

The Impact of Lawyers' Personality Traits on Occupational Burnout

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ABSTRACT

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Purpose – Lawyers, who operate under intense professional responsibilities, maintain constant interpersonal interactions, and work in highly stressful environments, are at a considerable risk of experiencing occupational burnout. One key factor influencing burnout is personality traits. Enhancing individuals' awareness of their own personality characteristics, identifying which traits contribute to burnout, and understanding the direction and strength of these effects are essential for reducing the risk of burnout. This study aims to investigate the impact of lawyers' personality traits on their levels of occupational burnout.

Design/methodology/approach – This study utilized a relational survey design, collecting data through a structured questionnaire. The instrument consisted of three sections: the Maslach Burnout Inventory, the Five-Factor Personality Traits Inventory, and a demographic information form. The research population included lawyers practicing in the city center of Adana. Using convenience and snowball sampling methods, valid responses suitable for analysis were obtained from 267 lawyers. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) as well as validity and reliability tests of the measurement scales. Regression analyses were performed to test the study hypotheses.

Results – The results revealed that lawyers' personality traits significantly influence their levels of burnout. Specifically, Neuroticism was found to positively predict emotional exhaustion and reduce personal accomplishment, both sub-dimensions of burnout. Conversely, Agreeableness was shown to negatively predict emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Conscientiousness negatively predicted depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Additionally, Extraversion and Openness to Experience were found to negatively predict reduced personal accomplishment.

Discussion – The findings indicate that personality traits play a crucial role in shaping the occupational burnout levels of lawyers. While Neuroticism exacerbates burnout, traits such as Openness to Experience, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness serve as protective factors that help mitigate its effects. Raising lawyers' awareness of how their personality traits influence burnout can contribute to more effective self-regulation and coping strategies. Furthermore, law firms and bar associations should consider these personality traits when designing supportive work environments that foster resilience and reduce the risk of burnout.

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1. Introduction

Access to justice and the availability of legal remedies are fundamental human rights. In a state governed by the rule of law, it is the duty of the government to provide citizens with avenues to seek legal remedies and to ensure legal security. Within this framework, lawyers act as guarantors of the right to legal recourse and representatives of the defense. As outlined in the Attorneyship Law No. 1136 (Official Gazette, 1969), the legal profession is both a public service and a liberal profession. Its purpose is to regulate legal relations, ensure fair and equitable resolutions of legal matters and disputes, and guarantee the full application of legal rules. To this end, lawyers offer their knowledge and expertise in the service of justice and for the benefit of individuals.

While the legal profession plays a crucial role in defending individuals' rights and ensuring access to justice, it also presents various challenges. Lawyers often face stressors such as complex legal procedures, time constraints, heavy workloads, and high client expectations (Serçemeli, 2018). Negative public perceptions and instances of verbal or physical assaults can further increase the psychological pressure on lawyers, potentially leading to occupational burnout (Gürses, 2006).

ETHICAL APPROVAL: The ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Çağ University Institute of Social Sciences Ethics Committee of with the decision dated April 30, 2019, and numbered SOBE 847.

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Burnout in the legal profession can lead to a range of adverse outcomes at individual, professional, and societal levels. Individually, burnout may result in physiological issues like sleep disorders, chronic fatigue, headaches, digestive problems, and weakened immunity, as well as psychological challenges such as depression, anxiety, hopelessness, feelings of worthlessness, anger, and irritability (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Melamed et al., 2006).

Furthermore, burnout can negatively affect lawyers' relationships with family, friends, and social circles, causing communication difficulties, misunderstandings, and conflicts (Ardıç & Polatçı, 2008). Feelings of job dissatisfaction and thoughts of leaving the profession are also common among burned-out lawyers. As a coping mechanism for the individual effects of burnout, some may turn to medication, alcohol, or substance use (Kazu & Yıldırım, 2021), potentially leading to addiction. Such outcomes can damage the reputation and public image of the legal profession (Zamroni, 2020).

Additionally, burnout can lead to decreased job performance, mistakes, and lowered productivity (Boymul, 2015). Burned-out lawyers may struggle to provide adequate, high-quality services to their clients, which not only undermines the efficiency of the justice system but also adversely affects clients' rights (Richmond, 2012; Napier, 1979; Cohn et al., 1998). Burnout may also lead to communication issues, competition, and conflicts among colleagues, thereby weakening the spirit of cooperation and solidarity. Furthermore, diminished performance, errors, and unethical behavior may tarnish the profession's reputation and erode public trust in lawyers (Kaçmaz, 2005).

On a societal level, lawyer burnout can hinder citizens' access to justice and diminish their trust in the justice system. Burned-out lawyers may also be less effective in addressing social issues (Napier, 1979), which can contribute to the escalation and persistence of these problems. Therefore, studies focusing on lawyers' burnout levels and related factors are crucial at the individual, professional, and societal levels. Individuals with different personality traits may experience burnout at varying levels. Being knowledgeable about burnout, recognizing oneself, and understanding the relationship between personality traits and burnout can facilitate individual coping strategies. For this reason, the impact of personality traits on lawyers' levels of burnout emerges as an important area of research. Examining the relationship between lawyers' personality traits and burnout levels can help identify the personality factors influencing burnout, contribute to the development of preventive measures and improvement strategies, and support efforts to reduce burnout among lawyers.

