Master Thesis

Investigating Nonviolent Communication Skills as a Tool for Managing Anxiety and

Attributional Confidence to Foster Effective Communication in Difficult Interpersonal

Encounters

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Content

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Summary

People who are careless and dishonest (two of three so-called 'nightmare traits') are prone to be involved in conflicts or relational aggression, which can have detrimental effects on team performance and organizational effectiveness. Carelessness and dishonesty are likely to affect other people's anxiety/uncertainty management (AUM), which, in turn, is linked to communication effectiveness. This study explores the effectiveness of nonviolent communication (NVC) for anxiety/uncertainty management to foster effective communication in encounters with people who are careless and/or dishonest. It is hypothesized that NVC positively affects perceived communication effectiveness through AUM. Furthermore, the effects of NVC on AUM is hypothesized to depend on carelessness and dishonesty. A vignette-based online survey was distributed among students and people in the workforce in Germany and the Netherlands (n = 60). The results show that NVC is related to effective communication but that this relation is not mediated by AUM. Additionally, carelessness and dishonesty strongly (and positively) predict AUM. These results suggest that NVC is a valuable communication approach for facilitating not only effective communication but also for helping to reduce misunderstandings.

Key words: Conscientiousness, Honesty-Humility, Nonviolent Communication, Anxiety/Uncertainty Management, Effective Communication

Problem statement

Among other factors, team psychological safety has been used to explain team effectiveness, ultimately affecting organizational effectiveness (Edmondson, 1999). Edmondson (1999) defines team psychological safety as "a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking" (Edmondson, 1999, p. 354). Feeling safe for interpersonal risk taking such as speaking up or articulating critique is affected by rewarding co-worker relationships and the extent of interpersonal interaction, social support and the familiarity, quality and trust among team members (Newman, Donohue, & Eva, 2017, p. 525). Moreover, Kahn (1990) highlights that psychological safety is supported by a positive anticipation of the reactions of others toward oneself. Hence, communication about needs and wishes without anxiety or fear of could serve as an indicator of its presence.

Psychological safety can be threatened by malevolent intentions caused by one or more of the three nightmare traits (TNT) of a communication partner (de Vries, 2018). The TNT is an overarching conceptualization of the dark side of personality based on the HEXACO personality model (de Vries, 2018) and dishonesty, disagreeableness and carelessness all have particularly negative effects on human interaction, on colleagues, or on the organizations in which people with nightmare traits work (de Vries, 2018). Typical TNT behaviours includes manipulative and aggressive manners, being stubborn and unwilling to compromise, and procrastinating and ignoring mistakes as a matter of carelessness (Lee & Ashton, 2004). Furthermore, people with nightmare traits are more likely to be involved in conflicts or to engage in relational aggression (de Vries, 2018; Knight, Dahlen, Bullock-Yowell, & Madson, 2018). Ineffective communication and destructive conflicts pose a threat to team psychological safety and a teams' performance (Decuyper, Dochy, & van den Bossche, 2010; Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Lei, 2014).

Such deviant behaviour can be threatening and communication partners may experience increased anxiety when they cannot accurately predict and explain other's behaviour, feelings, or attitudes (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001). Gudykunst and Nishida (2001) propose that "anxiety/ uncertainty management directly influences the effectiveness of

communication in interpersonal [...] encounters" (p. 55). In difficult interpersonal encounters, mastering conflicts or basic interpersonal communication can challenge one's communication and conflict management skills. This highlights the need for competent conflict management and communication skills to manage anxiety and uncertainty especially when dealing with difficult encounters caused by one or more of the TNT.

A promising example of a communication concept for dealing with difficult encounters is nonviolent communication (NVC) because it acknowledges feelings, needs and wishes of each individual and is designed to resolve conflicts (Rosenberg & Molho, 1998; Wacker & Dziobek, 2018a). Thus, managing anxiety and uncertainty is conceptually incorporated in NVC. NVC offers a guideline to facilitate the flow of information that is necessary for communicating effectively with one another (Rosenberg & Molho, 1998) and has been used and studied in the context of crime prevention, health care, for improving interprofessional communication and managing interpersonal relationships at work (Marlow et al., 2012; Museux, Dumont, Careau, & Milot, 2016; Suarez et al., 2014; Vazhappilly & Reyes, 2017; Wacker & Dziobek, 2018a). However, to the author's knowledge, empirical investigations of nonviolent communication as a tool for dealing with dishonest and careless people have not been conducted yet. Deeper insights into the mechanisms and effectiveness of nonviolent communication can inspire not only social work but also HR departments in the healthcare sector and education to establish appropriate measures for preventing miscommunication and conflict. Further, knowledge about the effects of carelessness and dishonesty informs about leverage points for developing preventive measures against their detrimental effects on others.

This study sets out to close the research gap on nonviolent communication and the nightmare traits by investigating the use of NVC skills in everyday life as a tool for addressing effective communication in difficult interpersonal encounters with careless and dishonest people. Consequently, the following research question is addressed: *What is the relation between nonviolent communication skills, anxiety and uncertainty management, and perceived communication effectiveness in difficult interpersonal encounters?* To that end, the relation

between NVC skills and perceived communication effectiveness is investigated and it is proposed that anxiety/uncertainty management (AUM) mediates this relation in interpersonal encounters. Moreover, this study explores the moderating effect of carelessness and dishonesty on the relation between NVC skills and anxiety/uncertainty management.

Literature review

To explore a strategy for how to effectively communicate with communication partners who are dishonest or careless, this study investigates the relation between nonviolent communication skills and perceived communication effectiveness. Gudykunst and Nishida (2001) specify effective communication as the *extent* to which individuals can "accurately predict and explain others' attitudes, feelings, and behaviors" (p.55), effectuating to be able to minimize misunderstandings. Furthermore, it is examined whether this relation is mediated by anxiety and attributional confidence, which is the inverse of uncertainty. The negative characteristics carelessness and dishonesty of a communication partner are taken into account as two additional moderator variables which might influence the effect of NVC on anxiety and attributional confidence, assuming that depending on the extent of dishonesty or carelessness, the effect of NVC on anxiety and attributional confidence might be altered, as shown in the model below (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Investigated relations among the study variables
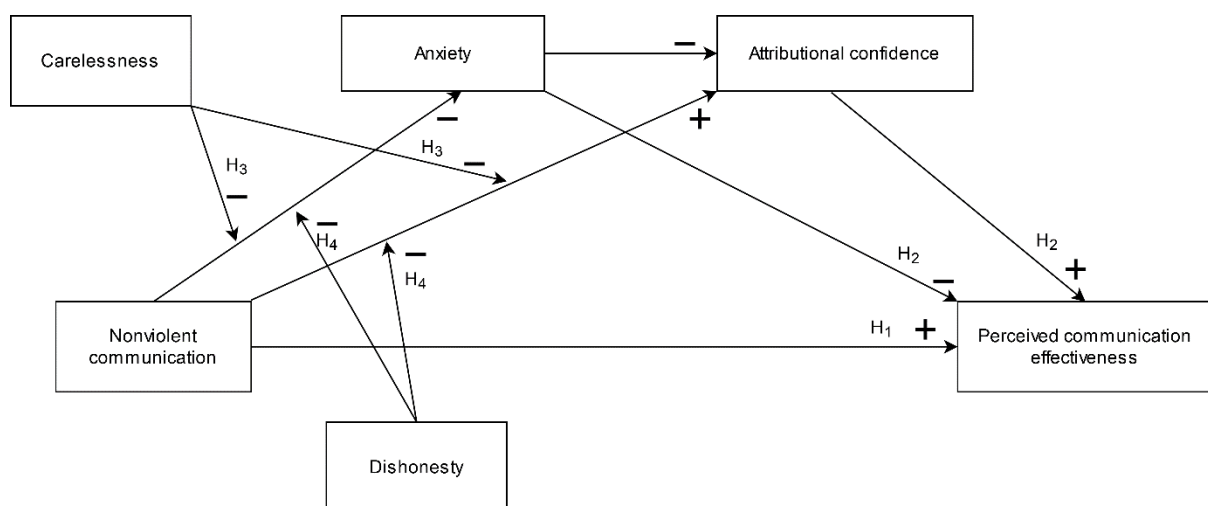
The following sections introduce the concepts of communication effectiveness, nonviolent communication skills, anxiety management, and attributional confidence. Finally, dishonesty

and carelessness as characteristics of difficult interpersonal encounters are introduced and related to the model of the study.

Effective communication

Effective communication is defined by the extent to which the receiver of a message attaches a meaning to the message that is approximately congruent to that which was intended by the sender (Stephan, Stephan, & Gudykunst, 1999). Stated differently, communicating effectively necessitates "making isomorphic attributions about each others' behaviors" (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001, p. 60). This means, effective communication denotes the congruence of cognitions between the individuals who are involved in the interaction (Stephan et al., 1999, p. 616).

When working together either at the workplace or in student teams working on a joint assignment like at the University, effective communication is of great importance for negotiating solutions, discussing ideas, or for team learning processes (Decuyper et al., 2010). In this sense, effective communication can support communicative behaviours such as sharing information, constructive conflict, and co-construction of knowledge (Decuyper et al., 2010). For organizations, these processes are necessary to manage the environment in order to remain competitive in the market (Zaccaro, Ely, & Shuffler, 2008).

Nonviolent communication

NVC is designed to "facilitate the flow of information necessary" for cooperation and peaceful conflict resolution (Rosenberg & Molho, 1998). As Wacker and Dziobek (2018a) highlight, NVC is a communication approach for handling socioemotionally demanding situations by providing a framework for empathic communication with the self and others (Marlow et al., 2012). Almost 500 trainers teach NVC worldwide, in workshops and courses for conflict resolution and mediation (Cox & Dannahy, 2005; Wacker & Dziobek, 2018a). NVC is applied in various fields, such as the healthcare sector, prisons, social work, schools, universities, and private practices

and many participants of the courses acknowledge its use in their everyday life (Cox & Dannahy, 2005; Rosenberg, 2003).

NVC conveys information and simultaneously defines and expresses the relationship between two parties (Watzlawick (1980) as cited in Cox & Dannahy, 2005) in its components, *observation (1)*, *feeling (2)*, *need (3),* and *request (4)*. Observation and request transfer the information, while feeling and need express and define the relationship (Cox & Dannahy, 2005). The inclusion of the relational dimension of communication in NVC has been shown to be effective for building trust and authentic communication (Cox & Dannahy, 2005), which has, in turn, been found to be central for effective interprofessional collaboration (Decuyper et al., 2010). The effectiveness of active listening, empathy, and self-disclosure based on awareness for the self and other for communication was confirmed by McCaffrey et al. (2012).

In nonviolent communication, observations are expressed without making critical judgements about others and clear requests are presented in a respectful and noncoercive manner (Rosenberg & Molho, 1998). Its application shall generate clarity in emotionally charged situations and provide conditions to minimize misunderstandings (Rosenberg, 2003). Observing without evaluating means to separate judgments from a neutral description of the situation and to be specific to time and context (Rosenberg, 2003; Rosenberg & Molho, 1998). A nonviolent observation is an observation like the one through a camera. Wacker and Dziobek (2018a, p. 146) point out that observing without evaluating one's own emotional states and those of others creates an inner distance which contributes to prevent negative emotional states such as anxiety and discomfort evoked by others. Furthermore, Wacker and Dziobek (2018a) indicate that the mere awareness of one's own negative feelings towards others without blaming oneself might support emotional down-regulation of strong feelings.

Expressing feelings is a crucial component of NVC because unexpressed feelings can lead to the inability to connect to ourselves with others in a compassionate manner (Rosenberg, 2003). As a matter of fact, expressing feelings facilitates a clear identification of feelings and can help to resolve conflicts (Rosenberg & Molho, 1998). Creswell, Way, Eisenberger, and

Lieberman (2007) found the mindful labelling of negative emotions to set off a process of inner detachment from these emotional states. A study by Wacker and Dziobek (2018a), which investigated the effect of an NVC training, found that the NVC training bolstered competent negative emotion verbalization during tense group discussions among nurses and increased the everyday communication of participants, which is also associated with a decline in empathic distress (Wacker & Dziobek, 2018a). Wacker and Dziobek (2018a) assume that emotion verbalization also possesses a social integration function: by expressing one's own affective states one can engender empathy in others, so it might strengthen cooperation and prevent conflict escalation or facilitate reconciliation. This is in line with results of Museux et al. (2016) who found a positive association between an NVC training and role clarification in the workplace.

