



# Changing attitudes toward personality traits: An experimental evidence<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

According to the five-factor theory (FFT) by McCrae and Costa (2013), basic traits of personality (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience) are determined exclusively by biological factors and comprise thereby a series of *basic tendencies*. And the interrelationships between the individual and environment result in an indefinite number of *characteristic adaptations*. The latter are both based on basic tendencies and determined by various external influences. The reciprocal effects of characteristic adaptations on external influences are also presumed. These effects are expected to be indirect, mediated by objective biography, i.e., by a set of individual behavioral reactions. Recently one of us proposed a construct of attitudes toward traits as one of the type of characteristic adaptations (Shchebetenko, 2014). It is bipolar evaluations of a given trait, without reference to that person. Although several studies have demonstrated attitudes toward traits can mediate the relationship of traits with several life outcomes (Balabina 2015; Shchebetenko, 2016, 2017), it is unclear whether the attitudes produce causal effects on behavior, or simply correlate with it. If attitudes toward traits are a type of characteristic adaptations, after influence the attitude towards traits will change (as a social construct), but not the trait (as a biological construct). In this study, we investigated the extraversion.

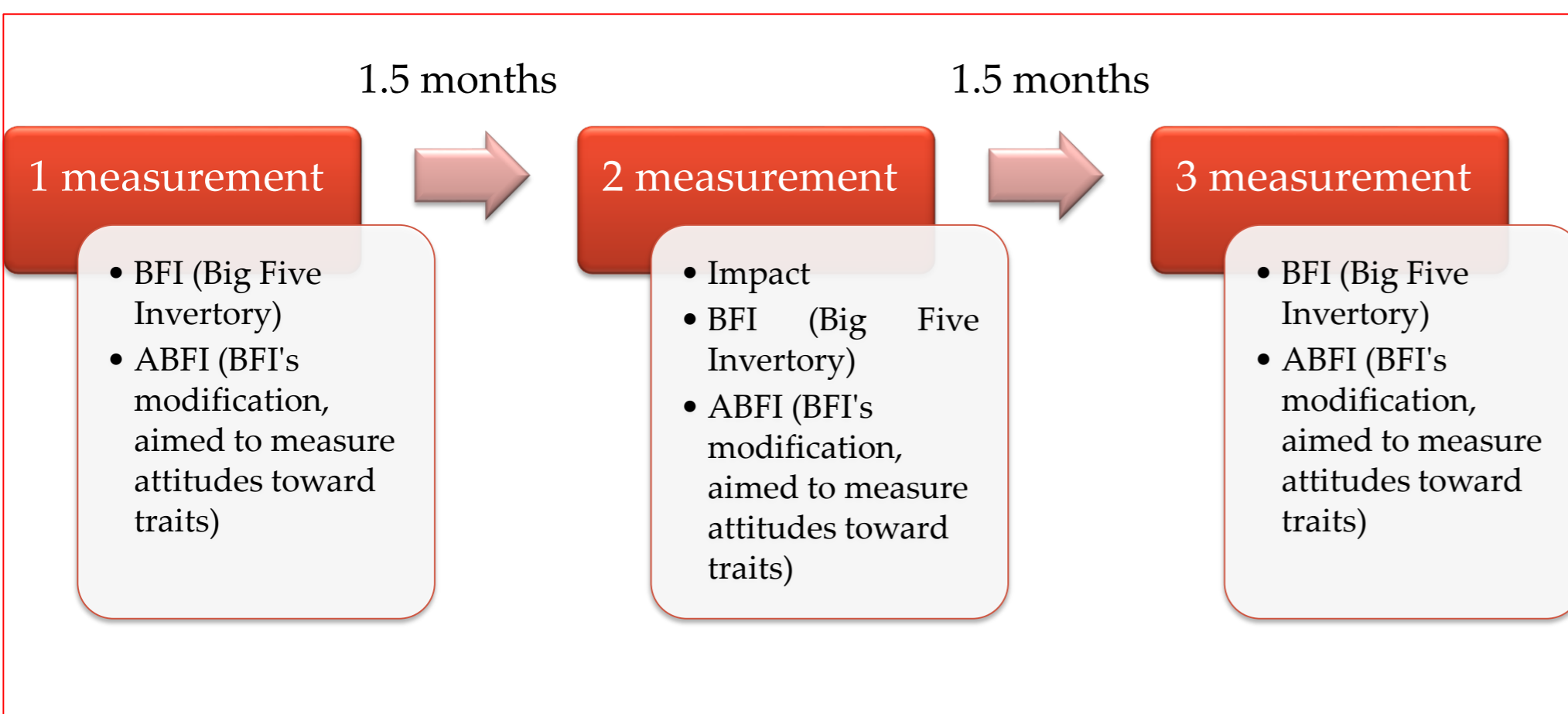
## Participants

The participants were 193 undergraduates (including 58 men) from universities of Russia aged from 17 to 24 years ( $M= 19.14$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ).

