

The Effects of Personality Traits and Emotional Intelligence on Emotional Information Processing Speed

Kişilik Özellikleri ve Duygusal Zekânın Duygusal Bilgi İşleme Hızına Etkisi

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Abstract: This study investigated whether personality and trait emotional intelligence may predict the response speed to emotional stimuli in athletes and whether athletes' response speed may differ due to the stimuli's emotional content. The sample included 62 male student-athletes who participated in the study. Participants first completed the Five Factor Personality Inventory and the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale for personality and emotional intelligence measures. Afterward, they completed an experimental task to measure response speed to emotional stimuli. In this experiment, participants responded to neutral, positive, or negative images chosen from the International Affective Picture System (IAPS). The data was analyzed by ANOVA, paired sample t-tests, Pearson correlation, and linear regression analyses. Results demonstrated that extraversion and neuroticism were not correlated to response speed to emotional stimuli. However, consistent with our predictions, openness to experience was associated with the emotional information processing speed of positively valenced stimuli. Besides, the appraisal of emotions dimension of the trait emotional intelligence was also significantly and negatively correlated to response speed to positively valenced pictures. Although the results supported the link between emotional information processing speed, personality, and emotional intelligence, our results have some preliminary implications for both researchers and practitioners. Accordingly, our study indicated that openness to experience and appraisal of emotions might be a valuable construct for a better understanding individuals' responses to positive emotional stimuli and previously known personality traits.

Keywords: Personality traits, emotional intelligence, IAPS, response time.

Özet: Bu çalışma, kişilik özelliği ve duygusal zekânın sporcularda duygusal uyarılara tepki hızını tahmin edip edemeyeceğini ve sporcuların tepki hızlarının uyarıların duygusal içeriğine bağlı olarak farklılık gösterip göstermediğini araştırmıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemini 62 erkek öğrenci-sporcu oluşturmuştur. Katılımcılar ilk olarak kişilik ve duygusal zekâ ölçümleri için Beş Faktör Kişilik Envanteri ve Schutte Duygusal Zekâ ölçeğini tamamladılar. Daha sonra ise, duygusal uyarılara tepki hızını ölçmek için deneysel bir görevi tamamladılar. Duygusal uyarıları simüle etmek amacıyla Uluslararası Duygusal Resim Sistemi (UDRS) 'nden seçilen nötr, pozitif ve negatif resimler kullanıldı. Elde edilen veriler; ANOVA, t-test, Pearson korelasyon ve lineer regresyon analizleri aracılığıyla analiz edildi. Sonuçlar, dışadönüklük ve nevrotiklik duygusal uyarılara tepki hızıyla ilişkili olmadığını göstermiştir. Bununla birlikte, deneyime açıklık ile olumlu duygusal bilgileri işleme hızının ilişkili olduğu görülmüştür. Ayrıca, duygusal zekâ özelliklerinin duyguların değerlendirilmesi boyutu ile pozitif değerli resimlere tepki hızı negatif yönde anlamlı derecede ilişkili bulunmuştur. Bu çalışma, duygusal bilgi işleme hızı, kişilik ve duygusal zekâ arasındaki bağlantıya ilişkin tahminlerimize yalnızca kısmi destek sağlasa da sonuçlarımız bu alanda araştırma yapanlar ve saha uygulayıcıları için bazı ön çıkarımlara sahiptir. Buna göre çalışmamız, deneyime açıklığın ve duyguları değerlendirmenin, bireylerin olumlu duygusal uyarılara verdiği tepkileri anlamak için değerli bir yapı olabileceğini göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kişilik özellikleri, duygusal zekâ, UDRS, tepki zamanı.

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INTRODUCTION

Athletes may face extreme emotional conditions influencing performance in the performance sport context. Therefore, examining the possible effect of emotions on athletes' psychomotor performance is very important. The question that deserves particular interest is whether certain psychological features may facilitate or inhibit athletes' motor performance in response to positive or negative stimuli.

