



# Five Factor Personality Traits and Performance: An Application at A Public Sector Institution in Turkey

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## Abstract

*Humans have born with specific abilities. The progression starts with birth and continues through the end. During this process individual builds the personality traits. Every individual have distinctive qualities that we can see the differences on their personality. These traits are connected with the personality components and the reflection to the outside world. The aim of this paper is to explore the relations between five factor personality traits and individual performance. Two surveys were used in order to measure and assess the five factor personality traits and individual performance. The survey conducted on 300 employees of a public sector institution in Ankara. 123 of them were used. Data, acquired from surveys analyzed through the SPSS statistical packaged software. The results show that there was a negative relationship between*

**Keywords:** Personality, performance, Traits.

## Introduction

Personality indicates to an extensive range of individual characteristics, traits, and portrayals. There can be lots of features that could describe one person from another. The combination of research collected over decades have taken this wide range of different behaviors collected and grouped those that are similar into unique clusters. Using tools to evaluate personality that contains various elements and descriptions, five specific traits emerged that became accepted and known as the Five Factor Model (extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, openness and conscientiousness)<sup>1</sup>. Planning and executing an approach to managing employees that confirms they are a source of supportable competitive advantage is the objective of "strategic human resource management"<sup>2</sup>. A principle for HR management contains roles, abilities, and behaviors needed for every manager to manage all the organizational actions and roles easily and efficiently<sup>3</sup>. In modern HRM practices there are various strategies for implementing them to organization to gain competitive advantage. For instance, a model is mentioned to as the behavioral perspective. From this point of view, HRM implementations<sup>7</sup> are an organization's primary resources for motivating and leading employee behaviors. This idea accepts that many external forces, which have significant costs for the decisive success and endurance of the firm. But this fore warning states that the combined effects of individual employee behaviors are primary determinants of organizational effectiveness. Definitely, performance management implementations take in to consideration the expectations that employees of the organization about their behaviors; they shape the goals of employees and also enable the success of those goals by formal and informal rewards and punishment<sup>2</sup>. In this

paper specifically focused on the relationship between five factor personality traits and individual performance.

**Literature Review: Five Factor Personality Traits: Personality:** Almost everyone understands what is meant by the word "personality" but things may get difficult when it comes to making a formal definition of it. There is no single definition that psychologists agreed on. What is understood from personality is "a distinguishing, coherent and established form of relationship that an individual builds with his/her internal and external environment"<sup>4</sup>.

In other words, personality is defined as "the distinguishing and characteristic patterns of thoughts, emotions and behaviors that define an individual's manner of interaction with his/her physical and social environment"<sup>5</sup>.

Roger Holdsworth, A personality measurement guru and the co-founder of the counseling company "Saville and Holdsworth", says that "the answer of the question 'What kind of a person is he/she?' is personality" and indicates that what kind of a person you are is dependent on your personality, i.e. some preferences that are recorded in your brain. Human is the only being that has the ability of conscious thinking. It can make plans and fantasize<sup>6</sup>.

When we discuss personality with the factors that constitute it, it would be better to define it as a function and an entirety of the past, present and the future rather than a behavioral composition and a way of behavior within a period.

The most important thing that should be kept in mind about personality in workplace environment is that individuals are different. These differences make life and work variable and

enjoyable. You will not only get better at finding the suitable career for yourself as you better understand both your and other people's personality, but you will also gain the ability to understand and work with other personalities around you<sup>7</sup>.

There are many theories about what personality consists of. Although some words such as "id", "superego" and "libido" are used in daily life correlatively with the word "personality", it is not appropriate to use them for various types of jobs. So, is our personality measurable? Our personality shows itself with different behaviors and reactions at various times. Even if we are not content with it, most of us may act outside the borders of our character for the feeling of comfort. This does not mean that we will not change. We change because of experiences and as we get to know ourselves better. For instance, do you not like to talk in front of an audience? If you get some training on talking in front of an audience and keep practicing, it may come as a natural thing to talk in front of an audience to you<sup>8</sup>.

