

Are Pre-Service Teachers Ready to Teach? Investigating the Impact of Personality Traits and Communication Skills

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ABSTRACT

Personality traits and communication skills play a major role in a teacher's ability to deal with students and the classroom environment. Communication skills are also one of the key factors that determine a teacher's success in conveying knowledge and understanding to students. In the pre-service stage, teachers may receive academic training in academic subjects, but actual preparation for teaching requires more than just knowledge of academic content. This study focuses on a group of pre-service teachers who were undergoing part-time teaching and practical training in a private higher education institution in West Malaysia. The main objective of this study is to understand the relationship between personality traits and communication skills and their impact on pre-service teacher's preparedness. This study employs a quantitative approach and a cross-sectional design. To collect the data, the survey method was utilized. The survey instrument was adapted from the Big Five Personality Traits Theory, the Communication Skills Scale, and the Teacher Readiness Scale. The survey questionnaire was distributed to 164 pre-service teachers, online via Google Forms. The results of the study exhibit that the Big Five personality traits explain a significant portion (50%) of variance in willingness to teach among preservice teachers. Communication skills, on the other hand, had a smaller influence (39.5%). Additionally, the results indicate that preservice teachers with strong personality traits, such as empathy and patience, in addition to communication skills, are associated with the ability to create and stimulate a safe learning environment for students. Other personality traits such as openness and emotional stability are significant factors influencing teachers' willingness, mediated by communication skills.

Keywords: *communication skills, personality traits, preservice teachers, teacher education, teacher preparation.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Educational researchers have long focused on teachers' personal characteristics which identify the detailed process of teacher preparation programs. A teacher acts as a guide and educator for students. The state of education cannot improve unless teachers care well-prepared in terms of moral values, knowledge, culture, and technical, educational, and personal skills. The ultimate goal of education is to nurture good citizens capable of contributing positively to their communities and nations. Achieving this objective necessitates the cultivation of well-prepared teachers who stand of pillars in the educational structure. Teachers are important figures in societal and education reform, equipped with a deep awareness of their responsibilities and the issues of their time.

Certain professions require specific personal traits due to the nature of their work and associated pressures. The teaching profession, in particular, requires particular personality traits to handle its unique challenges effectively. Questions about the personal qualities that contribute to a teacher's success have long occupied the minds of education stakeholders. Numerous studies have examined the traits that are closely linked to effective teaching performance ([Abulon, 2012](#); [Franz et al., 2022](#); [Li & Guo, 2024](#); [Polk, 2006](#)). Personality traits significantly influence a teacher's readiness to succeed in the classroom. These traits, along with communication skills, play a vital role in preparing individuals for the teaching profession.

Teacher readiness, as defined by [Straková \(2015\)](#), refers to "the belief that one is equipped for the teaching profession, taking into account the various dimensions and factors that influence this perception in preservice teacher education" (p. 33). This definition highlights the complex concept of readiness which covers not only the subject matter expertise but also preparedness, confidence, and the ability to adapt to various educational needs.

Futhermore, [Ahmed et al. \(2024\)](#) emphasized that teachers' personality traits significantly influence their communication styles, which are essential for effective teaching and creating a productive learning environment. These traits shape teachers' thoughts, feelings, and credibility, impacting their ability to convey information and engage with students. Consequently, strong communication skills, rooted in personality traits, are crucial for a teacher's readiness to enter the profession, as they directly affect educational quality and student satisfaction.

The ability to manage one's own learning has become a critical survival skill in modern education systems ([Morris, 2019](#)). Historically, learning strategies focused on equipping students with techniques to facilitate learning. Over time, research has expanded to explore the cognitive, perceptual, and affective dimensions of teaching and learning ([James & McCormick, 2009](#)). [Zimmerman \(2000\)](#) observed that while some learners effectively use similar strategies, others struggle, suggesting the importance of personal traits and communication skills in achieving teaching efficacy.

Effective communication courses were integrated into teacher education curricula to enhance interactions among teachers, students, and parents. Effective Communication course with enhanced student engagement positively influenced preservice teachers' empathic tendency levels, suggesting potential benefits for interactions among teachers, students, and parents, despite limited impact on overall communication skills ([Çelik & Alpan, 2023](#)). The inclusion of these courses reflects the growing recognition of communication skills as a fundamental component of teacher readiness, alongside personal attributes such as openness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability.

