EJSSE

Eurasian Journal of Sport Sciences and Education
Avrasya Spor Bilimleri ve Eğitim Dergisi
Vol: 7, Issue: 2, 2025
E-ISSN: 2717-8455
URL: http://www.dergipark.org.tr/ejsse

The Effect of Personality Traits and Life Skills of Physical Education and Sports Teacher Candidates on Pre-professional Teacher Identity*

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Original Article
Received: 09.07.2025 Accepted: 29.09.2025
DOI: 10.47778/ejsse.1738107
Online Published: 30.09.2025

Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the effects of personality traits and life skills on the pre-professional teacher identity of prospective physical education and sports teachers. The research was conducted with 622 teacher candidates enrolled in Schools of Physical Education and Sports and Faculties of Sports Sciences at seven state universities in Türkiye. Data were collected using the Five Factor Personality Scale, the Life Skills Scale, and the Pre-Professional Teacher Identity Scale, and analyzed through t-test, ANOVA, correlation, and multiple regression techniques. The findings revealed that life skills and personality traits were significantly associated with pre-professional teacher identity. In particular, the subdimensions of life skills such as empathy, self-awareness, and communication skills were strong predictors of teacher identity. Among personality traits, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience contributed positively, while neuroticism did not have a significant effect. Additionally, differences were observed according to variables such as gender, type of sport, and work experience, indicating that both individual and contextual factors shape teacher identity development. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that the integration of life skills and positive personality dimensions plays a critical role in strengthening the professional identity of prospective physical education and sports teachers. These results highlight the need for teacher education programs, particularly in the field of sports sciences, to place greater emphasis on life skills training and the recognition of personality traits in order to support identity formation.

Keywords: Sports, Physical education, Life skills, Big five model, Personality traits, Pre-service teacher identity

* This study is derived from Uğur İnce's doctoral thesis titled "The Effect of Physical Education and Sports Teacher Candidates' Personality Traits and Life Skills on Their Professional Readiness and Teacher Identity," supervised by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zeki COŞKUNER. Additionally, this study was presented as an abstract paper online at the 2nd Latin American International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities held on April 5-7, 2022 / Colombia, Bogotá.

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INTRODUCTION

The modern understanding of education goes beyond the transmission of academic knowledge. It also represents a multidimensional process that supports individuals' social, emotional, and behavioral development (Napolitano et al., 2025; Ringwald et al., 2025; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). In this context, acquiring life skills such as coping with challenges encountered throughout life, effective communication, decision-making, and problem-solving has become one of the core goals of contemporary education (Evertsen & Brevik, 2024; Hsu et al., 2024; Johnson, 2009). Life skills directly influence individuals' academic success. They also contribute to personal development, social adaptation, and emotional balance (Calp & Edis, 2020; Tagat et al., 2025). Moreover, these skills enhance self-confidence, facilitate the establishment of social relationships, and improve individuals' capacity to cope with stress (Nasheeda et al., 2019; Pellegrino et al., 2025). Life skills, which play a significant role in students' academic achievement and emotional regulation, have been defined as a key area of competence in 21st-century education policies (Feraco et al., 2024; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Additionally, it is of critical importance that teachers and teacher candidates possess these skills, as they serve as role models for students and play an active role in imparting life skills (Bolat & Balaman, 2017; Wang et al., 2025).

In particular, it is critically important for prospective teachers to possess not only life skills but also distinct personality traits, as these contribute not only to their individual development but also to the formation of their professional roles and teacher identities. Teacher identity is a dynamic and multilayered construct that pertains to how individuals perceive their professional selves, the values they assign to this self, and how this identity evolves over time (Beijaard et al., 2004). This identity development process is significantly influenced by the personal characteristics of teacher candidates. Indeed, research has shown that positive personality dimensions such as extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience have a supportive effect on the development of teacher identity (Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2014). However, it has also been noted that certain traits, such as high levels of neuroticism, may hinder adaptation to the teaching profession and negatively impact identity development (Klassen & Tze, 2014). Therefore, teacher identity is shaped not only by pedagogical knowledge and skills but also by the personality structures and internal attitudes of prospective teachers (Sachs, 2005).

Contemporary teachers are expected not only to possess pedagogical knowledge and mastery of instructional methods but also to demonstrate life skills such as emotional intelligence, self-awareness, empathy, effective communication, collaboration, leadership, and stress management (Bolat & Balaman, 2017). These skills strengthen teachers' relationships with students and enhance their effectiveness across various domains, from classroom management to professional resilience (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Life skills play a critical role not only at the individual level but also in the construction of professional identity within institutional and societal contexts among prospective teachers (Popper-Giveon et al., 2016). Studies have shown that teachers with strong empathy, self-regulation, and interpersonal communication skills make direct contributions to student success and develop a stronger sense of teacher identity (Roeser et al., 2013).

Furthermore, teacher candidates with well-developed life skills tend to exhibit higher levels of professional commitment and are more successful in fostering a positive social climate in educational settings (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020).

The interaction between life skills and personality traits among prospective teachers constitutes one of the fundamental factors shaping the quality of pre-professional teacher identity. While life skills enable individuals to establish healthy relationships with their surroundings and enhance their problem-solving and decision-making abilities, personality traits determine the extent and way these skills are exhibited (Nasheeda et al., 2019). Personality dimensions within the Five Factor Model—such as extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience—play a decisive role in fostering positive attitudes toward the teaching profession and in building a solid foundation for professional identity (Friedman, 2006; John & Srivastava, 1999). These traits support prospective teachers in developing empathetic relationships with students, assuming leadership roles in the classroom, and engaging more effectively in educational interactions. On the other hand, negative personality tendencies such as neuroticism have been associated with difficulties in coping with stress, professional burnout, and uncertainties in identity development (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; McCrae & Costa, 2003). Therefore, teacher education processes require a holistic approach that encompasses both the recognition of personality structures and the development of life skills to support the formation of teacher identity.

