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Research Article

Nevrotizm ve Dışa Dönüklük Kişilik Özellikleri ile Bilişsel Esneklik Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi*

Cognitive Flexibility and Personality Traits: An Evaluation in Terms of Neuroticism and Extraversion

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ÖZ

Araştırmanın amacı beş faktör kişilik özelliklerinin nevrotizm ve dışa dönüklük boyutları ile bilişsel esneklik arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektir. Sıfatlara Dayalı Kişilik Testi (SDKT) ve Bilişsel Esneklik Envanteri (BEE) aracılığı ile veri toplama işlemi gerçekleştirilmiştir. 18-35 yaş aralığında yer alan 130 erkek, 220 kadın olmak üzere toplam 350 yetişkin bireyden veri toplanılmıştır. Veriler 'Google forms' aracılığı ile toplanmıştır ve analiz aşaması SPSS 26.0 paket programıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Değişkenler arasında ilişkinin incelenmesi amacıyla Pearson korelasyon analizi ve çoklu doğrusal regresyon analizi uygulanmıştır. 18-35 yaş aralığında yer alan bireylerin dışa dönüklük, nevrotizm ve bilişsel esneklik düzeyleri arasındaki ilişkilere bakıldığında; dışa dönüklük ile bilişsel esneklik düzeyleri arasında pozitif yönde nevrotizm ile bilişsel esneklik düzeyleri arasında negatif yönde anlamlı ilişki tespit edilmiştir. Bu bulgular, kişilik özelliklerinin bilişsel süreçleri ve esnekliği nasıl etkilediğini vurgulamaktadır. Nevrotik eğilimleri azaltmak ve dışadönük davranışları teşvik etmek, bilişsel esnekliği ve genel problem çözme yeteneklerini iyileştirebileceği sonucuna varılabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kişilik özellikleri, nevrotizm, dışa dönüklük, bilişsel esneklik.

ABSTRACT

The goal of the research is to find out the relationship between the neuroticism and extraversion dimensions of the five-factor personality traits and cognitive flexibility. Data was collected through the Personality Test Based on Adjectives (PTBA) and the Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (CFI). Data were collected from 350 adult individuals, 130 men and 220 women, aged 18 to 35. Participants were informed through the informed consent form that participation in the study was voluntary. The SPSS 26.0 package program was used to analyze the data. Pearson's correlation and multiple linear regression were used to examine the relationships among variables. Results show a relationship among extroversion, neuroticism, and cognitive flexibility in individuals aged 18 to 35. It was also determined that there is a positive relationship between extraversion and cognitive flexibility, and a significant negative relationship between neuroticism and cognitive flexibility. These findings highlight how personality traits influence cognitive processes and adaptability. Reducing neurotic tendencies and fostering extroverted behaviors could improve cognitive flexibility and problem-solving abilities.

Keywords: Personality traits, neuroticism, extraversion, cognitive flexibility.

* Bu çalışma birinci yazarın yüksek lisans tez çalışmasından üretilmiştir.

INTRODUCTION

Differences in how individuals understand and respond to their surroundings have long played an important role in psychological studies. Rather than just defining behavioral patterns, personality characteristics influence emotional regulation, cognitive evaluation, and adaptive function. The Five-Factor framework has gained substantial empirical validation in a variety of cultural situations (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Among its five characteristics, neuroticism and extraversion stand out for their persistent cross-cultural stability and predictive significance.

Increased emotional reactivity and stress sensitivity are frequently linked to neuroticism. Beyond affective instability, though, it might also be an indication of a cognitive style with diminished ambiguity tolerance and threat-focused thinking. People with high neuroticism tend to be anxious, have negative expectations, and have trouble controlling their negative emotions (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Costa & McCrae, 1992). Previous research has connected neuroticism to less successful problem-solving techniques and maladaptive coping mechanisms (D'Zurilla et al., 2011; Mete, 2006). According to this viewpoint, neuroticism may affect a person's ability to adapt their ideas and conduct in unpredictable situations, in addition to how they feel under stress.