## Procedure

Attitudes and traits were measured three times with an interval of 1.5 months:

1. At the first measurement the participants were presented with a Russian version (Shchebetenko, 2014) of the 44-item Big Five Inventory (BFI; John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008) and its modification (ABFI), aimed to measure attitudes toward traits.
2. Immediately before the second measurement the participants watched a short film-lecture about the negative aspects of extraversion. Then traits and attitudes toward traits were measured again.
3. At the third measurement the participants were presented with a Russian version (Shchebetenko, 2014) of the 44-item Big Five Inventory (BFI; John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008) and its modification (ABFI), aimed to measure attitudes toward traits.



## Results

Afterwards, the attitude toward extraversion became statistically more negative as compared to the control condition,  $F=3.03$ ,  $p=.05$  (see figure 1). Post-hoc test revealed that the attitude toward extraversion was significantly lower in the third measurement than in the first ( $t=-2.11$ ,  $p=.036$ ) and in the second measurement than in the first ( $t=-2.28$ ,  $p=.024$ ).

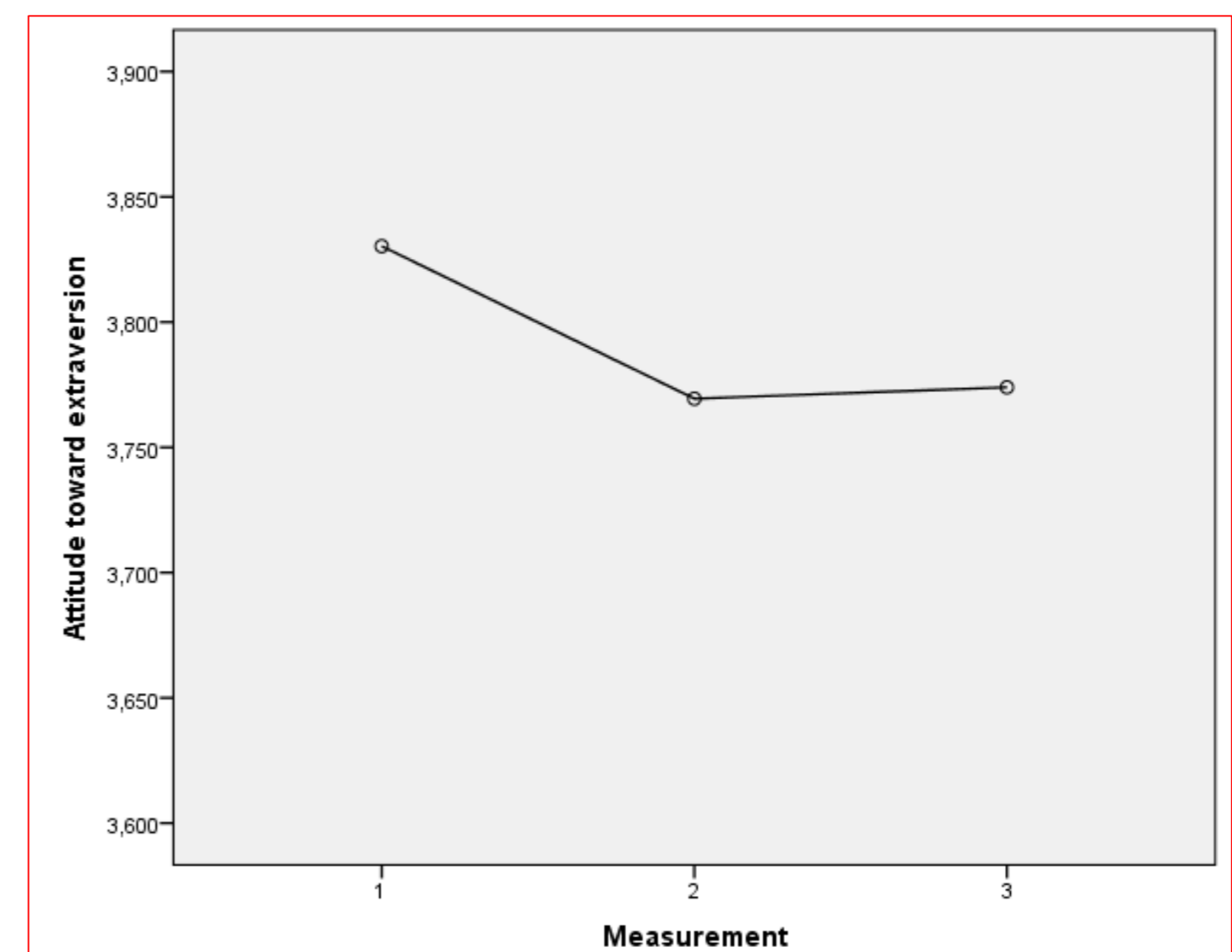


Figure 1

Changing the attitudes toward extraversion

Extraversion did not change significantly after the impact,  $F=2.24$ ,  $p=.109$  (see figure 2). Figure 2 shows increase of extraversion from the first to the third measurement, but post-hoc test revealed no significant differences ( $t=1.60$ ,  $p=.112$ )