Various ideas have been declared concerning personality and by making use of different personality data, different researchers' attained findings related to the five dimensions of personality. Each dimension comprehends case-specific characteristics and differences within these dimensions remain stable for long years<sup>9</sup>. The five-factor personality model is defined with these dimensions: extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, openness and conscientiousness. The typical behavioral attributions that define these dimensions are<sup>10</sup>.

Extraversion: Friendly, energetic, cheerful, thrill-seeker and dominant (high score); distant, calm, introverted, loner (low score).

Openness: Creative, analytic, open-minded, sensitive (high score); traditionalistic, conservative, advocate of truth, indifferent (low score).

Emotional Stability: Peaceful, self-confident, patient, open to criticism, stress-tolerant (high score); anxious, tense, shy (low score).

Agreeableness: Humble, open to cooperation, intimate, understanding (high score); skeptical, stubborn, obstinate, competitive, restrained (low score).

Conscientiousness: Systematic, determined, success-inclined, ambitious, precise (high score); uncoordinated, procrastinator, easy to get distracted, untidy (low score).

Personality is affected by many factors during its development. These are<sup>11</sup>.

**Family related factors:** Factors such as whether the kid was planned or not, the age gap between the kid and the parents, the physical, emotional and economic status of the family, the

number of persons living in the family have positive or negative effects on the personality of the kid.

School, environment and society related factors: The social structure of the school where the kid studies, the religious, political and social values that the society holds, the sex role stereotypes have an effect on personality.

**Kid related factors:** The character of the kid has an equal effect on his/her personality. Character contains some features such as the intensity of the individual's emotional reactions, level of mobility and attention. These are inborn features.

The personality of the individual is highly important for career selection. Factors such as emotions, thoughts, and achievements, psychological strength that has an effect on the formation of personality will be determinant during the selection of career. John Holland's study, which examines the relationship between personality orientation and choice of career and which puts forward the fact that people tend to choose professions that are suitable for their own personality orientation is the most recognized study in this field<sup>12</sup>.

When we consider the importance that personality and social environment have on guiding the individual to a profession; even if the profession that the individual chooses is suitable for his/her physical nature, this individual cannot be successful and happy if the profession is not suitable for his/her psychosocial nature. For instance, it cannot be expected from an aggressive, neurotic individual in terms of personality to be successful in professions such as policing or teaching<sup>13</sup>.

**Performance:** Performance is defined as the measurement of the results and resources to achieve the goals; achievement level of the defined goal; efficiency and quality of an activity with a purpose. It also can be defined as a complicated interrelation between certain performance indicators such as effectiveness, efficiency, and quality, quality of the working life, innovation and profitability<sup>14</sup>. The literature review shows that performance is mostly examined in two categories: individual and organizational performance<sup>15</sup>.

**Individual Performance in Organizations and Individual Performance Factors:** Individual performance is defined as the individual's performance of a work appropriate to the attributes and skills defined for him/her within acceptable limits<sup>16</sup>. There are basically three factors that could affect the individual performance at various levels depending on the conditions. These are administrative factors, individual-related factors and other factors<sup>16</sup>.

**Administrative Factors:** Even though considered to be related to the employee at first glance, individual performance is a concept related to the perception of the administrative mentality and leadership style within the business climate. Among the specific administrative factors regarding the performance

increase are definition of mission and vision, definition of the strategies, leadership, participation, and communication, motivation, and stress management and performance evaluation<sup>17</sup>.

**Individual-Related Factors:** The results of the stress factors affect the individual performance adversely as overstress affects the individual's eagerness to work negatively, thus having a negative impact on the performance<sup>18</sup>. Among the most important individual-related factors are socio-demographic features (age, gender, marital status, and educational background), cultural background, and area of expertise and income perception<sup>17</sup>.

**Other Factors:** Among the other factors resulting in a decrease in the performance are individuals' practice of professions in specific fields, transfer of up-to-date technologies to the organization, deficiencies in social security and distance between the home and workplace<sup>18</sup>.

Personality traits commonly used for job selection, evaluation and promotion in organizations. Nowadays more personality and EQ tests were conducted on employees<sup>19</sup>.