The opposite dispositional tendency is extraversion. Extraversion is often characterized by sociability and positive emotionality (McCrae & Costa, 1992), but it also includes behavioral activation and approach motivation. Extraverted people are more inclined to actively interact with their environment, ask for feedback from others, and take initiative in trying situations. According to empirical research, extraversion is linked to positive problem-solving techniques and adaptive coping (Çapan, 2019; Mete, 2006). Such inclinations may promote receptivity to different points of view and raise the possibility of producing adaptable cognitive reactions in the face of new demands.

Conversely, cognitive flexibility describes the ability to change viewpoints, take into account several possible answers, and modify behavior in response to shifting contextual circumstances (Martin & Anderson, 1998). It encompasses both awareness of alternative solutions and confidence in implementing them. While those with lower levels of cognitive flexibility have been linked to anxiety and inflexible thought processes, those with higher levels tend to exhibit more efficient psychological adjustment and stress management (Johnson, 2016). Crucially, emotion regulation and executive control processes interact to produce cognitive flexibility, indicating that stable personality qualities may be important for its development and manifestation.

While previous research indicates that neuroticism and cognitive flexibility are negatively correlated, and extraversion and flexibility are positively correlated (Bilgin, 2017; Güvenç, 2019; Çeltekligil, 2021), these characteristics are frequently studied separately. A more accurate understanding of the joint relationship between behavioral activation and emotional reactivity and adaptive cognitive performance may be possible if they are assessed concurrently within a single prediction framework.

Additionally, there is still relatively little research done in the Turkish cultural setting, especially when it comes to studies using regression-based models that evaluate the combined predictive contributions of neuroticism and extraversion. Explaining these connections in a sample of young adults may yield culturally relevant information about the dispositional elements linked to cognitive flexibility.

In light of these considerations, the present study examines whether neuroticism and extraversion significantly predict cognitive flexibility levels among Turkish adults aged 18–35. By analyzing these personality dimensions within the same statistical model, the study aims to provide a more integrative account of their relative and combined contributions to adaptive cognitive processes.

1.1. Purpose of the Study and Hypotheses

The study's main goal is to investigate the structural links between neuroticism, extraversion, and cognitive flexibility, as well as to evaluate if neuroticism and extraversion substantially predict cognitive flexibility levels in young adults. Based on theoretical considerations regarding affective reactivity and behavioral activation, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1:Neuroticism will negatively predict cognitive flexibility.

H2: Extraversion will positively predict cognitive flexibility.

METHOD

This study was designed as a quantitative, correlational research aiming to examine the relationships between neuroticism, extraversion, and cognitive flexibility, and to determine the predictive roles of neuroticism and extraversion on cognitive flexibility.

2.1. Sample and Population

The population of the study consisted of adults aged between 18 and 35 years. The sample comprised 350 adults (220 females, 130 males) who voluntarily participated in the study. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods. Inclusion criteria were being between the ages of 18–35 and providing informed consent for participation. Demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	N	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Woman	220	62.9
Male	130	37.1
Age		
18-35 years old	350	100

2.2. Data Collection Tools

2.2.1. Personality Test Based on Adjectives (PTBA)

Personality traits were measured using the Personality Test Based on Adjectives (PTBA) developed by Bacanlı et al. (2009). PTBA is a scale developed based on the five-factor personality theory, measuring five dimensions of personality, including neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience. PTBA, which measures five personality dimensions, is a two-tailed scale developed using pairs of adjectives. Analyzes conducted to measure the validity of the scale indicate that the scale is valid (Bacanlı et al., 2009). As a result of the analyzes performed to measure reliability, it was determined that the Cronbach's alpha value was .70 for the neuroticism dimension and .88 for the extraversion dimension, and this result shows that the scale meets the reliability criteria.