Despite the critical role of personality traits and communication skills in teacher preparation, there is a noticeable gap in the literature, particularly in the Malaysian context. Existing research has not sufficiently explored how these factors influence preservice teachers' readiness to teach, nor has it examined the mediating role of communication skills between personality traits and teaching readiness. Addressing this gap is essential to developing a comprehensive understanding of how personal and communicative abilities contribute to effective teaching practices.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influence of personality traits and communication skills on preservice teachers' readiness to teach, with a focus on the Malaysian context. This gap identified in the literature calls for research to provide new insights into how these two domains influence teacher preparation and effectiveness. The study also aims to explore the direct and indirect effects of personality traits and communication skills on teaching readiness which can offer a practical framework to improve teacher education programs. The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. Are preservice teachers reading to teach in the classroom?
2. Is there a significant relationship between personality traits and communication skills of preservice teachers and their preparedness to teach?
3. How do personality traits, based on the Big Five theory, and communication skills influence preservice teachers and their preparedness to teach?
4. What are the direct, indirect, and total effects of personality traits and communication skills on preservice teachers' preparedness to teach?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Personality Traits

Teacher personality significantly influences their interactions with students, instructional methods, and overall teaching effectiveness ([Backman & Barker, 2020](#)). Key traits such as patience, flexibility, empathy, positivity, and adaptability equip teachers to effectively manage the diversity and challenges of the classroom environment. The characteristics help educators to manage diverse student behaviors, motivate learners, and foster inclusive, supportive educational environments ([Dhillon & Kaur, 2023](#); [Mammadov & Avci, 2024](#)).

Personality traits not only influence how teachers manage classroom dynamics but also significantly correlate with student academic performance and classroom achievement. Research highlights that teachers who exhibit openness, emotional stability, and conscientiousness are often better prepared to implement creative teaching methodologies and maintain consistency in classroom management ([Dhillon & Kaur, 2023](#); [Mammadov & Avci, 2024](#)). Conversely, traits like excessive introversion, anxiety, or emotional instability may negatively impact teachers' classroom management strategies, student-teacher relationships, and overall job satisfaction ([Mammadov & Avci, 2024](#)).

Moreover, the Big Five Personality Traits ([John et al., 1991](#)) provides a robust framework for understanding teacher personality. This theory categorizes personality into five broad dimensions: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Teachers with high levels of openness are usually innovative and creative,

making lessons engaging and effective. Conscientious teachers are organized and disciplined, fostering structured learning environments. Extraverted teachers actively engage with students, encourage participation, and enhance student motivation. Agreeable teachers foster trust and respect, nurturing healthy teacher-student relationships. However, high neuroticism is generally linked with lower teaching efficacy due to increased anxiety and stress management difficulties.

2.2 Communication Skills

Effective communication is an essential skill within educational settings, critical to successful teaching, learning and student engagement. Communication extends beyond merely conveying information; it involves active listening, clarity, emotional intelligence, and appropriate non-verbal cues. [Akkuzu and Akkaya's \(2014\)](#) Communicative Skills Scale (CSS) is frequently employed to evaluate teacher communication, assessing four key dimensions: competence, frustration, body language, and emotional control. Competence includes both verbal and non-verbal effectiveness in information delivery, linguistic proficiency, and the ability to express emotions clearly and constructively. The frustration dimension addresses anxiety levels and approval-seeking behaviors, which can hinder effective teaching. Body language, comprising eye contact, facial expressions, posture, and gestures, significantly influences classroom engagement and student-teacher rapport. Lastly, emotional control involves regulating emotions to create a safe and positive learning environment conducive to student participation and academic growth.

Non-verbal communication plays a particularly significant role in educational contexts. Effective non-verbal behaviors help build trust and rapport, enhance understanding, and maintain students' interest. Conversely, poor non-verbal communication can cause misunderstandings, reduce student engagement, and hinder the establishment of a supportive classroom atmosphere ([Güleç & Leylek, 2018](#)). Teachers who demonstrate strong communicative abilities are better positioned to encourage student participation, foster an inclusive classroom culture, and serve as positive communicative role models.

2.3 Teacher Preparedness

Teacher preparedness is a multidimensional construct encompassing theoretical knowledge, practical teaching skills, effective communication, and pedagogical expertise ([Straková, 2015](#)). There are two primary stages of teacher preparedness: pre-service training, which includes theoretical instruction, reflective practice, and supervised teaching experiences, and in-service professional development aimed at continuous improvement of teaching practices and adaptability to educational reforms. Both stages equip teachers with essential tools and strategies to refine their instructional approaches, enhance student interactions, and optimize teaching effectiveness ([Dachi, 2018](#); [Ishumi, 2013](#); [Villegas-Reimers, 2003](#)).