There is a growing emphasis in contemporary teacher education on equipping prospective teachers with both personality-based competencies and life skills. This study addresses a gap in the literature, where these two constructs are often examined separately. While previous research has highlighted the role of life skills in enhancing communication and resilience, and personality traits in shaping professional attitudes, there is limited evidence on their combined influence in the unique cultural and institutional context of sports sciences in Türkiye. By integrating these two dimensions, the present study contributes to a more holistic understanding of teacher identity formation and offers implications for teacher education programs aiming to foster both personal and professional growth.

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of personality traits and life skills on the pre-professional teacher identity of prospective physical education and sports teachers. The study analysed how their individual characteristics are reflected in the development of professional identity.

METHOD

Research Model

This study utilized a quantitative research approach, specifically adopting a correlational survey design. This design type is used to explore the strength and direction of relationships among two or more variables (Karasar, 1998). Participants were clearly informed that their participation was

voluntary. However, it should be noted that the study sample was limited to state universities in Türkiye, which may restrict the diversity of socio-cultural contexts. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design and the use of self-report scales limit causal inferences and raise the potential for social desirability bias. It was limited to the Schools of Physical Education and Sports and the Faculties of Sport Sciences of universities.

Research Groups

Participants in the study were chosen through a simple random sampling strategy. As a probability-based method, this approach provides each member of the population with an equal opportunity to being included in the sample, thereby enhancing representativeness (Özen & Gül, 2007). The final sample comprised 622 pre-service physical education and sports teachers enrolled in Schools of Physical Education and Sports and Faculties of Sports Sciences at seven state universities across different regions of Türkiye. 40.8% of the participants were female, while 59.2% were male. Detailed demographic characteristics of the participants are provided in Table 1. This research was collected in the 2021-2022 academic year.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Variable	Category	N	%
Age	18-19	186	29,9
	20-21	285	45,8
	22 +	151	24,3
Sport Discipline	Team Sports	285	45,8
	Individual Sports	184	29,6
	Not an Athlete	153	24,6
Gender	Female	254	40,8
	Male	368	59,2
Academic Year	1st Year	163	26,2
	2nd Year	186	29,9
	3rd Year	170	27,3
	4th Year	103	16,6
University	Erciyes University	117	18,8
	Fırat University	87	14,0
	Harran University	133	21,4
	Karabük University	101	16,2
	Pamukkale University	22	3,5
	Sakarya University	22	3,5
	Süleyman Demirel University	140	22,5
Are you a licensed athlete?	Yes	327	52,6
	No	295	47,4
Have you ever worked?	Yes	405	65,1
	No	217	34,9
How many years have you worked?	1 year	172	27,7
	2 year	232	37,3
	I have never worked	218	35,0

In Table 1, the frequency and percentage distributions of the participants based on various variables are presented. It was observed that 186 participants (29.9%) were between the ages of 18–19, 285 participants (45.8%) were between the ages of 20–21, and 151 participants (24.3%) were 22 years or older. In other words, most participants (45.8%) were in the 20–21 age range. Among the participants, 40.8% were female and 59.2% were male. Regarding sports branches,

45.8% were engaged in team sports, 29.6% were involved in individual sports, and 24.6% were not affiliated with any sports discipline. It was found that licensed athletes outnumbered non-licensed ones. In response to the question "Have you ever worked?", more participants answered "yes" than "no". Of all participants, 27.7% had worked for one year, 37.3% for two years or more, and 35% had never worked.

Data Collection Tools

This study utilized four instruments for data collection. These included a Personal Information Form as well as three standardized scales measuring personality traits, life skills, and pre-service teacher identity.

The Personal Information Form was developed by the researchers to collect demographic data from participants, including variables such as age, gender, sport discipline, academic year, university, licensed athlete status, and work experience.

The Big Five Personality Inventory, originally developed by John, Donahue, and Kentle (1991) and revised by Benet-Martinez and John (1998), was adapted into Turkish by Karaman et al. (2010). The inventory includes 44 items rated on a five-point Likert scale and assesses five personality traits: Extraversion (α = .77), Agreeableness (α = .81), Conscientiousness (α = .84), Neuroticism (α = .75), and Openness to Experience (α = .86). The instrument demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity for use in Türkiye.

The Life Skills Scale (LSS), developed and validated by Bolat and Balaman (2017), consists of 30 items across five subdimensions: Stress and Emotion Management (α = .82), Empathy and Self-Awareness (α = .77), Decision-Making and Problem Solving (α = .72), Creative and Critical Thinking (α = .73), and Communication and Interpersonal Skills (α = .66). The overall internal consistency of the scale was α = .90.

The Pre-Professional Teacher Identity Scale, created by Friesen and Besley (2013) and adapted into Turkish by Arpacı and Bardakçı (2015), was a unidimensional 17-item scale that used a five-point Likert format. The internal consistency coefficient was α = .93 in the adaptation study and α = .915 in the present study, indicating high reliability.

Ethical Approval

Ethical clearance was granted by the Ethics Committee for Social and Human Sciences Research at Fırat University (Protocol No: 404125, dated July 29, 2020).

Analysis of Data

In this study, the assumption of normality for the data obtained from the scales and their subdimensions was evaluated first. The skewness and kurtosis values were found to range between +1.5 and-1.5, indicating a normal distribution, consistent with the criteria suggested by (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

To identify differences in the study group across various variables, Independent Samples t-Test was applied for comparisons between two groups, while One-Way ANOVA was used for comparisons involving three or more groups. When significant differences were detected, the Tukey post hoc test was utilized to determine the source of the variation. Additionally, correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships among the scale subdimensions. To evaluate the predictive relationships between the variables, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was employed. All statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS version 22.0, and the significance threshold was set at $p < .05$.

