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A FIELD STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY AND PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to reveal the relationship between the personality traits and professional commitment of university students and to determine whether personality affects professional commitment. For this purpose, 272 students studying at Akdeniz University, Faculty of Tourism participated in the research. A questionnaire was used as the data collection tool. Arithmetic mean and standard deviation values were calculated to determine students' personality traits and organizational commitment levels. Correlation analysis was performed to calculate the relationships between the variables discussed in the study, and multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to identify the predictive power that the independent variables had on the dependent variables. Research results indicated that there was a significant and positive relationship between the students' personality traits and professional commitment levels. In addition, it was determined that the extraversion personality trait was a significant predictor of the affective commitment dimension, neuroticism personality trait was a significant predictor of the continuance commitment dimension, and agreeableness personality trait was a significant predictor of the normative commitment dimension. It is believed that the results of the study will provide concrete information about the relationship between professional commitment, one of the main problem areas of the sector, and personality, one of the key concerns and interesting topics in the field of organizational behavior and bring considerable benefits to the business world.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to existing literature by revealing the relationship between the personality traits and professional commitment of university students and to determine whether personality affects professional commitment.

1. INTRODUCTION

From the late twentieth century to the present day, there have been a great deal of research and publications on the variables of personality and their use in the business world. Research carried out has had a significant impact on industrial, work and organizational psychology, especially in the past two decades (Hough, 2001). Therefore, personality traits have become popular as an explanation of both behaviors and orientations (Llewellyn & Wilson, 2003). This concept has become representative of behavioral and cognitive models proven to be stable and invariant over time and in different settings (Cattell, 1964).

Based on the concept of personality, the science of psychology investigates the cause of behavior and emphasizes personal differences. Although each individual has a physio-biologically different personality, both the

environment that individuals are in and the genetic factors inherent in individuals are effective in shaping their personality and thus creating a unique personality for each individual (Paris, 2005; Plomin, DeFries, McClearn, & Mcguffin, 2001). As a matter of fact, the studies conducted (Chatman, 1989; Chatman, 1991; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991; Saari & Judge, 2004) indicate that the individual's success in business life will increase if the job and the organization in which he is involved are in harmony with the personality of the individual. In other words, if the job is compatible with the personality structure of the individual, the success of the individual will increase, and if there is a discrepancy between the job and personality, then the success of the individual will decrease. As a matter of fact, advanced job/work analysis methods address the dimensions of work performance that have become important in our new world of work. While working and job performance now includes task performance and contextual performance, predictors of performance criteria includes personality.

It is essential for individuals to choose the profession that suits their personality traits. Choosing a career that matches personality is considered an important factor in individuals' satisfaction with and loyalty to their professions. Therefore, the development of professional loyalty emerges as a result of the compatibility between personality traits and professional traits (Klein, Molloy, & Cooper, 2013). As in all sectors, this also applies to tourism, which is a service-oriented sector. Therefore, it can be suggested that attitudes and perceptions towards the profession play a crucial role for the candidates of the tourism profession. However, the decrease in the professional commitment of the candidates receiving tourism education is one of the most essential problems of the sector today, and due to various reasons in the tourism industry, a significant number of qualified personnel who receive tourism education do not want to work in the sector and they move away from the sector (Türker, Uçar, & Ateş, 2016; Unur, Duman, & Tepeci, 2004). When the relevant literature was reviewed, the relationships between students' personality traits and their choice of profession, employment, and career planning were investigated, and a significant relationship was found between the them in several international and national studies (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Erdem & Kayran, 2013; Genç, Kaya, & Genç, 2007; Rogers, Creed, & Glendon, 2008; Yanıkkerem, Altınparmak, & Karadeniz, 2004). However, a very limited number of studies have been conducted on personality and professional commitment, which are the variables of the present study. It is a very difficult and stressful process for individuals to have educational and learning experiences, to strive to accomplish educational tasks, to recognize their own personality, interests, and talents, and to decide their future profession at the same time during the development process. In such a case, individuals will be in search of a job that matches their own interests, abilities, and knowledge. Here, perhaps the most prominent and important issue is that individuals know themselves very well in the context of their characteristics (Civilidağ, Yanar, Kızılırmak, & Denizli, 2018). Knowing oneself entails that individuals are aware of their talents, needs, attitudes, values, and the activities they like to do. In this sense, personality can serve a preparatory function for the business life in terms of learning about the profession they intend to do in the future. In this respect, it is important to identify the relationship between the personality of the students receiving tourism education and the professional commitment in the tourism sector and to determine the extent to which personality affects professional commitment. However, the issue of whether personality traits have an impact on professional commitment and the direction and size of the impact, if any, appear to be a topic that requires more research. Based on this point, the present study discusses the sub-components of the five-factor personality traits, namely extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and neuroticism, and the students' professional commitment through the sample of Akdeniz University, Faculty of Tourism.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Research on personality has had a considerable impact on the practice and science of organizational psychology in the past two decades. Personality is defined as the distinctive characteristics of individuals such as thinking, feeling, and acting. Personality is unique to each individual and consists of stable behavior patterns over time and across situations (Lynam & Derefinko, 2006). When the literature on the concept of personality is examined, it is

