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Big Five Traits and Loneliness among Turkish Emerging Adults

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***Abstract*—**Emerging adulthood, between the ages of 18 and 25, as a distinct developmental stage extending from adolescence to young adulthood. The proportions composing the five-factor model are neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. In the literature, there is any study which includes the relationship between emerging adults' loneliness and personality traits. Therefore, the relationship between emerging adults' loneliness and personality traits have to be investigated. This study examines the association between the Big Five personality traits, and loneliness among Turkish emerging adults. A total of 220 emerging adults completed the NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), and the The UCLA Loneliness Scale (UCLALS). Correlation analysis showed that three Big Five personality dimensions which are Neuroticism (positively), and Extraversion and Aggreableness (negatively) are moderately correlated with emerging adults' loneliness. Regression analysis shows that Extraversion, Aggreableness and Neuroticism are the most important predictors of emerging adults' loneliness. Results can be discussed in the context of emerging adulthood theory.

***Keywords*—**Personality; Big Five Traits; Loneliness; Turkish Emerging Adults.

I. INTRODUCTION

THERE is a general consensus that over the past two decades, social, economic, and demographic changes have altered the life course trajectories of young people between their early teens and late twenties [1, 2, 3, 4] and becoming an adult takes longer time today than in previous decades [1, 2, 3] due to changes in life conditions change the life phases. During the last 50 years, there have been changing trends in the transition to adulthood and roles of individuals especially 18–29 years olds [1, 2]. The changing trends in the transition to adulthood especially in the developed countries led to new conceptual notions as well. The most influential one is probably "emerging adulthood" which is characterized by young peoples' exploration of various possibilities in love, work, and identity proposed by Arnett [1].

Emerging adulthood, between the ages of 18 and 25, as a distinct developmental stage extending from adolescence to young adulthood, and it may not be a universal period; thus, it may vary across cultural groups. There are five main distinguishing features of emerging adulthood: It is the age of identity explorations, of trying out various possibilities, especially in love and work; the age of instability; the most self-focused age of life; the age of feeling in-between, in transition, neither adolescent nor adult; and the age of possibilities, when people have an unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives. During the emerging adulthood years, young people must accomplish some important developmental tasks. In general, the ages between 18 and 25 are a period of completing school, establishing occupations, and creating new households [5]. During these years, young people become less dependent on their parents and become gradually an adult [6] and must obtain education beyond high school to attain employment sufficient to support themselves and any dependents. In addition, young people must develop the social skills during this period of time [7]. These developmental tasks may bring "loneliness" which is very influential on emerging adults' daily life in its wake.

In general, loneliness is a psychological mode caused by the weakness of personal communication and socialization skills [8]. Loneliness, a common psychological problem, is typically defined as the unpleasant experience that occurs when a person's network of social relationships is deficient in some important way, either qualitatively or quantitatively; can be linked to anxiety, reduced social competence, and suicide risk [9, 10, 11, 12]. Loneliness can also be defined as a situation in which people have difficulties in social adaptation when they feel misunderstood and unhappy [13]. Lonely people experience subjective distress because they perceive themselves as being alone, isolated or cut off and they evaluate their social relationships as deficient. This leads to high levels of anxiety and finally to alienation from society [14].

Loneliness is a common, universal human experience with emotional, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions, and has various types and degrees. Weiss [15] identified two types of loneliness, emotional loneliness and social loneliness; he suggested that the former results from the loss or lack of an intimate tie, whereas the latter results from the lack of a network of involvements with peers, neighbors, or friends.

Loneliness has been linked to poor social skills [16], poor interpersonal relationships, low self-esteem [17], shyness [18], and poor social adjustment [19]. Researchers have explored the links between loneliness and a variety of factors, including demographic characteristics such as gender [20], emotional states such as loneliness and anxiety [21, 22, 23], inadequate social support networks [24]. Several studies have shown

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links between internet use and loneliness [25, 26]. Shaw and Gant found that greater internet use was associated with a decrease in loneliness. In contrast, Engelberg and Sjoberg found frequent use of the Internet to be associated with greater loneliness, poorer social adaptation and emotional skills. Caplan found that lonely people can develop a preference for online social interaction. In general, there is any study which includes the relationship between big five traits and loneliness, thus it has to be investigated the relationship between loneliness and predicting factors such as personality traits.

Many researchers pointed out that loneliness is experienced more intensively in adolescence rather than the other developmental stages of life [27]. Researches of adolescents' loneliness showed that loneliness is related with depression and low selfesteem, loneliness is linked with suicide and, adversely correlated with life satisfaction, academic failure, alcohol or drug use, and social isolation, low peer acceptance, peer rejection, self-disclosure, and intimacy). In adulthood, loneliness is associated with the lack of ability to develop intimate relationships [28]. However, loneliness in emerging adulthood, the new life stage, has not been studied yet.

