

## THE INVESTIGATION OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' SELF-DISCLOSURE BEHAVIORS IN TERMS OF PERSONALITY TRAITS AND IDENTITY PROCESESS

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### Abstract

Healthy interpersonal communication's establishing and sustaining depend on using variety communication skills' effective. Self-disclosure provides people to establish more satisfying and healthy relationships that from this one of the communication skills. The aim of this study is to determine how personality traits and identity dimensions predict self-disclosure behavior. Research group consists of 282 university students (67.4 % female, 32.6 % male). The Pearson correlation and regression analysis were used in the analysis of the data. Findings indicated that extroverted personality trait significantly predicted the amount of self-disclosure and agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness and emotional stability significantly predicted conscientiousness. Looking at the results in terms of identity development dimensions in-depth and ruminative exploration significantly predicted conscientiousness.

**Keywords:** Self Disclosure, Personality, Identity

## ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN KENDİNİ AÇMA DAVRANIŞLARININ KİŞİLİK ÖZELLİKLERİ VE KİMLİK SÜREÇLERİNE GÖRE İNCELENMESİ

### Özet

Kişiler arasında sağlıklı ilişkilerin kurulması ve sürdürülmesi, çeşitli iletişim becerilerinin etkili olarak kullanılmasına bağlıdır. Bu iletişim becerilerinden biri olan kendini açma, kişilerin daha doyurucu ve sağlıklı ilişkiler kurabilmelerini sağlar. Kendini açma, bireyin karşısındaki kişiye kendi ile ilgili sözel bilgi verme veya bireyin kendisini bilinçli olarak başkasına tanıtmaması olarak tanımlanabilir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, kişilik özelliklerinin ve kimlik boyutlarının üniversiteli öğrencilerinin kendini açma davranışlarını ne yönde yordadığını belirlemektir. Araştırma grubu, 282 üniversite öğrencisinden oluşmaktadır (% 67.4 kadın, % 32.6'si erkek ). Verilerin analizinde Pearson Kolerasyon katsayısı ve regresyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, dışa dönük kişilik özelliğinin kendini açma miktarını anlamlı olarak yordadığını, kişilik özelliklerinden uyumluluk, dışa dönüklük, sorumluluk duygusal dengenin ise dürüstlüğü anlamlı olarak yordadığını göstermiştir. Kimlik gelişim boyutları açısından sonuçlara bakıldığında genişlemesine ve saplantılı araştırma boyutlarının dürüstlüğü anlamlı olarak yordadığı saptanmıştır.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Human beings have needed to communicate since the existence. Establishing and maintaining the healthy relationship among the individuals depend on the usage of various communication skills. The self-disclosure, amid those communication skills, enables individuals to create satisfying relationships. Self-Disclosure is defined as “any information about himself which person A communicates verbally to a person B” (Cozby,1973) Self-disclosure, according to another definition, is introducing him/herself consciously to others. If a person invites another person to self-disclosure, s/he should mutually communicate taking part in this process (Jourard and Jaffe, 1970). Beginning from this point of view, it can be claimed that self-disclosure behaviors appear in all kinds of communications respectively. To exemplify, as beginning to any kind of friendship, a person’s sincere and frank self-disclosure can be claimed that is significant for both sides (Walker & Wright, 1976).

High or low self-disclosure level is also effective in the emergence of conflict-oriented incompatible behaviors such as anger and aggression (Angelisti & Perlman, 2006). In the studies which is made correspondingly, it is detected that the individuals with low self-disclosure level experience more loneliness, social anxiety and isolate themselves more from their environment (Wei, Rusell and Zakalik, 2005). High self-disclosure level, which is in contrast with the other one, would cause his/her interlocutor to feel uncomfortable of this situation at the same time it creates possibility of person’s fall into a meaningless and dangerous situation (Angelisti & Perlman, 2006). That’s why it is emphasized that self-disclosure either face to face or online should be in a specific level based on the interlocutor and the place (Taddei & Contena, 2013). In previous studies, it was revealed that individuals’ level of self-disclosure varies depending on variables such as age, gender, topic, and culture, and that the recipient may change depending on whether he is a friend, family member, colleague or a stranger (Schug, 2010; Nosko, 2010). In addition to these factors, parameters such as life satisfaction, connection styles, identity structure are also associated with the same subject, and it is observed that they are included in the research topics (Gültekin, 2001; Çetinkaya & Akbaba, 2011; Uygur 2018).