NVC assumes that expressing one's needs facilitates connection between two parties, because everybody can relate to how one must feel when a need is not met. Needs like growth, autonomy, freedom or acknowledgement etc. are considered universal, such that connecting feelings with the needs that lie at the root of one's emotions enables oneself to take responsibility for how he or she feels as a consequence thereof (Rosenberg, 2003; Suarez et al., 2014; Wacker & Dziobek, 2018a).

Requests are formulated in a clear and positive language, and are phrased in concrete action language as to reveal what we really want (Rosenberg, 2003). Accompanying needs to a request should be mentioned to help the listener to understand what stimulated our current feelings and what could help us to feel different (Rosenberg, 2003). Requesting includes making sure the other understands if he/ she would be willing to take the particular action or to find out what they would need in order to do so (Rosenberg, 2003).

Up to this point, there are relatively few studies on NVC, still, the results of some of these studies are compelling. Museux et al. (2016) investigated the effect of an NVC training on interprofessional collaboration. Museux et al. (2016) found NVC training to be effective for "fostering openness, empathy, and trust in interprofessional relationships" (p. 438) and self-

awareness in interprofessional collaboration. More so, these authors suggest NVC to be an effective strategy for improving interprofessional collaboration through improving individual competency in role clarification and client centred collaboration (Museux et al., 2016). Furthermore, in this study (Museux et al., 2016), interprofessional teams showed higher group competency with regard to creating a shared plan of action and individuals could more accurately identify effects of spontaneous communication and foster collective leadership. Vazhappilly and Reyes (2017) confirm the effect of NVC for enhancing social, cognitive and interactional skills. Similarly, in a study by Wacker and Dziobek (2018a), employees reported decreased empathic distress and they found that the NVC training served as a preventive measure against an increase in social stressors at work. Further, the authors advocate that empathy-inducing emotion verbalization might positively affect cooperation, given the premise that the other is generally willing to cooperate (Wacker & Dziobek, 2018a). All in all, the findings suggest that NVC can promote constructive conflict, a key factor for team performance (Decuyper et al., 2010). This leads to the first hypothesis: *Nonviolent communication skills have a positive effect on perceived communication effectiveness in interpersonal encounters* (Hypothesis 1).

Anxiety and attributional confidence

The above mentioned studies may indicate that NVC can help managing anxiety or uncertainty, especially in socio-emotionally tense situations as is the case when dealing with people who exhibit one or more of the nightmare traits. When introducing anxiety/ uncertainty management (AUM) theory (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001), this paragraph sticks to the original wording of the theory. Following Gudykunst and Nishida (2001) and Clatterbuck (1979), however, the construct uncertainty is assessed as attributional confidence, the inverse of uncertainty. Hence, in this study the concept of uncertainty will be discussed as its inverse, attributional confidence, in the sections hereafter.

Central to AUM theory is the proposition of a direct influence of anxiety/ uncertainty management on communication effectiveness (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001; Stephan et al., 1999). Gudykunst and Nishida (2001) specify effective communication as the *extent* to which individuals can "accurately predict and explain others' attitudes, feelings, and behaviors" (p.55; see also above), whilst anxiety and uncertainty management is the *ability* to do so and thereby manage the anxiety and uncertainty experience. If people avoid interpersonal encounters or try to leave them as soon as possible, effective communication becomes problematic (Duronto, Nishida, & Nakayama, 2005).

Uncertainty.

Cognitive uncertainty denotes the lack of confidence in *predicting* and *explaining* others' attitudes, values, feelings and behaviours (Stephan et al., 1999). Samochowiec and Florack (2010) note that uncertainty is not necessarily linked to negative affective responses: Some individuals regard uncertainty as exciting and interesting and are curious about others. Still, others or the same individuals in other contexts perceive uncertainty as threatening (Samochowiec & Florack, 2010). Individuals strive to reduce uncertainty because they desire to feel comfortable in interactions or expect to see the person again (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001) and it can negatively affect communication, e.g. by being inattentive, or by blurring or simplifying issues (Presbitero & Attar, 2018). Duronto et al. (2005) uphold that only if we trust that our interaction partner is to some extent reliable and predictable, we are motivated to interact at all and to attempt to reduce uncertainty (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001). Such motivation to interact at all could be a reasonable expectation that those who act deviant would reward us, e.g. by being nicer or more cooperative (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001).

Anxiety.

In AUM theory, anxiety is the affective equivalent of uncertainty (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001). Anxiety is a "generalized and unspecified sense of disequilibrium" (Turner, 1988, p. 61) and emerges when feeling tense, worried, uneasy, apprehensive and concerned about current or prospective encounters (Stephan et al., 1999, p. 615). Turner states that we need to feel part of

an interaction context in which the interaction will become predictable and reliable. Turner (1988) highlights "when this sense of implicit trust and predictability in interaction is disrupted, individuals experience diffuse anxiety" (p. 60). According to (Stephan & Stephan, 1985) (intergroup) anxiety is usually based on negative expectations. People are afraid of embarrassment or threats for their self-esteem, exploitation, rejection or scorn, disapproval, or conflicts (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). As a consequence, people tend to avoid others around whom they feel such anxiety or conclude interactions as soon as possible as a measure to manage this very anxiety (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001). Nonetheless, anxiety also elicits the motivation to 'repair' the aversive emotional state (Samochowiec & Florack, 2010). More so, feeling anxious can result in behaving overly solicitous or in being increasingly perceptive for delicate interactions, even bolstering effective interactions (Stephan & Stephan, 1985).

Managing anxiety and uncertainty.

Anxiety and uncertainty management depends on the individual minimum and maximum thresholds for anxiety and for uncertainty. These thresholds indicate the boundaries within which individuals are confident yet skilful enough to accurately predict and explain others' attitudes, feelings, and behaviours to feel comfortable to interact with them and also indicate the amount of anxiety people can tolerate (Stephan et al., 1999). Within these boundaries, individuals are neither overconfident nor overwhelmed by the extent to which they have to predict and explain the other. Outside these boundaries, they would have to consciously (mindfully) manage their anxiety and uncertainty to make more accurate predictions and explanations to improve their communication (Stephan et al., 1999).

AUM theory proposes that decreases in uncertainty (increases in attributional confidence) lead to positive affect, for instance trust or comfort. Increases in uncertainty (decreases in attributional confidence) lead to negative affect such as apprehensiveness (Samochowiec & Florack, 2010; Stephan et al., 1999). Others have found an association between difficulties in predicting the behaviour of their communication partner and high anxiety levels or declined willingness to interact (Duronto et al., 2005; Logan, Steel, & Hunt, 2016;

Samochowiec & Florack, 2010). So, predicting a dishonest or careless interaction partner's behaviour, attitude, and values can be challenging. Their deviation from behavioural norms exacerbate anxiety and uncertainty management, e.g. by using charming, inscrutable and concealing communication styles (de Vries, Bakker-Pieper, Konings, & Schouten, 2011).

All in all, interpersonal uncertainty poses a threat to a teams' performance and measures are needed to mitigate interpersonal risk taking (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Nonviolent communication not only conveys information but expresses and defines the relationship between communication partners by verbalizing feelings, needs and values. As it stands to reason that in difficult interpersonal encounters, the uncertainty is related to the inability to predict attitudes, feelings, beliefs, values, and behaviour (Samochowiec & Florack, 2010), the language-based guideline to express oneself in nonviolent communication might help in explaining and predicting feelings, attitudes, behaviours, and values of the other. Hence, NVC might be a promising tool for better managing anxiety and uncertainty, whilst anxiety/uncertainty management has been found to predict effective communication (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001). This leads to the second hypothesis: *Anxiety/uncertainty management mediates the relation between NVC skills and perceived communication effectiveness (in difficult interpersonal encounters)* (Hypothesis 2).

Difficult Interpersonal Encounters

In this study, the relation between nonviolent communication skills, anxiety/ uncertainty management and perceived communication effectiveness is investigated under the influence of the nightmare traits dishonesty and carelessness. The decision not to explore disagreeableness revolves around the limits imposed by the scope of a master thesis. Dishonesty is included because honesty-humility is the greatest change of the HEXACO to the Five Factors (de Vries, 2018). Carelessness is included because the conscientiousness domain on which it is based, remains largely the same in the HEXACO compared to the Five Factor Model (de Vries, 2018).

This means that conclusions drawn about carelessness might integrate into an already existing body of knowledge of how to prevent such behaviour.

The concept of the three nightmare traits emerged from the interest in the relations between dark personality traits and leadership styles (de Vries, 2018). De Vries (2018) found strong relations between ethical leadership and HEXACO honesty-humility, between supportive leadership and HEXACO agreeableness and between task-oriented leadership and HEXACO conscientiousness. De Vries (2018) calls the low pole of these personality dimensions the three nightmare traits and notes that these traits in leaders can have severe negative effects on their subordinates and their organizations. Even though the TNT correlate with leadership styles, they originate from the HEXACO Personality Model and thus also occur among non-leaders (de Vries, 2018).

Since to the authors knowledge the concept of the three nightmare traits has not been studied as such yet, this study relies mainly on research on associations of dishonesty and carelessness with aspects of relational aggression, managing the emotions of others and workplace deviance. The following examples shall delineate the potential effects of the nightmare traits on anxiety/uncertainty management, the ability to accurately predict and explain other's feelings, attitudes, and behaviour. In the following paragraphs, the nightmare traits dishonesty and carelessness are introduced. Further, dishonest and careless behaviour is described as well as the effects thereof on co-workers ad fellow students – or generally, on people with whom nightmare trait people work.

Dishonesty as a nightmare trait.

Dishonesty is the negative pole of HEXACO honesty-humility. Honesty-humility is associated with moral behaviour as depicted by the four facets (1) *sincerity*, which is the reluctance to manipulate as in flattering or pretending sympathy in order to obtain benefits; (2) *fairness*, which pertains to the probability of avoiding fraud or deceit as shown in the aspiration for stealing or cheating as opposed to the reluctance thereof; (3) *greed avoidance,* which refers to

the tendency to be allured by luxury goods, lavish wealth, or high social status versus the affection of enjoying life independent of these aspects, and (4) *modesty*, which indicates the inclination to be modest and unassuming in contrast to feeling entitled and superior of others (Lee & Ashton, 2004).

Dishonesty is associated with immoral behaviour and results in predispositions for being insincere, greedy and unfair (de Vries, 2018; Lee & Ashton, 2004). TNT dishonest people tend to make selfish allocations, are sly and pretentious, are motivated to exploit others for their own good and are receptive to possibilities for manipulation (Hilbig, Zettler, & Heydasch, 2012; Zettler & Hilbig, 2010). Knight et al. (2018) found that people who score low in honesty-humility, are more prone to engage in relational aggression. Moreover, individuals low on honesty-humility are sensitive to situational circumstances and opportunities to attain personal benefits and adopt their behaviour with selfish intentions, which links low honesty-humility to workplace deviance (Zettler & Hilbig, 2010).

Dishonesty as a predictor for workplace deviance.

Honesty-humility is a strong predictor of workplace deviance (Anglim, Lievens, Everton, Grant, & Marty, 2018; Lee, Ashton, & de Vries, 2005; Lee, Ashton, & Shin, 2005; Pletzer, Oostrom, Bentvelzen, & de Vries, 2020; Zettler & Hilbig, 2010). Deviant workplace behaviour consists of violating an organization's norms, policies or internal regulations such that the organization's well-being or its members is jeopardized (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Workplace deviance (WD) includes behaviours such as alcohol consumption at work, disclosing organizational secrets, exerting rude manners in contact with colleagues, stealing from employers or cheating on the organization (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Hilbig & Zettler, 2009). Victims of WD are more likely to turnover, to be stressed and suffer from related problems such as low morale, lost work time, decreased productivity, lower self-esteem, fear and insecurity and psychological and physical pain (Christine A. Henle, Robert A. Giacalone, & Carole L. Jurkiewicz, 2005, p. 220). Lee, Ashton, and de Vries (2005, p. 183) suggest that honesty-humility presumably taps into the core of workplace delinquency: exploitation and deception. Similarly, Zettler and Hilbig (2010)

18

propose that honesty-humility constitutes antecedents for WD in two ways: (1) the interest in luxury or social status which also includes the willingness to exploit others, and (2) the extent of internal control to engage in or avoid fraud and the tendency to be genuine or fraudulent in interpersonal relations. This highlights that TNT dishonest individuals are willing and able to adapt to situational circumstances strategically for personal gain (Zettler & Hilbig, 2010).