This study investigates the relationship between lawyers' personality traits and their levels of occupational burnout. Specifically, it aims to answer the questions: "Is there a relationship between lawyers' personality traits and their levels of occupational burnout?" and "Do lawyers' personality traits affect their levels of occupational burnout?" Although the literature contains many studies examining the relationship between personality traits and burnout (Bakker et al., 2010; Dinç et al., 2013; Kapusuz & Çavuş, 2018; Kokkinos, 2011; Vaulerin et al., 2016; Vittori et al., 2024; Butoi et al., 2025; Camara et al., 2025), research on this relationship among lawyers remains limited. Therefore, the findings of this research are significant in contributing to the existing body of literature, adding a new dimension to previous studies, guiding future research, and providing insights for preventing burnout among lawyers.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Occupational Burnout

Freudenberger (1974) was the first to introduce the concept of burnout in the academic field, defining it as exhaustion, fatigue, and a sense of failure resulting from the excessive use of one's energy and resources. Maslach and Jackson (1981) expanded on this definition, conceptualizing burnout as a multidimensional syndrome that encompasses both physical and psychological aspects. Key features of burnout include physical exhaustion, prolonged fatigue, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, and developing negative attitudes toward one's work, life, and others. Many scholars emphasize that burnout is primarily an internal psychological phenomenon that occurs at the individual level, shaped by personal expectations, attitudes, and perceptions (Ağaoğlu et al., 2004; Gökçakan & Özer, 1999; Izgar, 2000; Pines & Aranson, 1988; Taşğın, 2004; Tümkaya, 1996).

According to Kavla (1998), burnout is a negative experience that arises from the interaction between the individual and their environment. It is a response to chronic occupational stress that hinders individuals from

achieving their professional goals and develops progressively over time. Burnout syndrome does not occur suddenly; instead, its symptoms escalate gradually. If these symptoms are ignored, the condition worsens, making it increasingly difficult to cope. Therefore, recognizing early signs of burnout and taking preventive measures is essential (Ardıç & Polatçı, 2008).

The literature identifies several factors that contribute to burnout, which can generally be categorized into two main groups: personal and organizational (Rossi et al., 2006).

Personal factors include expectations, personality traits, age, lack of relaxation opportunities, and insufficient family time (Göktepe, 2016). On the other hand, organizational factors encompass the type and nature of the profession, workload and working hours, workplace environment, social support, sense of belonging, and socioeconomic conditions (Boymul, 2015).

Burnout symptoms can be classified into three categories (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Kaçmaz, 2005):

- Physical: Fatigue, sleep problems, headaches
- Psychological: Irritability, depression, feelings of helplessness
- Behavioral: Forgetfulness, anger, decreased performance

Physical symptoms can develop into serious health issues, while psychological symptoms may lead to cognitive difficulties, anxiety, and diminished self-esteem. Behavioral symptoms are often recognized by others rather than the individual experiencing them, causing disruptions in relationships at work, within families, and in social settings. This may result in communication problems, conflicts, lack of cooperation, and social isolation (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Ardıç & Polatçı, 2008).

Burnout is commonly examined through three sub-dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is the core dimension, frequently observed in professions that require constant interaction with others, and it represents the stress component of burnout (Koç, 2012, p. 31). Depersonalization reflects the interpersonal aspect and is characterized by negative attitudes, harsh behaviors toward others, and emotional detachment from professional responsibilities (Budak & Sürgevil, 2005, p. 96). Reduced personal accomplishment pertains to feelings of ineffectiveness, perceptions of failure, and diminished self-confidence and self-esteem stemming from perceived professional inadequacy (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

2.2. Personality Traits and the Five-Factor Personality Model

Personality refers to the consistent behavioral patterns and internal processes of an individual, reflecting stable differences in feelings, thoughts, and behaviors (Burger, 2016). In essence, it represents distinct and characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving that shape how individuals interact with their physical and social environments (Smith et al., 2016). The core features of personality include distinctiveness, which emphasizes the differences between individuals, and consistency over time (Sayar & Dinç, 2018). Furthermore, personality encompasses not only behaviors but also emotional, cognitive, and perceptual processes.

Various personality theories have sought to explain and understand human behavior and personality traits. Learning Theory explains personality development through concepts such as classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning (Mukhalalati et al., 2022). Trait Theory emphasizes identifying fundamental traits that define personality and differentiate individuals from one another (Bleidorn, 2024). Humanistic Theory focuses on free will, subjective experiences, human potential, and personal growth (Joseph, 2021). Cognitive Theory examines how personality is shaped by information-processing mechanisms and how individuals perceive the world (Burger, 2016).

Personality psychologists have long aimed to define and measure personality more formally than it is typically used in everyday language. By using lexical terms to describe personality traits and applying statistical methods such as factor analysis, researchers have attempted to identify the core dimensions of personality. For example, Allport and Odbert (1936) and Cattell (1957) analyzed thousands of trait terms and proposed various numbers of factors. Eysenck (1971) suggested two major dimensions—introversion-extraversion and Neuroticism-stability—and later added psychoticism-tough-mindedness. McCrae and Costa (1999) expanded

this framework by introducing openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, leading to the development of the Five-Factor Model (Big Five). Today, the Big Five model—comprising extraversion, Neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience—is widely accepted as a comprehensive model that captures the essential dimensions of personality.

