

Examining The Effects of Salespeople's Personality Traits and Personal Values on Sales Performance¹

Kişilik Özellikleri ve Kişisel Değerlerin Satış Performansına Etkisinin İncelenmesi

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ÖZET

Bu araştırma, özellikle kişilik özelliklerinin, kişisel değerlerin, müşteri odaklılığın ve yaratıcılığın birbiriyle bağlantılı rollerini araştırarak, satış elemanı performansını etkileyen çok yönlü yönleri derinlemesine inceliyor. Dışadönüklük ve özdenetim/sorumluluk gibi kişilik özellikleri, çeşitli sektörlerde satış başarısıyla bağlantılı önemli unsurlar olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Sosyallik, kendine güven ve hırsla karakterize edilen dışadönüklük, özellikle işbirliği ve iletişimin çok önemli olduğu rollerde kişiler arası güçlü ilişkileri ve etkili ekip çalışmasını teşvik eder. Öte yandan, çalışkanlık, güvenilirlik ve detaylara dikkat gibi özelliklerle ifade edilen, özdenetim/sorumluluk karmaşık görevlerin yerine getirilmesinde, yüksek standartların korunmasında ve satış ortamlarında karmaşık kişiler arası dinamiklerin yönetilmesinde etkili olmaktadır. Bu çalışma, kültürel geçmişlerden, yetiştirilme tarzından ve yaşam deneyimlerinden etkilenen kişisel değerlerin dinamik doğasını kabul etmektedir. Bu yol gösterici ilkeler karar almayı, hedef belirlemeyi ve davranışı etkileyerek satış performansını önemli ölçüde etkiler. Bu araştırma, kişilik özellikleri ile kişisel değerler arasındaki etkileşimi kabul ederek, bireylerin içsel motivasyonlarının ve inançlarının satış rollerindeki başarılarına nasıl katkıda bulunduğu dair incelikli içgörülerini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu temel kavramların kapsamlı bir analizi yoluyla, satış yönetimi stratejileri için uygulanabilir öneriler sağlamak amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Kişilik Özellikleri, Kişisel Değerler, Satış Performansı

Jel Kodları:

M30, J24, D46

ABSTRACT

This research delves deeply into the multifaceted aspects influencing salesperson performance, particularly exploring the interconnected roles of personality traits, personal values, customer orientation, and creativity. Personality traits, such as extraversion and conscientiousness, have emerged as crucial elements linked to sales success across various industries. Extraversion, characterized by sociability, self-confidence, and ambition, fosters robust interpersonal relationships and effective teamwork, especially in roles where collaboration and communication are paramount. On the other hand, conscientiousness, marked by traits like diligence, reliability, and attention to detail, proves instrumental in handling complex tasks, maintaining high standards, and navigating intricate interpersonal dynamics within sales environments. This study recognizes the dynamic nature of personal values, influenced by cultural backgrounds, upbringing, and life experiences. These guiding principles influence decision-making, goal-setting, and behavior, significantly impacting sales performance. By acknowledging the interplay between personality traits and personal values, this research aims to uncover nuanced insights into how individuals' intrinsic motivations and beliefs contribute to their success in sales roles. A comprehensive analysis of these basic concepts aims to provide actionable recommendations for sales management strategies.

Keywords:

Personality Traits, Personal Values, Sales Performance

Jel Codes:

M30, J24, D46

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Introduction

Improving salesperson performance is an ongoing challenge in sales management, with various individual factors being identified as potential drivers of success. The significance of certain individual factors in providing guidance and support has been highlighted (Bartkus et al., 1989, p. 11-12). These factors include personality traits (Vinchur et al., 1998, p.588; Furnham and Fudge, 2008, p.12; Judge and Zapata, 2015, p.6) and personal values (Herjanto & Franklin, 2019, p.105), customer orientation (Mehrabian et al., 2012, p.218), and creativity, all of which are positively correlated with sales performance.