2.2.2. Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (CFI)

Within the scope of the research, CFI, developed by Martin and Rubin (1995) and whose validity and reliability studies in Turkey were conducted by Altunkol (2011), was used. BEE is a

Likert-type scale consisting of 12 questions. The results of the analysis conducted to measure the validity of the scale show that CFI meets the validity criteria (Altunkol, 2011). When the reliability analyzes were examined, it was determined that the Cronbach alpha value was .80, and this result shows that the scale meets the reliability criteria.

2.3. Procedure

Data collection was carried out after obtaining ethics committee approval from Istanbul Arel University (Ref. No: E-69396709-050.06.04-248684). The study was approved by the decision taken at the Ethics Committee meeting dated 30.12.2022 and numbered 2022/26. Data were collected through Google Forms. Participants were informed via the informed consent form that participation in the study was voluntary. To minimize potential fatigue effects, the order of the scales was counterbalanced during data collection.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data analyses were conducted using SPSS 26.0. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between neuroticism, extraversion, and cognitive flexibility. Subsequently, multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine whether neuroticism and extraversion were significant predictors of cognitive flexibility. Gender was included in the regression model as a dummy variable (0 = female, 1 = male) to control for potential gender-related effects.

Prior to conducting the multiple linear regression analysis, the assumptions of regression were examined. Normality of the distribution was assessed using Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, as well as skewness and kurtosis coefficients. Although the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test yielded statistically significant results ($p < .05$), indicating deviation from normality, the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables were within the acceptable range of ±1, and the sample size exceeded $n = 30$. Therefore, consistent with methodological recommendations, the data were considered appropriate for parametric analyses (Büyüköztürk, 2010; Field, 2018).

RESULTS

3.1. Findings Regarding Normality Distribution Analysis of Scale Scores

The results of the analysis to determine whether the scores obtained from the Cognitive Flexibility Inventory and the neuroticism and extraversion dimensions of the PTBA Adjective-Based Personality Test show a normal distribution are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Normality distribution analysis of scale scores

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		Skewness	Kurtosis
	df	P.		
Cognitive Flexibility	350	.01	-0.390	-0.011
PTBA				
Neuroticism	350	.010	0.354	-0.637
Extraversion	350	.000	-0.071	-0.654

Although Kolmogorov–Smirnov test results indicated deviations from normality ($p < .05$), skewness and kurtosis values of all variables were within the acceptable range of ±1. Considering

the large sample size (n = 350), the distributions were regarded as sufficiently normal for parametric analyses.

Pearson correlation analysis was performed to evaluate whether there was a significant relationship between the cognitive flexibility levels of individuals aged 18-35 with neuroticism and extroversion characteristics. Analysis results are given in Table 3.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation Analysis of Scale Scores

	1	2	3
1. Neuroticism	1		
2. Extraversion	-.280 **	1	
3. Cognitive Flexibility	-.416 **	.492 **	1

Pearson Correlation, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

The findings indicate that, at the 99% confidence level, there is a moderately significant negative correlation between the participants' ratings on the Neuroticism dimension and Cognitive Flexibility (r=-.416 **, p=.000). Examining the correlation between the participants' extraversion dimension scores and cognitive flexibility, it was found that, at the 99% confidence level, there was a significantly positive connection (r=.492 **, p=.000). There was a weakly significant negative correlation between the participants' scores on the neuroticism and extraversion dimensions at the 99% confidence level (r = -.280 **, p <.001), according to the results of the analysis.

3.2. Regression Analysis Findings Regarding the Prediction of Neuroticism and Extraversion Variables According to the Cognitive Flexibility

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis applied to determine whether the sub-dimensions of the Adjective-Based Personality Test, neuroticism and extraversion, were significant predictors of cognitive flexibility levels are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Regression Analysis on Cognitive Flexibility Variable Predicting Neuroticism and Extraversion Variables

Independent Variable	B	β	p	T
Neuroticism	-0.187	-0.302	.000	-6.581
Extraversion	0.211	0.408	.000	8.882