Extraversion: This dimension, akin to Eysenck's (1971) introversion-extraversion model, includes traits such as sociability, energy, optimism, assertiveness, and warmth. Extraverts tend to be adventurous, expressive, and often report higher levels of happiness. In contrast, introverts are typically described as quiet, reserved, shy, passive, and preferring solitude. However, introversion is not simply the opposite of extraversion; introverts may choose solitude without experiencing social anxiety and are not necessarily unhappy or pessimistic. While extraverts tend to express positive emotions more openly, introverts generally exhibit more restraint. Research suggests that extraverts adapt better to various cultures and face fewer difficulties when seeking psychological help (Smith et al., 2016).

Neuroticism / Emotional Instability: This trait encompasses anxiety, hostility, insecurity, and vulnerability, and it is associated with negative emotions such as sadness, worry, anger, and guilt. Individuals high in Neuroticism often display emotional instability and impulsivity (Burger, 2016). In contrast, emotionally stable individuals tend to be calm and relaxed. Those high in neuroticism may overreact to stress, while individuals low in Neuroticism tend to cope with stress more effectively (Yoğurtçu, 2018). Neuroticism is linked to long-term risks of psychological and behavioral problems, impaired emotional regulation, poor decision-making, and reliance on irrational beliefs or maladaptive coping strategies.

Conscientiousness: This dimension, which encompasses characteristics such as discipline, determination, planning, goal orientation, and perseverance, is associated with achievement orientation. Low conscientiousness, on the other hand, is characterized by impulsivity, disorganization, and procrastination (McCrae & Costa, 1999). Self-regulation is regarded as an important predictor of job performance (Burger, 2016).

Openness to Experience: This dimension includes traits such as imagination, intellectual curiosity, broad-mindedness, and receptivity to new ideas and perspectives (Burger, 2016). Scientists and artists are often perceived as scoring high in openness (Feist & Feist, 2006). Low openness is associated with conservatism and a lack of intellectual curiosity. Creativity, originality, courage, and an unbounded curiosity are key defining features of openness. While there is a strong association between high openness and cognition, it should not be confused with intelligence. Although intelligent individuals may be more open-minded, the two represent distinct constructs (McCrae & Costa, 1987).

Agreeableness: This trait relates to interpersonal relationships and encompasses qualities such as helpfulness, sympathy, trustworthiness, and humility (Burger, 2016). Individuals high in agreeableness are generally cooperative, whereas those low in this trait may exhibit skepticism, aggressiveness, and hostility (Weiten et al., 2016). Agreeableness reflects the compassionate aspect of personality, but high agreeableness should not be misconstrued as dependence or submissiveness.

2.3. The Relationship Between Personality Traits and Occupational Burnout

Personality traits influence how individuals cope with stress, regulate their emotions, maintain social relationships, and approach their work, making them more or less susceptible to emotional exhaustion. Alarcon et al. (2009) highlighted the impact of personality factors on burnout development. Similarly, Angelini (2023) pointed out that personality traits could explain why employees under the same stressful conditions experience burnout differently. Pérez-Fuentes et al. (2019) argued that, although job-related factors contribute to burnout, the varying responses of individuals in identical conditions underscore the significance of personal variables like personality.

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between personality traits and burnout, indicating that different personality characteristics can lead to varying levels of burnout depending on the professional context (Alarcon et al., 2009; Bakker et al., 2010; Bianchi, 2018; Dinç et al., 2013; Pérez-Fuentes et al., 2019; Kapusuz & Çavuş, 2018; Kim et al., 2009; Kokkinos, 2011; Mills & Huebner, 1998; Van der Wal et al., 2016; Vaulerin et al., 2016; Vittori et al., 2024; Butoi et al., 2025; Camara et al., 2025).

Extroverted individuals, by actively seeking social support and maintaining a positive outlook, are generally better equipped to cope with their workload and find emotional relief during stressful times, thereby reducing their risk of burnout (Spreitzer & Porath, 2012). Individuals with a neurotic personality often experience negative emotions more frequently and intensely. They may exhibit irrational thinking, suffer from low self-esteem, struggle with impulse control, and lack effective stress management skills. Consequently, they face greater challenges in the workplace, which can lead to emotional resource depletion and an increased risk of burnout, particularly in high-stress professions such as law (Jackson et al., 1987; Lester et al., 2011). Conscientiousness, another important personality trait, enhances time management, reduces stress levels, and increases job satisfaction through organized work habits, goal orientation, and attention to detail, which can mitigate burnout (Hagen et al., 2023).

In contrast, individuals high in openness to experience tend to generate creative solutions to professional challenges. Their receptiveness to new ideas allows them to adapt more easily to changing conditions and may help prevent burnout related to monotony (Bakker et al., 2010; Spreitzer & Porath, 2012). Lastly, agreeableness fosters empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution skills in the workplace. By nurturing supportive relationships with colleagues and clients, individuals with this trait can enhance job satisfaction and lower the risk of burnout. Consequently, personality traits play a crucial role in both the emergence and prevention of burnout.