Given that personality traits and personal values encompass and influence customer orientation, emotional intelligence, creativity, and adaptive selling, our research focuses on these core concepts. Many studies have indicated that overcoming sales job challenges depends on personality traits and personal values, with individuals possessing specific traits and values being more resilient in the face of difficulties (Strutton et al., 1995, p.134). Personality significantly impacts how individuals perceive their work environment and tasks, thereby affecting their performance (Aytaç, 2001, p.1). The utility of using personality variables to predict job performance has been underscored. In sales, a salesperson's personality often plays a pivotal role in their success, with many researchers asserting its importance in achieving higher performance levels and advocating for the identification of suitable personality traits for predicting sales success (Deeter-Schmelz and Sojka, 2007, p.148).

Personality is crucial for understanding an individual's unique characteristics and the variations among them. While personality traits are relatively stable and biologically rooted, values are influenced by one's environment, including culture, upbringing, and life experiences, making them more dynamic and learnable (Rokeach, 1973, p.20; Parks-Leduc et al., 2015, p.9). Traits can shape values, as individuals exhibiting consistent behavioral traits tend to prioritize the goals associated with those traits (Roccas et al., 2002, p.800).

In existing literature, extraversion and conscientiousness have been linked to sales performance, with conscientiousness often emerging as the strongest predictor. However, the relationship between other personality traits and performance remains an area of study (Barrick and Mount, 1991, p. 5-6; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000, p. 870-871). Another study highlighted conscientiousness as the top predictor across all occupations, while agreeableness and extraversion were particularly relevant for roles involving interpersonal interactions (Judge & Zapata, 2014, p. 9-10). Extraversion, with its emphasis on social interaction, is a valid predictor of job performance, especially in sales roles (Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003, p.69). Similarly, higher agreeableness is associated with better performance in roles with less autonomy, which is significant in sales where interpersonal dynamics are crucial (Barrick and Mount, 1991, p.11).

The conscientiousness trait has been the focus; however, other personality traits also affect performance significantly, and the necessity of examining these traits has been emphasized (Hurtz and Donovan, 2000, p.870). It has been stated that achievement value is related to academic performance. However, by investigating the relationship between achievement value and performance in the workplace context, the subject can be examined further (Parks and Guay, 2012, p.151). In addition, additional work is needed to understand the dynamic processes by which personality shapes attitudes and behaviors in the workplace. It is stated that there is a need for models that explain how personality affects values (Klinger and Mallon, 2015, p.824). In this study, the mediator variable was considered due to the dynamic nature of personal values, and the effect of personality traits on sales performance was investigated. In this context of the study, theoretical explanations were made as a result of the literature review. The research findings on the salespeople were examined and discussed in the methodology section.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1. The Relationship Between Personality Traits and Personal Values

Values represent our beliefs about what we should do, while personality reflects our natural inclinations. Unlike personality traits, which typically do not contradict each other, values can clash. (Parks and Guay, 2009, p.677). Both values and traits help summarize past behaviors and forecast future actions. For instance, they can predict the general behavioral tendencies individuals are likely to exhibit (Dollinger et al., 1996, p.25).

Agreeableness personality trait is positively and highly correlated with benevolence. Agreeableness explains how friendly, loyal, and cooperative individuals tend to be, while the benevolence value domain reflects individuals' belief that they are honest, friendly, and helpful. A positive correlation was found between extraversion and stimulation value (Parks and Guay, 2009, p.677). Extroverts are characterized by their need for higher emotional stimulation and naturally place a higher value on stimulation. A positive relationship was found between agreeableness, benevolence, conformity, and

tradition. A compatible person with a higher need for acceptance by others will approve of these values more (Luk and Bond, 1993, p.431).

Individuals who score high on agreeableness tend to value being pro-social, especially benevolence towards people in their close circle, and, at the same time, universalism towards people in society in general. They also tend to restrain their impulses (conformity and tradition), possibly to facilitate understanding with others. Individuals who score high in extraversion tend to value excitement and diversity (stimulation), and they value dominance, success, and developing their interests (power, achievement and hedonism) through fun (Parks-Leduc et al., 2015, p.8).

