

Full Length Research Paper

Dimensions of personality and emotional intelligence as predictors of high school students' career decision difficulties

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This study aims to examine the predictability of emotional intelligence and five factor personality traits on career decision difficulties. The study group consisted of 432 students (246 women, 186 men) who participated in five different high schools in Adana and voluntarily participated in the study. Data collection tool were composed of Career Decision Difficulties Questionnaire, Emotional Intelligence Assessment Scale and Adjective Based Personality Scale. This study intends to identify the relationship between personality traits, emotional intelligence and career decision difficulties. To test the research hypotheses, a path model was developed to test causal relationships between the variables. In the model, the scores of the dimensions of career decision difficulty were used as indicators to create a latent construct. Emotional intelligence and five factor personality subscales were considered as observed variables emotional instability was found to be a positive predictor of career decision difficulty. However, extraversion and self-awareness were negative predictors of career difficulty.

Key words: Five factor personality, emotional intelligence, career decision difficulties, high school students.

INTRODUCTION

Difficulties in career decision making are expressed as possible obstacles that may prevent a better career decision (Saka et al., 2008; Willner et al., 2015). It is also considered to be an indispensable part of the career problem and is thought to lead to failures in the career process (Boysan and Kagan, 2016; Di Fabio et al., 2015). Decisions about career choices encompass various factors such as skills and abilities, life goals, career goals, career preferences, individual expectations. For this reason, it can be said that having difficulties in

deciding career is not an exception, but a general tendency (Di Fabio et al., 2013). Technological, sociological and economic changes in recent years have created an uneven world of work with increasingly difficult answers to the question of who wants to be a professional and what they can do in this challenging business world (Di Fabio et al., 2015). In line with these changes, the perceptions of individuals about career choices are changing and causing difficulties in decisions about career choices (Öztemel, 2014a).

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Experiencing career-decision making difficulty may cause individuals not to choose a convenient career. Therefore, these individuals may have low performance, low satisfaction and become unhappy as well as unsuccessful (Kırdök, 2010). Some studies show that there is a relationship between career-decision making and a lot of personal features. Öztemel (2014a) indicated that self-efficacy and locus of control were predictors of career-decision making difficulties in high school students. Similarly, Bacanlı (2012) demonstrated that irrational beliefs relating to career choice were predictors of career-decision making difficulties in high school students. Career-decision making difficulties are related to anxiety, low self-esteem, pessimism and perfectionism (Gati et al., 2011). In recent years there have been also studies that refer to the fact that career-decision making is related to emotions and personality (Saka and Gati, 2007; Saka et al., 2008; Gati vd. 2011; Gati et al., 2012).

CAREER DECISION DIFFICULTIES AND PERSONALITY

Personality has an impact on career choices (Harris et al., 2006; Aliyev, 2008; Gökdeniz and Merdan, 2011; Öztemel, 2014b; Rossier, 2015). It is also stated that career decision difficulties are related to personality and many personality traits (Boysan and Kagan, 2016; Di Fabio et al., 2013; 2015). The five-factor model, also known as Big 5 personality trait is accepted as a generalization of an adequate classification of personality traits. This model is based on the trait approach, and personalities are identified by taking advantage of the traits that individuals use to describe themselves and others. There are five factors regarding this model. First, neuroticism is composed of negative feelings such as anger, anxiety and depression. Extraversion refers to the tendency to live with assertiveness, sociability, enthusiasm, warmth, cheerful, communicative and positive feelings. As for the third dimension, openness denotes experience that reflects the tendency to be open to new thoughts and feelings. Agreeableness refers to humanistic, warm, friendly, gentle, safe, tolerant and socially interesting features. Conscientiousness includes leadership, duty awareness, self-discipline, productivity, success, struggle and determination (Civitçi and Arıcıoğlu, 2012; Dogan, 2013; McCrae and Costa, 1996; Somer, Korkmaz ve Tatar, 2002). The validity of these factors is confirmed in many intercultural studies (Bacanlı et al., 2009; Somer et al., 2002; Sutin and Terracciano, 2015). In previous studies, it was found that there is a relationship between career ambiguity and various personality traits (Di Fabio et al., 2013; Gati et al., 2010; Lounsbury, Hutchens and Loveland, 2005; Xu and Tracey, 2017). Therefore, it can be considered that the five factor- personality traits play an important role in

understanding career decision difficulties. Some career decisions might be challenging and boring. Therefore, the role of emotions can be important in that they can help individuals initiate and sustain choices regarding career (Brown et al., 2003; Di Fabio and Saklofske, 2014).