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings from the data analysis.

Table 2. Independent samples t-test results for the five-factor personality inventory by gender

Subdimensions	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	*Sd.*	t	p
Extraversion	Female	254	3,43	,47	1,15	,25
	Male	368	3,38	,52		
Conscientiousness	Female	254	3,58	,45	1,53	,12
	Male	368	3,52	,49		
Agreeableness	Female	254	3,51	,41	,06	,95
	Male	368	3,51	,47		
Neuroticism	Female	254	3,27	,47	-,15	,91
	Male	368	3,27	,53		
Openness to Experience	Female	254	3,60	,50	-1,23	,21
	Male	368	3,65	,51		

p>0,05

As shown in Table 2, the mean scores of the Five-Factor Personality Inventory subdimensions were compared based on the gender variable. For the *Extraversion* subdimension, the mean score was 3.43 ± 0.47 for females and 3.38 ± 0.52 for males. For *Conscientiousness*, females scored 3.58 ± 0.45, while males scored 3.52 ± 0.49. In the *Agreeableness* subdimension, both females and males had an identical mean score of 3.51 (± 0.41 and ± 0.47, respectively). In *Neuroticism*, the mean score was 3.27 ± 0.47 for females and 3.27 ± 0.53 for males. Lastly, for *Openness to Experience*, females had a mean score of 3.60 ± 0.50 and males 3.65 ± 0.51. No statistically significant differences were found in any of the subdimensions according to gender.

Table 3. Independent samples t-test results for the five-factor personality inventory by prior work experience

Subdimensions	Work Experience	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd.	t	p
Extraversion	Yes	404	3,43	,50	2,136	**,03***
	No	217	3,34			
Conscientiousness	Yes	404	3,56	,46	1,034	,30
	No	217	3,51			
Agreeableness	Yes	404	3,55	,41	2,943	**,00****
	No	217	3,44			
Neuroticism	Yes	404	3,28	,48	,455	,64
	No	217	3,26			
Openness to Experience	Yes	404	3,67	,51	2,197	**,02***
	No	217	3,57			

p<0,05*, p<0,01**

According to the results of the independent samples t-test conducted to compare the subdimensions of personality by work experience, significant differences were observed in extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience. Participants with work experience reported higher mean scores in extraversion ($\bar{X}$=3.43) compared to those without work experience ($\bar{X}$=3.34), and this difference was statistically significant (t=2.136, p<.05). Similarly, individuals with work experience scored significantly higher on agreeableness ($\bar{X}$=3.55) than those without such experience ($\bar{X}$=3.44) (t=2.943, p<.01). In addition, work experience was positively associated with openness to experience, as participants with work experience had higher mean scores ($\bar{X}$=3.67) than those without work experience ($\bar{X}$=3.57), and this difference reached statistical significance (t=2.197, p<.05). On the other hand, no significant differences were found between groups in conscientiousness (t=1.034, p>.05) and neuroticism (t=0.455, p>.05). These findings suggest that work experience is associated with higher levels of extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience, whereas it does not appear to exert a meaningful influence on conscientiousness or neuroticism.

Table 4. Independent samples t-test results for the pre-professional teacher identity scale by gender

	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t	p
Pre-Professional Teacher Identity Scale	Female	254	62,67	7,22	3,34	**,00****
	Male	368	60,34	9,37		

p<0,01**

As shown in Table 4, the mean scores of male and female participants on the *Pre-Professional Teacher Identity Scale* were compared according to gender. The results revealed a statistically significant difference in favor of female participants ($p < .01$). In other words, female participants scored significantly higher than male participants on the Pre-Professional Teacher Identity Scale.

Table 5. Independent samples t-test results for the life skills scale by gender

	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t	p
Coping with Stress and Emotions	Female	254	3,43	,71	-3,241	**,00****
	Male	368	3,62	,71		
Empathy and Self-Awareness	Female	254	4,09	,60	-1,153	,25
	Male	368	4,15	,64		
Decision Making and Problem Solving	Female	254	3,98	,62	,166	,86
	Male	368	3,97	,70		
Creative and Critical Thinking	Female	254	4,08	,66	,500	,67
	Male	368	4,05	,68		
Communication and Interpersonal Skills	Female	254	4,10	,74	,844	,39
	Male	368	4,05	,73		

p<0,01**

As shown in Table 5, the mean scores of male and female participants on the Life Skills Scale were compared by gender. A statistically significant difference was observed only in the *Coping with Stress and Emotions* subscale in favor of male participants ($p < .01$). No significant differences were found between genders in the other subscale.

Table 6. Independent samples t-test results for the life skills scale by the variable "Are you a licensed athlete?"

	Licensed Athlete	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	T	p
Coping with Stress and Emotions	Yes	327	3,64	,73	3,599	**,00****
	No	295	3,44	,69		
Empathy and Self-Awareness	Yes	327	4,17	,66	1,650	,10
	No	295	4,08	,58		
Decision Making and Problem Solving	Yes	327	4,02	,69	1,741	,08
	No	295	3,92	,65		
Creative and Critical Thinking	Yes	327	4,07	,72	,418	,67
	No	295	4,05	,62		
Communication and Interpersonal Skills	Yes	327	4,08	,76	,377	,70
	No	295	4,06	,70		

p<0,01**

As shown in Table 6, participants' mean scores on the Life Skills Scale were compared based on whether they were licensed athletes. A statistically significant difference was found only in the *Coping with Stress and Emotions* subscale ($p < .001$), favoring those who reported being licensed athletes. No significant differences were observed in the other subscales.