1.2. The Relationship Between Personality Traits and Sales Performance

There is a positive relationship between the personality trait of the manager and the salesperson with the extravert personality trait and the job performance. It is stated that individuals with extraverted personality traits establish relationships by acquiring a more comfortable environment (Mahlamaki et al., 2014, p.6). However, the power of extraversion to predict success in sales depends on the type of sales job and the products sold. Therefore, some aspects of extraverted behaviors, such as socializing and attracting attention, can be helpful personality traits in the sales process (Furnham and Fudge, 2008, p.12). Extraversion is associated with job performance in occupations where interaction with others is essential. Being sociable, self-confident, energetic, and ambitious will contribute to business success, especially sales. In addition, if working in a team includes a critical component of working, it is expected that employees with the personality trait of extraversion will be more effective in teamwork. Based on these findings, extraversion will trigger and affect success in jobs where interpersonal relationships are intense, especially in matters such as mentoring and leadership (especially management and sales positions), and it will be important in providing high performance in the teamwork process (Barrick et al., 2001, p.14). This personality trait, which has a strong relationship with competitiveness and is characterized by superiority, is a strong determinant in predicting sales performance. There is a positive relationship that extraversion increases sales performance in an environment where performance is rewarded (Barrick et al., 2002, p.44).

The strong association of extraversion and conscientiousness with sales success or performance is a critical framework that predicts sales performance regarding self-confidence and determination (Vinchur et al., 1998, p.589). In addition, being extraverted affects sales positively, as well as affecting managerial processes (Hurtz and Donovan, 2000, p.870). Extravert personality traits have a positive effect on sales performance and have a higher effect than other traits (agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscientiousness) (Waheed, et al., 2017, p.140).

Agreeableness is positively associated with job performance if it requires attention to detail and independence in completing the job or task. In jobs that require attention to detail, compliant people are more docile and tolerant (McCrae and Costa, 1992, p.230) to better meet their detail-oriented job expectations. In other words, compliance with rules, standards, and procedures is essential in detail-oriented works and is more suitable for the structure of employees who have the feature of agreeableness (Judge and Zapata, 2014, p.20). It is crucial to be agreeableness for jobs that require interpersonal interaction, so being sympathetic, cooperative, and good-natured has been found to have a consistent effect on performance (Hurtz and Donovan, 2000, p. 872). Compatible people cooperate with others (Butcher, 2009, p.55) and want to help them. Extraversion and agreeableness are valid predictors of performance criteria for occupations such as management and sales (Barrick and Mount, 1991, p.4).

Agreeableness is associated with kind, understanding, collaborative, reliable, thoughtful, and helpful dispositions, and they can cope more easily with people who are especially rude or who are more challenging to satisfy, in which they make an effort to show positive relationships with others (Judge and Zapata, 2014, p.24).

1.3. Relationship Between Personal Values and Sales Performance

Salespeople who prioritize achievement and excitement-oriented values are more inclined to engage in entrepreneurial sales activities compared to those who consider these values less important (Weeks and Kahle, 1990, p.188). Achievement value is positively correlated with salesperson performance (Swenson and Herche, 1994, p.285). Effective salespeople embody the values of achievement, power, and benevolence to excel (Herjanto and Franklin, 2019, p.106). Collaboration, defined as individuals voluntarily contributing to successful task completion and mutual goal achievement, is a critical aspect of sales management (Yılmaz and Hunt, 2001, p. 337). Emphasizing values that support cooperation (such as benevolence) should be a top priority to foster a high level of collaboration (Schwartz, 2015, p.30).

2. Methodology

2.1. Purpose

The study aims to create and test a model to determine the mediating role of personal values in the relationship between personality traits and sales performance in the context of the effect of personality traits and personal values on subjective sales performance. It is to be researched within the five-factor personality model and Schwartz value theory

framework. While creating the research model was created after a detailed examination of the literature on the relationship between personality traits and personal values. Due to the structure of the pharmaceutical industry, the well-defined task structures of the employees, the relatively low level of autonomy, agreeableness, as well as the extraversion feature were included in the study's model. In the literature, there is a positive correlation between extraversion and stimulation, achievement, power, hedonism values; another positive correlation is between agreeableness with benevolence, tradition, and conformity values. The study examined the effects of personality traits (extraversion and agreeableness) and personal values (stimulation, achievement, power, hedonism, benevolence, conformity, and tradition) on sales performance.