Personality traits may affect on perceived support from social relationships, and also individuals' loneliness. Within personality, core (Big Five personality traits) and surface characteristics (global self-worth, perceived peer acceptance, and loneliness) have been distinguished. Personality traits are stable and highly important compositions in people's life [29]. McCrae and Costa [30] used the labels ''basic tendencies'' and ''characteristic adaptations'' for these two classes of personality characteristics. The proportions composing the five-factor model are neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. The five-factor construction has been recaptured through analysis of trait adjectives in various languages, factor analytic studies of existing personality inventories, and decisions considering the dimensionality of existing measures made by expert judges [29]. The dimensionality of Big Five has been found to generalize across almost all cultures [31] and persists reasonably stable over time [29, 30]. Moreover, the literature suggests that the Big Five traits have a genetic basis [32], and the heritability of their proportions seems to be quite significant [33]. According to Shiner and Caspi [34], it seems that dimensions of the Big Five are seen among children who are at the ages of 3-8. In addition to these findings, the development of personality traits continue not only at adulthood stages but also at childhood and adolescence stages [35]. Two of the Big Five dimensions, neuroticism and extraversion, seem to be most related to adults' loneliness [36].

Loneliness and personality traits are important study areas of psychology literature. When we look at the literature, briefly, there are few studies which investigate the relationship between adolescents' loneliness and personality traits. In addition, there is no study which investigate the relationship between emerging adults' loneliness and personality traits. These two main subjects are important not only for adolescents' life but also emerging adults' life. What is more, loneliness and personality traits have to be investigated in emerging adulthood stage. As a result, the present study aims to explain two questions:

a. Is there a significant relationship between emerging adults' loneliness and the traits of Big Five?

b. Do the Big Five traits predict emerging adults' loneliness?

II. METHOD

A. Procedure

The descriptive study was conducted to determine the relationship between emerging adults' loneliness and personality traits. Scales were administered in university groups of students, in classrooms during lessons. In other groups, scales were administered in participants' work places. In other cases, scales were administered individually. All data were collected by same procedure. Totally, scales were administered to 220 participants. All the inventories that had items with no response or more than one response to the same item were rejected. The relationship between loneliness, and big five personality was computed with "simultaneous regression analysis" and the correlation coefficients. SPSS 13.0 pocket program was used in analyzing the data. In all analysis, significant level was accepted at least .05.

B. Participants

A total of 220 adolescents participated in this study, and the mean age was 22.2 years (*SD* = 3.76). The sample was made up of 112 girls and 108 boys. All the participants in the study were from college and non-college population. Participation was voluntary and anonymous; only the ID number of each participant was recorded in order to be able to provide the participants with the results of their questionnaires. Participants features were presented in Table 1.

As shownt Table 1, 49,9 % of the participants are male, 50,1 % of the participants are female.

TABLE I
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARASTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

	Features	Number	%
Gender	Male	108	49,9
	Female	112	50,1
	Total	**220**	**100,0**

C. Instruments

Big Five Inventory—The "Big Five" personality traits of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism were measured by using the 44-item Big Five

Inventory (BFI; [37]). This scale was adapted to Turkish by Evinc [38]. In this scale, participants rated the extent to which it described how they typically behave (e.g. "can be moody" for neuroticism) using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Cronbach's alphas suggest that internal reliabilities for all of the factors are within an acceptable range (openness = .81; conscientiousness = .82; extraversion = .88; agreeableness = .79; neuroticism = .84). The scale has also demonstrated good convergent and discriminant validity [37]. In the current sample, Cronbach's alphas suggest that internal reliabilities for all of the factors are within an acceptable range (openness = .73; conscientiousness = .72; extraversion = .73; agreeableness = .70; neuroticism = .68).

University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Loneliness Scale—The 20-item UCLA Loneliness Scale [39] was used to measure loneliness. The items are scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale, anchored by 1 = Never and 4 = Always, and the scores can range from 20 (low level of loneliness) to 80 (high level of loneliness). The scale has been shown to possess high internal consistency [39]. The scale was standardized for the Turkish sample by Demir [40]. Demir [40] reported an internal consistency coefficient of the Turkish version of loneliness scale to be .96, and test-retest (one-month interval) reliability coefficient to be .94. In this study, the alpha level of the UCLA-Loneliness Scale (N = 220) was found .93.

III. RESULTS

Results are presented in three sections; descriptive statistics of all variables, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. The results were shown below. Descriptive statistics for the personality variables and loneliness measures are presented in Table 2.

As shown Table 2, Neuroticism dimension has the highest mean (37,88). Conscientiousness dimension has the lowest mean (18,75). In addition, lthe mean point about lonelines was found as 28,49. Correlation analysis for the personality variables and loneliness measures, and reliability coefficients of all variables were presented in Table 3.

Correlation analysis showed that three Big Five personality dimensions which are Neuroticism (positively), and Extraversion and Aggreableness (negatively) are moderately correlated with emerging adults' loneliness. Neuroticism is significantly associated with all the indicators of loneliness, yielding a correlation coefficient of .28 with loneliness. Extraversion (-.18) and Agreeableness (-.16) are negatively low correlated with loneliness. Conscientiousness, and Openness are not correlated with loneliness. Subsequently, the effects of big-five traits are considered independent variables on the dependent variables of loneliness with simultaneous regression analysis. The results are shown in Table 4.