Since few decisions are effective in the lives of individuals such as career decisions, it is necessary to continue their work to understand this issue (Di Fabio et al., 2013). It is also necessary to emphasize that career decision making is one of the difficult and complex decisions (Öztemel, 2014b) because this complexity makes it difficult for most people to make the ideal career decision (Gati et al., 1996). For this reason, career decision difficulties are considered as one of the important factors of career counseling (Bacanlı and Hamamcı, 2015). Given the difficulties many people face when deciding on a career decision, it is not surprising that theoretical and empirical studies have been abundant in examining career decision difficulties (Osipow and Gati, 1998). Therefore, it can be said that the concepts that may be related to career decision difficulties need to be investigated in order to understand career decision difficulties and to offer effective solutions to individuals who have these difficulties.

CAREER DECISION DIFFICULTIES AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional intelligence includes being aware of emotions, knowing the relationships between emotions and using emotions based on reasoning, problem solving and self-motivation (Köksal and İşmen - Gazioğlu, 2007).

According to Bar-On (2004), EO is a multi-faceted factor that regulates emotional and social factors. It denotes how effective we are when we establish relations with others and how we cope with everyday pressure. These five dimensions can be listed as intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress-management, adaptability and general mood. Mayer et al. (2000), define emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in the thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others. Emotion in career theories has been often under represented (Puffer, 2010). However, emotions play an important role in career choice and career behavior as well as in cognition (Di Fabio and Palazzeschi, 2009; Jiang, 2017). Individuals with a high level of emotional intelligence, who are assumed to have a unique role in career decision difficulties, are more aware of their emotions and have more capacity to integrate emotional experience and thoughts and actions (Di Fabio and Blustein, 2010; Di Fabio and Palazzeschi, 2009; Di Fabio et al., 2013; Di Fabio et al., 2012). It has been often stressed that there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and decision making behaviors of

individuals (Köksal and İşmen - Gazioglu, 2007). Emotional intelligence appears to be associated not only with decision-making behaviors but also with career decision difficulties (Di Fabio and Palazzeschi, 2008). Di Fabio and Kenny (2011) found that the training program regarding emotional intelligence increased participants' emotional intelligence levels and reduced their career decision difficulties. Therefore, it can be said that emotional intelligence is an important concept related to individuals' difficulties in career decision making. Di Fabio et al. (2013) point out that studies that examine emotional intelligence and personality traits with career decision difficulties must be conducted in different cultures. Emotional intelligence and personality traits are important concepts in explaining the difficulty of career decision making.

This study aims to examine dimensions of personality (emotional instability, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness) and dimensions of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, emotional self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills) as a predictor of career decision difficulties

METHODS

Participants and procedure

The study was based on randomly selected sampling, and the group consisted of 432 students (246 women, 186 men) who participated in five different regular high schools in Adana, one of the cities on the mediterranean coast of Turkey and voluntarily participated in the study. The age range of the participants was 14-19 (Age mean = 16.10, Sd = 1.04).

Measure

Data collection tools were composed of Career Decision Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ) (Gati and Saka, 2001; Bacanlı, 2008), Emotional Intelligence Assessment Scale (EIAS) (Hall, 1999; Ergin, 2000) and Adjective Based Personality Scale (ABPS) Bacanlı et al., 2009).

Career decision difficulties questionnaire (CDDQ)

Career decision difficulties questionnaire developed by Gati and Saka (2001) and adapted in Turkish by Bacanlı (2008) was used to measure the participants' career decision difficulties. The scale consists of 34 items. It was developed based on the data collected from 9th 10th and 11th Israeli students. The Turkish version of the scale was also based on the same type of data collected from 9th, 10th and 12th grades. The scale, which originally has 7-point scale, has a 5-point scale in Turkish version consisting of three main and ten sub-scales. The theoretical basis is based on Taxonomy of Career Decision Difficulties by Gati et al. (1996). Turkish version of the scale also consists of three main and ten subscales. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients for the reliability scale of the original scale were calculated as 0.60 for Lack of Readiness scale, 0.93 for Lack of Information, 0.83 for Inconsistent Information and 0.92 for the total scale. The Cronbach

Alpha internal consistency coefficients for the reliability of the Turkish version of the scale were calculated as 0.45 for Lack of Readiness, 0.90 for Lack of Information, for Inconsistent Information 0.82 and 0.89 for the total scale.

