THE INTERPERSONAL SKILLS FACTORS

FACTOR	(2 months)	(4 months)		(6 months)	
	(n = 41) r	n	r	r	r
First order					
Means-end articulation for goals attainment	.56***	19	.40	19	.37
Cognitive empathy	.77***	18	.72**	18	.37
Causal relationships	.58***	17	.49*	17	.31
Consequential thinking	.46**	19	.36	19	.53
Search for alternatives	.69***	16	.71**	16	.38
Second order					
General factor	.72***	15	.62**	15	.28

NOTE: n = size of group; r = Pearson correlation

(*) p < .05; (**) p < .01; (***) p < .001

(i). It seems to be a dynamic process within the aged's structure of personality, at least for the four studied nuclei. This dynamic suggests an increasing independence as more assessments are made.

(ii). Interpersonal skills show only a significant coefficient with intelligence (second assessment, $p < .05$). The magnitude of the correlation suggests that interpersonal skills and general intelligence are essentially independent.

(iii). Interpersonal skills are independent of the locus of control (multidimensionally assessed).

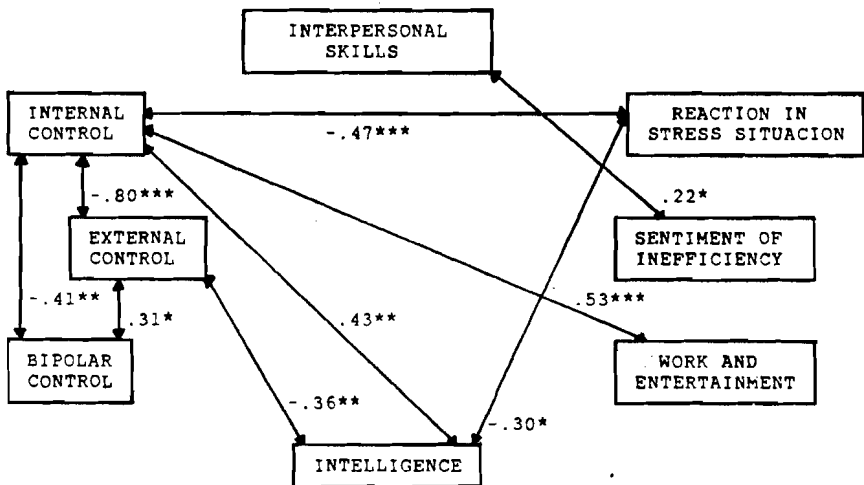
(iv). Interpersonal skills are essentially independent of achievement motivation. Only 2/9 of the coefficients become statistically significant and with little common variance (between 4 and 10 per 100).

FIGURE I.II RELATIONS BETWEEN INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AND OTHER PERSONALITY VARIABLES

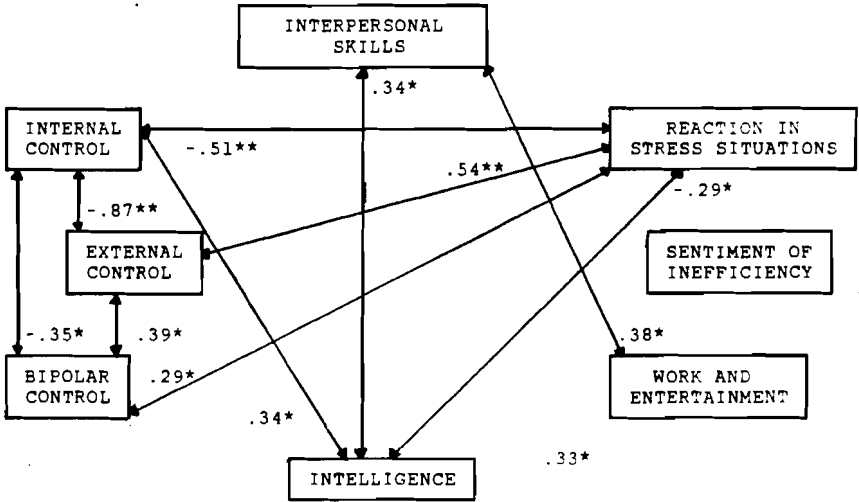
FIGURE I.I.I

RELATIONS BETWEEN INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AND OTHER PERSONALITY VARIABLES

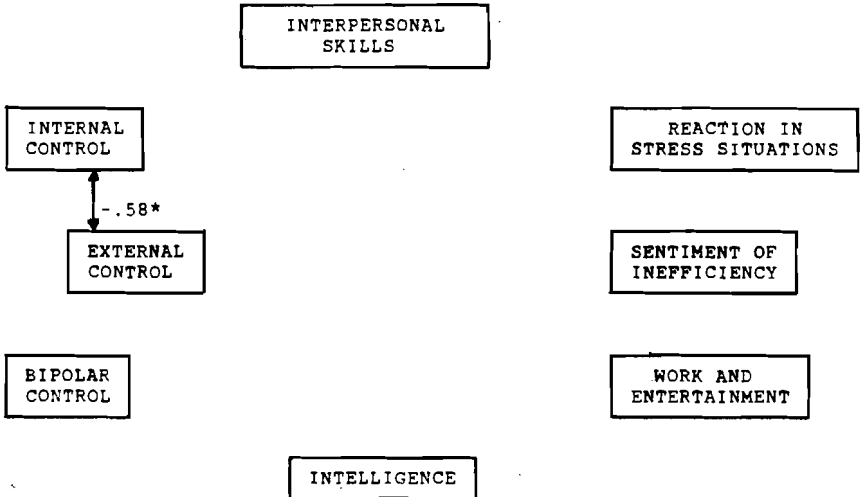
A) FIRST TIME OF THE ASSESSMENT (N = 64)



B) SECOND TIME OF THE ASSESSMENT (N = 40)



C) THIRD TIME OF THE ASSESSMENT (N = 15)



NOTA: * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The above results allow us to conclude:

(1). It is possible to assess interpersonal skills in the aged using paper and pencil instruments. Five first order factors and a second order factor have been found. Not all the first order factors found have got the same degree consolidation.

(2). In the elderly, interpersonal skills are practically independent of general intelligence, locus of control and achievement motivation. The changes in score for the personality dimensions and competencies are independent of general intelligence because the latter remains stable and without significant changes.

These results demand the inclusion of interpersonal skills as a part of personality research. Also, in the aged, interpersonal skills must not be identified with intelligence; perhaps interpersonal skills can be interpreted as part of social intelligence which is related to personal competence, trust and search of different outcomes for human problems. In this sense, interpersonal skills (measurement and intervention) shouldn't be explained with cognitive concepts and categories proceeding neither from the information processing nor from traditional studies of problem solving. Interpersonal processes seem to be **different** and should be studied and explained from a different perspective.

NOTES

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(**) These questionnaires are presented in the paper of Pelechano and de Miguel. LUCAN questionnaire is formed by 5 first-order factors (3 second-order) and the MAEAN by 6 first-order factors (3 second-order).

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