As a consequence of several researches, some approaches, enucleating behavior patterns used while individuals show self-disclose behavior, were suggested. One of them is the approach developed by Wheelless and Grotz. According to this approach, self-disclosure consists of five dimensions (Öksüz, Mersin and Türker, 2017). The intention; is defined as reflection of feeling and behaviors, during self-disclosure, depending on the person’s wish and awareness at the moment; besides that, the amount; expresses the length and shortness of the self-disclosure sentences while

the individual reflects his/her emotion and behaviors, and displaying the self-disclosure behavior. Constructiveness is that the individual tends to speak positively to the interlocutors and self-disclosure depend on the involvement of his/her interlocutor. Conscientiousness, on the other hand, refers to the way that the individual limits and addresses to the self-disclosure behavior by emphasizing the concept of truth while s/he expresses oneself. Finally the term control; is the explanation of the individual whether act messily or tidily and augustly during the self-disclosure (Wheeles & Grotz, 1976; Wheeles, 1978).

There are several variables that determine the level of self-disclosure of individuals. In this study, the identity dimensions and the personal traits which are both thought to be related to the self-disclosure were focused on.

Personality has been one of the most handled and scrutinized topics among those which investigate the human behaviors. One of the major causes of this situation is one of the most significant variables which could be interpreted through the keeping pace with the hard life conditions, vocational success, mood, health, and the quality of the relation among the individuals (McAdams and Olson, 2010). Accordingly, personality is a continuous, interpersonal, emotional, motivational experience-based interaction style that a person acquires by changing and developing throughout his life, besides that it is a feature which differentiates the person from the others (McCrae and Costa, 1989). Communication, which is an indispensable element of being human, enables people to socialize more by sharing their feelings and thoughts. Hereby it is proceed to complete their personal development (Stuart, 2009). Establishing healthy and sustainable interpersonal relationships depends on the effective use of communication skills. Since self-disclosure behavior, which is one of the communication skills, consists of transferring the accumulation and knowledge of the individual, including emotions, thoughts and experiences (Greene, Derlega & Mathews, 2006), it is inevitable to be investigated with the concept of personality.

In the Five Factor Personality Theory (McCrae and Costa, 2003), also referred to as the Big Five, where classification is envisaged by considering all the personal traits universally, it is thought that there are five basic dimensions to determine adequately the personality area (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis and Sam, 2015). These dimensions consist of extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, conscientiousness and openness to experience.

The extraversion dimension; includes features like social ability, assertiveness and talkativeness (Morsünbül, 2014). The extravert individuals; are the characters who are social, sincere, talkative, active besides that they like entertainment and dominating his/her surroundings

(McCrae and Costa, 1987). The introvert individuals, on the other hand, timid, calm, quiet, closed, tend to be alone and tend to put barriers with the others (McShane and VonGlinov, 2005). Agreeableness dimension; push the humanity dimension of the individual to forefront (Digman, 1990) and it includes features like sympathetic, respectful, sincere, and understanding. (Morsünbül, 2014) Maladaptive individuals; in the behavioral context they have features such as avoiding cooperation, being stubborn and rude. Emotional stability dimension; it is established upon the features like calmness, accepting the critics, comfort (Morsünbül, 2014). In the stability situation it is expected from the individuals to keep calm, be adaptive; not to react maladaptive and emotionally (Burger, 2016). In case of the stability, it is expected from the individuals to keep calm and adjust well; not to be maladaptive and emotionless (Burher, 2016). Neurotic individuals – whose emotions often tend to change –are people with emotional distress, anxious, nervous and low self-confidence (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Conscientiousness dimension; It includes features related to self-discipline, order and achievement (Morsünbül, 2014). Therefore the main features of this dimension are how much the individual has the self-confidence, and in which level s/he can control oneself. Openness to the experience dimension; it contains features like creativeness, curiosity and openness to the new thoughts (Morsünbül, 2014). Accordingly, this dimension is associated with the extent of tendency to accept the innovations by moving beyond the boundaries. With the individuals who are closed to the experiences, there is a tendency of loyalty to traditions, in the meanwhile to choose the customary rather than something new (Burger, 2016).