Table 7. Independent samples t-test results for the life skills scale by the variable "Have you worked before?"

	Have You Worked Before?	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t	p
Coping with Stress and Emotions	Yes	404	3,60	,73	2,599	**,01***
	No	217	3,44	,69		
Empathy and Self-Awareness	Yes	404	4,15	,60	1,167	,24
	No	217	4,09	,67		
Decision Making and Problem Solving	Yes	404	3,97	,67	-,031	,97
	No	217	3,97	,67		
Creative and Critical Thinking	Yes	404	4,07	,67	,366	,71
	No	217	4,05	,67		
Communication and Interpersonal Skills	Yes	404	4,07	,71	,051	,95
	No	217	4,07	,78		

p<0,05*

As illustrated in Table 7, participants' scores on the Life Skills Scale were analyzed based on whether they had previous work experience. A statistically significant difference was found only

in the *Coping with Stress and Emotions* subscale ($p < .05$), with participants who had work experience scoring higher. No significant differences were observed in the other subscales.

Table 8. One-Way ANOVA results of the big five personality scale by age variable

Subdimensions	Age	N	$\bar{X}$	*Ss*	f	p	Difference
Extraversion	18-19[1]	186	3,36	,50	1,60	,20	
	20-21[2]	285	3,40	,51			
	22 +[3]	151	3,45	,46			
	Total	622	3,40	,50			
Conscientiousness	18-19[1]	186	3,53	,49	,29	,74	
	20-21[2]	285	3,53	,46			
	22 +[3]	151	3,57	,47			
	Total	622	3,54	,47			
Agreeableness	18-19[1]	186	3,46	,47	2,57	,08	
	20-21[2]	285	3,52	,43			
	22 +[3]	151	3,56	,44			
	Total	622	3,51	,45			
Neuroticism	18-19[1]	186	3,30	,54	1,00	,36	
	20-21[2]	285	3,28	,50			
	22 +[3]	151	3,22	,47			
	Total	622	3,27	,51			
Openness to Experience	18-19[1]	186	3,54	,54	4,15	**,01***	**1-2**
	20-21[2]	285	3,68	,50			
	22 +[3]	151	3,65	,47			
	Total	622	3,63	,51			

p<0,05*

As shown in Table 8, the mean scores of the subscales of the Big Five Personality Scale were examined according to age groups. Among the subscales, only *Openness to Experience* showed a statistically significant difference ($p < .01$). Post-hoc analysis revealed that this difference was between the 18–19 and 20–21 age groups. Other subscales did not show any significant differences by age.

Table 9. One-Way ANOVA results of the big five personality scale by type of sport branch

Subdimensions	Sport Branch	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	F	p	Difference
Extraversion	Team Sports[1]	285	3,42	,50	1,06	,34	
	Individual Sports[2]	184	3,40	,52			
	Non-Athletes[3]	153	3,35	,46			
	Total	622	3,40	,50			
Conscientiousness	Team Sports[1]	285	3,55	,49	,877	,41	
	Individual Sports[2]	184	3,56	,51			
	Non-Athletes[3]	153	3,50	,39			
	Total	622	3,54	,47			
Agreeableness	Team Sports[1]	285	3,55	,46	3,637	**,02***	**1-3**
	Individual Sports[2]	184	3,51	,45			
	Non-Athletes[3]	153	3,43	,40			
	Total	622	3,51	,45			
Neuroticism	Team Sports[1]	285	3,29	,51	,228	,79	
	Individual Sports[2]	184	3,25	,53			
	Non-Athletes[3]	153	3,27	,47			
	Total	622	3,27	,51			
Openness to Experience	Team Sports[1]	285	3,67	,52	2,206	,11	
	Individual Sports[2]	184	3,63	,54			
	Non-Athletes[3]	153	3,57	,44			
	Total	622	3,63	,51			

p<0,05*

As seen in Table 9, the mean scores of the Big Five Personality Scale subscales were compared according to participants' sports branch. A statistically significant difference was observed in the Agreeableness subscale ($p < .05$), with team sport athletes scoring significantly higher ($\bar{X} = 3.56 \pm 0.47$) than non-athletes ($\bar{X} = 3.44 \pm 0.41$). No statistically significant differences were found in the other subscales.

Table 10. One-Way ANOVA results of the big five personality scale by academic year

Subdimensions Academic Year		N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	F	p	Difference
Extraversion	1st Year	163	3,35	,53	3,11	**,02***	1-3
	2nd Year	185	3,37	,46			
	3rd Year	171	3,50	,51			
	4th Year	103	3,38	,46			
	Total	622	3,40	,50			
Conscientiousness	1st Year	163	3,49	,47	,92	,42	
	2nd Year	185	3,55	,45			
	3rd Year	171	3,58	,49			
	4th Year	103	3,54	,49			
	Total	622	3,54	,47			
Agreeableness	1st Year	163	3,43	,44	3,44	**,01***	1-3
	2nd Year	185	3,50	,43			
	3rd Year	171	3,58	,44			
	4th Year	103	3,55	,46			
	Total	622	3,51	,45			
Neuroticism	1st Year	163	3,27	,51	1,86	,13	
	2nd Year	185	3,25	,51			
	3rd Year	171	3,34	,52			
	4th Year	103	3,20	,47			
	Total	622	3,27	,51			
Openness to Experience	1st Year	163	3,56	,55	3,36	**,01***	1-3
	2nd Year	185	3,62	,50			
	3rd Year	171	3,73	,50			
	4th Year	103	3,61	,44			
	Total	622	3,63	,51			

p <0,05*

As presented in Table 10, the sub-dimensions of the Big Five Personality Scale were analyzed based on academic year. Significant differences were found in Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Openness to Experience, with third-year students scoring notably higher than first-year students. However, no significant differences were observed in Conscientiousness or Neuroticism.