observed that personality has different definitions of. Therefore, there is little consensus on what personality actually is Atkinson, Atkinson, and Hilgard (1995). According to Wortman (1988) personality is a phenomenon that reflects all the characteristics of a person. For Larsen and Buss (2005) it is a set of psychological features and mechanisms that are relatively permanent and affect an individual's interactions with and adaptation to the intrapsychic, physical, and social environments.

Another definition that emphasizes the relationship between personality and behavior is made by Allport (1961) who describes personality as the dynamic organization within the individual of psychophysical systems that determine his/her distinctive behavior and thought. Personality is defined by Fromm (1947) as the sum of the inherited and acquired psychic qualities that are characteristic of an individual and that make the individual unique. Similarly, personality is unique to each individual and is consistent throughout life and comprises unique patterns of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors which make the individual unique (Lall & Sharma, 2009). In addition, Mischel (1999) views personality as distinctive behavioral patterns that permanently characterize each individual, including emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. As can be seen from the definitions, there are three basic principles that form the concept of personality, which are:

- Uniqueness or individual differences.
- Consistency.
- Invariance or stability.

Personality traits shape not only career and professional decisions but also decisions about which organization to work in. Therefore, it can be stated that personality traits are essential in understanding professional commitment. Schneider (1987) Attraction-Selection-Attrition theory clearly addresses this phenomenon. The theory of "being attracted to an organization, being selected by it and the attrition in commitment to the organization" reveals certain types of people in an organization. The research results obtained have indicated that personality traits are effective in predicting performance and they could be useful in determining other work-related features (Barrick, Stewart, & Piotrowski, 2002; Moutafi, Furnham, & Crump, 2007; Smith & Canger, 2004; Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991). Besides the benefits of personality traits in predicting job performance, they also play a crucial role in determining the applicants for specific jobs, professions and organizations (Barrick., Mount, & Gupta, 2003). In addition, personality traits continue to have important roles in employees' behavior after they start work. Personality traits have gradual effects on almost all human behavior, the individual or group behavior, in organizations.

Various theories that are claimed to explain the dimensions or basic factors of personality have been proposed in the historical process. However, in the past 20 years it is assumed that five dimensions are required to adequately determine the field of personality. Personality refers to a construct consisting of five dimensions (Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Neuroticism and Openness) and is called the Big Five (Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991; Goldberg, 1981; McCrae & Costa, 1987; McCrae & Costa, 1995; Wiggins, 1996).