Emotional intelligence might be the most critical candidate with the potential to facilitate athletes' motor responses to emotional stimuli. However, it is valuable for the readers to make a conceptual differentiation between the trait and ability model of emotional intelligence propounded by Petrides and Furnham (2000) to present a more accurate and precise definition of emotional intelligence. Trait emotional intelligence (or emotional self-efficacy) is a constellation of behavioral dispositions and self-perceptions concerning one's ability to recognize, process, and utilize emotion-laden information (Petrides, Frederickson, & Furnham, 2004). Ability EI (cognitive-emotional ability) refers to one's ability to recognize, process, and utilize emotion-laden information (Petrides et al., 2004). Despite concerns about the predictive ability of trait emotional intelligence measured by self-report tests, recently several studies showed that trait emotional intelligence might be associated with athletes' motor performance (Laborde, Lautenbach, Allen, Herbert, & Achtzehn, 2014; Tok, Binboğa, Guven, Çatikkas, & Dane, 2013) and athletes' responses to stress (Laborde, Brüll,

Weber, & Anders, 2011). Based on the theoretical arguments and results cited above, a link between trait emotional intelligence and motor response to emotional stimuli might exist.

The theoretical reason to assume a link between personality traits and motor responses to emotional stimuli is based on the view that emotional processing may be influenced by certain personality traits (Gomez et al., 2002). In addition, emotional intelligence, and personality traits, especially those within the Big Five model, may lead to a better or worse motor response to emotional stimuli. Extraversion and neuroticism are the most widely known personality traits that can lead to better (or faster) negative and positive emotional information. Two theoretical views can be offered to justify the possible link between these two personality traits and the processing of positive and negative emotional information.

Elliot and Trash's (2002) approach and avoidance notion is the first theoretical perspective. Accordingly, Elliot and Thrash (2002) supported that approach and avoidance temperaments may comprise extraversion and neuroticism, respectively. Trait-congruency theory (Rusting & Larsen, 1998; Rusting, 1999) is another theoretical framework that accounts for the link between personality and emotional information processing. Larsen and Ketelaar's (1989) framework assumes that individuals high in extraversion may be predisposed to process positive emotional information, and

individuals high in neuroticism may be more predisposed to process negative emotional information. In light of the abovementioned theoretical perspectives, these two personality traits may affect the speed of motor behaviour in processing positive and negative emotional information.

Research findings supported the suggested interaction between personality and emotional information processing. For example, in previous studies, extraversion was associated with faster processing of pleasant words (Rusting & Larsen, 1998; Gomez, Gomez, & Cooper, 2002; Borkenau, Paelecke, & Yu, 2010) and faces (Rusting & Larsen, 1998). In a study examining the relationship between personality traits and motor performance, extraversion was associated with better motor performance in situations where positive emotional stimuli were processed compared to other personality traits (Güven, 2018). According to another result of the same research, neuroticism was associated with better motor performance in situations where negative emotional stimuli should be processed compared to other personality traits. Other research findings indicate that extraversion and neuroticism are closely related to pleasure and arousal responses to positive and negative visual stimuli (Tok, Koyuncu, Dural, & Catikkas, 2010). The mentioned research findings put extraversion and neuroticism before other personality traits in processing emotional information.

Despite the findings showing that extraversion and neuroticism may lead to faster processing of positive and negative emotional stimuli, it remains unclear whether other personality traits can lead to better processing of certain emotional information. In this respect, openness to experience might be an essential candidate with the potential to alter the processing of emotional information, especially positive ones. Openness to experience is also referred to as intellect and is related to intelligence to a great extent (Gignac, Stough, & Loukomitis, 2004; Fiori & Antonakis, 2012). However, in addition to intellectual abilities, openness to experience includes culture, aesthetics, and imagination (McCrae & Costa, 1997), facilitating processing and response to positive emotional information. Few studies may provide evidence regarding the link between openness to experience and positive emotional information processing. In a recent study, Fiori and Antonakis (2012) documented that open individuals need less time to process and respond to positive emotional stimuli. Tok et al. found a significant path coefficient between openness to experience and valence ratings to images chosen from the IAPS (Lang, Bradley, & Cuthbert, 2008). However, Tok et al. (2010) found openness to be associated with only high valence low arousal pictures but not high valence, not high arousal pictures. This finding suggests that openness should lead to faster processing of positive emotional information when arousal is low.