Table 11. One-Way ANOVA Results of the big five personality scale by university

Subdimensions	University	N	$\bar{X}$	ss	F	p	Difference
Extraversion	Erciyes University[1]	117	3,51	,49	4,487	**,00****	1-4 1-7 6-4 6-7
	Fırat University[2]	87	3,37	,56			
	Harran University[3]	133	3,46	,43			
	Karabük University[4]	101	3,28	,52			
	Pamukkale University[5]	22	3,43	,40			
	Sakarya University[6]	22	3,69	,42			
	Süleyman Demirel University[7]	140	3,31	,50			
	Total	622	3,40	,50			
Conscientiousness	Erciyes University[1]	117	3,65	,49	3,854	**,00****	1-4 1-7 3-7
	Fırat University[2]	87	3,51	,53			
	Harran University[3]	133	3,61	,44			
	Karabük University[4]	101	3,44	,49			
	Pamukkale University[5]	22	3,66	,40			
	Sakarya University[6]	22	3,63	,39			
	Süleyman Demirel University[7]	140	3,44	,44			
	Total	622	3,54	,47			
Agreeableness	Erciyes University[1]	117	3,59	,39	4,863	**,00****	1-7 2-3 3-4 3-7
	Fırat University[2]	87	3,45	,47			
	Harran University[3]	133	3,63	,40			
	Karabük University[4]	101	3,43	,50			
	Pamukkale University[5]	22	3,52	,40			
	Sakarya University[6]	22	3,66	,39			
	Süleyman Demirel University[7]	140	3,40	,45			
	Total	622	3,51	,45			
Neuroticism	Erciyes University[1]	117	3,36	,46	2,778	**,01***	1-4 1-7 3-4 3-7 4-5
	Fırat University[2]	87	3,24	,56			
	Harran University[3]	133	3,35	,46			
	Karabük University[4]	101	3,17	,55			
	Pamukkale University[5]	22	3,42	,39			
	Sakarya University[6]	22	3,28	,64			
	Süleyman Demirel University[7]	140	3,20	,49			
	Total	622	3,27	,51			
Openness to Experience	Erciyes University[1]	117	3,73	,48	4,692	**,00****	1-4 1-7 3-4 3-7 4-6 6-7
	Fırat University[2]	87	3,60	,58			
	Harran University[3]	133	3,72	,44			
	Karabük University[4]	101	3,50	,52			
	Pamukkale University[5]	22	3,71	,48			
	Sakarya University[6]	22	3,90	,37			
	Süleyman Demirel University[7]	140	3,5329	,52			
	Total	622	3,6382	,51			

p<0,05*, p<0,01**

Upon examining Table 11, the mean scores of the subdimensions of the Big Five Personality Scale were presented based on the university variable. The analysis revealed that there were statistically significant differences at a high level in all subdimensions—namely *Extraversion*, *Conscientiousness*, *Agreeableness*, *Neuroticism*, and *Openness to Experience*. The universities with the highest and lowest scores in each subdimension were as follows: in the *Extraversion* subdimension, the highest mean score was observed in Sakarya University ($\bar{X}$ = 3.69), and the lowest in Karabük University ($\bar{X}$ = 3.28); in *Conscientiousness*, the highest score belonged to

Pamukkale University ($\bar{X}$ = 3.66), while the lowest was recorded by Süleyman Demirel University ($\bar{X}$ = 3.44); for *Agreeableness*, Sakarya University again had the highest score ($\bar{X}$ = 3.66), and Süleyman Demirel University the lowest ($\bar{X}$ = 3.40); in the *Neuroticism* subdimension, the highest score was found in Pamukkale University ($\bar{X}$ = 3.42), while the lowest was in Karabük University ($\bar{X}$ = 3.17); and finally, in *Openness to Experience*, Sakarya University stood out with the highest score ($\bar{X}$ = 3.90), whereas Karabük University had the lowest ($\bar{X}$ = 3.50). Overall, it was observed that four universities consistently obtained lower average scores across all subdimensions of the scale.

Table 12. One-Way ANOVA Results of the big five personality scale according to work experience

Subdimensions	Work Experience	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	F	p	Difference
Extraversion	1 year[1]	172	3,40	,48	2,881	**,05***	2-3
	2 year or more[2]	232	3,45	,50			
	Never worked[3]	218	3,34	,50			
	Total	622	3,40	,50			
Conscientiousness	1 year[1]	172	3,54	,44	,719	,48	
	2 year or more[2]	232	3,57	,51			
	Never worked[3]	218	3,51	,46			
	Total	622	3,54	,47			
Agreeableness	1 year[1]	172	3,50	,44	5,900	**,00****	2-3
	2 year or more[2]	232	3,58	,47			
	Never worked[3]	218	3,44	,41			
	Total	622	3,51	,45			
Neuroticism	1 year[1]	172	3,24	,51	,876	,41	
	2 year or more[2]	232	3,31	,53			
	Never worked[3]	218	3,26	,48			
	Total	622	3,27	,51			
Openness to Experience	1 year[1]	172	3,62	,51	3,507	**,03***	2-3
	2 year or more[2]	232	3,70	,50			
	Never worked[3]	218	3,57	,51			
	Total	622	3,63	,51			

p<0,05* p<0,01**

Upon examining Table 12, the mean scores of the subdimensions of the Big Five Personality Scale were presented according to the variable of years of work experience. The analysis revealed that statistically significant differences were found in the subdimensions of *Extraversion*, *Agreeableness*, and *Openness to Experience*, whereas no significant differences were observed in *Conscientiousness* and *Neuroticism*. In the subdimensions where significant differences were detected, the variation was specifically between participants who had two or more years of work experience and those who had no work experience.