According to McCrae and John (1992) the five-factor personality model is important in terms of showing the construct of personality as a whole, systematically examining the relationships between personality traits and behaviors, and providing a general definition of personality within the scope of five factors. Due to the reasons stated above, five-factor personality scale was used in this study. Five-factor personality traits can be briefly defined as follows;

- **Extraversion**: This personality dimension refers to one's level of sociability and outgoingness. The basic components of extraversion include high activity and energy, dominance, sociability, expressiveness, and positive emotions (Benet-Martínez & John, 1998).
- **Conscientiousness**: This dimension includes high level of thoughtfulness, impulse control, and goal-directed behavior. Conscientious individuals tend to be organized and pay attention to details (Cherry, 2019).

- **Agreeableness**: This factor includes being kind, respectful, flexible, and compassionate. Agreeableness affects self-image and helps to shape social attitudes and life philosophy (Costa et al., 1991).
- **Neuroticism**: This dimension is expressed as the opponent of emotional stability and is characterized by various negative emotions such as sadness, irritability, and anxiety (Benet-Martínez & John, 1998).
- **Openness to experience**: This dimension refers to one's desire to be intellectually curious, thoughtful, open-minded, and imaginative. People who are open to experience seek innovation and enjoy understanding new ideas (Ojedokun, 2018).

Professional commitment is described as the bond established between individuals and their professions (Klein et al., 2013). It is stated that individuals' professional commitment has important effects on business outcomes. First of all, professions represent a meaningful focus in many people's lives. In addition, high level of professional commitment is considered to be associated with outcomes such as high level of job satisfaction and job performance that are beneficial for both employers and employees (Lee, Carswell, & Allen, 2000). Another definition of professional commitment proposes that it is the relative strength of one's identification with and involvement in a particular profession, and the desire to strive for a profession and to maintain this membership (Aranya & Ferris, 1984). Professional commitment is different from organizational commitment. For example; if an individual who is committed to his/her profession thinks that this will help improve his/her career, the organization can change. An individual who is attached to the organization can change his career within the organization and continue to be attached to the organization (Goulet & Singh, 2002). Moreover, the personal precursors of both professional commitment and organizational commitment are described as personality, motives, and values (Meyer & Espinoza, 2016). As a result of the positive correlation between organizational commitment and professional commitment, Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) maintain that professional commitment has three main components as affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Accordingly, affective commitment refers to an individual's involvement in the profession and feeling of an emotional bond between the individual and the profession. Affective commitment is defined as the emotional attachment of a strongly committed individual in such a way that he/she is involved in the organization and becomes a member of the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The development of affective professional commitment starts with the choice of profession and is shaped by experiences (Goulet & Singh, 2002). For this reason, the fact that organizations meet individuals' career goals, develop their professional talents, and offer rewarding activities to them is an important factor that improves their affective professional commitment (Weng & McElroy, 2012). Professional continuance commitment develops when employees realize that they will lose their investments and the costs will be high if they leave the organization. In this case, individuals continue to work in the organization and retain their profession due to the limited availability of alternatives (Meyer et al., 1993). Normative commitment refers to a sense of obligation to continue the employment. Employees with a high level of normative commitment think that they need to remain in the organization and continue their profession (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Personality traits of the candidates for tourism professions are also important in the career choice process and in their professional commitment. Personality traits will enable individuals to be satisfied with such a challenging working environment even though there are conditions that will cause others to leave the organizations they work for. Therefore, individuals' choice of a profession that matches their personality traits makes them more comfortable and satisfied (Eason, Mazerolle, Monsma, & Mensch, 2015). It is emphasized that individuals who will work in tourism establishments, a labor intensive sector, should have a suitable personality for the sector and have people skills such as leadership, oral and written communication and listening skills (Chung, 2000). In their study, Temeloğlu and Aksu (2016) compared the personality traits of students receiving tourism education and the personality traits required by the profession, and came to the conclusion that personality traits had an impact on the desire to pursue a career. In a study conducted on 511 high school senior students, Uzunibrahimoğulları (2003) showed that the five-factor personality traits of students affect their professional interests. In addition to this, five

factors personality traits were discussed in terms of the professional development and professional preferences of high school senior students. Based on the theoretical framework described above, the relationship between personality and professional commitment was identified as the main problem of the study.