Teacher readiness also involves psychological readiness, such as self-efficacy and confidence in one's teaching abilities. Studies highlight the importance of self-efficacy in determining teachers' resilience, commitment, and overall preparedness ([Zimmerman, 2000](#)). Teachers who feel adequately prepared display higher levels of self-confidence, improved instructional delivery, and a stronger capacity for managing classroom challenges effectively.

2.4 Personality Traits and Communication Skills in Preservice Teachers

Educational systems globally aim to develop teachers capable of meeting dynamic societal and pedagogical demands ([Aydın et al., 2013](#)). Pre-service teacher programs focus not only on imparting subject matter expertise and instructional methods but also on enhancing personal traits and communication competencies essential for effective teaching ([Akhyar, 2023](#)). Personality traits and communication skills are thus interconnected foundational elements, significantly impacting teacher readiness and professional success.

Research emphasizes that pre-service teachers possessing positive personality traits such as empathy, resilience, and openness are more adaptable to classroom challenges and demonstrate superior instructional effectiveness ([Dhillon & Kaur, 2023](#)). On the other hand, pre-service teachers with high anxiety levels or pronounced introversion may face difficulties in engaging students and managing classroom dynamics effectively.

Similarly, effective communication skills significantly influence pre-service teachers' readiness to teach. Strong communicative abilities facilitate clear and compelling lesson delivery, effective classroom management, and positive teacher-student relationships ([Erdem, 2018](#)). Teachers proficient in listening skills are also adept at understanding student needs, thus fostering a supportive and inclusive classroom environment.

Importantly, the relationship between personality traits and communication skills underscores the holistic nature of teacher preparedness. Pre-service teachers who combine favorable personality attributes with strong communicative competence exhibit higher levels of confidence, flexibility, and overall readiness to handle classroom responsibilities. Consequently, teacher education programs that integrate personality development alongside rigorous communication training can significantly improve teaching effectiveness, classroom management skills, and student outcomes ([Andersson et al., 2022](#); [Korpershoek, 2016](#); [Podolsky et al., 2019](#)).

Teaching readiness has commonly been assessed using validated tools such as the Teacher Readiness Scale adapted by [Imbimbo and Silvernail \(1999\)](#), which measures the preparedness of pre-service teachers through items relevant to practical teaching competencies. A high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha of 0.857) supports the reliability of this tool in assessing teaching readiness effectively.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach to collect data from participants efficiently. The quantitative approach is ideal for a large data collection within a short period of time. Considering this research collected data from preservice teachers during the micro-teaching and practicum sessions, the survey method is deemed most suitable. The survey method, as defined by [Sekaran and Bougie \(2014\)](#), is the process of gathering data from individuals to explain, describe, or compare behaviors, knowledge and attitudes. The study investigates the effect of personality traits and communication skills on preservice teachers' preparedness to teach. The survey questionnaire was distributed to preservice teachers in a private university in West Malaysia.

3.1 Participants

The participants consisted of 164 pre-service teachers enrolled in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) programs at a private higher education institution located in West Malaysia. Participants were categorized into two distinct groups: second-year students undertaking micro-teaching courses and third-year students participating in practicum placements. Micro-teaching provides simulated teaching experiences among peers, while practicum involves actual teaching practice in authentic school settings, allowing pre-service teachers to apply theoretical knowledge practically. A stratified sampling technique was utilized, selecting participants proportionally from each group, ensuring representation from both micro-teaching and practicum experiences. From a total population of 909 TESL students enrolled across both cohorts, 164 participants were sampled to provide robust and representative data.

3.2 Research Instruments

Personality traits were measured using the Big Five Inventory developed by [John et al. \(1991\)](#). This validated 44-item questionnaire evaluates five dimensions of personality: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness. Each dimension comprises specific facets such as sociability, assertiveness, openness to experiences, emotional stability, and organizational skills, facilitating a comprehensive assessment of pre-service teachers' personality profiles as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The big five personality traits.