Tablo 13. One-Way ANOVA results of the pre-service teacher identity scale according to university variable

University	N	$\bar{x}$	Ss	F	p	Difference
Erciyes University[1]	117	62,91	8,80	7,022	**,00****	
Fırat University[2]	87	59,09	9,59			1-2
Harran University[3]	133	63,68	6,46			1-4
Karabük University[4]	101	58,29	9,11			2-3
Pamukkale University[5]	22	64,68	7,09			3-7
Sakarya University[6]	22	64,00	6,02			4-5
Süleyman Demirel University[7]	140	60,24	8,78			
Total	622	61,29	8,62			

p<0,01**

Upon examining Table 13, it is observed that there is a statistically significant difference in the Pre-Service Teacher Identity Scale scores across different universities. Post-hoc comparisons revealed that there were meaningful interactions among most universities, excluding Sakarya University, which did not appear in the significant pairwise differences. Notably, Fırat University obtained the lowest mean score on the scale, whereas Pamukkale University had the highest, marking a significant distinction between the institutions.

Table 14. One-Way ANOVA Results of the pre-service teacher identity scale according to grade level

Academic Year	N	$\overline{x}$	Ss	f	p	Difference
1st year[1]	163	60,13	9,11			
2nd year[2]	185	60,74	8,54			
3rd year[3]	171	62,91	8,39	3,292	**,02***	**1-3**
4th year[4]	103	61,41	8,06			
Total	622	61,29	8,62			

p<0,05*

As shown in Table 14, the ANOVA results for the Pre-Service Teacher Identity Scale according to grade level indicate a statistically significant difference between 1st-year and 3rd-year students ($p < 0,05$). Further examination revealed that the difference was in favor of 3rd-year students, suggesting they exhibited a stronger pre-service teacher identity compared to their 1st-year counterparts.

Table 15. Correlation relationship between the scales

Subdimension		BFP Total	LSS Total	PSTIS Total
BFP TOTAL	p	1	**,437***	**,608***
	r		,000	,000
	N		622	622
LSS TOTAL	p		1	**,486***
	r			,000
	N			622
PSTIS TOTAL	p			1
	r			
	N			

BFP: Big Five Personality Scale**, LSS:** Life Skills Scale, **PSTIS:** Pre-Service Teacher Identity Scale

The Pearson correlation analysis results in Table 15 show a statistically significant positive relationship between the Big Five Personality Scale (BFP), Life Skills Scale (LSS), and Pre-Service Teacher Identity Scale (PSTIS) ($p < 0,01$). Overall, these findings indicate meaningful positive associations among the three scales.

Table 16. Multiple Linear Regression analysis results on the effect of big five personality traits on pre-service teacher identity

BFP Traits	B	β	Ss	t	p
Extraversion	4,424	,258	,757	5,848	**,00****
Conscientiousness	3,060	,170	,748	4,090	**,00****
Agreeableness	1,872	,098	,819	2,286	**,02***
Neuroticism	-,046	-,003	,695	-,066	,94
Openness to Experience	3,957	,235	,729	5,427	**,00****
R=0,625	R^2=0,391				
F (78,940)=0,000*	p<0,001				

Dependent Variable: Pre-Service Teacher Identity
p<0,05*, p<0,01**

According to the multiple linear regression analysis results, the personality traits of *"Extraversion"* (β = .258, t = 5.848, p < 0,001), *"Conscientiousness"* (β = .170, t = 4.090, p < 0,001), *"Agreeableness"* (β = .098, t = 2.286, p >0,05), and *"Openness to Experience"* (β = .235, t = 5.427, p < 0,001) were identified as having a statistically significant positive impact on the level of Pre-Service Teacher Identity. On the other hand, *"Neuroticism"* (β = –.003, t = –.066, p > 0,05) did not have a statistically significant effect in explaining the identity level and showed a non-significant negative tendency. Overall, it was determined that the personality traits accounted for 39% of the variance in *Pre-Service Teacher Identity*. When examined in terms of subdimensions, all traits except *"Neuroticism"* were found to significantly contribute to the prediction of pre-service teacher identity.

Table 17. Multiple Linear Regression analysis results on the effect of life skills scale on pre-service teacher identity

LSS	B	β	Ss	t	p
Coping with Stress and Emotions	-,475	,499	-,040	-,952	,34
Empathy and Self-Awareness	3,110	,783	,227	3,971	**,00****
Decision-Making and Problem Solving	1,093	,686	,085	1,593	,11
Creative and Critical Thinking	,989	,740	,078	1,337	,18
Communication and Interpersonal Skills	2,728	,577	,233	4,725	**,00****
R=0,521	R^2=0,272				
F (45,998)=0,000*	p<0,001				

Dependent Variable: pre-service teacher identity

p<0,05*, p<0,01**

According to the results of the multiple linear regression analysis, the dimensions of *"Empathy and Self-Awareness"* (β = .783, t = 3.971, p <0,001) and *"Communication and Interpersonal Skills"* (β = .577, t = 4.725, p <0,001) were found to significantly and positively influence *Pre-Service Teacher Identity*. Although not statistically significant, the dimensions of *"Coping with Stress and Emotions"* (β = .499, t = –0.952, p = .342), *"Decision-Making and Problem Solving"* (β = .686, t = 1.593, p >0,05), and *"Creative and Critical Thinking"* (β = .740, t = 1.337, p >0,05) also showed a positive trend in predicting teacher identity. Notably, the subdimension *"Coping with Stress and Emotions"* demonstrated a non-significant negative contribution to the outcome variable. Overall, the life skills dimensions accounted for approximately 27% of the variance in *Pre-Service Teacher Identity*. When considered by subdimensions, only *"Empathy and Self-Awareness"* and *"Communication and Interpersonal Skills"* had a statistically significant impact on the prediction of teacher identity.