Emotional intelligence assessment scale (EIAS)

The emotional intelligence assessment scale developed by Hall (1999) and adapted to Turkish by Ergin (2000) was used to measure the emotional intelligence levels of the participants. Likert type scale consists of 30 items. A 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = totally disagree; 6 = totally agree) was used for subject responses to each of the items for five subscales.

Subscales: Self-awareness (6 items), Emotional self-regulation (6 items), Motivation (6 items), Emphaty (6 items), Social skills (6 items). The possible total scores ranged from 30 to 180 points, and high scores indicate that the level of emotional intelligence is high. The Cronbach's Alpha for the scale was for the present sample 0.83. The internal reliability coefficients were 0.60 (Self-awareness), 0.61 (Emotional self-regulation), 0.66 (Motivation), 0.66 (Emphaty), and 0.65 (Social skills).

Adjective based personality scale (ABPS)

Adjective based personality scale developed by Bacanlı et al. (2009) was used to measure five factor personality traits of the participants. The scale consists of 40 items based on pairs of opposite adjectives.

The scale consists of five sub-dimensions that measure five dimensions of your personality. These sub-dimensions are emotional instability (7 items), extroversion (9 items), openness (8 items), agreeableness (9 items), conscientiousness (7 items). The Cronbach's Alpha for the present sample was 0.67 (emotional instability), 0.88 (extraversion), 0.71 (openness), 0.75 (agreeableness), and 0.81 (conscientiousness).

Data analysis

Pearson moments correlations analysis was used to examine the relationship between the participants' difficulty in career decision making, emotional intelligence, and personality scale scores. Cronbach alpha coefficients and descriptive statistics were also analyzed. To test the research hypotheses, a path model was developed to test causal relationships between the variables. In the model, the scores of the dimensions of career decision difficulty were used as indicators to create a latent construct. Emotional intelligence and five factor personality subscales were considered as observed variables. During the path model analysis, the criteria for the model fit were examined.

During the model fit analysis, values of χ^2 fit index, Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), the Normed-Fit Index (CFI) were taken as criteria. Data analysis was done through Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) 20 and Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.00. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS

The correlation values between the descriptive statistics and the variables are given in Table 1. There is a

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlation values.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Emotional instability (ABPS)	1										
2. Extraversion (ABPS)	-0.271**	1									
3. Openness (ABPS)	-0.076	0.418**	1								
4. Conscientiousness (ABPS)	-0.098*	0.304**	0.274**	1							
5. Agreeableness (ABPS)	-0.188**	0.109*	0.312**	0.313**	1						
6. Self-awareness (EIAS)	-0.210**	0.132**	0.100*	0.173**	0.028	1					
7. Self-regulation (EIAS)	-0.237**	0.058	0.068	0.189**	0.041	0.330**	1				
8. Motivation (EIAS)	-0.274**	0.153**	0.108*	0.204**	0.035	0.488**	0.524**	1			
9. Emphaty (EIAS)	-0.045	0.067	0.144**	0.152**	0.109*	0.473**	0.177**	0.327**	1		
10. Social skills (EIAS)	-0.060	0.118*	0.174**	0.127**	0.035	0.368**	0.310**	0.357**	0.639**	1	
11. CDDQ	246**	-0.378**	-0.207**	-0.180**	-0.011	-0.260**	-0.168**	-0.159**	-0.127**	-0.171**	1
Mean	26.28	43.80	41.76	34.61	45.82	24.57	20.55	22.93	25.90	23.20	94.43
Sd	7.61	10.65	7.30	7.78	9.65	5.67	6.14	5.69	5.83	5.46	18.31

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, N=432.

significant relationship between subscales of personality (Emotional instability, Extraversion, Openness, and Conscientiousness except Agreeableness) and subscales of emotional intelligence (Self-awareness, Emotional self-regulation, Motivation, Empathy, and Social skills) and career decision difficulty.

There is a positive correlation between career decision difficulty and emotional instability, whereas there is a negative correlation between the subscales of personality (Extraversion, Openness and Conscientiousness) and the subscales of emotional intelligence (Self-awareness, Emotional self-regulation, Motivation, Empathy and Social skills).

The path analysis findings using the maximum likelihood method in order to demonstrate the effect of the personality and emotional intelligence sub-dimensions of high school students on career

decision difficulties are shown in Figure 1. In addition, coefficients related to path analysis are given in Table 2.