Regulating the emotions of others as a practice of dishonesty.

Netzer, van Kleef, and Tamir (2015) found that maximizing the own instrumental benefit is a driving force in regulating emotions of others and reported that people induce anger in rivals as well as partners if they expect to benefit from the others' anger. Worsening the emotions of others (e.g. 'I make somebody feel bad after I feel insulted or when I dislike somebody's behaviour.') was equally predicted by HEXACO low honesty-humility and low agreeableness and was less negatively associated with conscientiousness (Austin & Vahle, 2016). Mood-worsening tactics are applied for exploiting others and as a reaction to exploitation (Austin & Vahle, 2016; Hilbig, Zettler, Leist, & Heydasch, 2013). Inauthentically managing the emotions of others by pretending emotions to influence how others feel, e.g. by sulking, flattering or inducing guilt is strongly associated with low honesty-humility (Austin & Vahle, 2016). People who display dishonesty might proactively and strategically criticize, undermine or hurt a colleague out of personal dislike or when feeling hurt (but perhaps independent of objective reasons).

In the context of working together on joint assignments the relevance of worsen and inauthentic mood regulation strategies for the notion of trust and psychological safety is unveiled. Speaking up and constructive conflict, processes that facilitate fruitful collaboration in a team and hence team performance are at risk when a team member employs these anti-social strategies for managing the emotions of others (Decuyper et al., 2010).

Carelessness as a nightmare trait.

TNT carelessness is the negative pole of the HEXACO conscientiousness domain, which is defined by the four facets (1) *organization*, (2) *diligence*, (3) *perfectionism*, and (4) *prudence*

(Lee & Ashton, 2004). Organization refers to being structured or to the love of tidiness as opposed to being haphazard or sloppy and thereupon letting physical surroundings become chaotic (Lee & Ashton, 2004). Whilst diligence captures the aspiration to work hard, it covers a strong work ethic and ambition to exert oneself on the high pole, but little self-discipline or motivation to achieve on the low pole, as Lee and Ashton (2004) state. Perfectionism assesses the tendency to allow mistakes and to deny details versus alertness for potential improvements (Lee & Ashton, 2004). The last facet, prudence, refers to following impulses as opposed to the utilization of one's foresight, considering consequences deliberately. The behavioural range stretches from impulsive to self-controlled (Lee & Ashton, 2004).

Hence, careless people are irresponsible, do not consider consequences, are impulsive, and reckless (Smith, 2015). They often demonstrate a 'fast life history strategy', a tendency to prefer "making personal gains and exploiting immediate opportunities at the expense of building more equitable and lasting social relationships that have more delayed pay-offs" (Volk, Schiralli, Xia, Zhao, & Dane, 2018, pp. 130–131). Careless people are impulsive, drift and let themselves go, and have difficulties with self-control and discipline (de Vries, 2018; Volk et al., 2018). De Vries (2018) points out that careless people are attracted by workplaces which are less result-oriented, that offer home offices or travels, and that convey less control but opportunities to disregard rules for swerving standards. Opportunities which allow for immediate pleasure and environments in which laziness and sloppiness are tolerated and in which a weak sense of urgency remains rather unnoticed are especially attractive to careless people (de Vries, 2018). Furthermore, careless people often demonstrate risky and negligent behaviour and are involved in accidents or errors (de Vries, 2018). They engage in life strategies that promise easy to achieve benefits, which allow parasitic behaviour, and bullying or relational aggression are observed more often among people who score high on carelessness (Gleason, Jensen-Campbell, & South Richardson, 2004; Knight et al., 2018; Volk et al., 2018; Voulgaridou & Kokkinos, 2015). As such, relational aggression is closely linked to bullying and indeed, HEXACO honesty-humility and HEXACO conscientiousness predicted cyberbullying best

(Book et al., 2016; Book, Volk, & Hosker, 2012; Farrell, Della Cioppa, Volk, & Book, 2014; Smith, 2015; Volk et al., 2018).

Carelessness as a predictor for relational aggression.

Relational aggression is "a form of aggression that involves attempts to harm others through the manipulation and damage of relationships and feelings of social inclusion" (Werner & Crick, 1999, p. 615) and intends to impair the social role or reputation of a person (Werner & Crick, 1999). This is done by withdrawing friendship or by refraining from social relationships, by intentional ignorance or by shutting somebody out of the group (Knight et al., 2018).

All the above findings suggest that especially dishonesty and carelessness predict antisocial behaviour against individuals and organizations. Co-workers can be physically and psychologically affected by the tendencies of careless colleagues to spread rumours or to play mean pranks. Moreover, the risk of being affected by acts of relational aggression or bullying, by mood worsening tactics or inauthentic emotional display with the intention to manipulate others, or having to deal with co-workers who feel entitled to superior status or pay-offs and exhibit aggressive, callous and reckless manners or who are impulsive, puts colleagues of such people in unpredictable work relations, potentially increasing anxiety and uncertainty. It stands to reason that these tactics and behaviours impede the ability to manage anxiety and uncertainty. When interacting with a highly careless and/or dishonest person, the potential effectiveness of NVC for managing anxiety and uncertainty through honestly conveying information and expressing and defining the relationship between communication partners, might be weakened. Given the focus of the present study on the effectiveness of nonviolent communication as a tool for dealing with difficult interpersonal encounters, the above considerations lead to the following hypotheses:

High carelessness weakens the positive relation between NVC skills and anxiety/uncertainty management (Hypothesis 3). And *High dishonesty weakens the positive relation between NVC skills and anxiety/ uncertainty management* (Hypothesis 4).

This study

In this study, participants were prompted with vignettes describing dishonest and careless behaviour of a fictitious colleague in order to explore the effectiveness of nonviolent communication skills for dealing with difficult interpersonal encounters. The following research question was addressed: *What is the relation between nonviolent communication skills, anxiety/uncertainty management, and perceived communication effectiveness in difficult interpersonal encounters characterized by dishonesty and/ or carelessness?*

In an explorative quantitative study design using a vignette as the core element, the attitude and intended behaviour of respondents in interpersonal encounters with dishonesty and carelessness was measured. Investigating dishonesty and carelessness in the form of vignettes entailed a two x two design with four conditions: *a*) high honesty-humility and high conscientiousness, *b*) high honesty-humility and low conscientiousness, *c*) low honesty-humility and high conscientiousness and *d*) low honesty-humility and low conscientiousness. Each vignette covered only one out of four facets of each of the personality dimensions honesty-humility and conscientiousness, such that participants had to read four different vignettes of the same condition in order to be prompted with all facets of dishonesty/ carelessness (dishonesty is the inverse of low honesty-humility, carelessness is the inverse of low conscientiousness). The nonviolent communication scale, intergroup anxiety scale, the measure for attributional confidence and the perceived communication effectiveness scale were used to indicate whether high NVC skills would result in higher perceived communication effectiveness. Further, by means of these scales it was investigated whether anxiety and attributional confidence would mediate the relation between nonviolent communication skills and perceived communication effectiveness and it was explored whether these relations would change under the influence of the dishonesty and carelessness of the communication partner.

The vignettes were intended to overcome methodological constraints imposed by ethical guidelines when doing research on human subjects while allowing the simultaneous presentation of dishonest and careless behaviour in high and low manipulations in a real life

context (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010). Further it was expected that the vignettes would elicit that participants empathize with the work situation in which the colleague is dishonest and/ or careless and to trigger accompanying feelings for that situation. This means that participants could more realistically answer questions about their anxiety, attributional confidence, and perception of communication effectiveness, since they were asked to note down a reply to the colleague in the vignette beforehand. Moreover, it was expected that the use of the vignettes allows to investigate whether the effect of high NVC skills is dependent of the level of dishonesty and/ or carelessness in the communication partner. Four outcomes were expected: Firstly, nonviolent communication skills have a positive effect on the perception of communication effectiveness. This means that strong NVC skills facilitate clear self-expression of feelings, needs and requests such that misunderstandings can be avoided more competently. Secondly, the manipulations of honesty-humility and conscientiousness in the vignettes might induce different levels of anxiety and attributional confidence according to the condition of the vignette scenarios. The use of the vignettes was expected to allow to investigate whether anxiety management and attributional confidence mediate the relation between NVC skills and effective communication. Thirdly and fourthly, it was expected that the effect of NVC skills on perceived communication effectiveness would change when presented with either low or high dishonesty and carelessness. Figure 1 shows the model; the hypotheses are presented below.

H_1: Nonviolent communication skills have a positive effect on the perceived communication effectiveness.

H_2: Anxiety management and attributional confidence mediate the relation between nonviolent communication skills and perceived communication effectiveness.

H_3: Carelessness moderates the relation between nonviolent communication skills and anxiety management and attributional confidence.

H_4: Dishonesty moderates the relation between nonviolent communication skills and anxiety management and attributional confidence.

Method

Participants

By means of a combination of convenience and snowball sampling, 94[1] respondents in the Netherlands and Germany participated in the survey. The participants were contacted personally, via social media messengers or e-mail and asked to fill out the online survey via an anonymous link. The participation was entirely voluntary, and no incentives were offered. Excluding respondents who did not complete the NVC and IRI measures resulted in a sample size of N = 81. Only 60 of these respondents completed the full survey including the vignettes. There were no statistically significant differences between the student group and the working/ unemployed group, which led to a sample size of n = 60 for the analyses investigating the hypotheses H_1 – H_4. Sociodemographic characteristics and background information on these participants can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants at Baseline

Baseline characteristic	Students		Working/Unemployed		Full sample	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Gender						
Male	7	24.1	15	48.4	22	36.7
Female	21	72.4	15	48.4	36	60
Other	1	3.4	1	3.2	2	3.3
Nationality						
Dutch	1	3.4	4	12.9	5	8.3
German	22	75.9	23	74.2	45	75

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[1] Respondents who completed only two percent of the survey were removed prior to data analysis, reducing the sample size from n = 98 to n = 94.

Baseline characteristic	Students		Working/Unemployed		Full sample	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
European (Non-Dutch, non-German)	1	3.4	2	6.5	3	5
Non-European	5	17.2	2	6.5	7	11.7
Highest educational level						
Highschool graduate	2	6.9	3	9.7	5	8.3
Some college	10	34.5	2	6.5	12	20
Bachelor	14	48.3	5	16.1	19	31.7
Master	3	10.3	15	48.4	18	30
PhD.	0	0	3	9.7	3	5
Vocational Education	0	0	3	9.7	3	5
Interaction with others at work						
Never	1	3.4	0	0	1	1.7
Sometimes	14	48.3	2	6.5	16	26.7
Half of the time	4	13.8	7	22.6	11	18.3
Most of the time	7	24.1	12	38.7	19	31.7
Always	3	10.3	10	32.3	13	21.7
Conflict management / interpersonal communication						
Has education (Training, books or electronic media)	22	75.9	20	64.5	42	70
Has no education	7	24.1	11	35.5	18	30

Note. *N* = 60 (student group *n* = 29, non-student group *n* = 31). Participants mean age in student-group was 25.2 (*SD* = 3.5) and in non-student group *M* = 33.2 (*SD* = 10.8).

Instruments

Online survey. At the beginning, the 63-item online survey included three items on demographic information, one item on educational background, three items covered type of work and work experience and one item asked about experience and/or education in conflict management trainings or literature. Thereafter, participants reflected on their everyday communication behaviour with the help of a questionnaire on nonviolent communication skills[2] and were prompted with four vignettes, each describing a fictitious colleague with high or low dishonesty and high or low carelessness characteristics. Further, a conflict situation was described, and participants were asked to imagine themselves in these situations. Participants were asked to note down what they would reply to this colleague and what kind of feedback they would give if they could for facilitating reasonable answers to the subsequent questions on their anxiety experience, their attributional confidence (inverse of uncertainty), as well as their perception of the communication effectiveness. Each vignette was followed by seven different items in interspersed order on anxiety, attributional confidence and perceived communication effectiveness, such that respondents answered the complete scales on anxiety, attributional confidence and perceived communication effectiveness after they had completed the four vignettes.