In this research, we investigated whether athletes' psychological characteristics, namely personality and emotional intelligence, may lead to faster processing and response to certain emotional information. In light of previous research, we predicted that emotional intelligence should lead to a faster response to positive emotional stimuli. Regarding personality, extraversion and openness to experience should be associated with faster response time to positive emotional stimuli. In contrast, neuroticism should be associated with faster responses to negative emotional stimuli.

METHODS

Research Model: This research was designed to be descriptive, using the questionnaire technique and an experimental model as a data collection tool. The study used a descriptive survey model that questioned the personality and emotional intelligence of the participants. Also, an experiment was developed (constructed) via SuperLab 4.0 software and its response pad to assess participants' response speed to emotional pictures. We used 90 images (30 neutral, 30 positives, and 30 negatives) chosen from the IAPS. In this experiment, participants responded to different images (presented via a computer) regarding whether they were positive, negative, or neutral. For each image, they had to decide whether it was positive, negative, or neutral and press the corresponding key of the response pad as fast as possible. Color response pairs and the order of the images were counterbalanced across participants. Similarly, the order of the images was also counterbalanced across participants. A cross preceded the presentation of each image. Each participant completed a practice trial, 3 with each picture group. The software recorded the response speed of the correct answers in milliseconds.

This study also includes several limitations. First, the experimental procedure employed in the present study does not test whether stimulus valence might be a factor that influences the processing of emotional stimuli. Also, the study sample included only male participants, which inhibits the generalization of the results to the female population.

Participants: The present study sampled 62 male athletes aged 18 to 24 from different sports branches with at least six years of experience with competitive sports. University Research Ethics Committee approved all experimental procedures, and all data were collected following the Helsinki Declaration's ethical standards.

Five-Factor Personality Inventory: The short form of the Five Factor Personality Inventory was developed by Tatar (2016). The inventory, which gives five basic factor scores, consists of 85 items, 1 = Completely Appropriate, 2 = Somewhat Appropriate, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Not Very Appropriate, and 5 = Not at all Appropriate, with a 5-point Likert-type response option. It allows the calculation of scores for five main personality traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience.

Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale: Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale was first developed by Schutte et al. (1998) with 33 items and a single-factor structure. Later, the scale, which was rearranged by Austin, Saklofske, Huang, and McKenney (2004), was increased from 33 to 41 items with a 5-point Likert-type response option. In addition, they reversed some items and added new items to the scale. They also claimed that the scale's factor structure consisted of 3 factors. Tatar, Tok, and Saltukoglu (2011) adapted the scale into Turkish. The scale was presented with a three-factor structure in its 42-item form. Factors were defined as optimism/mood regulation, utilization of emotions, and appraisal of emotions.

Statistical Analysis: The data was analyzed by a repeated measure of ANOVA to explore whether response speed differed significantly among positive, negative, and neutral images. In reporting repeated measures of ANOVA, the corrected degree of freedom was used via Greenhouse-Geisser estimates of sphericity if the assumption of sphericity is violated. Paired sample t-tests with Bonferroni correction were performed following a significant result of repeated measures of ANOVA. Then we calculated Pearson correlation coefficients between personality traits, emotional intelligence, and response speed and accuracy in the experiment. Afterward, linear regression analyses in a stepwise fashion were conducted to examine whether the regression model consisting of the Big Five Personality traits and trait emotional intelligence may explain a significant amount of variance in response speed to positive, negative, and neutral images.

RESULTS

Repeated measures of ANOVA were conducted to examine whether participants' response speed differed significantly among positive, negative, and neutral image conditions. The results demonstrated that response speed differed among positive, negative, and neutral images [$F(1.59, 89.27)=3.60$, $P=.041$, $\eta^2=.06$, $\omega^2=.65$] (Figure 1).