TABLE II
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR ALL VARIABLES (N= 220)

Variable	MEAN	SD
UCLALS	28,49	1,43
E	32,55	32,63
N	37,88	28,49
O	19,90	15,75
C	18,75	17,55
A	28,90	24,75

Note: SD = Standard deviation, UCLALS: University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Loneliness Scale, E: Extraversion, N: Neuroticism, O: Openness, C: Conscientiousness A: Agreeableness.

TABLE III
CORRELATION MATRIX AND RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS (A) OF ALL THE VARIABLES (N= 220)
VARIABLES

	UCLALS	**E**	**N**	**O**	**C**	**A**
UCLALS	**1.0**	.18*	.28**	.09	.07	.-16*
E		**1.0**	-.29**	.40**	-.07	. - 03
N			**1.0**	.03	-.21**	-.25**
O				**1.0**	.15*	.14
C					**1.0**	.27**
A						**1.0**

***p = .01., *p = .05, UCLALS: University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Loneliness Scale, E: Extraversion, N: Neuroticism, O: Openness, C: Conscientiousness A: Agreeableness.*

TABLE IV
RESULTS OF THE SIMULTANEOUS REGRESSION ANALYSIS, ZERO-ORDER AND SEMI-PARTIAL CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES (N= 220)

Predictor:

	UCLALS		**Regression Coefficients**	**Correlations**	
	B	**SEB**	**ß**	**Zero-Order**	**Semi-Partial**
E	.21	.08	.22**	-.18*	.22**
N	.27	.07	.26**	.28**	.27**
O	.08	.07	.08	.09	.08
C	-.06	.07	.00	-.07	.00
A	- .15	.08	- .16*	- .16*	- .17*

***p = .01., *p = .05., UCLALS: University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Loneliness Scale, E: Extraversion, N: Neuroticism, O: Openness, C: Conscientiousness A: Agreeableness.*

Regression analysis showed that Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Aggreableness are the most important predictors of emerging adults' loneliness.

As shown Table 4, Neuroticism, is the most important predictors of emerging adults' loneliness (.28). In addition,

Conscientiousness and Openness do not predict emerging adults's loneliness.

Briefly, there is a significant relationship between big five personality traits and emerging adults' lonelines; Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism are related to loneliness. In addition, there is not significant relationship between loneliness and Conscientiousness, and Openness.

IV. Discussion

In this study, it was found that there is a significant relationship between emerging adult's loneliness and the three dimensions of Big Five traits; Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Aggreableness. In this section, the results are discussed in the context of emerging adulthood theory. Generally, judging from the results, it can be said that findings in the present study similar to those in literature. As the current study, on previous researches [41, 42] neuroticism would demonstrate significant negative relationship with loneliness. In this sample, extraversion and aggreableness demonstrated a significant negative relationship with loneliness. The magnitude of the correlations were consistent with previous studies involving both children [43, 42, 31] and adults [31].

There can be possible explanations as to why extraversion and aggreableness demonstrated a significant negative relationship with loneliness, and neuroticism demonstrated a significant positive relationship with emerging adults' loneliness in this study. Researchers suggest that the mechanism through which this association gets up is social in nature. Lonely people may have less rewarding interactions with others and may have less extensive social networks from which they receive support. Therefore, extraversion and aggreableness may influence loneliness negatively by allowing more effective use of social support as a coping strategy [44]. In addition to these explanations, there is important literature to explaine the role of neuroticism. People who were reporting high levels of neuroticism, a trait defined by its lack of emotional stability and optimism, and noted by high levels of guilt proneness, psychosomatic concerns, and worry, may be expected to describe higher level of loneliness. As regards this expectation, it was found that people higher in neuroticism experienced more negative emotions in a longitudinal study, [45]. Briefly, it can be said that people who are extravers and aggreable can feel themselves less lonely than the others; and also people who are more neurotic feel more loneliness than the others [46].

"Instability" is one of the most important features of emerging adulthood stage [1, 2]. The explorations of emerging adults and their shifting choices in love and work make emerging adulthood an exceptionally full and intense period of life but also an exceptionally unstable one. The best illustration of the instability of emerging adulthood is in how often they move from one residence to another. It makes emerging adulthood an unstable time, but it also reflects the explorations that take place during the emerging adult years. Emerging adults rarely know where they will be living from one year to the next. These instability may bring neuroticism ,thus loneliness, in its wake in emerging adulthood. In the emerging adulthood years, people have a life plan, and these plans may changed plenty of times during the emerging adulthood. For instance, emerging adults move in with a boyfriend or girlfriend and start to think of the plan as founded on their future together, only to discover that they have no future together. These changes are a natural consequence of their explorations; and the instability of emerging adulthood is not easy for them. In emerging adulthood stage, the problems of adolescence diminish, but instability replaces them as a new source of disruption [2]. Generally, judging from the results, it can be said that these features of emerging adulthood may effect loneliness in emerging adulthood.

As a conclusion, this research showed similarities in loneliness literature. Generally, the findings of this study showed that there is a interaction between loneliness and personality traits in emerging adulthood. Future researches should focus on emerging adults' loneliness both by using qualitative and quantative methods with a cultural background. In addition, cross-cultural studies may produce using big populations.

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