Questionnaires.

Nonviolent Communication. The 18-item nonviolent communication scale measures NVC as in the four components conceptualized by Rosenberg (2003): (1) observing without evaluating (e.g. "In conversations, I rather try to describe what I notice than to judge"), (2) expressing feelings and needs (e.g. "I describe my feelings to my dialogue partner"), (3) formulating clear requests (e.g. "Towards my dialogue partner, I express my requests understandably so that they

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[2] The three additional variables perspective taking(r = .27*), personal distress (r = -.33*) and empathic concern (r = .09) from the interpersonal reactivity index Davis (1980) were included prior to prompting the respondents with the vignettes. These additional variables were used to validate the nonviolent communication scale only. All subscales corelated or failed to correlate as expected. * p < .05.

are easy to fulfil"), and (4) empathic listening (e.g. "I can understand the wishes and interests of my dialogue partner even when he/ she doesn't express them directly") (Wacker & Dziobek, 2018b). Participants were asked to respond to these items on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *1 = not at all true* to *5 = completely true*. The scale had a high alpha reliability of 0.854.

Intergroup anxiety scale. The intergroup anxiety scale measures how respondents would feel during an interaction which is described in the vignette on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001). The format "I feel calm during my interaction with Robin", was completed with the eleven items calm, frustrated, in control, insecure, composed, relaxed, irritated, worried, impatient, and awkward, respectively. Robin was the fictitious colleague described in the vignette scenario. High values indicate high levels of anxiety. Item 10 and 5 were removed for the analyses because of low Pearson correlation coefficients, resulting in an adequate alpha reliability of .701

Attributional confidence in high and low context cultures. Following Gudykunst and Nishida (2001), uncertainty was measured as its inverse, attributional confidence. The original 12 items of the measure of attributional confidence in high and low context cultures in question format were rephrased into declarative sentences to which participants could respond on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree.* This was done for aligning the general response pattern presented to the participants*.* For instance, "How confident are you in your general ability to predict how he/ she will behave?" was turned into "I am confident in my general ability to predict how Robin will behave". High scores indicate high attributional confidence, i.e. low uncertainty. Item 12 and item 6 were removed from the scale due to their low Pearson correlation coefficients, leading to an adequate alpha reliability of .778 for the scale.

Perceived communication effectiveness. Perceived communication effectiveness was measured by five items as suggested by Gudykunst and Nishida (2001) on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree,* with "this person" being replaced by the respective name of the fictious colleague of the vignette. Items with evaluative wordings as in

"My communication was unsuccessful/ a failure" do not align with a typical NVC approach which to the contrary, withdraws observations mixed with evaluations. The remaining three items were "I communicated effectively with Robin", "I feel competent when I communicate with Sam", "I communicated appropriately with Cameron". High scores indicate high levels of perceived communication effectiveness. The alpha reliability of .306 was very low. However, since perceived communication effectiveness is a central variable in this study, it is still used.

Vignettes.

Four vignette scenarios *Robin, Taylor, Sam,* and *Cameron* were written for the purpose of this study by the author herself using an exemplary vignette of Vries (2000). Each vignette features one facet of conscientiousness (C) and one facet of honesty-humility (H), meaning that four different manipulations of each vignette were written. For instance, vignette Robin had the combinations *a*) high perfectionism and high fairness, *b*) high perfectionism and low fairness, *c*) low perfectionism and high fairness, and *d*) low perfectionism and low fairness (*a, b, c,* and *d* indicate the conditions). Vignette Taylor features *diligence* (C) and *sincerity* (H), vignette Sam features *organization* (C) and *greed avoidance* (H), and vignette Cameron features *prudence* (C) and *modesty* (H)[3].

The vignettes are structured in two parts, namely in introduction, and conflict. In the introductory part, the work setting and the role of the participant is described (e.g. "You are part of the Xpro team which develops a device that helps the production unit to work more effectively by automizing some of the working steps which are currently done by hand. […]"). Thereafter, a fictitious colleague (Robin, Taylor, Sam or Cameron) is characterized (e.g. "Robin is very determined to accuracy in tasks and usually double checks work for errors, being careful not to miss details."). In the conflict part, a situation at work is depicted (e.g. "You make a coffee in the office kitchen when Robin enters and starts talking to you about the ongoing development

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[3] Due to a clerical error, vignette Cameron was interchanged in condition B and C, such that the manipulated version of the Cameron vignette for condition *b*) (low conscientiousness and high honesty-humility) was assigned to condition c) (high conscientiousness and low honesty-humility) and vice versa. To carry out the analyses the answers to the questions following only the Cameron vignette were retrospectively interchanged between condition *b* and *c*.

of the Xpro. [...]"), including a personal statement of the colleague about the issue at work (e.g. "However, I think we have to run the pilot with as many people as required so we can stick to the official requirements for participating in the competition."). Upon the personal statement, participants were asked to indicate what they would reply to the colleague what kind of feedback they would provide for this person. These two questions elicited an imagination of the participants in the situation and also account for the missing reliability check of the vignettes prior to the study. The manipulated sentences are kept as similar as possible and are as closely based on the trait definitions of the HEXACO-PI domain-level scales (Lee & Ashton, 2020); additional characterizations are taken from de Vries (2018). Due to the scope of a master thesis, the vignettes were controlled and checked by Prof. Dr. R. E. de Vries and could not undergo a pilot to test the reliability and comprehensibility among a broader audience.

Procedure

Before participation, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and that their data would be analysed on the group level only. The survey was hosted on Qualtrics and could be completed entirely online at any time and took about 45 minutes. No incentives were given for participation in the study. A debriefing statement informed the participants about the motivation and practical relevance of the study.

Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted using IMB SPSS Statistics 25. Prior to data analysis and to validate the nonviolent communication scale, the correlation scores of this scale with the three subscales of the interpersonal reactivity index perspective taking, empathic concern, and personal distress was assessed. A Mann-Whitney-U test was conducted to investigate group differences in NVC skills between students and the group of employees, self-employed and unemployed people, as the assumptions for a student's t-test were not met. To investigate whether NVC skills have a positive effect on perceived communication effectiveness, correlation

scores were checked. For assessing whether anxiety management and attributional confidence mediate that relation, a mediation analysis was conducted. Further and to explore the effectiveness of NVC skills in the presence of dishonesty and carelessness in the communication partner, a mediated moderation analysis was performed. To this end, the PROCESS macro by Hayes (2012-2020), v. 3.4.1, was used. Based on ordinary least squares regression, unstandardized path coefficients for total, direct and indirect effects were computed. Using bootstrapping with 5000 samples and heteroscedasticity consistent standard errors inferential statistics and confidence intervals were calculated and effects were interpreted significant when the 95% confidence interval did not cross zero.

Results

Group differences in nonviolent communication

To explore if there were differences in NVC score between the student group (n = 29) and the working/ unemployed group (n = 31) (employees, self-employed, or unemployed), a Mann-Whitney U test was run to. Distributions of the NVC scores for students and non-students were similar, as assessed by visual inspection. The NVC score was not statistically significantly different between students (*Mdn* = 3.66) and non-students (*Mdn* = 3.55), U = 360.5, z = -1.319, p = .187. Therefore, the whole sample (n = 60) was used for the subsequent analyses.

Determining the direct relations between the study variables

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables and background variables can be found in Table 2. The criterion variable perceived communication effectiveness was positively and statistically significantly correlated with nonviolent communication. This result fails to reject hypothesis 1 *Nonviolent communication skills have a positive effect on the perceived communication effectiveness*. Moreover, nonviolent communication was positively and statistically significantly correlated with attributional confidence. Further, perceived

communication effectiveness was positively and statistically significantly correlated with attributional confidence and negatively correlated with anxiety, whilst anxiety was as expected negatively correlated with attributional confidence. Dishonesty was negatively correlated with attributional confidence and almost statistically significantly with gender (p = .051) and carelessness in the interaction partner was positively associated with anxiety.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics and correlations of study variables

Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Gender[a]	58	N.A.	N.A.	—												
2. Age	81	30.2	9.6	−.02	—											
3. Work experience	56	6.5	7.9	.00	.92**	—										
4. Conflict management education[b]	60	N.A.	/ N.A.	.12	−.03	−.11	—									
5. Nonviolent communication	81	3.60	0.42	−.14	−.11	−.13	−.02	—								
6. Perspective taking	81	3.60	0.67	.17	−.25[d]	−.24	.14	.27*	—							
7. Empathic concern	81	3.85	0.60	.27*	.07	−.03	.04	.09	.29*	—						
8. Personal distress	81	2.60	0.84	.08	−.02	.04	−.01	−.33*	−.05	−.10	—					
9. Anxiety	60	3.15	0.83	.07	.06	−.01	.09	−.22	−.23	.07	.34**	—				

Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
10. Attributional confidence	60	4.58	0.80	.04	-.06	−.02	.04	.28*	.04	−.10	−.14	−.34**	—			
11. Perceived communication effectiveness	60	5.42	0.66	−.24	.05	.05	−.07	.49**	.23	−.03	−.30*	−.44**	.46**	—		
12. Carelessness[c]	60	N.A.	N.A.	.03	.08	.07	.10	−.10	−.10	.04	−.19	.27*	−.24	−.10	—	
13. Dishonesty[c]	60	N.A.	N.A.	−.26[d]	.08	.10	−.15	−.02	.18	−.03	−.10	.17	−.46**	−.09	−.03	—

Note. The correlations reported are calculated with *n* = 60.

[a] Categorical variable (Male/ female).

[b] Categorical variable (participant has/ has no conflict management education).

[c] Categorical variable (Character trait present/ not present in fictitious interaction partner).

[d] $p = .051$
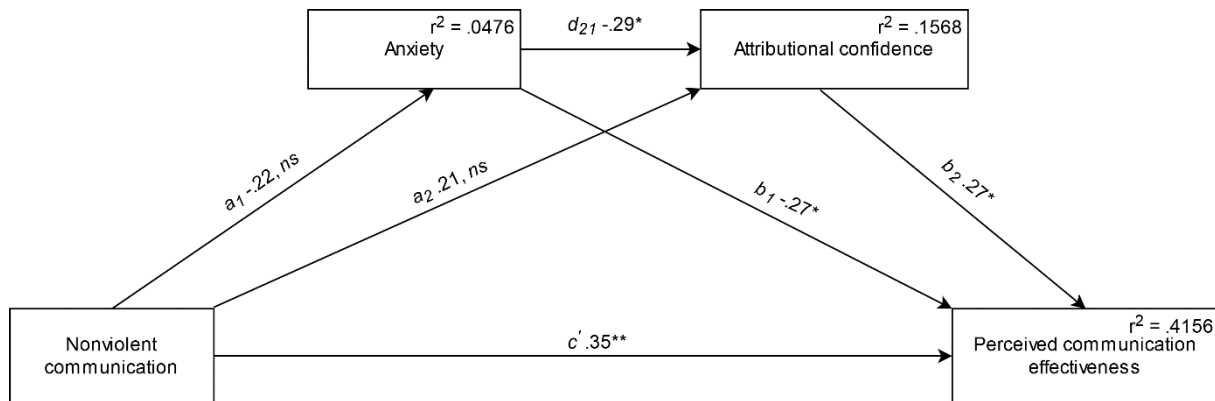
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Determining the mediation effect of anxiety management and attributional confidence

A double mediation was run to analyse H_2 *Anxiety management and attributional confidence mediate the relation between nonviolent communication skills and perceived communication effectiveness.*

A moderate direct positive and statistically significant effect of NVC skills on perceived communication effectiveness was observed, as shown on *c'* in Figure 2, $p = .0017$. However, after adding the mediator variables anxiety (M_1) and attributional confidence (M_2) to the model, the hypothesized indirect effect of NVC skills on perceived communication effectiveness via anxiety/ uncertainty management (H_3) was not found as indicated by the insignificant standardized indirect effects $a_1b_1 = .0592$, 95% CI [-,0159, 1482], $a_2b_2 = .0574$, 95% CI [-,0159, 1837], $a_1db_2 = .0172$, 95% CI [-.0042, 0518]. Moreover, nonviolent communication skills did not predict the mediators anxiety (M_1) and attributional confidence (M_2) significantly, a_1 $p = .0941$ and a_2 $p = .0941$. Nevertheless, in the tested model, anxiety significantly negatively predicted attributional confidence d_{21} $p = .0229$ and perceived communication effectiveness b_1 $p = .0164$. Likewise, attributional confidence could add significantly to the prediction of perceived communication effectiveness, b_2 $p = .0182$. In this model, nonviolent communication skills, anxiety and attributional confidence could explain 41.56 % of the variance in perceived communication effectiveness despite the lack of a significant association of nonviolent communication to anxiety and attributional confidence. In contrast, nonviolent communication accounted for 23.71% of the variance in perceived communication effectiveness alone, $p = .0001$. The total effect size including anxiety and attributional confidence on perceived communication effectiveness was with $c = .49$ and $p = .0001$ fourteen points higher and stronger than the direct effect of NVC on perceived communication effectiveness. The standardized linear regression coefficients for each path of the mediated regression analysis model and the r^2 values are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Path diagram of associations between nonviolent communication skills and perceived communication effectiveness mediated by anxiety and attributional confidence

Note. Coefficients presented are standardized. $*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001$.