Among the big five personality traits, only openness to experience was negatively and significantly correlated to response speed to positively valenced images ($r=-.350$, $p=.008$). Besides, the appraisal of emotions dimension of the trait emotional intelligence was also significantly and negatively correlated to response speed to positively valenced images ($r=-.307$, $p=.020$) (Table 1).

Afterwards, the data was tested to determine whether a regression model consisting of the big five personality traits and trait emotional intelligence may have the ability to predict variations in response speed to positively valenced stimuli. The stepwise regression analysis results demonstrated that a model consisting solely of openness to experience might explain a significant amount of variance in response speed to positively valenced images [$F(1.56)= 7.68$, $P=.008$, $Beta=-.350$, $R^2_{adj}=.11$].

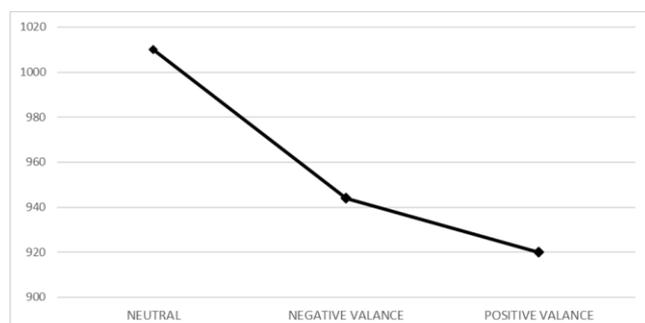


Figure 1: Mean response speed differences among the neutral, negative and positive image conditions

Table 1: The correlation analysis between personality, emotional intelligence, and neutral, positive, and negative images response time conditions

	Neutral	Positive	Negative
Extraversion	.041	-.251	-.113
Agreeableness	.038	-.095	-.116
Conscientiousness	-.088	-.064	-.181
Neuroticism	.128	.045	.070
Openness to experience	-.135	-.350**	-.169
Regulation of emotions	.156	.011	-.067
Utilization of emotions	.091	-.170	-.071
Appraisal of emotions	.023	-.307*	-.133

* $p<.05$ ** $p<.01$

Table 2: The regression model of personality and trait emotional intelligence for the average response speed of responses to positive stimuli (With stepwise method)

Independent Variables	B	β	T	R	R^2
Openness to experience	-137.15	-.35	-2.77		
Constant	1483.39		7.27	.35	.12

DISCUSSION

This study explored whether trait personality and emotional intelligence may have accounted for the response speed to athletes' emotional stimuli. The study also investigated whether athletes' response speed may differ due to the stimuli's emotional content. The present study's results support the link between personality traits, emotional intelligence, and emotional information processing. Contrary to our predictions, extraversion was not correlated to response speed to positively valenced stimuli. Further, neuroticism was not associated with a response speed to negatively valenced stimuli. Even though there is a weak correlation between the trait emotional intelligence dimension of appraisal of emotions and response speed to positively valenced stimuli, appraisal of emotion was not a significant predictor of emotional information processing speed. However, consistent with our predictions, openness to experience was associated with the emotional information processing speed of positively valenced stimuli.

The first finding we want to address is the lack of association between extraversion and positively valenced emotional stimuli. In previous studies, extraversion was consistently associated with positively valenced emotional stimuli processing. Bearing in mind the defining features of extraversion, such as the desire for pleasurable activities (Lucas & Diener, 2001), susceptibility to positive affect (Larsen & Ketelaar, 1989), and extraverts' predispositions to rewarding cues, it would be pretty logical to expect such an association. Other factors can moderate the link between extraversion and the positively valenced emotional stimuli processing in this regard; the former studies cited above provided no information about the arousal level of emotional stimuli. The results from the present experiment suggest arousal may be a factor that can give rise to extroverts' emotional information processing speed. Although our experimental design does not allow us to test the effect of arousal on the relationship between extraversion and emotional information processing speed, one previous study (Tok et al., 2010) reported extraverts' higher level of ratings to positive valence – high arousal pictures which contain erotic couples and opposite-sex nudes. Therefore, we

concluded that the effect of arousal, in addition to valance, should be examined as a possible moderator of the link between extraversion and the processing of positively valenced emotional information. The argument (Eysenck, 1967; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985) suggests that extroverts' motivation to increase their arousal level may support our view that extroverts may more efficiently process positive emotional information by having a higher level of arousal.