3. METHOD

3.1. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine the relationships between the personality traits and professional commitment of students studying in the Faculty of Tourism. In addition, the study also aimed to find out the extent to which the components of the personality traits of the students receiving tourism education predicted the components of their professional commitment.

3.2. Scope of the Research

The population of this study consisted of students studying at Akdeniz University, Faculty of Tourism. The sample of the study comprised 247 students studying at Akdeniz University, Faculty of Tourism.

3.3. Research Method and Data Collection Tools

Quantitative research method was used in the study. Research analyses were performed using three questionnaires. The first part of the questionnaire includes questions to determine the demographic characteristics of the students. The second part of the questionnaire consists of the "Professional Commitment Scale" developed by Meyer et al. (1993). The scale is 7-point likert type scale with 18 items and it involves three dimensions, which are affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Han, Dağlı, and Elçiçek (2018) and was tested in terms of reliability and validity. The Cronbanch's Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.843. The "Big Five Inventory" used in the study was developed by John, Donahue, and Kentle (1991). It includes some statements that people use to describe themselves and their personality traits. In this context, the 5-point Likert scale includes 44 items and 5 sub-scales (neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience). The scale was adapted to Turkish by Alkan (2006) and its reliability and validity analysis were performed. Accordingly, the Cronbanch's Alpha reliability coefficient was determined to be 0.87, and it was concluded that the factor structure was in accordance with the original. In the present study, the Cronbach's reliability coefficient was found as 0,754 for the "Professional Commitment Scale" and as 0,781 for the "Big Five Inventory". In order for the research results to better represent the research universe, random sampling method was employed to select the sample. The population of the research included students studying at Akdeniz University, Faculty of Tourism (2444 students as of 31.12.2019). According to Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan (2004) if the main population is 2500, the sufficient sample number representing the main mass is 224 (p= 0.8, q= 0.2). Within the scope of this study, 272 questionnaires were collected, and 247 of these were found to meet the necessary criteria and were included in the analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data, the SPSS 22 program was used. The arithmetic means and standard deviation values were calculated to determine the personality traits and organizational commitment levels of the students studying at Akdeniz University, Faculty of Tourism. In addition, correlation analysis was used to reveal the relationships between variables, and multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine the extent to which the independent variables predicted the dependent variables.

4. RESULTS

The findings of the study are illustrated under three subheadings: descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression analysis.

Table-1. Mean and standard deviation values for the variables.

Variables	$\bar{x}$	S
Extraversion	3.47	0.47
Conscientiousness	3.57	0.48
Agreeableness	3.53	0.65
Neuroticism	3.27	0.51
Openness to experience	3.66	0.52
Affective commitment	4.51	1.30
Continuance commitment	3.89	1.30
Normative commitment	3.81	1.27

Table 1 reveals that openness to experience had the highest mean ($\bar{X}$ = 3.66) whereas neuroticism had the lowest mean ($\bar{X}$ = 3.27) among the personality traits of the students. In terms of professional commitment, it was concluded that affective commitment had the highest mean ($\bar{X}$ = 4.51) while normative commitment had the lowest mean ($\bar{X}$ = 3.81).

Table-2. Values for the relationship between the personality traits and components of professional commitment.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Neuroticism	1	0.548**	0.572**	0.493**	0.478**	0.299**	0.212**	0.258**
Extraversion		1	0.555**	0.613**	0.610**	0.402**	0.179**	0.263**
Agreeableness			1	0.615**	0.648**	0.357**	0.213**	0.364**
Conscientiousness				1	0.617**	0.250**	0.102	0.203**
Openness to experience					1	0.370**	0.154*	0.260**
Affective commitment						1	0.147*	0.261**
Continuance commitment							1	0.540**
Normative commitment								1