$R=0.571$ $R^2=0.326$

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Neuroticism and extraversion were found to be significant predictors of cognitive flexibility ($p \leq 0.05$) in the multiple linear regression analysis. Specifically, participants showed a substantial positive correlation between their levels of extroversion and cognitive flexibility (p <.001, B =.211) and a negative significant correlation between their levels of neuroticism and cognitive flexibility (p=.000, B=.-187). Cognitive flexibility was shown to account for 32.6% of the variance (R2 =.326). The hypothesis that a person's level of cognitive flexibility will decrease

as their level of neuroticism grows was accepted (t=-6.581, p≤0.05). The prediction that a person's level of cognitive flexibility will rise in proportion to their level of extroversion was accepted (t=8.882, p≤0.05). When we look at the unstandardized beta coefficients; It is observed that when the neuroticism level increases by one unit, the cognitive flexibility level will decrease by one unit (B=-187), and when the extraversion level increases by one unit, the cognitive flexibility level will increase by one unit (B=.211).

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study indicate a moderate and negative association between neuroticism and cognitive flexibility among individuals aged 18–35. In practical terms, higher levels of neuroticism were linked to lower levels of flexibility in cognitive processing. This pattern aligns with previous empirical findings reported in different samples (Bilgin, 2017; Çeltekligil, 2021; Güvenç, 2019), yet the current results extend this evidence by situating neuroticism within a predictive framework rather than treating it as a simple correlate.

Neuroticism is typically associated with heightened emotional reactivity and vulnerability to stress (Bruck & Allen, 2003; Costa & McCrae, 1992). Beyond emotional instability, however, it may also reflect a tendency toward rigid appraisal patterns. Individuals high in neuroticism often rely on maladaptive coping strategies and display less effective problem-solving styles (D'Zurilla et al., 2011; Mete, 2006). Such tendencies may restrict the ability to reinterpret challenging situations or generate alternative behavioral strategies. Cognitive flexibility requires both awareness of multiple response options and confidence in implementing them; persistent anxiety, pessimistic expectations, and self-doubt may interfere with these processes.

Conceptually, neuroticism and cognitive flexibility are two opposing regulatory concepts. Neuroticism is typified by sensitivity to threat cues and trouble disengaging from unpleasant affect, whereas cognitive flexibility entails adaptive restructuring and openness to alternative interpretations. People with high levels of anxiety or self-doubt may find it difficult to be open-minded in unclear circumstances. In this way, affective dysregulation's effect on executive functions may be reflected in the observed negative connection. This interpretation is supported by recent research linking neuroticism, difficulty regulating emotions, and cognitive rigidity (Aslan & Türk, 2022).

In contrast, the findings revealed a moderate positive association between extraversion and cognitive flexibility. Higher extraversion scores were associated with greater flexibility in cognitive responses. This pattern is consistent with previous research (Çeltekligil, 2021; Güvenç, 2019) and suggests that approach-oriented dispositions may facilitate adaptive cognitive restructuring.

Although extraversion is commonly characterized by sociability and pleasant affect (McCrae & Costa, 1992), its motivating component might be especially pertinent in this situation. Extraverted people are more likely to actively connect with their surroundings, seek out social engagement, and show initiative in the face of uncertainty. According to empirical data, these people frequently use more flexible coping mechanisms and helpful approaches to problem-solving (Çapan, 2019; Mete, 2006). The ability to come up with different interpretations may be strengthened by exposure to a variety of situations and social input.

Furthermore, cognitive flexibility include behavioral experimentation and a general orientation toward possibilities in addition to technical problem-solving abilities (Martin & Anderson, 1998). Extraverted people might be more open to trying new things, accepting uncertainty, and changing how they behave in changing circumstances. Their optimistic expectations for results (Bilgin, 2017) might encourage more inquisitive thought. In this regard,

extraversion may function not just through cognitive mechanisms but also as a facilitator that enhances cognitive plasticity through motivational engagement.

Taken together, the results suggest that affective reactivity and approach motivation function in opposite directions in relation to cognitive flexibility. While neurotic tendencies may constrain adaptive restructuring processes, extraverted orientations may enhance them. Evaluating both traits simultaneously within the same model provides a clearer understanding of their relative contributions to adaptive cognitive functioning.