Over 20 years, there is a common understanding spread among researcher about the five factor model dispersed much of the clouds on personality. Some of the researches focused on relation of isolated personality traits from neuroticism and extraversion to job satisfaction. Others focused on affectability (positive or negative)<sup>20</sup>. We focused on effects of five factor personality traits on performance.

**Hypothesis:** To achieve this aim we developed following hypothesis: H1: There is a relationship between Openness and individual performance factors. H2: There is a relationship between Agreeableness and individual performance factors. H3: There is a relationship between Emotional Instability and individual performance factors. H4: There is a relationship between Conscientiousness and individual performance factors. H5: There is a relationship between Neuroticism and individual performance factors. H6: There is a relationship between Laziness and individual performance factors. H7: There is a relationship between Extraversion individual performance factors

## Methodology

**Research Goal:** The aim of this paper is to find the relation between five factor personnel traits and individual performance. To test these hypothesis two scales was conducted.

**Sample and Data Collection:** The contributors in the current study consist of public sector employees working at public sector institution in Ankara in Turkey. The sample was included nearly 300 employees and all of them participated to questionnaire. Surveys distributed by researcher himself at all of

public sector institution. When the returned questionnaires were examined, 10 were invalid. As a result, a total of 123 valid responses were used in the research.

## Results and Discussion

The survey was the main source of the inputs. The survey consisted of tree measures. Initially, questions about the demographic characteristics of banking sector employees; second part questions were designed to measure five factor personality traits and the last part individual performance questions were asked.

Five factor personality traits were measured by the scale, which is developed by Goldberg, John ve Srivastava and revised by Tomrukçu. The measure included 42 items, each item was answered through a five-point Likert scale ranging from "1=strongly disagree" to "5=strongly agree." In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was .89.

Individual performance scale is developed from Wong and Law performance measurement scale. This scale contains 13-performance measurement, 10-job satisfaction and 18 organizational citizenship behavior questions. We only used the performance questions. The measure included 10 items, each item was answered through a five-point Likert scale ranging from "1=strongly disagree" to "5=strongly agree." In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was .83.

**The Validity of the Measures:** To confirm the validity and reliability of the study variables, explanatory factor and reliability analysis were conducted by using SPSS software.

The five-factor personality measure produced seven factors as a result of the factor analysis. The first factor named "Openness", explained 12,063% of the total variance. The second factor was named "Agreeableness" and it explained 8,862% of the variance. The third factor named "Emotional Instability" with a variance of 8,841%. The Fourth factor named "Conscientiousness" and explained 8,280%. The fifth factor was named as "Neuroticism" and explained 7,541%. The sixth factor named "Laziness" and explained 7,024% of total variance. And the last factor named as "Extraversion" and explained 6,444 % of variance. The factors all together explained 59.055 % of the variance. KMO Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was .731.

Individual Performance measure produced two factors as a result of the factor analysis. The first factor named "Intention to leave", explained 30.64% of the total variance. The second factor was named "Stumbling" and it explained 19.01% of the variance. The factors all together explained 49.74 % of the variance KMO Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was .776.

The correlations between research variables listed below in table 3. There is a negative relationship between "Openness" and "Stumbling" (-0,23, p<0,05). There is a negative relationship

between “Agreeableness” and “Stumbling” (-0,22, p<0,05). Moreover there is a negative relationship between “Conscientiousness” and “Intention to Leave” (-0,24, p<0,005). Finally, there is a negative relationship between “Extraversion” and “Stumbling” (-0,20, p<0,05). We could not find any relation between other variables.

To explore the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables, hierarchical regression analyzes were conducted. Table-4 shows the regression analysis results for each five-factor personality dimension. The results show that, Conscientiousness had a negative and significant effect on intention to leave and openness, agreeableness and Extraversion had a negative and significant effect on stumbling.