Similarly, neuroticism was not found to be associated with the processing of negatively valenced emotional information processing. There is an extensive consensus that neuroticism is closely associated with the predisposition to negative emotionality and the processing of negatively valenced stimuli. The present study's results supported Ng's (2009) argument that neuroticism may not be associated with negative emotions. Other circumstances can potentially link neuroticism and negatively valenced emotional information processing.

Openness to experience includes liking change, being open to new ideas, intellectual curiosity, and aesthetic sensitivity (McCrae & Costa, 1987; 1997). In addition, Tok et al. (2010) stated that participants who are open to experience give higher points to positive images. In addition to these studies, some research findings provide evidence that individuals who are open to experience are opportunistic and take every opportunity they encounter (Allbeck and Badler, 2002) and process rapid information (Fiori and Antonakis, 2012). In light of the research mentioned above findings, it can be interpreted that openness to experience is more sensitive to processing positive emotional information, and open individuals seek an emotional stimulus that can benefit them. As stated by McCrae and Costa (1987; 1997), individuals have aesthetic sensitivity, which makes it easier for the participants who are open to experience to focus on pleasant and positive emotional information in the experiment, and these individuals are in an orientation towards such stimuli.

Conclusions: Results indicated a significant negative relationship between the openness to experience personality trait and response speed to positive pictures. Results also showed a significant negative relationship between the appraisal of emotions subdimension of emotional intelligence and response speed to positive pictures. Although these results ensured partial support for the link between emotional information processing speed, personality, and emotional intelligence, our results have some preliminary implications for researchers and practitioners. Accordingly, results revealed that openness to experience and appraisal of emotions might be a valuable construct for a better understanding individuals' responses to positive emotional stimuli and previously known personality traits.

Ethics: In this article, journal writing rules, publication principles, research and publication ethics rules, and journal ethics rules were followed during the research process. Responsibility for any violations regarding the article belongs to the author. *Ege University Scientific Researches Ethics Decision Number 17274-17052.*

Conflict of Interest: The authors state no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions: While the contribution rate of the first author in this study is 50%, the total contribution rate of the other authors is 50%.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Çalışmanın Amacı: Bu çalışmada, kişilik özelliklerinin ve duygusal zekâ özelliklerinin sporcularda duygusal uyarılara tepki hızını öngörme yeteneğine sahip olup olmadığını araştırmak amaçlanmıştır. Ayrıca sporcuların tepki hızlarının duygusal uyarıların içeriğinden dolayı farklılık gösterip göstermediğini de incelemeyi amaçladık.

Araştırma Soruları: Kişilik özellikleri sporcularda duygusal uyarılara tepki hızının öngörücüsü olabilir mi? Duygusal zekâ özellikleri sporcularda duygusal uyarılara tepki hızının öngörücüsü olabilir mi? Sporcuların duygusal uyarılara karşı verdikleri tepki hızları maruz kaldıkları duygusal uyarının içeriğine (nötr, pozitif ve negatif resimler) göre farklılık gösterir mi?