Determining the influence of carelessness and dishonesty on the relation between nonviolent communication skills and anxiety

A moderated mediation analysis including both moderator variables was run using the PROCESS macro by Hayes (2012-2020, v. 3.4.1) to investigate H_3 *Carelessness moderates the relation between nonviolent communication skills and anxiety management and attributional confidence* and H_4 *Dishonesty moderates the relation between nonviolent communication skills and anxiety management and attributional confidence* simultaneously.

There was a moderately strong negative and statistically significant moderation effect of carelessness on the relation between nonviolent communication skills and anxiety. This moderation effect helped to explain 4.42% of additional variance in anxiety, $p = .0479$. As a separate positive predictor variable for anxiety, carelessness itself and the moderation effect of carelessness were able to explain 19.12% of the variance in anxiety. No moderation effect of dishonesty on the relation between nonviolent communication skills and anxiety was found. The index of partial moderated mediation for the relation between NVC and perceived communication effectiveness via anxiety was statistically significant when carelessness was

present, a_1b_1 = .1544, 95% bootstrap CI [.0047, .3804] (Figure 3) but not when dishonesty was present a_1b_1 = -.0297, 95% bootstrap CI [-.2065, .2429] (Figure 4).

Determining the influence of carelessness and dishonesty on the relation between nonviolent communication skills and attributional confidence

The strength of the effect of nonviolent communication on attributional confidence was not moderated by neither carelessness nor dishonesty. Rather, both carelessness and dishonesty acted as separate independent negative predictor variables for attributional confidence, helping to explain 36.44% of the variance in attributional confidence. Since carelessness moderated only the relation between NVC skills and anxiety but not between NVS skills and attributional confidence, the hypothesized moderation effect of carelessness (H_3) was only partially confirmed. The index of partial moderated mediation for the relation between NVC and perceived communication effectiveness via attributional confidence was neither statistically significant when carelessness was present, a_1b_1 = .0635, 95% bootstrap CI [.0047, .3804], nor when dishonesty was present, a_1b_1 = -.0988, 95% bootstrap CI [-.2806, .0941]. Given these results, H_4 must be rejected because no interaction effect of dishonesty on the relation between NVC skills and anxiety/ uncertainty management was found.

Determining the effectiveness of NVC skills for managing anxiety and attributional confidence at presence of carelessness and dishonesty

With the inclusion of carelessness and dishonesty as separate moderator variables, the effect of nonviolent communication on anxiety and on attributional confidence was clearly insignificant (a_1 p = .7526 and a_2 p = .4687, respectively). The effect sizes for NVC on anxiety were not significant when dishonesty was present a_1 = .2200, p = .3318, when carelessness was present a_1 = -.4992, p = .2810 and when both moderators were present a_1 = -.3832, p = .0846, 95% CI [-.8205, .0541]. Moreover, the effects of anxiety and of attributional confidence on perceived communication effectiveness, which were significant in the previously conducted mediation

analysis, lost their explanatory power, as indicated by probability values of b_1 p = .0919 and b_2 p = .0579. However, the bootstrap results for the regression model parameters indicate that anxiety has a significant negative effect on perceived communication effectiveness b_1 = [-.4910, -.0646] and that attributional confidence has a significant positive effect on perceived communication effectiveness [.0457, .4658]. The detailed effect sizes of the relations between the study variables can be found in Figure 3 and 4. Figure 5 and 6 present the interaction effect of carelessness and dishonesty respectively.

Figure 3

Path diagram of associations between nonviolent communication skills and perceived communication effectiveness mediated by anxiety and attributional confidence moderated by carelessness
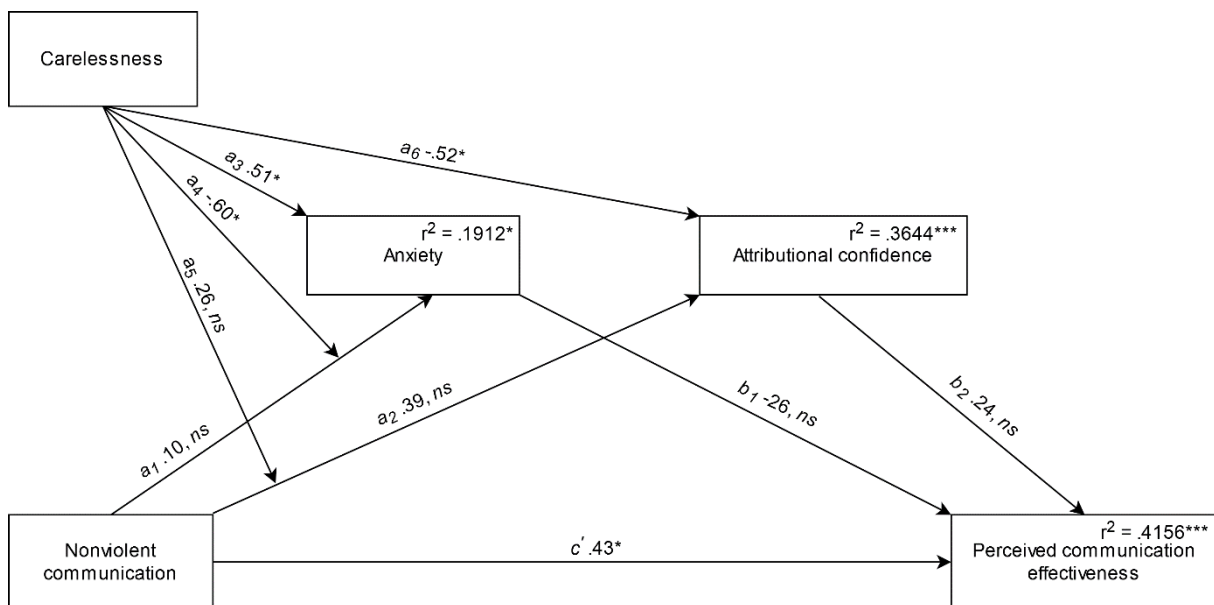
Note. Variables were standardized prior to the moderated mediation analysis. The coefficients presented are standardized. For a clear presentation of the coefficients, only the part of the model of the mediated moderation with the moderator carelessness is presented. R^2 values denote the explained variance of all the predictor variables jointly including both moderator variables carelessness and dishonesty for the respective manifest outcome variables. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Figure 4

Path diagram of associations between nonviolent communication skills and perceived communication effectiveness mediated by anxiety and attributional confidence moderated by dishonesty
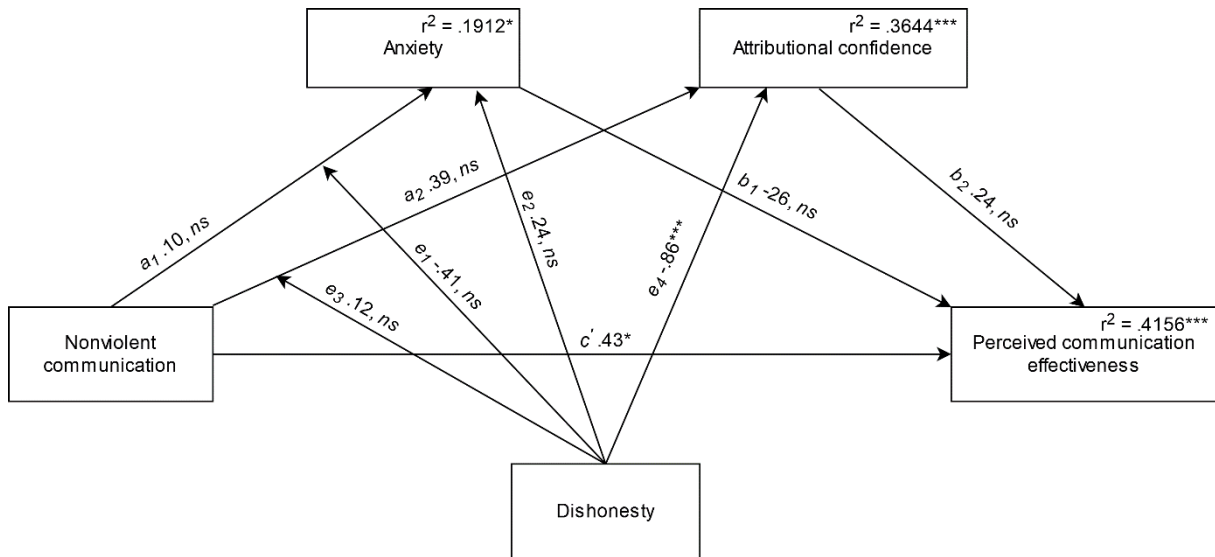
Note. The coefficients presented are standardized. For a clear presentation of the coefficients, only the part of the model of the mediated moderation with the moderator dishonesty is presented. R^2 values denote the explained variance of all the predictor variables jointly including both moderator variables carelessness and dishonesty for the respective manifest outcome variables. $*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001$.