2.2. Research Method and Sampling

In this study were used causal research method was. Based on the necessity of turning to an area where face-to-face sales are used intensively, the research was carried out for sales personnel working in companies operating in the pharmaceutical industry. A total of 258 questionnaires were answered by sales personnel. The literature shows that personality traits, personal values , and sales performance have recently been examined as a formative structure (Hau and Thuy, 2012, p.140; Yu, 2017, p.10). It is more accurate to measure the five-factor personality traits as a formative construct (Myszkowski et al., 2019, p.366). Sales performance should be considered a formative structure (Biong and Selnes, 1997, p.44). The formative structure is more appropriate than reflective when considering different performance aspects (dimensions) (Becker et al., 2012, p.364). In the research model, sales performance is discussed in three dimensions. These are sales targets, proving information, and sales presentation.

76% of the survey participants are male, and 24% are female. 61.6% of the survey participants are between the ages of 25-40, 36.1% are between the ages of 41-54, and 2.3% are 55 years old and over. Of the participants' experience as salespeople, 64.3% are ten years or more, 15.1% are between 4-6 years, 13.2% are between 7-9 years, and 7.4% are 1-3.

2.3. Scales

A five-factor personality scale consisting of ten items created by Rammstedt and John (2007, p.210) was used. Reliability values for the ten-item five-factor personality scale were over 0.81(Horzum et al., 2017, p.400). The Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) was used. Reliability values for PVQ were over 0,70 (Demirutku &Sümer, 2010, p.22). The data relating to the questionnaire consisting of 21 questions are measured.The performance scale used in the study of Sujan et al. (1994) was used, and it is seen that the scale has high internal consistency. The other questions were taken from the study of Behrman and Perreault (1982, p.365). Participants evaluated the 12-question scale with a 5-point Likert scale.

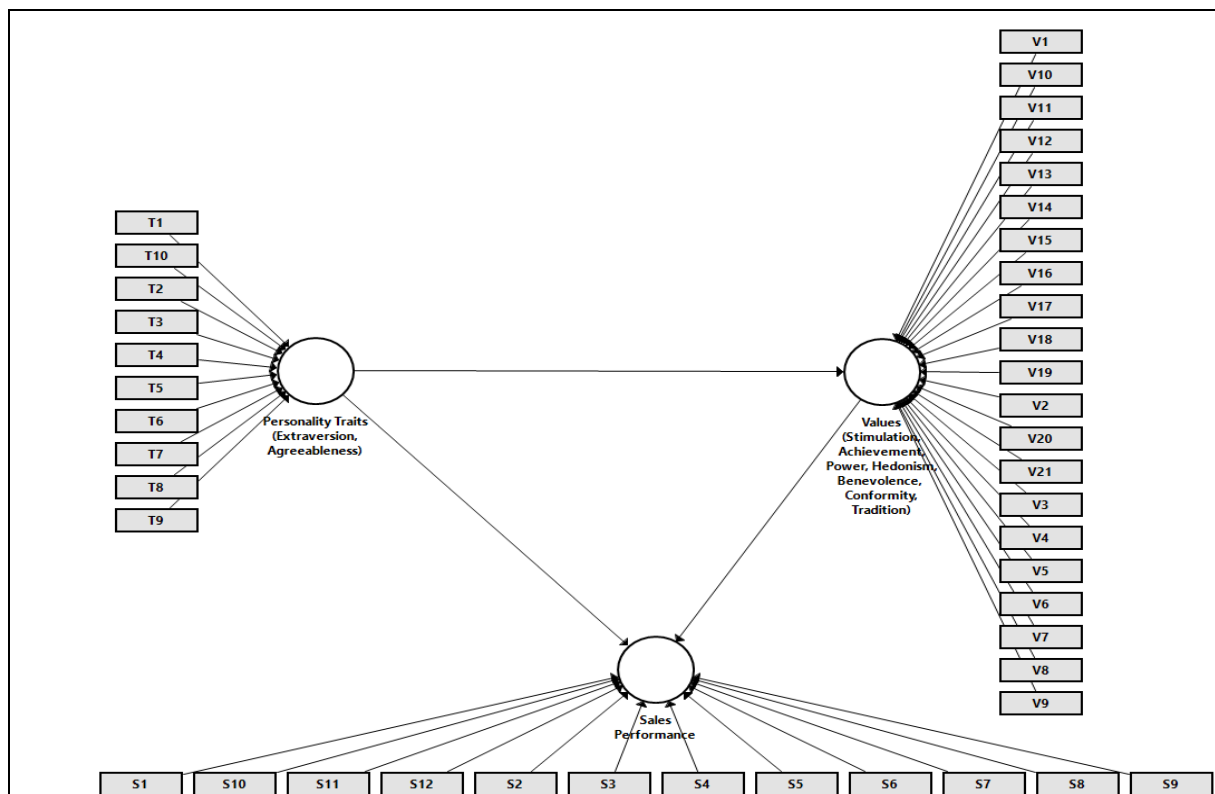


Figure 1. Research Model

2.4. Research Model and Hypotheses

The hypotheses tested in the study are:

H1: Values (Stimulation-Achievement-Power-Hedonism-Benevolence-Conformity-Tradition) have a mediating effect between personality traits (Extraversion and Agreeableness) and sales performance.

H2: There is a positive relationship between personality traits (Extraversion and Agreeableness) and values (Stimulation-Achievement-Power-Hedonism-Benevolence-Conformity-Tradition).

H3: There is a positive relationship between values (Stimulation-Achievement-Power-Hedonism-Benevolence-Conformity-Tradition) and sales performance

H4: There is a positive relationship between personality traits (Extraversion and Agreeableness) and sales performance

2.5. Measurement Model

The first value to look at for variables is Internal Consistency Reliability, traditionally measured with Cronbach's alpha. Hair et al. (2014, p.68) present the Composite Reliability (CR) value as an alternative to Cronbach's alpha and Henseler et al. (2015, p.120) present the rho A value as an alternative in the formative research model; The rho A internal consistency reliability was checked, and the criterion of a rho A value greater than 0.70 was taken into account (Doğan, 2019, p.67). The rho A value of Values, Personality Traits, and Sales Performance in the model was 1.00. Questions with negative factor weights were removed from the model. The codes of the expressions removed from the analysis are; D4, D16, D18, D20, K3, SP3, SP6, SP7, SP8, and SP9.

2.6. Structural Model

In the structural model, a Q² (Blindfolding) value exceeding zero for a given endogenous latent variable signifies that the pathway model is predictive for that specific construct (Hair et al., 2014, p.72). The Q² value in our model exceeded zero. Coefficients of determination (R²) gauge the proportion of variance in an endogenous construct that is accounted for by its predictor constructs, serving as a measure of the model's explanatory power concerning a particular endogenous construct. Sarstedt et al. (2017, p.22) state that in some cases, even a value of 0.10 may be sufficient (Doğan, 2019, p.71). In the model, the R² value was found to be 0.24 for values and 0.44 for sales performance.

Table 1. Blindfolding (Q²) ve Coefficient of determination (R²)

	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Values (stimulation-achievement-power-hedonism-benevolence-conformity-tradition)	0,057	0,241	0,238
Sales Performance	0,181	0,447	0,443

The effect size (f²) is calculated for each exogenous variable and shows the share of each exogenous variable in the disclosure rate of the endogenous variable. The evaluation of f² is made as low if it is 0.02, medium if it is 0.15, and as high if it is 0.35. However, it is impossible to talk about an effect for f² values below 0.02 (Sarstedt et al., 2017, p.24). The effect size was found in the model as medium-high values.

Table 2. Effect Size (f²)

	Values (stimulation-achievement-power-hedonism-benevolence-conformity-tradition)	Personality Traits (Extraversion-Agreeableness)	Sales Performance
Values (stimulation-achievement-power-hedonism-benevolence-conformity-tradition)			0,408
Personality Traits (Extraversion-Agreeableness)	0,317		0,056
Sales Performance			

When the values obtained as a result of the analyzes were examined, it was found that the proposed measurement model was appropriate, and the validity and reliability criteria were at satisfactory levels. R^2 , f^2 , and Q^2 values were within acceptable limits. NFI and SRMR values were checked. The SRMR value should be below 0.08, the SRMR value in the model is 0.051. The NFI value is expected to be greater than 0.90. In the model, NFI=0.86 is very close to the value it should be.

2.7. Evaluation of Analysis Results

The research model examined personal values, personality traits, and sales performance as formative variables. Partial least squares path analysis (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the research model. The program used bootstrapping technique to test the hypotheses. Hair et al. (2018, p.75) and Henseler et al. (2016, p.128) suggest the number 5000 for the subsample. Structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) of the research model with mediating variable added is as follows in Figure 2. Structural equation modeling analysis results are shown in Table 3.

