Personality and Decision Making Styles of University Students

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This study aimed to determine the relationship between personality and decision making styles. The Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaire and Big Five Inventory were administered on 360 university students. Hypotheses were formulated to test the relationship. Correlational analyses revealed that big five factors are correlated with decision making styles. Multiple regression analyses further showed that conscientiousness, openness to experience positively and neuroticism negatively predicts vigilance. Extraversion, openness to experience negatively and neuroticism positively predicted buck-passing. Some findings indicate that neuroticism and conscientiousness predicted procrastination positively and negatively, in that order. Only neuroticism positively predicted hypervigilance. The study's limitations and implications are provided as well.

Keywords: Big five personality factors, decision making style, vigilance, hypervigilance, buck-passing, procrastination

While solving or overcoming any problem, choosing one alternative over all the others is often crucial for any individual or a group to be successful. This act of choosing one alternative can be defined as decision making. Effective decision making skills and self confidence in decision making is important for any individual to overcome his/her problems (Deniz, 2011). An individual’s personal values, desires, and lifestyle influences his/her decision making competence while working in a company. Hence, companies are looking for personalities who will make the best decision for them (BPS Resolver, 2012). The basic goal of this study was to determine the relationship between personality and decision making styles and to understand whether personality can predict decision making styles or not. Since this matter is less frequently explored and there aren't enough studies, exploring this relationship would be important in terms of contribution to the literature.

Janis and Mann (1977) proposed a conflict model of decision making. According to this model, making decisions may generate psychological stress. The excess or absence of this stress eventually become as a major determinant of the subjects failure to make a good decision. There are at least two sources from which this stress can stem: a concern about one’s personal, social, and material losses that may incur by choosing any alternatives; and a concern for losing reputation and self esteem if a wrong decision is made. The way stress is managed in a potentially threatening situation can be conceptualized as a decision making style. Initially, three decision making patterns or behaviors were outlined by Janis and Mann (1976, 1977). These patterns are vigilance, defensive avoidance, and hypervigilance. Among these three, vigilance is the most effective decision making style. In a more recent study, a revise model comprising of four patterns—vigilance, hypervigilance, buck-passing, and procrastination were identified (Mann, Burnett, Radford, & Ford, 1997). Vigilant decision making style can be defined as, 'a methodological approach utilizing a number of discrete stages which link clearly defined objectives to a consideration of a range of options with the final decision emerging from a careful assessment of the ramifications of each decision alternative' (Brown, Abdallah, & Ng, 2011, p. 453). So, a vigilant decision maker needs to consider the goal or objective of the situation requiring a solution, collect information relating