Figure 5

Interaction effect of carelessness with nonviolent communication in the communication partner
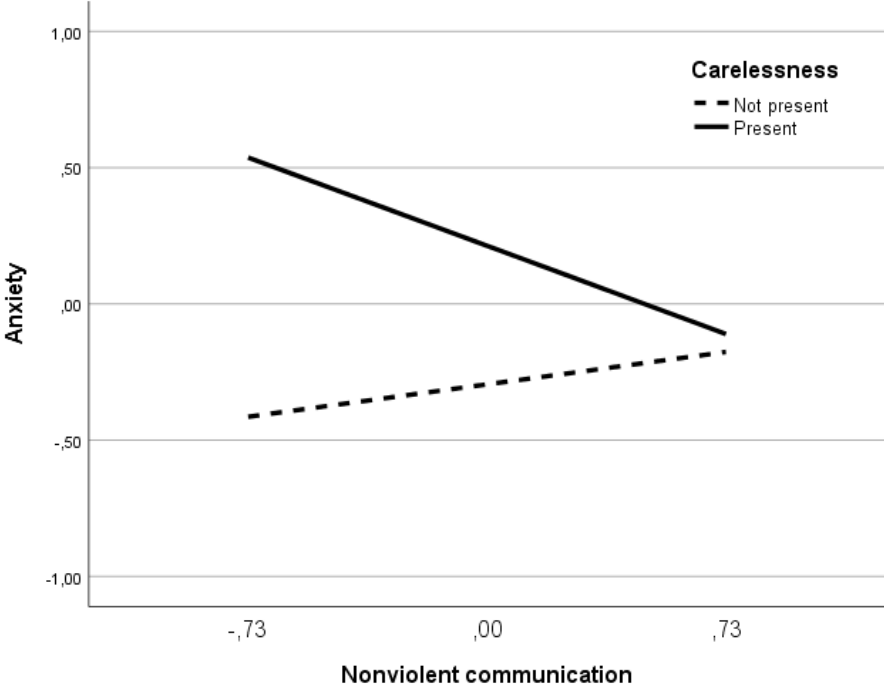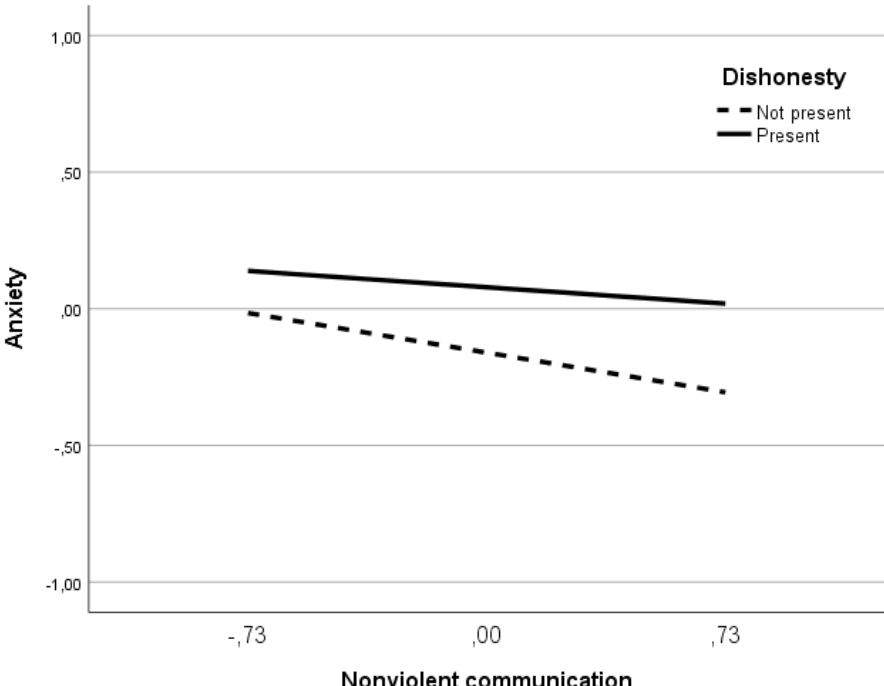

Figure 6

Interaction effect of dishonesty with nonviolent communication in the communication partner

Additional moderated regression analysis

Since carelessness was an independent predictor variable for anxiety whilst dishonesty was not, an additional exploratory analysis was conducted to investigate whether the effect of carelessness on anxiety was conditional on dishonesty.

There was no interaction effect between carelessness and dishonesty when regressing anxiety on carelessness moderated by dishonesty, b_3 = - .0302, p = .9410 and the r^2 changed value = .0001 and the bootstrap result for the regression model indicate that there is no interaction effect 95% bootstrap CI [-.8482, .7184]. Carelessness did not act as a predictor for anxiety, p = .0843, however, the bootstrap result indicates carelessness to be a significant positive predictor for anxiety $b1$ = .4673, 95% bootstrap CI [.0053, 1.0287]. Dishonesty did not statistically significantly add to the prediction of anxiety in neither the model (p = .1394) nor did the bootstrap results indicate a role of dishonesty as a predictor variable for anxiety 95% bootstrap CI [-.1000, .7266]. The detailed effect sizes and the interaction effect of carelessness with dishonesty are presented in Figure 7 and 8.

Figure 7

Path diagram of associations between carelessness and anxiety moderated by dishonesty
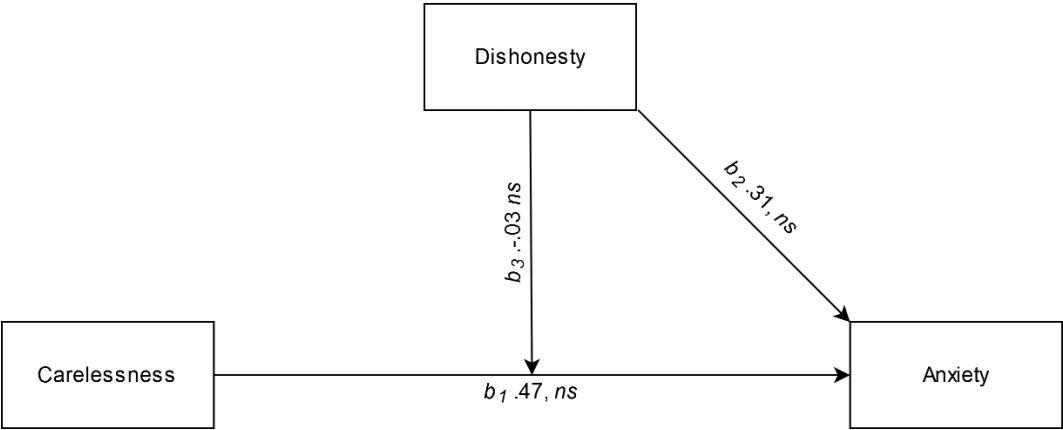
Note. The coefficients presented are standardized.

Figure 8

Interaction effect of dishonesty with carelessness in the communication partner
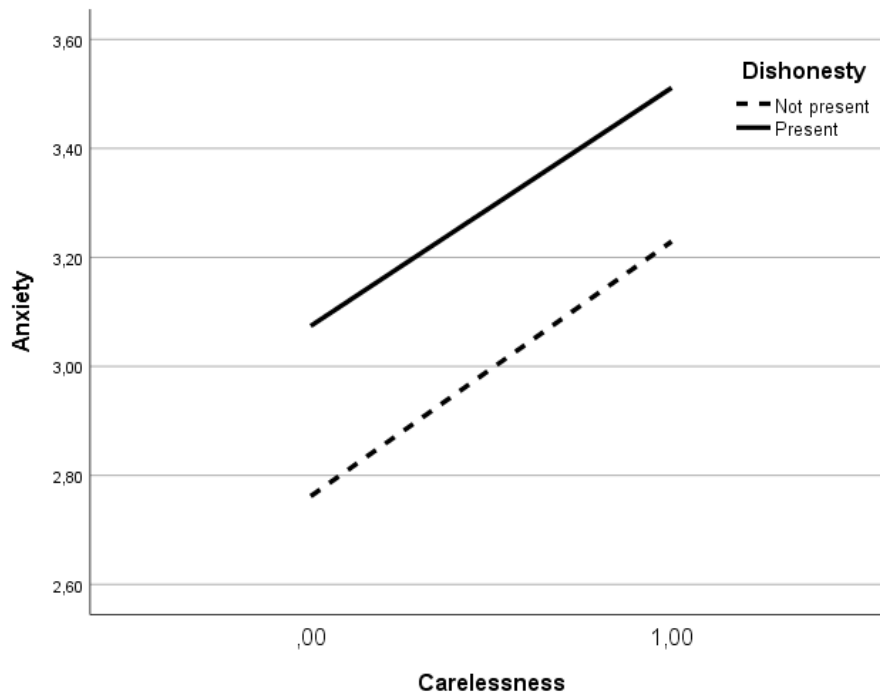
A post-hoc power analysis was conducted with G*Power because the data collection yielded only 60 out of initially calculated 92 responses. At an effect size of f^2 = .09, an α- error probability = .05, n = 60 and two predictors, a power of 1- β = .51 was yielded.

Discussion

Encounters with careless and dishonest people are almost inevitable when working with other people, be it in University or the workplace. These encounters can hamper effective communication and challenge one's communication skills because they infringe behavioural norms, manipulate others or engage in relational aggression. Research has shown that NVC is a useful tool for improving communication by generating clarity socioemotionally demanding situations, that NVC is effectively used to improve interprofessional collaboration, role clarification, and for reducing social stressors at work (Marlow et al., 2012; Museux et al., 2016; Wacker & Dziobek, 2018a). In the present study, the effectiveness of NVC on perceived communication effectiveness in difficult interpersonal encounters was investigated. By means of vignette scenarios, participants were randomly prompted with characterizations of fictitious colleagues who are highly or not at all dishonest and/or careless, followed by a work-scenario including a conflict. Participants were asked to note down a hypothetical reply and feedback they would provide if they could. Thereafter, participants answered questions on their anxiety, attributional confidence, and perceived communication effectiveness.

As an effect of high NVC skills, it was expected that the perceived communication effectiveness was higher and according to AUM theory, this effect was expected to be mediated by anxiety management and attributional confidence. The results of the correlation analysis show a significant effect of NVC skills on perceived communication effectiveness, yet there was no conclusive evidence for a mediation effect via anxiety management and attributional confidence. Only the effect of NVC skills on anxiety was dependent on carelessness but not on dishonesty. The relation between NVC skills and attributional confidence was not moderated by neither carelessness nor dishonesty. Overall, it can be concluded that NVC is a useful tool for dealing with difficult interpersonal encounters. To the author's knowledge, empirical investigations of nonviolent communication as a tool for dealing with the nightmare traits carelessness and dishonesty have not been conducted yet and this is the first exploratory study which attempts to close this research gap.

Perceived communication effectiveness

Looking at the correlation analysis, NVC skills acted as expected as a moderately strong predictor for perceived communication effectiveness, probably because NVC skills provide a guideline for bringing up both information and relational aspects of communication and thereby assist to bolster the extent to which one can accurately predict and explain feelings, attitudes, and behaviours of others. NVC can help to minimize misunderstandings by raising awareness for feelings and needs even when not explicitly verbalized, by facilitating compassionate listening. This result agrees with research that has found that NVC trainings help interprofessional teams creating a shared plan of action and that these teams show higher group competency (Museux et al., 2016). More so, NVC trainings improve individual competency in role clarification and individuals can more accurately identify effects of spontaneous communication and the ability to deal with conflictual situations is strengthened (Marlow et al., 2012; Museux et al., 2016; Suarez et al., 2014; Vazhappilly & Reyes, 2017, 2018; Wacker & Dziobek, 2018a).

Contrary to expectations, the effect of NVC skills on perceived communication effectiveness was not mediated by anxiety management or attributional confidence, indicating that NVC skills did not support anxiety management or attributional confidence. Presumably, the interactional process of two parties seeking information to create satisfactory interpersonal exchange and a harmonious relationship is impaired by the dishonest and careless nature of the communication partner in the vignette scenarios. NVC helps to reach clarity regarding the own emotions and supports a profound understanding of the needs that lie at the roots of feelings. To this effect, people might be more intelligible about their own (un-)fulfilled needs, however this does not yet imply the ability to accurately explain and predict someone else's behaviour. Moreover, awareness for one's anxiety provides clarity but not yet a tool for knowing how to cope with the anxiety. Rather, NVC is a tool for requesting the other to be transparent in these regards as well. Connecting to van Kleef's (2009) Emotions as Social Information Model which postulates that emotional expressions prompt inferences which inform the behaviour and

affective state of the other, Wacker and Dziobek (2018a) point to the social integration function of emotion verbalization. Unveiling emotional states through verbal and nonverbal cues can evoke empathy in the other which could lower anxiety (Wacker & Dziobek, 2018a). Further, NVC has a self-regulation function, because labelling feelings can function as a cooling-off strategy and thereby help to manage anxiety. However, the positive effects of disclosing emotional cues are based on the assumption that interaction partners have a predominantly cooperative attitude toward each other, which is not necessarily given in encounters with dishonest or careless people.

Further and as expected, anxiety and attributional confidence acted as modest predictors for perceived communication effectiveness. The equal effect sizes can be explained by the close theoretical proximity of anxiety and attributional confidence. High anxiety levels and low attributional confidence probably affect the ability to minimize misunderstandings because being anxious or uncertain distorts an accurate perception of the situation. This result confirms previous investigations of AUM theory (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001; Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996; Samochowiec & Florack, 2010). Nevertheless, when rejecting the hypothesis of a mediation effect via anxiety management and attributional confidence in this study with a small sample size, caution must be applied. Only 60 out of 92 responses were complete and usable for the analyses. Further, NVC skills were positively correlated with attributional confidence and the total effect size of the relation between NVC and perceived communication effectiveness including the mediators anxiety management and attributional confidence was fourteen points higher than without these mediators. Given the lower and upper levels of the 95% CI for the relation between NVC and anxiety at presence of both moderators, an appropriately sized sample might still show a mediation effect. Retrospectively raising the alpha-level to 10% would have yielded a significant effect of NVC on anxiety and attributional confidence even in the small sample, indicating an undetected partial mediation effect. This explanation would align with previous findings suggesting that NVC supports trust and openness in interprofessional relationships, indicating that NVC might help to manage anxiety (Museux et al., 2016).