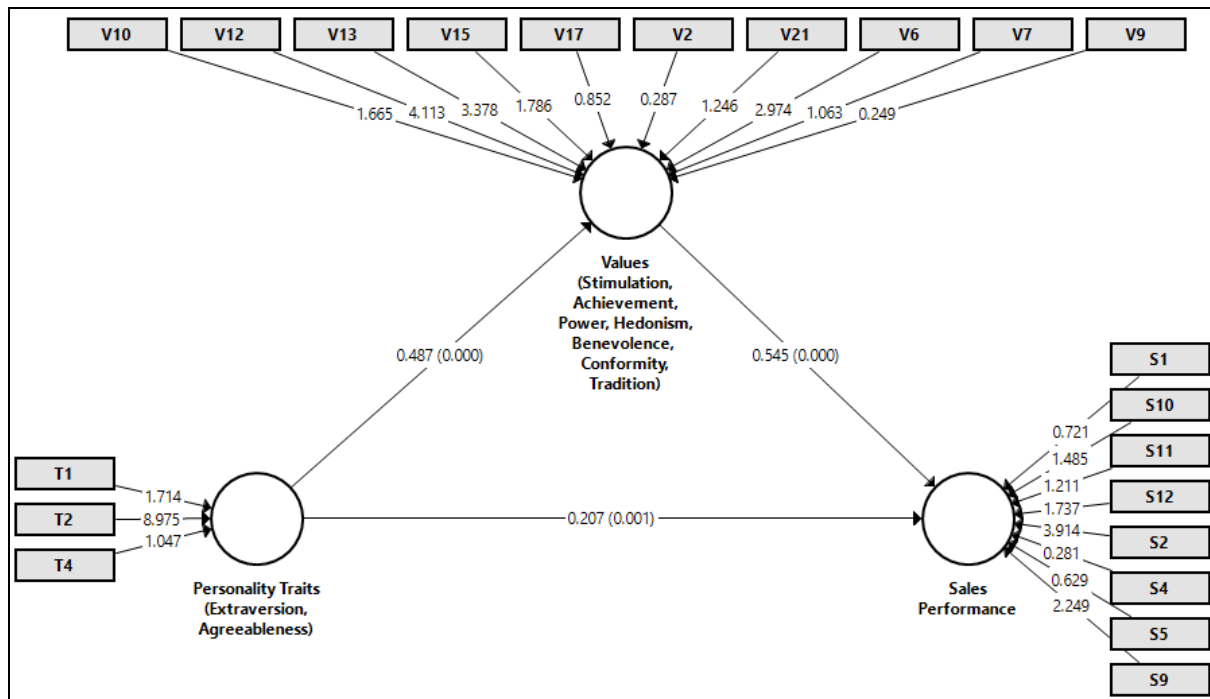


Fig. 2. PLS Result

Table 3. Structural Equation Modeling

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t- value	P value	Result
1	Personality Traits (Extraversion- Agreeableness) -> Values (stimulation-achievement-power-hedonism-benevolence-conformity-tradition) -> Sales Performance	0,273	0,041	6,606	0,000	Accepted
2	Personality Traits (Extraversion- Agreeableness)-> Values (stimulation-achievement-power-hedonism-benevolence-conformity-tradition)	0,491	0,054	9,161	0,000	Accepted
3	Values (stimulation-achievement-power-hedonism-benevolence-conformity-tradition)-> Sales Performance	0,557	0,060	9,248	0,000	Accepted
4	Personality Traits (Extraversion- Agreeableness)-> Sales Performance	0,189	0,075	2,523	0,000	Accepted

Personality traits positively and significantly affect values ($\beta=0.491$, $p=0.000$) and sales performance ($\beta=0.189$, $p=0.012$). It has been found that there is a positive relationship between personality traits of extraversion and agreeableness and personal values of stimulation, achievement, power, hedonism, benevolence, conformity, and tradition. It has been found that there is a positive relationship between extraversion and agreeableness personality traits and sales performance. H2 and H4 were accepted. Values positively and significantly affect sales performance ($\beta=0.557$, $p=0.000$). It has been found that there is a positive relationship between the values of stimulation, achievement, power, hedonism, benevolence, conformity, tradition, and sales performance. The H3 hypothesis was also accepted. In the H1 hypothesis,

the mediating effect of values (stimulation-achievement-power-hedonism-benevolence-conformity-tradition), personality traits (extraversion-agreeableness), and sales performance were investigated.