<i>Big Five Dimensions</i>	<i>Facet (and correlated trait adjective)</i>
Extraversion vs. introversion	Gregariousness (sociable) Assertiveness (forceful) Activity (energetic) Excitement-seeking (adventurous) Positive emotions (enthusiastic) Warmth (outgoing)
Agreeableness vs. antagonism	Trust (forgiving) Straightforwardness (not demanding) Altruism (warm) Compliance (not stubborn) Modesty (not show-off) Tender-mindedness (sympathetic)
Conscientiousness vs. lack of direction	Competence (efficient) Order (organised) Dutifulness (not careless) Achievement striving (thorough) Self-discipline (not lazy) Deliberation (not impulsive)
Neuroticism vs. emotional stability	Anxiety (tense) Angry hostility (irritable) Depression (not contented) Self-consciousness (shy) Impulsiveness (moody) Vulnerability (not self-confident)
Openness vs. closedness to experience	Ideas (curious) Fantasy (imaginative) Aesthetics (artistic) Actions (wide interests) Feelings (excitable) Values (unconventional)

Communication skills were assessed through a modified version of [Akkuzu and Akkaya's \(2014\)](#) Communication Skills Scale (CSS), encompassing 36 items categorized

into four dimensions: competence, discouragement, body language, and dignification. These dimensions collectively evaluate teachers' effectiveness in verbal and non-verbal communication, classroom management skills, emotional resilience, and respect for student dignity. Prior research validates this scale as reliable, demonstrating strong psychometric properties.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected via an online survey created with Google Forms, which allowed participants the convenience of responding at their own pace and location. The questionnaire comprised two primary sections: demographic data and items measured on a Likert scale relating to personality traits, communication skills, and teaching preparedness.

After the data collection phase, responses were carefully screened and validated to ensure accuracy and completeness. Statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Multiple regression analysis was employed to identify and quantify the relationships between personality traits, communication skills, and teaching preparedness. Descriptive statistics were also computed to provide a detailed overview and summarization of participant responses and key variables within the study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

This section presents the findings derived from the data analysis, addressing the research questions regarding the influence of personality traits and communication skills on pre-service teachers' preparedness to teach.

4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

The first research question explores the extent to which pre-service teachers perceive themselves as prepared to teach. As shown in Table 2, the mean preparedness score among pre-service teachers at the University of Selangor was 4.03 (SD = 0.21), which is higher than the midpoint of the Likert scale (median = 3). This result indicates a generally high level of perceived preparedness among the participants.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of preparedness-to-teach.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Preparedness_to_teach	164	2.800	5.000	4.02593	.210659

4.1.2 The Influence of Personality Traits and Communication Skills

To address the second and third research questions, multiple regression analyses were performed to evaluate the contributions of personality traits and communication skills to the pre-service teachers' preparedness to teach.

4.1.2.1 Personality Traits

The analysis in Table 3 reveals that the Big Five personality traits explain 50.1% of the variance in preparedness to teach ($R^2 = 0.501$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.485$). This significant explanatory power highlights the vital role of personality traits in shaping teaching readiness.

Table 3. Model summary and coefficients for personality traits (big five).

<i>Model</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
$R^2 = 0.501$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.485$					
(Constant)	1.147	0.277		4.135	<.001
Extraversion	0.767	0.093	1.121	9.207	<.001
Agreeableness	-0.576	0.135	-1.020	-4.283	<.001
Conscientiousness	0.009	0.122	0.017	0.075	0.940
Neuroticism	0.082	0.090	0.121	0.901	0.369
Openness	0.422	0.078	0.435	5.390	<.001
<i>Predictors: Openness, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness</i>					
<i>Dependent Variable: Preparedness to Teach</i>					

Further regression coefficients presented in Table 3 indicate that extraversion ($\beta = 1.121$, $p < .001$), agreeableness ($\beta = -1.020$, $p < .001$), and openness ($\beta = 0.435$, $p < .001$) significantly affect teachers' preparedness. Specifically, extraversion and openness have positive impacts, indicating that pre-service teachers who are outgoing, sociable, and open to experiences report higher levels of teaching preparedness. Conversely, agreeableness exhibits a negative influence, suggesting potential challenges in assertive classroom management among individuals who score highly on agreeableness. Notably, conscientiousness and neuroticism do not significantly influence preparedness to teach.

4.1.2.2 Communication Skills

Communication skills were found to explain 39.5% of the variance in teachers' preparedness to teach (Table 5). This significant yet smaller contribution compared to personality traits underlines the complementary importance of effective communication skills alongside personality traits in teacher readiness.

Table 4. Model summary and coefficients for communication skills.