Nonviolent communication effectiveness at presence of carelessness

As expected, the effect of NVC on anxiety is dependent on the level of carelessness in the communication partner. This means, NVC is less powerful and effective in managing anxiety in instances when the interaction partner is characterized by carelessness. However, since the direct relation between NVC and anxiety was insignificant, it is sensible that carelessness which also predicted anxiety independently, had as a moderator a significant effect on this relation. Volk et al. (2018) point out that lower levels of conscientiousness reflect a general preference for immediate gains at the expense of building lasting relationships and Netzer et al. (2015) note that humans manage emotions of others to gain hedonic benefits. Exploiting an immediate opportunity regardless of its effects on the anxiety level of the other might increase the difficulty of applying and using NVC.

Contrary to expectations, carelessness did not moderate the relation between NVC and attributional confidence. A possible explanation for this might be that when including the moderators carelessness and dishonesty, the relation between NVC and attributional confidence was insignificant. Further, the previously significant effect of NVC on attributional confidence could have been outperformed by dishonesty and carelessness because dishonesty itself strongly predicted attributional confidence, such that the relation between NVC and attributional confidence diminished after adding dishonesty and carelessness to the model.

Beyond the assumptions of this study, carelessness acted as an independent positive predictor for anxiety but negatively predicted attributional confidence to approximately the same extent. These results seem to be consistent with research of Knight et al. (2018) who found low conscientiousness to be related to relational aggression which is found to be a risk factor for anxiety and somatic complaints (Voulgaridou & Kokkinos, 2015) whilst Volk et al. (2018) and Smith (2015) found low conscientiousness to be related to bullying perpetration. Impulsivity and irresponsibility can evoke negative expectations such as being embarrassed, frustrated, irritated, being exploited or rejected in the other and thus increase anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). The relation between NVC and anxiety diminished after adding the

moderators to the model which might be explained by the independent predictor effect of carelessness on anxiety. The relation between NVC and anxiety depends on the level of carelessness of the interaction partner, whilst carelessness itself increases anxiety so that negative expectations dominate the emotional state of a communication partner. This could be interpreted such that the relation between NVC and anxiety is outperformed by the independent predictor effect of carelessness on anxiety. The elimination of the association between NVC and anxiety can nonetheless be caused by an inadequately small sample size such that the effect was not observed which is indicated by the moderate effect size and almost significant probability value of NVC on anxiety at presence of carelessness and dishonesty.

Nonviolent communication effectiveness at presence of dishonesty

Surprisingly, the effect of NVC on anxiety and attributional confidence was not dependent on dishonesty. The dishonesty of a communication partner appears to be irrelevant for one's ability to manage anxiety. Seeing that dishonesty acted as a strong negative predictor for attributional confidence, given the weak and insignificant effect size of the interaction term of dishonesty on the relation between NVC and anxiety, and NVC and attributional confidence, it stands to reason that dishonesty and carelessness (to a lesser extent) outperformed the association of NVC with attributional confidence.

Rather, dishonesty was better modelled as a strong independent predictor for attributional confidence. It may be that dishonest people illuminate their feelings and needs with their pretentious, insincere, and selfish appearance which impedes an accurate prediction of feelings, behaviour, or attitude so that attributional confidence decreases. This explanation is consistent with previous research in which dishonesty is described as insincere, fraudulent, pretentious and deceitful (Ashton, Lee, & Vries, 2014; de Vries, 2018) and with results of de Vries et al. (2011) who found that the communication style impression manipulativeness which covers the facets ingratiation, charm, inscrutableness, and conceilingness. An alternative explanation could be that dishonesty reduces trust to such a high extent that people are not

motivated to interact with these difficult communication partners anymore so that the relation between NVC and attributional confidence diminishes. This is supported by Duronto et al. (2005) who note that to be willing to interact, a certain amount of trust is necessary as well as by de Vries (2018), who stated that dishonest leaders induce distrust in organizational climate.

The results also showed that dishonesty did not predict anxiety in the present study. This finding objects results of Austin and Vahle (2016), Smith (2015) and Knight et al. (2018) who found that the two anti-social strategies for managing the emotions of others namely, worsen and inauthentic, as well as relational aggression are related to low honesty-humility and low conscientiousness. Others suggest that honesty-humility reflects people's fundamental preferences for reciprocity (Hilbig & Zettler, 2009; Zettler & Hilbig, 2010), so if dishonesty in the communication partner is high, the other person might not expect cooperation but exploitation. Especially given that honesty-humility is understood as a socially proactive trait, it seems reasonable to assume that criticizing, undermining or exploiting others to make selfish allocations would increase anxiety (Austin & Vahle, 2016; Hilbig et al., 2013). A possible explanation is that tactics for managing the emotions of others such as the worsen and inauthentic strategies were not explicitly addressed in the vignettes which could have led to the result which is somewhat contradicting the literature.

Carelessness at presence of dishonesty

Another interesting finding is that carelessness as an independent predictor variable for anxiety was not dependent on the level of dishonesty. In this study, carelessness and dishonesty seemingly exert their effects independent of each other which contradicts existing literature that shows links of low honesty-humility with low conscientiousness in concepts such as psychopathy (Book et al., 2016), relational aggression (Knight et al., 2018), bullying and cyberbullying (Book et al., 2016; Smith, 2015; Volk et al., 2018) or workplace deviance (Pletzer et al., 2020). The missing relations may partly be explained by the method used to investigate the nightmare traits carelessness and dishonesty. The manipulated sentences in the vignettes for carelessness described genuine behaviour according to facets of carelessness and the

manipulated sentences for dishonesty described only behaviour that is genuinely based on the facets of dishonesty; but no behaviour which is based on both character traits carelessness and dishonesty, such as bullying or workplace deviance was described. These experimental conditions cannot be found in reality such that these results have to be interpreted with caution. Further investigations are necessary to examine the relation between carelessness and dishonesty.

Scientific and practical implications

The theoretical concept of the nightmare traits has not yet been empirically investigated and this study advances in this regard not only by focusing on the effects of the nightmare traits on communication partners but also by providing instruments in the form of vignette scenarios to investigate these traits. Further and to the authors knowledge, this is the first study that investigates nonviolent communication skills as part of everyday communication behaviour in the context of the newly emerged concept of the nightmare traits (de Vries, 2018) without offering a communication training upfront. In this regard, the findings, while preliminary, suggest that the NVC scale developed by Wacker and Dziobek (2018b) is a valid measure for investigating nonviolent communication skills.

Apparently, NVC is effectuating emotions as social information, setting off inferential processes in the communication partner such that behaviour may be adjusted in order to rebuild satisfactory interpersonal exchange (Wacker & Dziobek, 2018a). This study has shown, that NVC is effective even though the other might not predominantly have a cooperative attitude toward the communication partner and that NVC can still help to minimize misunderstandings and supports taking responsibility for oneself. Indeed, NVC shows to be a practical tool for communication effectiveness and the ability to minimize misunderstandings even in difficult interpersonal encounters with dishonest or careless people. Minimizing misunderstandings is important for negotiating solutions, discussing ideas or for various team learning processes like sharing information, the co-construction of knowledge and constructive conflict (Decuyper et al.,

2010). Organizations and universities can benefit from introducing NVC to their staff and students to prevent frustration and affect student satisfaction or reduce employee turnover caused by conflict among colleagues. A better understanding of factors that influence communication effectiveness can enable HRD departments to develop more accurate measures for facilitating effective communication in teams and for fostering psychological well-being of staff and students.

Limitations

The undetermined reliability and validity of the vignettes limits the generalizability of the results as well as the very low alpha reliability of the measure of communication effectiveness. Further, due to a clerical error, the fourth vignette in condition B and C was interchanged. For these methodological limitations, some respondents might have been confused and it is noteworthy, that perceived communication effectiveness was measured by only three items, so generalizations and interpretations must be used with caution. A more precise measure for perceived communication effectiveness is needed for investigating the effectiveness of nonviolent communication because the item with evaluative wording contradicted the NVC approach which withdraws observations mixed with evaluations. Further, due to the low sample size and the high level of education of the participants in interpersonal communication and conflict management results yield only a low power. Despite these limitations, a first step has been made to explore how NVC interacts with anxiety management and attributional confidence, assuming a strong influence for fostering communication effectiveness. Even though no conclusive evidence was found to establish a mediation effect of NVC via anxiety management and attributional confidence on communication effectiveness, the results still indicate a promising starting point for future research. A more thorough investigation on the effect of nonviolent communication skills via anxiety management and attributional confidence could yield better understanding of how NVC supports effective communication. Further, the results of

this study pinpoint NVC as a tool for communication effectiveness that leverages the gained knowledge about how carelessness and dishonesty affect co-workers.

Future research

Future studies need to test the vignettes prior to data collection and could also use a sampling population that is familiar with office workplaces or include more diverse workplace situations in the vignettes. Beyond that, future studies could examine the answers of respondents given as replies to the fictitious colleague or as feedback about this person. A mixed method study design could serve to compare and validate the self-responses to the NVC scale with their written answers and the vignette scenarios. Further, the written answers pose an intriguing starting point for future research on the reactions to the nightmare traits carelessness and dishonesty. Exploring the reactions that the participants would have given when facing careless or dishonest colleagues could reveal a better understanding of where conflicts are rooted, i.e. on the relational level or the informational level. No conclusive evidence has been found to confirm an outstanding role of anxiety management and attributional confidence for the effectiveness of NVC for communication effectiveness, which pinpoints to an important issue for future research because it somewhat contradicts the theoretical concept of NVC. A bigger sample and a more appropriate measure for communication effectiveness could reveal first insights into this question and the third of the three nightmare traits, disagreeableness, could be included to see if there is an overlap of the effects of TNT on anxiety management and attributional confidence.

The findings of this study show that anxiety management and attributional confidence could be promising leverage points for appropriate preventive measures against the negative interpersonal effects of carelessness and dishonesty. More research on the effects of carelessness and dishonesty on also other variables like motivation to work or work satisfaction could enlighten the understanding and consideration of co-worker relationships when assessing a company's competitiveness. Gaining a better understanding of these relations might be of special importance for HR departments. Future research could investigate the relation between

nonviolent communication skills and their effectiveness for managing anxiety and attributional confidence. The potential of NVC for minimizing misunderstandings has been demonstrated in this study, yet more research is needed to consolidate this conclusion. Further, it would be worthwhile to investigate how organizational structures support and how they can also prevent the negative effects of carelessness and dishonesty on communication partners.

Conclusion

The present study shed light on how the nightmare traits carelessness and dishonesty affect the communication partner and makes a headway to explore nonviolent communication as a tool for managing anxiety and attributional confidence in an attempt to find ways to prevent the negative interpersonal effects of dishonesty and carelessness. NVC is a communication approach for handling socioemotionally demanding situations, whilst anxiety management and attributional confidence are known to be closely linked to communication effectiveness. Research on the effect of carelessness and dishonesty on co-workers and on NVC in everyday life is still scarce and this study addresses these gaps. It was shown that NVC skills support effective communication, however there is no conclusive evidence that this effect was mediated by anxiety management and attributional confidence. Further, carelessness and dishonesty showed to independently affect anxiety management and attributional confidence instead of moderating the effect of NVC on anxiety management and on attributional confidence. Yet, the potential effects of carelessness and dishonesty on NVC and on communication strategies in general need further investigation. The results of this study indicate that being able to understand and verbalize feelings and needs in conflictual situations such that the other understands and feels acknowledged too can support minimizing misunderstandings. NVC is valuable for all kinds of interpersonal situations and might aid trust and a cooperative attitude. Given the results of the few previous studies and the present research, the potential of nonviolent communication for facilitating effective and skilful interpersonal communication has been so far underestimated. Especially organizations and workplaces which are dependent on smooth processes and

functioning teams can profit from nonviolent communication skills of co-workers as a means to foster communication effectiveness to prevent misunderstandings or social stressors at work as Wacker and Dziobek (2018a) suggest, potentially also in difficult interpersonal encounters. Not only is this understanding beneficial to organizations which face regular miscommunication, but it can also show a possible solution to facilitate communication effectiveness. Beyond that, this study has made a first step in investigating the effect of the nightmare traits carelessness and dishonesty and has revealed a more profound understanding of how these traits affect interpersonal encounters.