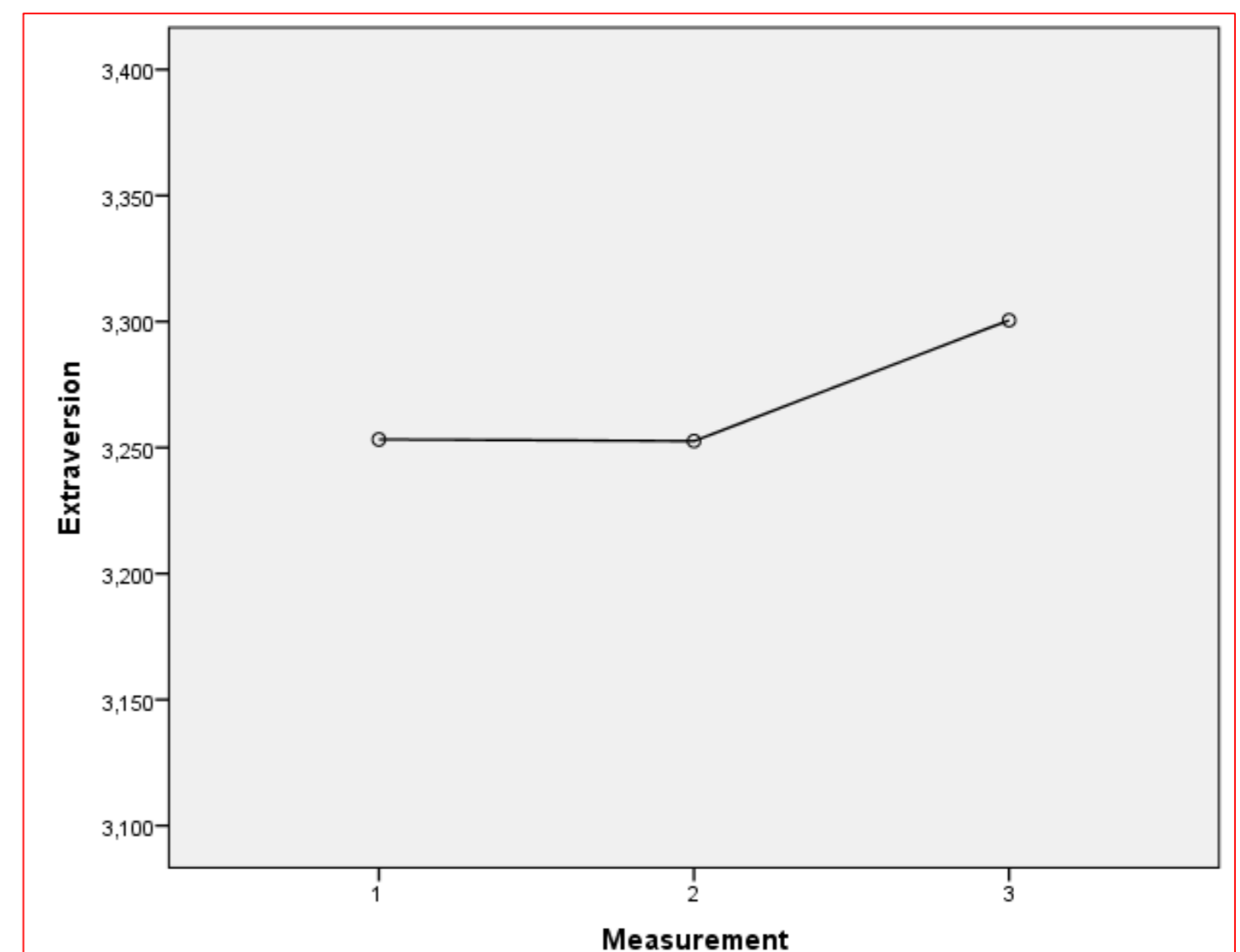


Figure 2

Changing the extraversion

## Discussion

Thus, the attitude toward extraversion became statistically more negative as compared to the control condition, while the extraversion has not changed significantly. The result confirms that it is possible to change the attitudes toward traits.

Further perspectives of the research are related with studying behavior after changing the attitudes toward traits.

## References:

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