Table 18. Multiple Linear Regression analysis results on the effect of life skills and big five personality traits scales on pre-service teacher identity

	B	β	Ss	t	p
LSS TOTAL	,699	,087	,271	8,04	**0,00***
BFP TOTAL	1,231	,085	,490	14,50	**0,00***
Model Summary					
R=0,665; R^2=0,430; F (233,159) = 0,000* p<0,001					

p<0,05*, p<0,01**

According to the results of the multiple linear regression analysis, the *Life Skills Scale* ($\beta = .087$, $t = 8.04$, $p < 0{,}001$) significantly and positively predicts *Pre-Service Teacher Identity*. Similarly, the *Big Five Personality Traits Scale* ($\beta = .085$, $t = 14.50$, $p < 0{,}001$) also shows a statistically significant and positive effect. Collectively, these two scales explain approximately 43% of the variance in *Pre-Service Teacher Identity* ($R^2 = 0.430$), indicating a moderate level of predictive power. In other words, the combined influence of life skills and personality traits accounts for 43% of the variation in pre-service teacher identity levels.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, the effects of the Big Five Personality Traits (BFPT) and life skills on the pre-professional teacher identity of prospective physical education and sports teachers were examined. The results revealed several important patterns. With regard to personality traits, no statistically significant differences were observed across gender, indicating that the personality characteristics of teacher candidates did not vary by sex (Lopera-Oquendo et al., 2024; Zewude et al., 2024). This finding is consistent with Ateş (2009), who reported no significant differences between male and female athletes in terms of personality scores. However, other studies present contrasting evidence. For example, recent research suggests that female students may exhibit higher levels of openness, agreeableness, and emotional sensitivity than males (Kordzadeh & Bozan, 2024; Xu, 2024). Similarly, women have been shown to display greater emotional reactivity, consistent with higher neuroticism scores (Tomczak et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). Gender differences in openness, honesty, and emotionality have also been identified across various contexts (Ferrándiz et al., 2025; Flinn et al., 2024), and Russo and Stol (2022) further highlighted that women scored lower than men in psychopathy but higher in honesty, emotionality, and openness to experience. Earlier studies (Barrick et al., 1998; Bradley et al., 2013; Neuman et al., 1999) similarly demonstrated that women outperformed men in traits such as openness to experience. Cross-cultural research also indicates that gender differences in personality traits tend to become more evident in societies with higher levels of gender equality (Kajonius & Mac Giolla, 2017; Mac Giolla & Kajonius, 2019; Stackhouse et al., 2024). These divergent results underline the complex and context-dependent nature of personality trait development.

These divergent results underline the complex and context-dependent nature of personality trait development. One possible explanation is that socio-cultural norms and gender role expectations may shape the way personality traits are expressed and reported. In societies where gender equality is more pronounced, differences between males and females may become more visible as individuals are freer to express their personality characteristics. Moreover, in teacher education and sports sciences contexts, pedagogical practices and professional role expectations could also contribute to these variations by encouraging traits such as empathy, communication, and openness more strongly in female candidates.

With respect to athletic status, no significant differences were found in the BFPT subdimensions between licensed athletes and non-athletes, despite extensive evidence suggesting that athletes are often more extroverted, socially engaged, and emotionally resilient (Tazegül, 2014; Tazegül, 2017). Previous studies have shown that participation in sports enhances extraversion, reduces neurotic tendencies, and fosters self-confidence and responsibility (Rogowska, 2020; Steca et al., 2018). In terms of employment status, significant differences were observed in extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience, with individuals who had prior work experience scoring higher. This suggests that work experience contributes to personality development by reinforcing communication, discipline, entrepreneurship, and social adaptation (Çelik & Beşpınar, 2011; Gelen, 2017). Furthermore, teacher candidates involved in team sports scored higher in agreeableness, aligning with literature indicating that team sports foster cooperation and social cohesion (Kim, 2018; Rogowska, 2020). Similarly, team athletes are often found to exhibit higher extraversion and lower neuroticism, whereas low cooperation is associated with reduced agreeableness (Piepiora, 2020). The observed differences between team and individual sports also point to the role of social interaction in teacher identity development. Team sports inherently emphasize cooperation and collective goals, which may foster interpersonal skills that are directly transferable to teaching. In contrast, individual sports may cultivate self-discipline and autonomy but might provide fewer opportunities for the development of communication and empathy, which are central to teacher identity.

Parallel to these findings, results from the Life Skills Scale (LSS) indicated notable differences across gender and athletic status. Male teacher candidates scored significantly higher in "Coping with Stress and Emotions," which aligns with studies suggesting that men utilize more effective coping strategies and sometimes benefit from avoidance-based strategies in performance contexts (Bahramizadeh & Besharat, 2010; Yönet & Kılıç, 2016). Licensed athletes also scored higher in this subdimension, supporting earlier findings that sports participation enhances stress regulation and emotional resilience. Indeed, physical activity has been shown to regulate mood, increase energy and attention, improve sleep quality, and empower individuals (Youngs & Youngs, 2016), while elite athletes are particularly adept at managing stress and complex emotions (Budyakova, 2020). Employment history further contributed to stress-coping skills, as individuals with two or more years of experience performed better than those with less or no experience. Although long-term employment has sometimes been linked to reduced academic performance (Culha & Demirtaş, 2021), short-term or structured employment has been associated with personal growth and improved stress management (Bezerra et al., 2009; Omokhodion et al., 2006), thereby indirectly supporting teacher identity formation.