**Table-1**  
**Five-Factor Personality Factor Analyses**

Factors	Openness	Agreeableness	Emotional Instability	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Laziness	Extraversion
A38	,843						
A41	,800						
A42	,746						
A37	,637						
A30		,786					
A26		,697					
A19			,715				
A18			,683				
A23			,665				
A17			,603				
A9				,647			
A12				,646			
A14				,646			
A8					,731		
A10					,728		
A21					,606		
A27						,880	
A28						,810	
A1							,803
A3							,671

**Table-2**  
**Performance Factor Analyses**

	Intention to Leave	Stumbling
B2	,849	
B3	,811	
B6	,746	
B7		,742
B1		,677

**Table-3**  
**Correlations**

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.	(.89)								
2.	0.0	(.90)							
3.	0.0	.00	(.91)						
4.	.40	-.20	.18	(.88)					
5.	.40	-.01	.15	-.01	(.81)				
6.	-.01	-.13	-.32	-.15	-.29	(.79)			
7.	.11	.10	-.19	-.15	-.23	.,05	(.78)		
8.	.15	-.11	.14	-.24**	-.07	-.06	-.17	(.78)	
9.	-.23*	-.22*	.11	-.13	-.02	.06	-.20*	0.0	(.76)

\*\*p<0,005 \*p<0,05

**Table-4**  
**Hierarchical Regression Analyses**

Dependent	Intention to leave	Stumbling
	$\beta$	$\beta$
Openness	.151	-.238**
Agreeableness	-.113	-.222**
Emotional Instability	.149	.118
Conscientiousness	-.242**	-.133
Neuroticism	-.077	.024
Laziness	-.069	.065
Extraversion	-.170	-.209*
$\Delta R^2$	0,156	0,186
$\Delta F$	2,142	3,520

Thus, hypotheses H1 (There is a relationship between Openness and individual performance factors) ( $\beta$ :-0,19,  $p$ <0.05) and H2 (There is a relationship between Agreeableness and individual performance factors) ( $\beta$ :-0,28,  $p$ <0.05), H3 (There is a relationship between Emotional Instability and individual performance factors), H4(There is a relationship between Conscientiousness and individual performance factors) and H7 (There is a relationship between Extraversion individual performance factors) accepted. H5 (There is a relationship between Neuroticism and individual performance factors), H6 (There is a relationship between Laziness and individual performance factors) were rejected.

### Conclusion

The aim of research is to explain the relationship between five-factor personality traits and individual performance within the organization. To achieve this aim we conducted an empirical research. We conducted a survey to explain the proposed relationship. The results showed that five-factor personality traits consisted of seven factors upon factor analysis. The first factor named “Openness”, the second factor was named “Agreeableness”, third factor named “Emotional Instability”, fourth factor named “Conscientiousness”, fifth factor was named as “Neuroticism”, the sixth factor named as “Laziness” and the last factor named “Extraversion”. Moreover, the individual performance measure produced two factors upon

factor analysis. The first factor named “Intention to leave” and second factor was named “Stumbling”.

As a result of correlation analyses, we found that, there is a negative relationship between “Openness” and “Agreeableness” and “Stumbling”. Moreover there is a negative relationship between “Conscientiousness” and “Intention to Leave” and negative relationship between “Extraversion” and “Stumbling”.

The hierarchical regression analysis displayed that, “Conscientiousness” had a negative and significant effect on “Intention to leave” and “Openness”, “Agreeableness”, and “Extraversion” had a negative and significant effect on “Stumbling”.

These results stated that, personality traits had a significant effect on individual performance. For instance, if an employee had a intention to leave the organization for any reason, his or her desire to the right thing or his or her conscience would not let him to do so. This personal trait got two sides, the first one is very good for organization by means of employee turnover and organization climate but on the other hand managers could abuse the good will. Supervisors for the good of two sides should carefully manage this trait. Another finding of this research is the negative effect of “Openness”, “Agreeableness”, and “Extraversion” on Stumbling”. By the nature of the business life every individual have right to mess the things up. Although

mistakes in work life could affect the performance, employees' characteristic behaviors could prevent the repetition of them. These traits are very unique and should be encouraged by the supervisors.

Without any doubt, the sample and the assessment instruments used in the present study limit these findings. This research conducted on local administrations in Ankara in Turkey; the findings might not be exchangeable to other establishments. Therefore, it is recommended that further researches can be conducted on different sectors and also in different countries for the generalizability of the results. The fact that the present sample is composed of only 123 personnel is another shortcoming of this study.

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