Professions that require frequent face-to-face interactions, such as law, are especially vulnerable to high levels of burnout. The legal profession, characterized by its intense workload, high stress levels, and numerous emotional challenges, is considered at significant risk for burnout. As a result, it is expected that lawyers may experience professional burnout, and their personality traits are likely to significantly influence this experience.

Based on this framework, the following hypotheses are proposed for testing:

H₁: Lawyers' personality traits affect emotional exhaustion.

H_{1a}: Lawyers' extraversion personality traits negatively affect emotional exhaustion

H_{1b}: Lawyers' neuroticism personality traits positively affect emotional exhaustion

H_{1c}: Lawyers' conscientiousness personality traits negatively affect emotional exhaustion

H_{1d}: Lawyers' agreeableness personality traits negatively affect emotional exhaustion

H_{1e}: Lawyers' openness to experience personality traits negatively affect emotional exhaustion

H₂: Lawyers' personality traits affect depersonalization.

H_{2a}: Lawyers' extraversion personality traits negatively affect depersonalization

H_{2b}: Lawyers' Neuroticism personality traits positively affect depersonalization

H_{2c}: Lawyers' conscientiousness personality traits negatively affect depersonalization

H_{2d}: Lawyers' agreeableness personality traits negatively affect depersonalization

H_{2e}: Lawyers' openness to experience personality traits negatively affect depersonalization

H₃: Lawyers' personality traits affect reduced personal accomplishment.

H_{3a}: Lawyers' extraversion personality traits negatively affect personal accomplishment.

H_{3b}: Lawyers' Neuroticism personality traits positively affect personal accomplishment.

H_{3c}: Lawyers' conscientiousness personality traits negatively personal accomplishment.

H_{3d}: Lawyers' agreeableness personality traits negatively affect personal accomplishment.

H_{3e}: Lawyers' openness to experience personality traits negatively affect personal accomplishment.

The conceptual model of the research in line with the hypotheses is as shown in Figure 1.

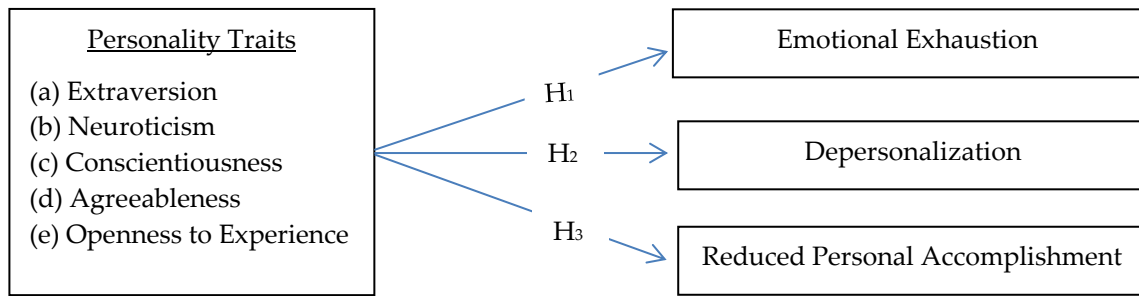


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Research

3. Research Method

This study is based on a section of Arzu Bilge Tanar's Master's thesis, which was conducted under the supervision of Erdinç Ballı. The Ethics Committee of Çağ University Institute of Social Sciences granted ethical approval for the study (Decision No. SOBE 847, dated April 30, 2019).

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between lawyers' personality traits and their levels of occupational burnout. The research utilized a correlational survey method, with data collected through questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), the Big Five Personality Traits Scale, and a section for demographic information.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory, developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) and adapted into Turkish by Ergin (1993), is a 22-item scale that evaluates burnout syndrome across three dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Reduced Personal Accomplishment. The Big Five Personality Traits Scale, developed by John, Donahue, and Kentle (1991) and adapted into Turkish by Sümer and Sümer (2005), consists of 44 items and assesses personality traits across five sub-dimensions: Extraversion, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Openness to Experience. Both instruments employ a 5-point Likert-type scale, with response options ranging from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, to (5) strongly agree.

The population for this study consists of lawyers practicing in the city center of Adana. Non-probability sampling techniques, specifically convenience and snowball sampling methods, were employed. Data were collected between September 2019 and November 2019 using both online questionnaires and printed survey forms distributed in bar association offices. During this period, a total of 324 lawyers were reached; after excluding incomplete or incorrectly filled forms, 267 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis. For data analysis, descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) as well as validity and reliability tests of the scales were conducted. Additionally, regression analyses were performed to test the research hypotheses.

4. Findings

Data were collected from a sample of 267 lawyers. The findings related to the participants' demographic characteristics, including gender, marital status, and age, as well as their professional characteristics, such as years of experience, type of practice, and types of cases handled, are summarized in Table 1. An analysis of the table indicates that 51.3% of the participants were female, 62.2% were married, and 53.9% were between the ages of 28 and 37. Regarding professional characteristics, 20.2% of the participants had 3 to 7 years of experience, 50.6% practiced individually, and nearly 60% specialized in civil law cases.