Extraversion ($\beta=-0.31$, $p=0.0000$) and Emotional instability ($\beta=0.13$, $p<0.005$), the subscales of personality, were found to be predictors of career decision difficulty as shown in Table 2 and Figure 1. Self-awareness ($\beta=-0.19$, $p<0.01$), a sub-dimension of emotional intelligence was found to be a predictor of career decision difficulties. The variables in the analysis account for 26% of career decision difficulties ($R^2=0.26$, $p=0.000$). The results of model fit analysis showed that the χ^2 fit index ($\chi^2 = 44.638$, $p = 0.001$, $df = 20$, $\chi^2 / df = 2.232$) and other fit indices (SRMR=0.023, RSMEA=0.053, GFI=0.985, NFI=0.969, CFI=0.982) were found. It can be said that the model is within acceptable limits of fit (Kline, 2011; Schumacker and Lomax, 2010).

DISCUSSION

In this study, EI and personality were examined as the predictors of career-decision making difficulty. In accordance with this aim, the correlations between the variables were analyzed. A positive correlation was found between emotional instability and career decision difficulty, while there was a negative relationship between extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness and career decision difficulty. There was no significant relationship between agreeableness and career decision difficulty. Negative correlations between career decision difficulty and all the subscales of emotional intelligence were found. There are similar findings in the related literature (Di Fabio and Palazzeschi, 2009; Di Fabio et al., 2012, 2015).

Emotional instability was found to be a positive

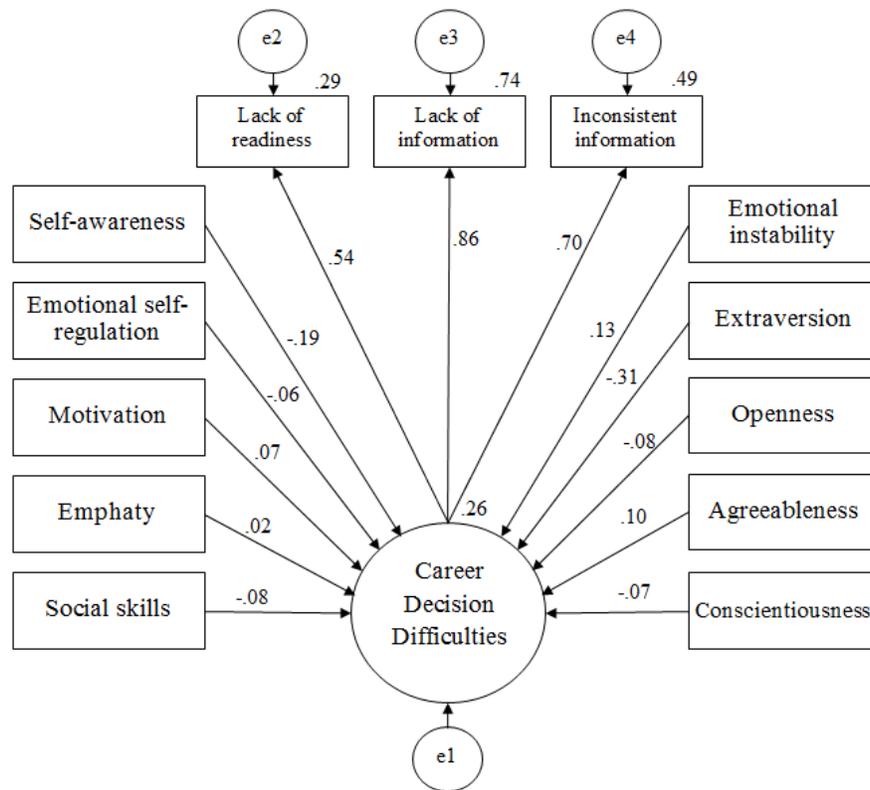


Figure 1. Subscales of personality and emotional intelligence as predictors of career decision- difficulties.

Table 2. Coefficients of Path Analysis of Personality and Emotional Intelligence as predictors of Career Decision Difficulties

			B	S.E.	C.R.	Beta	p
CDDQ	<---	Emotional instability (ABPS)	0.083	0.034	2.485	0.133	0.013
CDDQ	<---	Extraversion (ABPS)	-0.138	0.027	-5.191	-0.309	0.000
CDDQ	<---	Openness (ABPS)	-0.053	0.037	-1.445	-0.081	0.148
CDDQ	<---	Agreeableness (ABPS)	0.051	0.027	1.917	0.103	0.055
CDDQ	<---	Conscientiousness (ABPS)	-0.045	0.033	-1.373	-0.074	0.170
CDDQ	<---	Self-awareness (EIAS)	-0.162	0.051	-3.156	-0.192	0.002
CDDQ	<---	Self-regulation (EIAS)	-0.045	0.045	-1.009	-0.059	0.313
CDDQ	<---	Motivation (EIAS)	0.058	0.052	1.100	0.069	0.271
CDDQ	<---	Emphaty (EIAS)	0.014	0.055	0.258	0.017	0.796
CDDQ	<---	Social skills (EIAS)	-0.066	0.057	-1.168	-0.076	0.243