It is thought that the identity formation have effect on self-disclosure behavior as personal traits. The identity concept can't be defined standard due to being a multiple phenomenon which can be handled in different fields. However, in literature it can present that the concepts; I, ego, selfness, personality are synonyms just as it can be used for the different meanings. The common aspect of these concepts is the use of emotions, thoughts, attitudes and behaviors as a whole that distinguishes the individual from others (Morsünbül, 2005).

In recent years, some models have been proposed to examine identity development. One of these models is The Five-Dimensional Model of Identity Formation developed by Luyckx and colleagues (Luyckx et al., 2008). Commitment making process was divided into two dimensions that are commitment making and identification with commitment (Luyckx et al., 2008). The exploration processes were divided into three dimensions. The first one is exploration in breadth. The dimension shows that the extent of searching with the different identity alternatives before the individual make commitment. The second one is exploration in depth. It shows the deep surveys

that the commitments made by the individuals at the time is appropriate for themselves or not. The third one is ruminative exploration. It refers the degree of getting stuck in the processes of exploration. The commitment making process was divided into two dimensions. Commitment making shows the degree of decision making of individuals about identity issues. Identification with commitment making shows the degree of identification with individuals' feelings after evaluating their commitments (Morsünbül, 2014). Individuals providing a healthy identity development are also expected to be able to establish healthy interpersonal relationships.

It is important to examine how individuals' identity formations and personal traits to understand better individuals' self-disclosure behaviors. Based on the previous literature, the aim of this study is to determine how personality traits and identity dimensions predict self-disclosure behavior.

## **METHOD**

### **The Model**

This study was conducted in the light of correlational descriptive model. In the study, self-disclosure behavior was determined as dependent variable and identity development dimensions and personality traits were determined as independent variables.

### **Research Group**

The research group consisted of 282 (67.4 % female, 32.6% male) students at Aksaray University. The ages of the participants in the research group ranged from 17 to 24. (mean=20.65±.2.14).

### **Data Collection Tools**

**Personal Data Form:** It was used to obtain participants' age, gender, department and grade.

**Scale of Self-disclosure:** The scale was developed by Wheelers and Grotz (1976) and adapted to Turkish by Öksüz, Mersin and Türker (2017). In the present study, Cronbach-Alpha internal consistency coefficients of the scale were calculated .67 for intention, .65 for amount and .67 for conscientiousness. Because Cronbach's alpha value of costiveness (.47) and control (.54) were low, they were not used in this study.

**The Dimensions of Identity Development Scale:** This scale was developed by Luyckx et al.(2008) and adapted to Turkish by Morsünbül and Çok (2014). In the present study, Cronbach-Alpha internal consistency coefficients of the scale were calculated .89 for commitment making, .80 for

exploration in breadth, .77 for ruminative exploration, .85 for identification with commitment and .68 for exploration in depth.

**Quick Big Five Personality Scale:** This scale was developed by Verlmuts and Geris (2005) and adapted to Turkish by Morsünbül (2014). In the present study, Cronbach-Alpha internal consistency coefficients of the scale were calculated .69 for agreeableness, .83 for extroversion, .84 for emotional stability and .68 for the openness to experience.

### Data Analysis

SPSS package program was used to analyze the data obtained from the research. Frequency and percentage analyses have been used for analyzing participants' demographic characteristics. Correlation and regression analysis were used to examine the contribution of identity dimensions and personality traits on self-disclosure behavior.

## RESULTS

In this section, firstly, descriptive statistics results of the variables in the study are presented. Then, the results of the regression analysis are given.