CONFLICT of INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest with any individual or organization.

ETHICAL COMITEE DECISION

Data collection was carried out after obtaining ethics committee approval from Istanbul Arel University (Ref. No: E-69396709-050.06.04-248684). The study was approved by the decision taken at the Ethics Committee meeting dated 30.12.2022 and numbered 2022/26.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Giriş

Bireylerin çevrelerini algılama ve çevresel taleplere yanıt verme biçimleri psikolojik araştırmaların temel konularından biridir. Kişilik özellikleri yalnızca davranış örüntülerini değil, aynı zamanda duygusal düzenleme, bilişsel değerlendirme ve uyum süreçlerini de etkileyen önemli bireysel farklılık değişkenleri arasında yer almaktadır. Bu bağlamda Beş Faktör Kişilik Modeli, farklı kültürlerde doğrulanmış yapısı nedeniyle kişilik araştırmalarında yaygın olarak kullanılan kuramsal çerçevelerden biridir. Model içerisinde yer alan nevrotiklik ve dışadönüklük boyutları, bireylerin stresle başa çıkma biçimleri ve çevresel uyaranlara verdikleri tepkiler açısından özellikle dikkat çekmektedir.

Nevrotiklik, yüksek düzeyde duygusal tepkisellik, stres duyarlılığı ve olumsuz duygulanım ile ilişkilendirilmektedir. Nevrotiklik düzeyi yüksek bireylerin belirsizliğe karşı toleranslarının daha düşük olduğu, tehdit odaklı düşünme eğilimleri sergiledikleri ve olumsuz duyguları düzenlemede zorlandıkları belirtilmektedir. Bu özellikler bireylerin problem çözme süreçlerini ve uyum sağlayıcı başa çıkma stratejilerini olumsuz yönde etkileyebilmektedir. Buna karşılık dışadönüklük, sosyal yönelim, olumlu duygulanım ve davranışsal aktivasyon ile karakterize edilen bir kişilik özelliğidir. Dışadönük bireylerin çevreleriyle daha aktif etkileşim kurdukları, sosyal geri bildirim aradıkları ve yeni durumlara yaklaşma eğiliminde oldukları bilinmektedir.

Bilişsel esneklik ise bireyin farklı bakış açılarını değerlendirebilme, alternatif çözüm yolları üretebilme ve değişen çevresel koşullara uygun davranışlar geliştirebilme kapasitesini ifade etmektedir. Bilişsel esnekliğin yüksek olması psikolojik uyum, etkili problem çözme ve stres yönetimi ile ilişkilendirilirken; düşük bilişsel esneklik kaygı, katı düşünce örüntüleri ve uyum güçlükleri ile bağlantılıdır. Literatürde nevrotiklik ile bilişsel esneklik arasında negatif, dışadönüklük ile bilişsel esneklik arasında ise pozitif ilişkiler bulunduğunu gösteren çalışmalar yer almaktadır. Ancak bu değişkenlerin aynı model içerisinde birlikte ele alındığı çalışmalar sınırlıdır.

Bu doğrultuda mevcut araştırmanın amacı, genç yetişkinlerde nevrotiklik ve dışadönüklük kişilik özelliklerinin bilişsel esnekliği ne ölçüde yordadığını incelemektir. Araştırmada aşağıdaki hipotezler test edilmiştir:

H1: Nevrotiklik bilişsel esnekliği negatif yönde anlamlı olarak yordar.

H2: Dışadönüklük bilişsel esnekliği pozitif yönde anlamlı olarak yordar.

Yöntem

Bu araştırma nicel araştırma yöntemlerinden korelasyonel desen kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın evrenini 18–35 yaş arası yetişkin bireyler oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmanın örneklemi ise kolayda örnekleme ve kartopu örnekleme yöntemleriyle ulaşılan toplam 350 katılımcıdan oluşmaktadır. Katılımcıların 220'si kadın (%62.9), 130'u erkek (%37.1) bireylerden oluşmaktadır.

Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak iki ölçek kullanılmıştır. Kişilik özelliklerini ölçmek amacıyla Bacanlı ve arkadaşları (2009) tarafından geliştirilen Sıfatlara Dayalı Kişilik Testi (SDKT) kullanılmıştır. Ölçeğin nevrotiklik ve dışadönüklük alt boyutları araştırma kapsamında değerlendirilmiştir. Bilişsel esneklik düzeyini ölçmek için Martin ve Rubin (1995) tarafından

geliştirilen ve Türkçe uyarlaması Altunkol (2011) tarafından yapılan Bilişsel Esneklik Envanteri kullanılmıştır.

Veriler etik kurul onayı alındıktan sonra çevrimiçi anket formu aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Katılımcılar araştırmaya gönüllülük esasına göre katılmış ve bilgilendirilmiş onam vermiştir.

Veri analizinde SPSS 26.0 programı kullanılmıştır. Öncelikle değişkenler için betimsel istatistikler hesaplanmış, ardından değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri incelemek amacıyla Pearson korelasyon analizi yapılmıştır. Nevrotiklik ve dışadönüklüğün bilişsel esnekliği yordama düzeyini belirlemek amacıyla ise çoklu doğrusal regresyon analizi uygulanmıştır. Analiz öncesinde normallik varsayımları Kolmogorov–Smirnov testi ile birlikte çarpıklık ve basıklık değerleri incelenerek değerlendirilmiştir.

Bulgular

Araştırma bulguları, nevrotiklik ile bilişsel esneklik arasında orta düzeyde ve negatif yönde anlamlı bir ilişki olduğunu göstermiştir ($r = -0.416$, $p < .01$). Buna karşılık dışadönüklük ile bilişsel esneklik arasında orta düzeyde ve pozitif yönde anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur ($r = 0.492$, $p < .01$).

Çoklu regresyon analizi sonuçlarına göre, nevrotiklik ve dışadönüklük değişkenleri bilişsel esnekliğin anlamlı yordayıcılarıdır. Model bilişsel esneklikteki varyansın yaklaşık %32.6'sını açıklamaktadır ($R^2 = .326$). Nevrotiklik bilişsel esnekliği negatif yönde anlamlı biçimde yordarken ($\beta = -0.302$, $p < .001$), dışadönüklük bilişsel esnekliği pozitif yönde anlamlı olarak yordamaktadır ($\beta = 0.408$, $p < .001$). Bu sonuçlar araştırma hipotezlerini desteklemektedir.

Sonuç ve Tartışma

Araştırma bulguları, nevrotiklik ve dışadönüklük kişilik özelliklerinin bilişsel esneklik ile anlamlı biçimde ilişkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Nevrotiklik düzeyi yüksek bireylerin stres karşısında daha yoğun olumsuz duygular yaşaması ve tehdit odaklı düşünme eğiliminde olması, bilişsel yeniden yapılandırma süreçlerini sınırlayabilir. Buna karşılık dışadönük bireylerin çevreyle aktif etkileşim kurmaları, sosyal geri bildirim aramaları ve yeni deneyimlere daha açık olmaları bilişsel esnekliğin gelişimini destekleyebilir.

Bu sonuçlar, duygusal tepkisellik ve yaklaşma motivasyonunun bilişsel uyum süreçleri üzerinde farklı yönlerde etkiler yarattığını göstermektedir. Nevrotiklik bilişsel esnekliği sınırlandıran bir faktör olarak ortaya çıkarken, dışadönüklük bilişsel uyum süreçlerini destekleyici bir rol oynayabilir.

Araştırma, kişilik özelliklerinin bilişsel uyum süreçleri üzerindeki etkisini aynı model içerisinde inceleyerek literatüre katkı sağlamaktadır. Ayrıca Türk kültürel bağlamında genç yetişkinler üzerinde elde edilen bulgular, kişilik ve bilişsel süreçler arasındaki ilişkilerin kültürlerarası geçerliliğini destekleyen veriler sunmaktadır.