Table 4. Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Total Indirect Effect	P Values	Total Effect	VAF	Result
1	Personality Traits(Extraversion- Agreeableness)-> Values (stimulation-achievement-power-hedonism-benevolence-conformity-tradition) -> Sales Performance	0,273	0,000	0,462	0,590	Partial Mediation

The VAF value calculates the indirect effect ratio to the total effect. VAF value below 0.20 means zero mediator effect, 0.20-0.80 means partial, and more than 0.80 means full mediator effect (Hair et al., 2018, p.80). Since VAF = 0.590, the values have a partial mediation effect.

Conclusion

This research significantly contributes to the literature by examining the impact of personality traits and personal values on sales performance. The findings, particularly relevant to the pharmaceutical sector, can aid in developing sales management strategies to enhance sales personnel performance. Understanding how personality traits and personal values affect sales performance provides valuable insights for managers, helping them improve recruitment and training processes, thus gaining a competitive advantage. While specific to the pharmaceutical sector, the research results may yield different outcomes when applied to other industries. For example, knowledge of technology and innovation might be more critical in the technology sector, whereas in the retail sector, customer relationships and empathy could be more prominent. Each industry's unique dynamics and requirements mean that the impact of personality traits and values on sales performance may vary. Managers reading this research can better understand which personality traits and personal values to focus on to enhance sales personnel performance. For instance, knowing sales personnel with extraverted and agreeable personality traits tend to be more successful can guide hiring decisions. Integrating personal values into training and development programs can also boost employee motivation.

Future research should conduct similar studies in different sectors to compare results and achieve generalizable findings. It would also be beneficial to examine the impact of other individual and environmental factors on sales performance. Factors such as leadership style, organizational culture, and market conditions should also be considered. The results of this research are mainly consistent with previous studies. For example, the positive impact of traits like extraversion and agreeableness on sales performance has been supported by earlier studies (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge & Zapata, 2014). However, some findings specific to the pharmaceutical sector might differ from studies in other sectors. These differences could stem from unique industry practices, customer profiles, and product characteristics.

Human resources remain the only inimitable asset in a competitive environment where companies' technology and products can be quickly and cheaply imitated. Human resources provide a sustainable competitive advantage, making companies more profitable and efficient than their competitors. Appropriately qualified and trained salespeople are critical to the firm's survival and revenue growth. Literature has observed that salespeople with certain personality traits and personal values perform better than others. This study contributes to the literature by examining the mediating role of personal values on the relationship between personality traits and sales performance. Park and Leduc (2015) argue that culture, essential personality traits, and experiences influence personal values. Since personality traits are innate and considered permanent structures, while values are shaped later by the environment, personal values act as a mediating variable in our model. We conducted a literature review and presented a summary to determine which personal values are prioritized according to personality traits. Based on this information, personal values were selected, and a research model was created. As a result of the analysis, all research hypotheses were accepted, and the findings were consistent with the literature. This study explores how personality traits affect sales performance through personal values, providing more detailed information for understanding the relationship. It explains which values are important in the effect of personality traits on sales performance and how five-factor personality traits are associated with specific personal values. Furnham and Fudge (2008) state that personality traits apply to personnel selection. The practical contribution of the research entails providing insights for sales management on assessing personality traits and personal values before making final hiring decisions.

In conclusion, this research significantly contributes to the literature by examining the impact of personality traits and personal values on sales performance. Future studies should compare these findings across different sectors to achieve generalizable results. Managers can use these findings to improve recruitment and training strategies, ultimately enhancing the performance of their sales teams.

1. Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı

Çalışmada yazarlar arasında çıkar çatışması yoktur.

2. Yazar Katkı Oranı Beyanı

Yazarın çalışmaya katkısı %100'dür.

3. Etik Kurul Bilgileri Beyanı

Etik kurul izni alınmıştır.

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