Table 1. Findings on the Demographic and Professional Characteristics of the Participants

		n	%
Gender	Male	130	48.7
	Female	137	51.3
Age	18–27	16	6.0
	28–37	144	53.9
	38–48	71	26.4

	48–57	28	10.3
	58 and above	8	3.0
Marital Status	Married	166	62.2
	Single	101	37.8
Experience	2 years or less	42	15,8
	3–7 years	54	20,2
	8–12 years	47	17,6
	13–17 years	46	17,2
	18–22 years	43	16,1
	23–27 years	15	5,6
	28- 33 years	15	5,6
Type of Practice	34 years and above	5	1,9
	Law partnership	45	16.8
	Associate (employed lawyer)	56	21.0
	Individual law office	135	50.6
Type of Cases Handled	Public Sector	31	11.6
	Civil Law	160	59.9
	Enforcement Law	42	15.7
	Administrative Law	7	2.6
	Criminal Law	58	21.8

4.1. Validity and Reliability

To test the validity of the scales used, first-order multifactor confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted for the Burnout Scale, and single-factor CFA was conducted for the sub-dimensions of the Big Five Personality Scale using AMOS 21 software. The initial analysis results indicated that the fit indices of the measurement models were not within acceptable limits; therefore, modifications suggested by the program were implemented. In line with these modification indices, three items were removed from the Burnout Scale and ten items were removed from the Big Five Personality Scale. After removing these items, the CFA results for the Burnout Scale are presented in Table 2 and Table 3, while the CFA results for the Personality Traits Scale are provided in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 2. Fit Indices of the Burnout Scale

	X2	df	X2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Burnout Scale	238.949	147	1.63	.92	.92	0.05
Good Fit Indices*			≤3	≥0.90	≥0.97	≤0.05
Acceptable Fit Indices*			≤4-5	0.89-0.85	≥0.90	0.06-0.08

*(Gürbüz & Şahin, 2016)

An examination of the values in Table 2 reveals that the χ^2/df index is 1.63, which is less than 3, indicating a good fit. The GFI index is 0.92, which is greater than or equal to 0.90, also falling within the good fit range. The CFI index meets the acceptable fit criterion of 0.90 or higher, with a value of 0.92 indicating an acceptable fit in the confirmatory factor analysis. The RMSEA index, which tests the degree of model misspecification, prefers lower values closer to zero. RMSEA values of 0.05 or less indicate a good fit, while values between 0.06 and 0.08 reflect an acceptable fit (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2016). In this analysis, the RMSEA value was 0.05, demonstrating a good fit. Since all indices fall within the desired ranges, the three-factor structure of the Burnout Scale has been confirmed.

The factor loadings, arithmetic means, and Cronbach's Alpha (CA) reliability coefficients for the Burnout Scale are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Factorial Analysis of Burnout Scale

Scales	Items	Factor Loading	CA	Mean
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	EE1, EE2, EE3, EE4, EE5, EE6, EE8, EE9	.45 – .78	.69	3.20
Depersonalization (DP)	DP1, DP2, DP3, DP4, DP5	.44 – .79	.68	2.81
Reduced Personal Accomplishment (RPA)	PA1, PA2, PA3, PA5, PA7, PA8	.60 – .70	.69	2.14

An examination of Table 3 shows that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the Burnout Scale is .69 for the Emotional Exhaustion sub-dimension, .68 for Depersonalization, and .69 for reduced personal accomplishment. According to the criterion that $0.60 < \text{Alpha} < 0.80$ indicates a fairly reliable scale (Nakip, 2005; Kalaycı, 2006), it can be concluded that the sub-dimensions of the Burnout Scale demonstrate considerable reliability. Regarding arithmetic means, the highest average was observed in Emotional Exhaustion ($M = 3.2$), followed by Depersonalization ($M = 2.81$), and finally Reduced Personal Accomplishment ($M = 2.14$).

The results of the CFA conducted to test the validity of the five-factor structure of the Big Five Personality Scale are presented in Table 4. An examination of the values in the table indicates that they fall within acceptable ranges, thereby confirming the five-factor structure of the Big Five Personality Scale.

Table 4. Fit Indices of the Sub-Dimensions of the Big Five Personality Traits Scale

Dimension	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Extraversion	39.489	13	3.038	.96	.95	0.08
Neuroticism	43.714	13	3.36	.96	.93	0.09
Conscientiousness	37.937	14	2.710	.96	.94	0.08
Agreeableness	17.569	9	1.952	.98	.94	0.06
Openness to Experience	60.419	26	2.324	.95	.93	0.07
<i>Good Fit Indices*</i>			≤ 3	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,97$	$\leq 0,05$
<i>Acceptable Fit Indices*</i>			$\leq 4-5$	$0,89-0,85$	$\geq 0,90$	$0,06-0,08$

* (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2016)

An examination of Table 5 indicates that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the factors in the Big Five Personality Traits Scale fall within the range of $0.60 < \text{Alpha} < 0.80$, suggesting that the scale demonstrates considerable reliability. Regarding arithmetic means, the highest average was observed for the openness to experience trait, followed by conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and finally neuroticism.