### Relationships between variables

The relationships between variables are given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *The relationships between variables*

Variable	Intent	Quantity	Conscientiousness
Agreeableness	.12*	.02	.24**
Extraversion	.17**	.34**	.26**
Conscientiousness	.10	-.06	.16**
Emotional Stability	.17**	.05	.19**
Openness to experience	.16**	-.04	.14*
Commitment making	.28**	-.02	.23**
Identification with commitment	.30**	.00	.29**
Exploration in breadth	.28**	-.00	.25**
Exploration in depth	.17**	.11	.16**
Ruminative investigation	-.21**	-.10	-.25**

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01

As can be seen in Table 1 the strongest variable related to intent is identification with commitment ( $r = .30, p < .01$ ) while the weakest variable is agreeableness ( $r = .12, p < .05$ ). Extraversion significantly predict quantity ( $r = .34, p < .01$ ). The strongest variable related to conscientiousness is

identification with commitment ( $r = .29, p < .01$ ) while the weakest variable is openness to experience ( $r = .14, p < .05$ ).

### Regression Analysis Results

Regression analysis was conducted in order to determine how well variables predict intent, quantity and conscientiousness. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients were examined to determine whether the data were suitable for multiple regression analysis and these values were found to be between +1.5 and -1.5. Correlations between variables were examined in order to see whether there is a multicollinearity problem. No .80 and above correlation was found between variables. Also, VIF (ranging from 1.10 to 2.09) and Tolerance (ranging from .47 to .90) values were examined to determine the multicollinearity problem and no multicollinearity problem was found.

**Table 2.** Regression Analysis Results (Intent)

Model	Non-Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
<b>Stage1.</b>	B	Standard Error	Beta	T
Constant	9.66	1.59		6.04
Agreeableness	.03	.04	.06	.93
Extraversion	.04	.02	.11	1.85
Conscientiousness	.03	.02	.08	1.34
Emotional stability	.06	.03	.14	2.26*
Openness to experience	.06	.04	.10	1.60
$R^2=.07$	$R^2 \Delta$ for model =.07		F for $R^2 \Delta = 4.69^{**}$	
<b>Stage2.</b>				
Constant	8.61	2.01		4.27
Commitment making	.04	.06	.05	.68
Identification with commitment	.09	.06	.11	1.40
Exploration in breadth	.17	.07	.16	2.43*
Exploration in depth	.08	.07	.08	1.19
Ruminative exploration	-.11	.05	-.14	-2.27*
$R^2=.17$	$R^2 \Delta$ for model =.10		F for $R^2 \Delta = 6.31^{**}$	

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

As can be seen in Table 2, the emotional stability ( $\beta = .14, p < .05$ ) significantly predict intention. According to regression analysis exploration in breadth ( $\beta=.16, p < .05$ ) and ruminative exploration ( $\beta=-.14, p < .01$ ) significantly predict intent.

**Table 3.** Regression Analysis Results (Quantity)

Model	Non-Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
<b>Stage1.</b>	B	Standard Error	Beta	T
Constant	13.39	2.39		5.58
Agreeableness	.07	.06	.07	1.17
Extraversion	.23	.03	.37	6.24**
Conscientiousness	-.01	.03	-.02	-.45
Emotional Stability	-.05	.04	-.07	-1.19
Openness to experience	-.12	.06	-.12	-1.99*
$R^2=.13$	$R^2 \Delta$ for model =.13		F for $R^2 \Delta = 4.51^{**}$	
<b>Stage2.</b>				
Constant	13.81	3.12		4.41
Commitment making	-.09	.10	-.06	-.84
Identification with commitment	-.04	.10	-.03	-.46
Exploration in breadth	-.09	.11	-.05	-.83
Exploration in depth	.36	.10	.23	3.40**
Ruminative exploration	-.11	.07	-.09	-1.52
$R^2=.17$	$R^2 \Delta$ for model =.04		F for $R^2 \Delta = 2.41^*$	

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 3 shows regression analysis results conducted to how well variables predict quantity. The extraversion ( $\beta = .37$ ,  $p < .01$ ) significantly predict quantity. The identity development dimensions, which are in the second rank, make a 4 % contribution to the variance. According to regression analysis, only exploration in depth ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $p < .01$ ) significantly predict quantity.