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Appendix A

Adjusted scales of the interpersonal reactivity index

Perspective taking scale.

1. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

2. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.

3. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.

4. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.

5. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments. (-)

Empathic concern scale.

1. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (-)

2. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.

3. Sometimes I don't feel sorry for other people when they are having problems. (-)

4. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (-)

5. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.

Personal distress scale.

1. I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation.

2. In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease.

3. Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.

4. I tend to lose control during emergencies.

Appendix B

Vignettes

All vignettes below are given in the manipulation of condition A (high conscientiousness and high honesty-humility). The manipulated sentences are displayed in italics. Please see appendix C, Table C1-C4 for the exact manipulated sentences of all conditions.

Vignette 1: Robin.

Vignette Robin includes manipulations of the facets perfectionism and fairness.

Please read the story below and imagine Robin to be your colleague.

You are part of the Xpro team which develops a device that helps the production unit to work more effectively by automizing some of the working steps which are currently done by hand. Within your department, you lead the production unit and are in excellent contact with your staff. Your colleague Robin is acquainted with project management and is like you part of the Xpro team. With this project, the Xpro team participates on behalf of your organization in a competition, for which a project report must be handed in. About Robin: *Robin is very determined to accuracy in tasks and usually double checks work for errors, being careful not to miss details. Moreover, Robin is always on alert for potential improvements. Robin writes honest and fair project reports and has never deceived about encountered problems or made selfish allocations of credit while humbling contributions of others. Furthermore, Robin feels little temptation to bend rules for personal profit.*

You make a coffee in the office kitchen when Robin enters and starts talking to you about the ongoing development of the Xpro. The Xpro team is about to run a pilot which involves the executive staff to use the device in their daily work routine, so the development team can start revising the device based on their feedback. Robin: *"Can you convince your team to run the pilot and give feedback to the development team within this week? I really want to deliver a perfect product at the competition, and I need their feedback as soon as possible to improve.* Listen, I know

that your team is doing lots of extra hours. *However, I think we have to run the pilot with as many people as required so we can stick to the official requirements for participating in the competition. Cheating would be unfair."*

What would you say if you were to give feedback about Robin and the way Robin communicates? If you prefer not to give feedback, you can also say something else.

Vignette 2: Taylor.

Vignette Taylor includes manipulations of the facets diligence and sincerity.

Please read the story below and imagine Taylor to be your colleague.

For the 100th anniversary of your company, you, Taylor and some colleagues organize an internal anniversary party with a show and dinner for the complete staff. Taylor has volunteered to come up with a project plan informing about milestones, interdependencies, time frames and the budget by the next meeting because Taylor is experienced in event planning. About Taylor: *Taylor has a high aspiration to work hard, has strong self-discipline and works diligently towards a goal. Taylor has always shown a strong work ethic by being eager to accomplish. You have noticed that Taylor is hesitant to flatter others and avoids manipulating others for personal profit. Taylor is sincere regardless of prospective benefits for a certain behaviour.*

You had a project meeting 1,5 weeks ago and Taylor did not bring the project plan as promised because some positions regarding the budget and security guidelines were not finalised yet. Now, you urgently need the project plan for conducting the next steps. You approach Taylor and ask for the project plan. Taylor: *"Sorry to let you wait, I have already reached out to the secretary three times but apparently, she is very busy. I agree that we should start acting, so let's start with checking the available resources for each milestone and then continue with what is most urgent.*

We could calculate the budget and formulate tasks according to our estimations and then present this plan to the secretary to be confirmed as a working assumption. I am afraid that you as the project leader might have greater chances to reach her than me, so would you take over my task and talk to her?"

What would you say if you were to give feedback about Taylor and the way Taylor communicates? If you prefer not to give feedback, you can also say something else.

Vignette 3: Sam.

Vignette Sam includes manipulations of the facets organization and greed avoidance.

Please read the story below and imagine Sam to be your colleague.

Mark, the leader of your department, quit without notice and your team must rearrange the department workload to cover the position until a replacement is hired. The company is looking for someone from your team to replace the position in order to save costs and onboarding time. Sam is one of the possible candidates. About Sam*: Sam's desk is always tidy, and the calendar is held quite accurate. Sam works organized and systematically and has a structured approach to tasks and schedules. Sam is uninterested in luxury goods, lavish wealth and feels no special entitlement to elevated social status or privilege. More so, Sam enjoys life independent of materialistic or status prestige.*

You meet Sam in the elevator, and you talk about the workload that has come up since Mark has left. Both of you acknowledge that everybody works hard. Sam looks quite tired and says: *"Fortunately, I was taught to be organized and structured, I guess otherwise I'd sometimes not be able to catch up with all the work that I took up now and my desk would be a mess. I really fell in love with my to do app, it helps me that nothing slips my mind. You know, I don't really need to get*

that position, even though I feel it's time for me to move on but getting promoted to become a leader is not what I am looking for. And getting a raise is not really an incentive to me."

What would you say if you were to give feedback about Sam and the way Sam communicates? If you prefer not to give feedback, you can also say something else.

Vignette 4: Cameron.

Vignette Cameron includes manipulations of the facets modesty and prudence.

Please read the story below and imagine Cameron to be your colleague.

You are managing the creation of a new website that is supposed to launch in two weeks. Cameron, one of the senior editors found a major bug in the code and now, some team members want to push back on the deadline, which you know the client wouldn't appreciate. About Cameron: *Cameron is modest and unassuming towards others. Cameron would never put others down or humble contributions of others. Besides, Cameron approaches tasks carefully with sound reasoning and thinks ahead. More so, Cameron considers consequences deliberately and works prudently.*

You have a team meeting to discuss the next steps for finalizing and launching the clients' website in two weeks. You ask the team to focus on finding out what you need that could help solve the situation. Cameron says: *The client can expect us to stick to the deadline and fortunately we were able to discover the error with the help of others. Now that we discovered the bug, the entire code must be backtracked which needs time and workforce from everyone, but a delay should be avoided, not? But let's think about what we would need that could solve the situation. Are there things we could delay and work on after the launch?*

What would you say if you were to give feedback about Cameron and the way Cameron communicates? If you prefer not to give feedback, you can also say something else.

Appendix C

Manipulated sentences in vignettes per personality dimension and facet

Table C1

Manipulated sentences of the introduction part in vignettes for conscientiousness

Facet	Vignette	High	Low
Perfectionism	Robin	Robin is very determined to accuracy in tasks and usually double checks work for errors, being careful not to miss details. Moreover, Robin is always on alert for potential improvements.	Robin is not very determined to accuracy in tasks and usually does not double check work for errors, denying details. Robin is satisfied with imperfect performance.
Diligence	Taylor	Taylor has a high aspiration to work hard, has strong self-discipline and works diligently towards a goal. Taylor has always shown a strong work ethic by being eager to accomplish.	Taylor has little aspiration to work hard, tends to procrastinate and relies on the work of others. Taylor has never shown a strong work ethic by being eager to accomplish.
Organization	Sam	Sam's desk is always tidy, and the calendar is held quite accurate. Sam works organized and systematically and has a structured approach to tasks and schedules.	Sam's desk is always a bit chaotic, and the calendar might be out of date. Sam works haphazard and unsystematic and has no structured approach to tasks and schedules.
Prudence	Cameron	Besides, Cameron approaches tasks carefully with sound reasoning and thinks ahead. More so, Cameron considers consequences deliberately and works prudently.	Besides, Cameron approaches tasks negligently with little reflection and follows impulses. More so, Cameron does not consider consequences deliberately and does not work prudently.

Table C2

Manipulated sentences of the introduction part in vignettes for honesty-humility

Facet	Vignette	High	Low
Fairness	Robin	Robin writes honest and fair project reports and has never deceived about encountered problems or made selfish	Robin writes polished project reports deceiving about encountered problems and making selfish allocations of credit for its'

66

Facet	Vignette	High	Low
		allocations of credit while humbling contributions of others. Furthermore, Robin feels little temptation to bend rules for personal profit.	success while humbling contributions of others. Furthermore, Robin feels tempted to bend laws for personal profit.
Sincerity	Taylor	You have noticed that Taylor is hesitant to flatter others and avoids manipulating others for personal profit. Taylor is sincere regardless of prospective benefits for a certain behaviour.	You have noticed that Taylor used to flatter others and is willing to manipulate others for personal profit. Taylor pretends sympathy strategically to obtain benefits for a certain behaviour.
Greed avoidance	Sam	Sam is uninterested in luxury goods, lavish wealth and feels no special entitlement to elevated social status or privilege. More so, Sam enjoys life independent of materialistic or status prestige.	Sam is allured by luxury goods, lavish wealth and tends to feel entitled to elevated social status or privilege. More so, Sam hardly enjoys life independent of materialistic or status prestige.
Modesty	Cameron	Cameron is modest and unassuming towards others. Cameron would never put others down or humble contributions of others.	Cameron is egocentric and pretentious towards others. Cameron would put others down and humble contributions of others.

Table C3

Manipulated sentences in the dialogue part in vignettes for conscientiousness

Facet	Vignette	High	Low
Perfectionsim	Robin	Can you convince your team to run the pilot and give feedback to the development team within this week? I really want to deliver a perfect product at the competition, and I need their feedback as soon as possible to improve.	You don't need to convince your team to run the pilot and give feedback to the development team within this week. Everybody did a great job anyway, so let's assume things work out at the competition and we don't need their feedback to improve.
Diligence	Taylor	Sorry to let you wait, I have already reached out to the secretary three times but apparently, she is very busy. I agree that we should start acting, so let's start with	Oh, sorry, did I let you wait? Maybe I should reach out to the secretary ones more, I guess she is very busy. Hm, I agree that we probably should start acting, so can we start with checking the

Facet	Vignette	High	Low
		checking the available resources for each milestone and then continue with what is most urgent.	available resources for each milestone and then continue with what we like to do most?
Organization	Sam	Fortunately, I was taught to be organized and structured, I guess otherwise I'd sometimes not be able to catch up with all the work that I took up now and my desk would be a mess. I really fell in love with my to do app, it helps me that nothing slips my mind.	I was never really taught to be organized and structured, I guess that's why it's so hard for me to catch up with all the work that I took up now and my desk is a mess. I really need a to do app which helps me that nothing slips my mind.
Prudence	Cameron	But let's think about what we would need that could solve the situation. Are there things we could delay and work on after the launch?	But let's think about what we would need that the client wouldn't realize the situation. Can we not just launch a little bit sloppy version of the website?

Table C4

Manipulated sentences in the dialogue part in vignettes for dishonesty

Facet	Vignette	High	Low
Fairness	Robin	However, I think we have to run the pilot with as many people as required so we can stick to the official requirements for participating in the competition. Cheating would be unfair.	So, I think we could also run the pilot and pretend that we stick to the official requirements for participating in the competition. Cheating would be what everybody does at some point, I guess.
Sincerity	Taylor	We could calculate the budget and formulate tasks according to our estimations and then present this plan to the secretary to be confirmed as a working assumption. I am afraid that you as the project leader might have greater chances to reach her than me, so would you take over my task and talk to her?	You must calculate the budget and formulate tasks according to our estimations and then present this plan to the secretary. I already talked to her three times and I guess you as the project leader have greater chances to reach her than me, so why don't you just talk to her yourself?
Greed avoidance	Sam	You know, I don't really need to get that position, even though I feel it's time for me to	You know, I really need to get that position, I feel it's time for me to move on and getting promoted to

Facet	Vignette	High	Low
		move on but getting promoted to become a leader is not what I am looking for. And getting a raise is not really an incentive to me.	become a leader would be exactly what I am looking for. And getting a raise is really an incentive to me.
Modesty	Cameron	The client can expect us to stick to the deadline and fortunately we were able to discover the error with the help of others. Now that we discovered the bug, the entire code must be backtracked which needs time and workforce from everyone, but a delay should be avoided, not?	The client should not complain about pushing back the deadline but feel grateful to me for discovering the error. Now that I have discovered the bug, the entire code must be backtracked that needs time and workforce from everyone, so a delay is inevitable.