predictor of career decision difficulty. However, extraversion and self-awareness were negative predictors of career difficulty. Openness, and conscientiousness, subscales of personality and emotional self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, subscales of emotional intelligence were found not

to be the predictors of career decision difficulty. In line with this result, similar findings can be found in the related literature. Martincin and Stead (2014) found that there was a positive relationship between career decision difficulties and emotional instability, and there was a negative relationship between career decision difficulty

and extraversion. Di Fabio et al. (2015) found that extraversion and emotional instability were the predictors of career decision difficulties. Similar results have emerged in another study (Di Fabio et al., 2013). There are also studies showing that emotional intelligence is a predictor of career decision difficulty (Di Fabio et al., 2013; Di Fabio et al., 2012; Puffer, 2010).

There are few studies in which emotional intelligence and five factor personality traits were predictors of the career-decision making difficulty. Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2009) found that there was a positive relationship between career decision difficulty and emotional instability, while there was a negative relationship between certain subscales of personality and all other subscales of emotional intelligence. Extraversion and openness have been found to be negative predictors of internal intelligence and stress management. These dimensions accounted for 44% of the variance of career decision difficulty.

Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2009) emphasized that similar studies need to be conducted in different cultures. In Turkish context, there seem to be similarities as well as differences. Extraversion was found to be a predictor of career decision difficulties. Individuals who score high on the extraversion dimension are known to be more talkative, caring and social (Yazgan- İnanç and Yerlikaya, 2016). Therefore, it can be said that individuals with strong interpersonal relationships have fewer problems in situations in which they make their career decisions because individuals with extraversion make career decisions based on their social relations and interpersonal communication skills through which they learn about others' career experiences.

Openness is another variable that predicts career instability in Italian context. However, this study found that openness was not the predictor of career decision difficulty. Features of openness dimension are multi-layered. Somer, Korkmaz and Tatar (2002), and Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2009) have shown that these features are analytical, curious, complex, independent, creative, liberal, non-traditional, broad, imaginative, ambitious, artistic, open to different cultures. Therefore, there seems no consensus on the features of openness dimension (Somer et al., 2002). Openness also includes features such as being non-traditional, independent, liberal, open to different and new cultures. For this reason, it can be said that this dimension, which can be affected by cultural characteristics, may differ from culture to culture in predicting career decision difficulties.

Emotional instability is another predictor of career decision difficulty in Turkish context. It can be said that individuals who are indecisive about their careers may have anxiety, stress, depression and complex emotions. In addition, self-awareness is the predictor of career decision difficulty. This finding shows that individuals' self-awareness is an important factor in career decision.

In theories of career choice, individuals' self-awareness is emphasized. Since dimensions of EQ (emotional self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills) are related to social interaction, these dimensions can be said not to be influential in career decision. In Turkish culture, social interaction may be more influential (Ördem, 2017).

Individuals who can understand their own emotions, states of emotions and why they are in this mood will experience relatively fewer difficulties regarding career decision. One's being aware of one's own emotions might affect one's career decision difficulty. Although emotional processes play such a crucial role in career decision difficulty, Puffer (2010) points out that career theories and counseling largely ignore individuals' emotions. For this reason, it can be said that it is important to emphasize individuals' emotions in future studies and career counseling.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that individuals' emotional processes and active social relations may reduce their career decision difficulties. Self-awareness-enhancing activities can be included into group guidance activities for students who have difficulty in career decision-making. In career counseling, it may be useful to focus on self-awareness of individuals' emotions.

Self-awareness about emotions can be gained by supporting clients who are thought to have low self-awareness. In this study, it was found that emotions and some personality traits were found to influence career decision difficulties in Turkish context. However, as Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2009) have pointed out, cross-cultural studies need to be performed to better understand this situation.

This study has certain limitations. Gender was not taken into consideration. There are studies that show that women and men may differ in emotional features. They may also vary in career-decision making difficulties. Since this study largely focused on the prediction of EQ and personality on career-decision making difficulty, gender was excluded. In future studies, gender can also be taken into account. As this study was conducted in a Mediterranean coastal city, it is limited to cultural aspects of this region. This study can be conducted in various countries and cities in order for the findings to be generalized.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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