Table 5. Factorial Analysis of Big Five Personality Traits Scale

Scales	Items	Factor Loading	CA	Mean
Extraversion (E)	EV1, EV4, EV5, EV6, EV7, EV8	.55 – .77	.72	3.70
Neuroticism (N)	N1, N2, N3, N4, N5, N6, N7	.44 – .80	.77	2.90
Conscientiousness (C)	C1, C2, C4, C5, C7, C8, C9	.58 – .71	.77	3.81
Agreeableness (A)	A1, A3, A5, A6, A8	.41 – .71	.60	3.36
Openness to Experience (OTE)	OTE1, OTE2, OTE3, OTE4, OTE5, OTE7, OTE8	.43 – .75	.78	3.84

4.2. Correlation

To explore the relationships between burnout and personality dimensions, a correlation analysis was conducted, with results displayed in Table 6.

The table reveals that emotional exhaustion is negatively correlated with several personality traits: extraversion ($r = -0.255$; $p < 0.01$), conscientiousness ($r = -0.339$; $p < 0.01$), agreeableness ($r = -0.320$; $p < 0.01$), and openness to experience ($r = -0.182$; $p < 0.01$). In contrast, it shows a positive correlation with neuroticism ($r = 0.522$; $p < 0.01$).

Additionally, depersonalization exhibited significant negative correlations with extraversion ($r = -0.137$; $p < 0.05$), conscientiousness ($r = -0.292$; $p < 0.01$), and agreeableness ($r = -0.421$; $p < 0.01$). it also demonstrated a significant positive correlation with neuroticism ($r = 0.292$; $p < 0.01$).

Similarly, reduced personal accomplishment was significantly negatively correlated with extraversion ($r = -0.464$; $p < 0.01$), conscientiousness ($r = -0.510$; $p < 0.01$), and openness to experience ($r = -0.511$; $p < 0.01$). conversely, it was significantly and positively correlated with neuroticism ($r = 0.408$; $p < 0.01$).

Table 6. Correlation Analysis

	EE	D	RPA	EV	N	C	A	OTE
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	1	.511**	.152*	-.255**	.522**	-.339**	-.320**	-.182**
Depersonalization (DEP)		1	.044	-.137*	.292**	-.292**	-.421**	-.112
Reduced Personal Accomplishment (RPA)			1	-.464**	.408**	-.510**	-.035	-.514**
Extraversion (E)				1	-.491**	.440**	.010	.511**
Neuroticism (N)					1	-.498**	-.301**	-.298**
Conscientiousness (C)						1	.177**	.416**
Agreeableness (A)							1	-.021
Openness to Experience (OTE)								1

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

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

To examine the effects of personality traits on emotional exhaustion, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted, and the results are summarized in Table 7. The findings indicate that the model is statistically significant ($F = 16.233$; $p = 0.0001$). The VIF values ranged from a minimum of 1.145 to a maximum of 1.696, and the Durbin–Watson statistic was 1.966. These results suggest that there are no issues of multicollinearity or autocorrelation in the model.

According to the analysis results, one of the main hypotheses of the research, “H₁: Personality traits of lawyers affect emotional burnout”, was supported.

Table 7. The Effect of Lawyers’ Personality Traits on Emotional Exhaustion

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	p	Collinearity Statistics (Tolerance)	VIF	Durbin – Watson
Constant	3.156	.698	–	4.524	.000	–	–	1.966
Extraversion	.009	.094	.006	.096	.924	.590	1.696	
Neuroticism	.506	.080	.419	6.316	.000	.602	1.660	
Conscientiousness	-.144	.102	-.090	-1.420	.157	.655	1.528	
Agreeableness	-.248	.076	-.178	-3.239	.001	.874	1.145	
Openness to Experience	-.040	.093	-.027	-.437	.663	.688	1.453	

Dependent Variable: Emotional Exhaustion; $R^2 = .309$; Adjusted $R^2 = .296$; $F = 16.233$; $p < .01$

The proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables was found to be adjusted $R^2 = .296$. This result indicates that 29.6% of the variation in emotional exhaustion can be explained by personality traits. Examination of the model revealed that neuroticism ($\beta = .419$; $p < .001$) and agreeableness

($\beta = -.178$; $p = .001$) significantly affect employees' emotional exhaustion, whereas openness to experience ($\beta = -.027$; $p = .663$), extraversion ($\beta = .006$; $p = .924$), and conscientiousness ($\beta = -.090$; $p = .157$) do not have significant effects. Specifically, a one-unit increase in neuroticism leads to a 0.506-unit increase in lawyers' emotional exhaustion, while a one-unit increase in agreeableness results in a 0.248-unit decrease in emotional exhaustion. According to these results, the sub-hypotheses H1b and H1d were supported, whereas H1a, H1c, and H1e were not supported.

To examine the effects of personality traits on depersonalization, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted, and the results are summarized in Table 8. The analysis indicated that the model is statistically significant ($F = 15.822$; $p = .000$). The VIF values ranged from a minimum of 1.145 to a maximum of 1.696, and the Durbin-Watson statistic was 2.030. These results suggest that there are no multicollinearity or autocorrelation problems in the model.

Based on the analysis results, one of the main hypotheses of the research "H₂: Lawyers' personality traits affect depersonalization" was supported.