Note: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Table 2 indicates a low-level positive relationship between the tourism students' neuroticism and affective commitment (r= .299, p<.01), continuance commitment (r= .212, p<.01), and normative commitment (r= .258, p<.01). Furthermore, there is a moderate and positive correlation between extraversion of the students receiving tourism education and affective commitment (r = .402, p <.01); and a low, positive and significant relationship was found between extraversion and continuance commitment (r= .179, p<01) and normative commitment (r= .263, p< .01). What is more, a moderate and positive correlation was detected between agreeableness and affective commitment (r= .357, p<.01) and normative commitment (r= .364, p<.01), and a low, positive relationship was revealed between agreeableness and continuance commitment (r= .213, p<.01). While there was a low and positive correlation between conscientiousness and affective commitment (r= .250, p<.01) and normative commitment (r = .203, p <.01), a statistically insignificant relationship was detected between conscientiousness and continuance commitment (r= .102, p<.01). Finally, openness to experience had a moderate and positive correlation with affective commitment (r = .370, p <.01), and a low, positive relationship with continuance commitment (r= .154, p <.05) and normative commitment (r= .260, p<. 01).

Table 3 reveals significant relationships between the components of personality traits, which are neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, and affective commitment (R = .438, p = .00, F = 11.467). Furthermore, it was determined that the students' affective commitment explained 19.8% of the five personality traits (R² = .198). When the components of personality traits were examined separately, extraversion (β =, 296, p <, 05) and openness to experience (β =, 168, p <, 05) were concluded to be significant

predictors of affective commitment while neuroticism (β = ,078, p>, 05), agreeableness (β =, 68, p>, 05) and conscientiousness (β = -, 094, p>, 05) were not determined to be significant predictors of affective commitment.

Table-3. Regression analysis results for the prediction of affective commitment.

Variables	B	SH	β	T	P
Constant	1.302	,416		3,132	,002
Extraversion	,506	,140	,296	3,628	,000
Conscientiousness	-,158	,136	-,094	-1,165	,245
Agreeableness	,085	,082	,068	1,035	,302
Neuroticism	,123	,116	,078	1,059	,291
Openness to experience	,257	,117	,168	2,199	,029

Note: F= 11,467 p = .00, R = .438, R^2= .198, Adjusted R^2 =, 175.

Table-4. Regression analysis results for the prediction of continuance commitment.

Variables	B	SH	β	T	P
Constant	1.832	,709		2,583,	,010
Extraversion	,296	,238	,110	1,245	,214
Conscientiousness	-,151	,231	-,057	-,653	,514
Agreeableness	,162	,140	,083	1,160	,247
Neuroticism	,406	,198	,162	2,050	,041
Openness to experience	-,079	,199	-,033	-,399	,690

Note: F= 2,984 p = ,012, R = ,241, R^2= ,058, Adjusted R^2 =,039.

When Table 4 is analyzed, it is seen that the components of personality traits, which are neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, had significant relationships with continuance commitment (R = .241, p = .012, F = 2.984). In addition, it was found that the students' continuance commitment explained 5.8% of the five personality traits (R^2 = .058). When the components of personality traits were examined separately, only neuroticism (β =, 162, p>, 05) was identified to be a significant predictor of continuance commitment whereas extraversion(β= ,110, p>,05),agreeableness(β= ,083, p>,05), conscientiousness (β = -, 057, p>, 05), and openness to experience (β = -033, p>, 05) were concluded to be insignificant predictors of continuance commitment.

Table-5. Regression analysis results for the prediction of normative commitment.

Variables	B	SH	β	T	P
Constant	,557	,626		,891	,374
Extraversion	,255	,210	,103	1,212	,227
Conscientiousness	-,051	,204	-,021	-,252	,801
Agreeableness	,402	,123	,224	3,260	,001
Neuroticism	,231	,175	,101	1,323	,187
Openness to experience	,106	,176	,048	,601	,549

Note: F= 7,188 p = ,00,R = ,360, R^2= ,130, Adjusted R^2 =,112

Table 5 demonstrates that the components of personality traits, which are neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, had significant relationships with normative commitment (R = .360, p = .00, F = 7,188). What is more, it was determined that the students' normative commitment explained 13% of the five personality traits (R^2= .130). In addition, when the components of personality traits were examined separately, only agreeableness (β =, 224, p <, 05) was identified to be a significant predictor of normative commitment. However, it was concluded that neuroticism (β =, 101, p>, 05), extraversion (β =, 103, p>, 05), conscientiousness (β = -, 021, p>, 05), and openness to experience (β =, 048, p>, 05) were found to be insignificant predictors of normative commitment.