Literatür Araştırması: Duygusal zekâ özellikleri, kişinin duygusal yüklü bilgileri tanıma, işleme ve kullanma becerisine ilişkin davranışsal eğilimlerine atıfta bulunur (Petrides ve diğ., 2004). Kişisel bildirim testleriyle ölçülen duygusal zekâ özelliklerinin tahmin etme yeteneği hakkındaki endişelere rağmen, son zamanlarda yapılan birkaç çalışma, duygusal zekâ özelliklerinin sporcuların motor performansıyla (Laborde ve diğ., 2014; Tok ve diğ., 2013) ve strese tepkileri (Laborde ve diğ., 2011) ile ilişkili olabileceğini ortaya koymuştur. Yukarıda belirtilen teorik argümanlara ve sonuçlara dayanarak, duygusal zekâ özellikleri ile duygusal uyarılara verilen motor tepki arasında bir ilişki olabileceğini söyleyebiliriz. Geçmiş araştırma bulguları, kişilik özellikleri ve duygusal uyarılara verilen motor tepki arasında bir ilişki olduğunu destekler niteliktedir. Kişilik özellikleri ile motor performans arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyen bir çalışmada dışadönüklük kişilik özelliği, olumlu duygusal uyarıların işlendiği durumlarda diğer kişilik özelliklerine göre daha iyi motor performansla ilişkilendirilmiştir (Güven, 2018). Aynı araştırmanın bir başka sonucuna göre nevroitiklik, diğer kişilik özelliklerine göre olumsuz duygusal uyarıların işlenmesi gereken durumlarda daha iyi motor performans ile ilişkilendirilmiştir. Diğer araştırma bulguları, dışadönüklük ve nevroitikliğin olumlu ve olumsuz görsel uyarılara verilen uyarılma tepkileriyle yakından ilişkili olduğunu göstermektedir (Tok, Koyuncu, Dural ve Çatikkas, 2010). Deneyime açıklık kişilik özelliği ile olumlu duygusal bilgi işleme arasındaki bağlantıya ilişkin ise kanıt sağlayabilecek çok az çalışma vardır. Fiori ve Antonakis (2012), deneyime açık bireylerin olumlu duygusal uyarıyı işlemek ve bunlara yanıt vermek için daha az zamana ihtiyaç duyduğunu ortaya koymuşlardır.

Yöntem: Araştırmanın örneklemini 62 erkek öğrenci-sporcudan oluşmaktadır. Katılımcılar ilk olarak kişilik ve duygusal zekâ ölçümlerini tamamladılar. Daha sonra ise, duygusal uyarılara tepki hızını ölçmek için deneysel bir görevi tamamladılar. Katılımcıların duygusal resimlere tepki verme hızlarını değerlendirmek için SuperLab 4.0 yazılımı ve onun yanıt pedisi aracılığıyla bir deney geliştirildi. Duygusal uyarıları simule etmek amacıyla Uluslararası Duygusal Resim Sistemi'nden seçilen 90 resim (30 nötr, 30 pozitif ve 30 negatif) kullanıldı. Bu deneyde katılımcılardan bilgisayar aracılığıyla sunulan farklı resimlere olumlu, olumsuz veya nötr olup olmadığına göre yanıt vermeleri istendi. Katılımcılara bilgisayar ekranında arka arkaya sunulan bazı resimleri görecekleri bilgisi verildi. Her resim için, olumlu, olumsuz veya nötr olup olmadığına karar vermeleri ve mümkün olan en hızlı şekilde yanıt pedindeki ilgili tuşa basmaları istendi. Her katılımcı, her resim grubuyla 3 deneme yaptı. Yazılım, doğru yanıtların yanıt hızını milisaniye cinsinden kaydetti.

Sonuç ve Değerlendirme: Sonuçlar, dışadönüklük ve nevroitikliğin duygusal uyarılara tepki hızıyla ilişkili olmadığını göstermiştir. Bununla birlikte, hipotezimizle tutarlı olarak, deneyime açıklık ile olumlu duygusal bilgileri işleme hızı arasında bir ilişki olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Ayrıca, duygusal zekâ özelliklerinin duyguların değerlendirilmesi boyutu ile pozitif değerli resimlere tepki hızı negatif yönde anlamlı derecede ilişkili bulunmuştur. Bu çalışma, duygusal bilgi işleme hızı, kişilik ve duygusal zekâ arasındaki bağlantıya ilişkin tahminlerimize yalnızca kısmi destek sağlarsa da sonuçlarımız bu alanda araştırma yapanlar ve saha uygulayıcıları için bazı ön çıkarımlara sahiptir. Buna göre çalışmamız, deneyime açıklığın ve duyguları değerlendirmenin, bireylerin olumlu duygusal uyarılara verdiği tepkileri anlamak için değerli bir yapı olabileceğini göstermiştir.