<i>Model</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
$R^2 = 0.395$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.380$					
(Constant)	1.646	0.325		5.071	<.001
Competence	0.340	0.051	0.476	6.673	<.001
Dignification	0.008	0.033	0.024	0.249	0.804
Discouragement	-0.026	0.048	-0.048	-0.539	0.591
Body Language	0.316	0.061	0.467	5.182	<.001
<i>Predictors: Competence, Dignification, Discouragement, Body Language</i>					
<i>Dependent Variable: Preparedness to Teach</i>					

As shown in Table 4, among communication dimensions, competence ($\beta = 0.476$, $p < .001$) and body language ($\beta = 0.467$, $p < .001$) have significant positive impacts on preparedness. These findings underscore the importance of a teacher's ability to clearly communicate content and use effective non-verbal signals to facilitate engagement and

understanding. However, dignification and discouragement were not significant predictors in this study.

These statistical findings clearly indicate the influential roles of specific personality traits and key communication dimensions in preparing pre-service teachers for effective teaching practice. Extraversion, openness, communication competence, and appropriate body language emerge as essential areas for teacher education programs aiming to maximize teacher preparedness.

4.2 Discussion

This study provides valuable insights into the preparedness of pre-service teachers by closely examining how personality traits and communication skills impact their readiness to teach. The overall findings indicate a high perceived preparedness among pre-service teachers, suggesting that teacher education programs in Malaysia effectively equip students with both the theoretical knowledge and practical skills necessary for classroom teaching. This aligns with existing literature highlighting the importance of comprehensive teacher preparation ([Dachi, 2018](#); [Ishumi, 2013](#); [Straková, 2015](#); [Villegas-Reimers, 2003](#)).

The significant relationships between personality traits and pre-service teachers' preparedness examined in this study support previous findings ([Backman & Barker, 2020](#); [Dhillon & Kaur, 2023](#)). Specifically, extraversion and openness positively influenced preparedness, indicating that pre-service teachers who are outgoing, energetic, sociable and open to new experiences are likely better equipped to manage classrooms and adopt innovative teaching methods. These findings align with [Fatima et al.'s \(2020\)](#) assertion that teachers exhibiting openness and extraversion tend to be more confident and effective in fostering engaging learning environments.

Interestingly, agreeableness negatively impacted teacher preparedness in this study. Although previous literature typically associates agreeableness positively with teaching performance due to its link with empathy and cooperation ([Dhillon & Kaur, 2023](#); [Thohir et al., 2021](#)), this negative relationship may reflect the challenges faced by highly agreeable individuals in assertive classroom management, as they may struggle with disciplinary control or assertiveness in demanding situations. This finding calls attention to further examine the dynamics between agreeableness and teaching effectiveness and suggests the importance of training pre-service teachers to balance empathy with assertiveness.

Additionally, conscientiousness did not show a significant direct impact in this study. While conscientiousness generally involves careful planning and discipline ([Thohir et al., 2021](#)), its lack of significant influence here might indicate complexities in classroom interaction or management that conscientiousness alone does not sufficiently address. Future research could explore potential mediating factors influencing this relationship.

The analysis of communication skills further emphasizes their crucial role in teacher preparation. Specifically, communication competence and body language positively predicted teacher preparedness, highlighting that effective verbal clarity, confidence in delivering lessons, and impactful non-verbal signals are essential for pre-service teachers. These findings align with previous research that underscores how critical communication competence and effective non-verbal cues are for student engagement and classroom management ([Akkuzu & Akkaya, 2014](#); [Güleç & Leylek, 2018](#)). The

insignificant roles of dignification and discouragement suggest that while mutual respect and emotional regulation remain important, their direct influence on preparedness may be context-specific or overshadowed by other communication factors.

Overall, the interrelationships of personality traits and communication skills indicate their joint critical role in teacher readiness. These findings reinforce the importance of integrating training focused explicitly on enhancing personality and communication skills in teacher education curricula, as such training has the potential to significantly enhance pre-service teachers' professional readiness.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the pivotal roles that personality traits and communication skills play in determining pre-service teachers' preparedness for classroom teaching. Specifically, traits such as extraversion and openness positively predict preparedness, suggesting that teachers who are sociable, energetic, and open to new experiences are naturally better suited to teaching. Effective communication, particularly competencies related to clarity of information delivery and impactful use of body language, also significantly predicts teachers' readiness, underscoring the necessity of strong communicative abilities in teacher education programs.

Teacher training institutions should consider incorporating structured modules focusing on personality development and communication training. This approach can equip pre-service teachers with the necessary interpersonal and communication competencies, thereby enhancing their confidence and effectiveness in the classroom.

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