Table 8. The Effect of Lawyers' Personality Traits on Depersonalization

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	p	Collinearity Statistics (Tolerance)	VIF	Durbin - Watson
Constant	5.082	.648	-	7.847	.000	-	-	2.030
Extraversion	-.005	.088	-.004	-.060	.953	.590	1.696	
Neuroticism	.093	.074	.088	1.255	.211	.602	1.660	
Conscientiousness	-.245	.094	-.174	-2.603	.010	.655	1.528	
Agreeableness	-.446	.071	-.364	-6.279	.000	.874	1.145	
Openness to Experience	-.025	.086	-.019	-.287	.775	.688	1.453	

Dependent Variable: Depersonalization; R² = .233; Adjusted R² = .218; F = 15.822; p < .01

According to Table 8, the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 15.822$, $p < .01$), and the adjusted R² value indicated that the independent variables explained 21.8% of the variance in depersonalization (Adjusted R² = .218). The Durbin-Watson statistic (2.030) indicated no evidence of autocorrelation in the model. The independent variables contributing to the model were identified as conscientiousness ($\beta = -.245$; $p = .010$) and agreeableness ($\beta = -.446$; $p = .000$). In light of these findings, it can be concluded that as conscientiousness and agreeableness increase, depersonalization decreases. On the other hand, openness to experience ($\beta = -.025$; $p = .775$), extraversion ($\beta = -.005$; $p = .953$), and neuroticism ($\beta = .093$; $p = .211$) were not found to have significant effects in explaining the dependent variable in this model. Specifically, a one-unit increase in conscientiousness leads to a .245-unit decrease in lawyers' depersonalization, while a one-unit increase in agreeableness results in a .446-unit decrease. According to these results, the sub-hypotheses of the study, H_{2c}, and H_{2d}, were supported, while H_{2a}, H_{2b} and H_{2e} were not supported.

To examine the effects of personality traits on reduced personal accomplishment, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted, and the results are presented in Table 9. The findings indicated that the model was statistically significant ($F = 35.284$; $p = .000$). The VIF values ranged from a minimum of 1.145 to a maximum of 1.696, and the Durbin-Watson statistic (1.917) indicated no multicollinearity or autocorrelation issues in the model.

Based on the analysis results, one of the main hypotheses of the research “H3: Lawyers’ personality traits affect reduced personal accomplishment” was supported.

Table 9. The Effect of Lawyers’ Personality Traits on Reduced Personal Accomplishment

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	p	Collinearity Statistics (Tolerance)	VIF	Durbin – Watson
Constant	4.081	.384	–	10.637	.000	–	–	1.917
Extraversion	–.106	.052	–.128	–2.049	.041	.590	1.696	
Neuroticism	.099	.044	.138	2.241	.026	.602	1.660	
Conscientiousness	–.257	.056	–.272	–4.601	.000	.655	1.528	
Agreeableness	.041	.042	.050	.975	.330	.874	1.145	
Openness to Experience	–.260	.051	–.293	–5.088	.000	.688	1.453	

Dependent Variable: Reduced Personal Accomplishment; R² = .403; Adjusted R² = .392; F = 35.284; p < .01

The proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables was found to be adjusted R² = .392. This result indicates that 39.2% of the variation in reduced personal accomplishment can be explained by personality traits. Examination of the model revealed that openness to experience ($\beta = -.293$; $p < .001$), extraversion ($\beta = -.128$; $p = .041$), neuroticism ($\beta = .138$; $p = .026$), and conscientiousness ($\beta = -.272$; $p < .001$) significantly affect employees’ sense of reduced personal accomplishment, while agreeableness ($\beta = .050$; $p = .330$) does not have a significant effect. According to these results, the sub-hypotheses H3a, H3b, H3c, and H3e were supported, whereas H3d was not supported.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of lawyers' personality traits on their levels of professional burnout. The research was based on data collected from 267 lawyers registered with the Adana Bar Association and working in the city centre. Participants completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) and the Big Five Personality Inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991). Reliability and confirmatory factor analyses confirmed that both scales were valid and reliable.

The descriptive analysis of the sample indicated that openness to experience was the most pronounced personality trait among participants, followed by conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and, finally, neuroticism. Regarding burnout, the highest mean scores were reported for emotional exhaustion, with lower average levels for depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. These preliminary findings provided a basis for exploring how specific traits relate to burnout dimensions in legal professionals.

The study found significant relationships between personality traits and the three burnout dimensions. Neuroticism and agreeableness emerged as key predictors of emotional exhaustion: higher neuroticism was associated with greater emotional exhaustion, while higher agreeableness was associated with lower emotional exhaustion. This aligns with reviews and meta-analyses across a range of professions, consistently identifying neuroticism as the strongest predictor of emotional exhaustion and agreeableness as a buffer. In legal settings, traits linked to neuroticism, such as emotional sensitivity and anxiety, also appear associated with burnout, while the cooperative nature of agreeableness may counteract emotional depletion in client-facing roles.

For depersonalization, higher conscientiousness and agreeableness were associated with lower depersonalization, supporting their protective effect against detachment. Prior research also found that these traits negatively predicted depersonalization across professions. Unlike past research, neuroticism was not a significant predictor of depersonalization in this study. This may reflect features of legal practice, such as the

normative emotional distance reinforced by training, which may diminish the impact of personality on professional detachment.