5. CONCLUSION

The results obtained in the present study, which seeks to examine the relationship between the personality traits and professional commitment levels of tourism students, can contribute to the literature. According to the results of the research, the professional commitment levels of the students receiving tourism education were determined as affective commitment ($\bar{x}$ = 4.51) continuance commitment ($\bar{x}$ = 3.89), and normative commitment ($\bar{x}$ = 3.81). The fact that the highest mean is in the affective commitment component in the professional commitment variable can be considered as a positive situation because high affective commitment of tourism students means that students identify themselves with the profession and establish a bond involving positive emotions with the tourism sector (Bulut, 2017; Meyer & Allen, 1991). It was determined that the highest mean value of the students studying at the Faculty of Tourism was found to be in openness to experience ($\bar{x}$ = 3.66) and the lowest mean value in neuroticism ($\bar{x}$ = 3.27) among the five factor personality traits. Students receiving university education are expected to participate in intellectual activities and tend to be open to new emotions and thoughts. Therefore, it can be stated that this is an expected result. Given their age, it can be suggested that the lowest mean values obtained in neuroticism result from the fact that these are the times when students have high energy and positive feelings towards life. Studies conducted by Tatlıoğlu (2014); Keldal and Atli (2016); İçerli and Uğuz-Arsu (2019) and Tomšik and Gatial (2018) on the personality traits of university students also support this result. While the personality trait with the highest mean value varies in the previous studies, there is a consistency in those studies in that neuroticism is the personality trait that has the lowest mean value. The results of other studies conducted on the personality traits of academics confirm this situation and show that neuroticism has the lowest mean in academic studies (Bulut, 2017). According to the results of the correlation analysis conducted within the scope of the research, a significant and positive relationship was found between the affective commitment of the students receiving tourism education and their five-factor personality traits. The results of the regression analysis indicated that the personality traits were a significant predictor of affective commitment. When the components of personality traits were analyzed separately, it was concluded that extraversion and openness to experience were significant predictors of affective commitment whereas neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were not so. These findings mean that students committed to their jobs can be described with the adjectives social, warm-blooded, enterprising, open to new thoughts and ideas, and highly intellectual. While there are no parallel results in the literature with these results, Recepoğlu, Kilinç, Şahin, and Er (2013) determined the dimension of conscientiousness and Bulut (2017) determined the dimension of agreeableness as the significant predictors of affective commitment. In the study, it was determined that continuance commitment had significant relationships with the dimensions of neuroticism, openness to experience, extraversion, and conscientiousness, except the dimension of agreeableness. According to the results of the regression analysis, only neuroticism was concluded to be a significant predictor of continuance commitment. This finding is supported by Pasha and Khodadadi (2008); Erdheim, Wang, and Zickar (2006) and Kumar and Bakhshi (2010). This result reveals that neurotic people show more commitment to the organizations or professions they are affiliated with because they experience more negativity in their lives. This situation results from the fear of losing their current positions (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Statistically significant and positive relationships were identified between normative commitment and personality traits. According to the results of the regression analysis, it was concluded that only agreeableness was a significant predictor of normative commitment. Indeed, a study by Erdheim et al. (2006) indicates that while no relationship is observed between the other four personality traits and normative commitment, agreeableness is determined to be associated with normative commitment. The most important limitation of the study includes the fact that this study was conducted only on students studying at Akdeniz University, Faculty of Tourism. In future studies to be conducted on this subject, it can be recommended to involve different sample groups. In addition, further studies can be carried out using different variables (e.g. life satisfaction, burnout, well-being, stress etc.) with students who study in different departments with and compare the results.

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