Regarding pre-service teacher identity (PSTI) directly, female candidates achieved significantly higher scores than their male counterparts, corroborating earlier research that women often adopt a stronger sense of teacher identity (Çalı & Doğar, 2023; Motallebzadeh & Kazemi, 2018). This may also reflect broader societal perceptions of teaching as a profession more closely aligned with femininity. Beyond demographic factors, regression analyses revealed that four personality

traits—extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience—were significant positive predictors of teacher identity, while neuroticism was not a significant factor and even displayed a slight negative association (Costa et al., 1995; Gosling et al., 2003). Overall, personality traits accounted for 39% of the variance in teacher identity, highlighting their substantial role in shaping professional identity formation.

Life skills were found to be powerful predictors of teacher identity, explaining 27% of the variance. Among the subdimensions, empathy, self-awareness, and communication skills demonstrated significant positive effects, whereas stress coping, decision-making, and creative thinking did not yield statistically significant results. This aligns with prior evidence underscoring the role of empathy, mindful awareness, and interpersonal communication in teacher development (Germer et al., 2013). Given that teaching is inherently relational, such competencies appear indispensable for physical education and sports teachers, who must act as role models in communication, leadership, and emotional regulation. Moreover, the role of work experience in strengthening stress management and emotional control suggests that experiential learning opportunities during teacher training could play a pivotal role in shaping professional identity.

Taken together, the study demonstrates that both personality traits and life skills contribute significantly to the development of pre-service teacher identity. The combined explanatory power of these constructs underlines the need to approach teacher identity from a holistic perspective. The findings also point to important cultural implications. Within the Turkish context, faculties of sports sciences are uniquely structured, balancing theoretical knowledge with practical training, yet life skills and personality development often remain underemphasized. By showing how these factors shape teacher identity, this study underscores the importance of embedding structured life skills training—such as empathy, stress management, and interpersonal communication—into teacher education curricula. In addition, differences observed by gender, sport type, and employment status suggest that identity development is influenced by both individual and contextual factors.

In conclusion, this research contributes to the teacher identity literature by being among the few studies to examine personality traits and life skills together rather than separately. It highlights the importance of integrating personal dispositions and psychosocial competencies to better understand identity formation in teacher education. Beyond its theoretical contribution, the study offers practical implications: teacher training programs should place greater emphasis on cultivating life skills and supporting personality development, particularly in physical education contexts where teamwork, resilience, and leadership are essential. Future research should extend these findings by employing longitudinal designs, expanding to diverse cultural contexts, and incorporating mixed-methods approaches to capture the complex, dynamic nature of teacher identity formation. Taken together, the study offers a threefold contribution: theoretically, it advances teacher identity research by integrating two constructs that are often studied separately; methodologically, it demonstrates the explanatory power of combining correlational and regression analyses in examining identity formation; and practically, it provides evidence-based

recommendations for embedding life skills and personality development strategies into teacher education curricula, especially in faculties of sports sciences.

Recommendations

In order to develop skills such as coping with anxiety and stress, individuals should be provided with targeted training and opportunities to actively experience these competencies. It is of particular importance that the skills discussed in this study be effectively taught to pre-service physical education and sports teachers by educators in faculties of sports sciences. Since teacher candidates are equipped with theoretical knowledge during their academic training, they will also require these life skills when applying that knowledge in practice.

Educators who are expected to cultivate life skills in their students must themselves be knowledgeable about fundamental life skills and their components. This awareness would allow them not only to enhance their own life skills as adults but also to make meaningful contributions to the development of life skills in the children with whom they work.

Furthermore, personality assessment has gained popularity as a useful tool in identifying individuals' psychological states. Through personality profiling, educators can recognize the challenges students face and better understand their strengths, weaknesses, and desirable traits. Such information is especially valuable for instructors and coaches, as it enables them to guide students in the most appropriate and beneficial manner. Therefore, it is essential that teacher candidates are aware of their own personality traits and possess a general understanding of personality characteristics. It is recommended that pre-service physical education and sports teachers be encouraged to engage in part-time work or be provided with increased internship opportunities during their studies, as having prior work experience was found to enhance personality traits such as extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience, as well as life skills like coping with stress and emotions.

In light of these findings, structured modules that integrate life skills such as communication, empathy, and stress management into both theoretical and practical courses could be incorporated into teacher education programs within faculties of sport sciences. Workshop-based activities may be organized to enable teacher candidates to actively apply these skills in realistic classroom and sport settings. In addition, it is recommended that personality assessment tools be systematically employed at the beginning of the training process to help candidates identify both their strengths and areas for improvement. Expanding internship programs and part-time teaching experiences would also provide opportunities for candidates to apply their theoretical knowledge in authentic school and sport environments while simultaneously developing their life skills. Embedding these practices into teacher education curricula would better prepare future physical education and sports teachers for the multifaceted demands of the profession.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the research sample consisted only of students from state universities in Türkiye. As private universities and other socio-cultural contexts were not included, the generalizability of the results to all pre-service teachers remains limited. Future studies should therefore expand the sample to include private universities and teacher education programs from diverse socio-cultural regions in order to strengthen generalizability and capture contextual differences in teacher identity formation. Second, the cross-sectional design employed in this study restricts the possibility of making causal inferences. Longitudinal or experimental studies are needed to better understand how personality traits and life skills influence the long-term development of teacher identity. Third, all data were collected through self-report scales, which may have introduced the risk of social desirability bias. Although reliable and valid instruments were used, future studies could benefit from employing multi-method approaches such as observational techniques, peer evaluations, or qualitative interviews. Finally, this study was conducted within the specific cultural and institutional context of sports sciences faculties in Türkiye. While this provides important insights into a unique setting, future research should replicate and extend these findings across different disciplines and international contexts to strengthen external validity.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Authors' Contribution: All authors contributed equally to the study.

Ethical Approval
Ethics Committee: Firat University Ethics Committee for Social and Human Sciences Research
Date/Protocol number: 29.07.2020 / 404125

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