Reduced personal accomplishment was influenced by openness to experience, extraversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness. Higher levels of conscientiousness, openness, and extraversion were associated with a lower sense of reduced personal accomplishment — that is, a stronger sense of professional achievement. In contrast, higher neuroticism intensified feelings of reduced accomplishment. These findings are broadly consistent with prior evidence. Liu et al. (2022), in a meta-analysis of 28 studies (total N = 12,103), reported that reduced personal accomplishment was negatively associated with all five Big Five dimensions, with conscientiousness showing the strongest effect. Ghorpade et al. (2007) studied 265 university instructors and found that extraversion and conscientiousness were positively related to personal accomplishments, mirroring the present results. The protective role of openness to experience on personal accomplishment is particularly noteworthy in the legal context: lawyers who are intellectually curious and receptive to novel approaches may be better equipped to derive meaning from complex casework, thereby sustaining their sense of professional efficacy. Interestingly, agreeableness did not significantly predict reduced personal accomplishment in this study (H3d not supported). This null finding has precedent in the literature: Ghorpade et al. (2007) also reported that the relationship between agreeableness and personal accomplishment was not significant when modelled alongside other personality dimensions. In the legal profession, where individual performance and competitive outcomes are salient, the cooperative and empathic qualities captured by agreeableness may be less directly relevant to lawyers' subjective sense of professional achievement — a distinction that warrants further investigation. Conscientiousness did not significantly predict emotional exhaustion (H1c not supported). This finding differs from medical contexts; Freeman et al. (2025), for example, reported a strong negative correlation between conscientiousness and emotional exhaustion among emergency medicine residents ($r = -.40$). A contextual explanation is possible: in the demanding environment of legal practice, high conscientiousness may generate perfectionistic pressures that partially offset its otherwise protective effects on emotional resources in the short term, while its benefits emerge more clearly in reducing depersonalization and sustaining a sense of personal accomplishment over time.

In summary, openness to experience, extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness were associated with lower burnout, whereas neuroticism was associated with higher burnout. These associations differ across burnout dimensions and may be shaped by the distinct demands and socialisation norms of legal work, which cannot be entirely generalised from healthcare or education.

Addressing the adverse effects of neuroticism in the legal profession requires integrated approaches at the individual, organisational, and educational levels. At the individual level, lawyers with high neurotic tendencies should engage in stress management practices such as mindfulness and meditation, seek psychological counselling and therapy, maintain regular exercise and a healthy lifestyle, challenge irrational thoughts, and cultivate self-compassion.

At the organisational level, bar associations and law firms should offer stress management and emotional regulation training, establish psychological support systems, balance workloads, promote work-life balance through flexible work arrangements, and develop mentoring and supervision programmes. Legal education also plays a vital role: law schools should incorporate courses on stress management, emotional intelligence, communication skills, and psychological resilience into their curricula while providing early support through counselling centres. Awareness seminars on professional ethics, work-life balance, and self-care will equip future lawyers with effective coping strategies.

Supporting extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness among lawyers is equally important for preventing burnout. At the individual level, participation in professional solidarity groups, bar committees, and social events will strengthen extraversion by expanding emotional support networks. Training in time management, self-discipline, and stress management will help lawyers gain greater control over their workloads, thereby reinforcing conscientiousness. Personal development activities, such as counselling and communication workshops, will enhance empathy and communication skills, fostering agreeableness and promoting constructive workplace relationships.

At the organisational level, bar associations and law firms should implement structural policies to nurture these traits. To enhance extraversion, organisations can establish professional exchange platforms, host networking events, and engage in inter-bar collaborations. To strengthen conscientiousness, clear job descriptions, transparent workload allocations, regular performance evaluations, and effective reward systems are essential. To foster agreeableness, organisations should cultivate open communication cultures, provide empathy-based training, and implement effective conflict management programmes. Such efforts will create supportive organisational climates, thereby reducing the likelihood of burnout.

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the sample was drawn exclusively from lawyers practising in Adana's city centre, using convenience and snowball sampling. This restricts the generalisability of the findings to other bar associations and regions in Turkey and prevents conclusions about the broader population of Turkish lawyers. Second, the cross-sectional survey design limits causal inference: it is not possible to determine from the present data whether personality traits cause changes in burnout, or whether burnout-related states influence self-reported personality perceptions. Future research employing longitudinal designs would provide stronger evidence for the directional relationships observed here. Third, data were collected between September and November 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that the pandemic substantially altered working conditions in the legal profession – including shifts to remote work, increased caseloads, and heightened economic uncertainty – the extent to which these findings generalise to post-pandemic samples remains an open question. Fourth, the measurement models required removing three items from the Maslach Burnout Inventory and ten items from the Big Five Inventory to achieve acceptable fit. While the modified scales demonstrated acceptable reliability, this level of item reduction – particularly in the personality measure – may have affected the construct validity of the instruments and should be interpreted with caution. Fifth, the models explained between 22% and 39% of the variance in burnout dimensions, indicating that a substantial portion of the variance remains unexplained by personality alone. Future research should integrate organisational variables – such as workload, perceived organisational support, and role conflict – alongside personality measures to provide a more comprehensive account of burnout in the legal profession.

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