**Table4.** Regression Analysis Results (Conscientiousness)

Model	Non-Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
<b>Stage1.</b>	B	Standard Error	Beta	T
Constant	9.70	2.02		4.78
Agreeableness	.16	.05	.20	3.21**
Extraversion	.12	.03	.23	3.93**
Conscientiousness	.07	.03	.13	2.26*
Emotional Stability	.08	.03	.12	2.08*



Openness to experience	-.00	.05	-.00	-.08
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R <sup>2</sup> =.15	R <sup>2</sup> Δ for model =.15		F for R <sup>2</sup> Δ = 10.29**	
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<b>Stage2.</b>				
Stable	9.96	2.59		3.84
Commitment making	-.02	.08	-.02	-.26
Identification with commitment	.09	.08	.08	1.09
Exploration in breadth	.21	.09	.15	2.34*
Exploration in depth	.11	.08	.08	1.23
Ruminative exploration	-.18	.06	-.17	-2.82**
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R <sup>2</sup> =.22	R <sup>2</sup> Δ for model =.07		F for R <sup>2</sup> Δ = 4.74**	
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\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 4 shows regression analysis results conducted to how well variables predict conscientiousness. As can be seen in the results, the personality traits that enter the equation first explain 15% of the total variance. Compatibility ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ), extraversion ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $p < .01$ ), conscientiousness ( $\beta = .13$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and emotional stability ( $\beta = .12$ ,  $p < .05$ ) significantly predict conscientiousness. The identity development dimensions contribute 7% to the variance. Exploration in breadth ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and ruminative exploration ( $\beta = -.17$ ,  $p < .01$ ) significantly predict integrity.

## DISCUSSION, RESULTS AND SUGGESTIONS

In this part of the research, the findings obtained within the framework of the research are discussed. This study, which aims to examine the self-disclosure behavior of university students in terms of personality and identity, has been tried to be revealed through university students.

According to the results of multiple regression analysis conducted to determine the variables predicting self-disclosure, only emotional stability significantly predicted intention. Other personality traits didn't predict significantly. Emotional stability based on features such as openness to criticism, calmness, and comfort (Morsünbül, 2014). In the case of balance, calm, good fit; individuals who do not give excessive and incompatible emotional reactions are expected (Burger, 2016). It can be concluded that the individuals who have these characteristics have high self-disclosure levels depending on their current desire and awareness.

Results indicated that exploration in breadth and ruminative exploration significantly predicted intention but commitment making, identification with commitment and exploration in depth didn't predict significantly. Exploration in breadth shows that the degree of doing research

about different identity alternatives before making an internal investment of individuals. Ruminative exploration, on the other hand, shows the degree of getting stuck in the processes of discovery and experience, which will make it difficult for individuals to reach strict internal investments (Luyckx et al., 2008). It can be concluded that these sub-dimensions significantly predict the way they reflect their feelings and behaviors while exhibiting self-disclosure behavior depending on the person's current desire and awareness.

Of the personality traits only extroversion significantly predicted amount but agreeableness, emotional stability, conscientiousness and openness to experience didn't predict significantly. According to this finding, it can be said that the amount of expression in self-disclosure behaviors increases since extroverted individuals can easily express their emotions and behaviors. In terms of identity dimensions, only exploration in depth significantly predicted amount. According to this finding, it can be said that exploration in depth increases amount of expression in self-disclosure behaviors (Luyckx et al., 2008).

Results indicated that agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness and emotional stability significantly predicted conscientiousness. According to identity dimensions only exploration in breadth and ruminative exploration significantly predicted conscientiousness.

The self-disclosure behavior, which is becoming more and more important nowadays, is very important for individuals to establish more balanced social relationships, increase their self-efficacy levels and lead a psychologically healthy life. The ability of individuals to share their feelings and thoughts with others in a safe place and time is related to their personality traits and their identity dimensions.

In this sense, the following studies can be done about self-disclosure behavior. It may be beneficial for mental health professionals to consider personality traits and identity dimensions to increase self-disclosure behavior.

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