# INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERSONALITY TRAITS, MOTIVATION AND INNOVATION: EVIDENCE FROM PUBLIC SPORT SECTOR MANAGERS IN TÜRKIYE

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**Abstract**

*From the perspective of the new public management approach, the administrative structure of public institutions and the individual characteristics of their managers play a significant role in developing effective and innovative management processes. In this context, this study aims to examine the relationships between personality traits, basic motivation sources, and innovative behaviours of Middle and Top-level managers working in the central and provincial organizations affiliated with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Türkiye. The study was conducted using a relational survey model, and the sample consisted of 345 managers selected through a simple random sampling method. Data collection instruments included Short Form of the Five-Factor Personality Scale, Basic Motivation Sources Scale, and the Innovative Behaviour Scale. In the analysis of the data, Student's t-test and Pearson correlation coefficient were employed. The findings revealed statistically significant, yet low to moderate correlations between managers' innovative behaviours, basic motivation sources, and personality traits. The effectiveness of public administration is closely associated with the presence of well-qualified managerial personnel. In Türkiye, there is a prevailing belief that public work will somehow run itself, regardless of individual competence or managerial effort. This mindset undermines the importance of human capital. Abandoning this passive and institutionalized approach and instead emphasizing the value of managers' personality traits, motivational sources, and*

*innovative behaviors can contribute significantly to enhancing organizational success, motivation, innovation capacity, and long-term sustainability in the public sector.*

***Key-words:*** *Innovative behavior, Manager, Motivation, Personality, Public administration, Sports services.*

## INTRODUCTION

The term "public" is derived from the French concept service public and the German term “öffentliche Anstalt”. It was first introduced into Turkish as hidemat-ı umumiye and later evolved into the terms “amme hizmeti” and “kamusal hizmet” (Derbil, 1950). However, the most widely adopted term has become “kamu hizmeti” (public service). The concept of "public" refers to all individuals living within a specific country, encompassing entities that belong to citizens and are accessible to everyone (Özer et al., 2015). Public administration, on the other hand, is a dynamic structure developed to maintain social order and to deliver public services efficiently (Shafritz et al., 2017). It stands out as a key domain through which the state interacts with its citizens in the production and provision of services related to the public. However, this structure commonly known as traditional public administration gradually lost its effectiveness and failed to meet public expectations, leading to the search for alternative approaches in public service delivery (Boztepe, 2018). In this context, the concept of New Public Management (NPM), which emerged in the 1980s (Hood, 1991), or the entrepreneurial state (Weiss, 1995), sought to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public services by promoting decentralization, privatization, and market-based mechanisms within the public sector (Osborne, 2006; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

Within the New Public Management (NPM) framework, managers play a vital role in ensuring institutional effectiveness and sustainability. A key distinguishing factor of managers is the degree of authority they hold, which commonly defines their classification into Top, Middle, and Lower levels, although this typology may vary across institutions and countries (Dinçer, 2023; Rüzgar & Kurt, 2013). Top-level managers shape

strategic direction by defining mission, vision, and goals, as suggested by Top Echelons Theory, which posits that organizations reflect the characteristics of their top leaders (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Dursun & Köseoğlu, 2016). Conceptual skills are central at this level (Koç & Topaloğlu, 2012). Middle-level managers bridge strategic and operational domains, contributing to problem analysis, idea generation, and communication with senior leadership (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Chen et al., 2015; Mustafa et al., 2022). They also gather and synthesize institutional knowledge to support strategic decision-making (Campos et al., 2017; Mustafa et al., 2016). Lower-level managers, often holding roles such as supervisor or chief, focus on the practical execution of tasks, relying primarily on technical skills (Rüzgar & Kurt, 2013). The coordination among these managerial levels supports organizational coherence and performance (Ozan & Yolcu, 2022).

In contemporary public administration, assigning qualified individuals to managerial roles is essential for enhancing institutional effectiveness and fostering innovation. Research shows that job performance is closely linked to both personality traits and motivation, and that alignment between job characteristics and individual traits can enhance motivation (Virgana, 2020). Although numerous studies have examined personality (Saha & Sharma, 2019), motivation (Stone, 2010), and innovation separately, there is still a limited body of research that explores the interrelation of these variables particularly within public sector settings (Dufault et al., 2023; Suseno et al., 2019).

Traditional organizational models in public administration characterized by rigid hierarchies, centralized control, and unidirectional communication have been widely criticized for their inability to deliver efficient and high-quality services (Golembiewski & Vigoda, 2000). Moussa et al. (2018) highlight several structural and managerial obstacles to innovation, including limited long-term planning, underdeveloped incentive mechanisms, a prevailing culture of risk aversion, inadequate change management practices, and the persistence of outdated and inefficient programs. Moreover, cultural and organizational dynamics frequently hinder the effective integration of technology into public service delivery. These limitations continue to affect public institutions globally,

underscoring the ongoing relevance of debates surrounding efficiency and innovation in the public sector (Satı, 2019; Polat & Akçakaya, 2023; Çiçek & Ökten, 2024).

Innovation is essential for enhancing the effectiveness and service quality of public institutions in today's complex environments (De Vries et al., 2016). Research highlights several factors influencing innovative behaviour, including individual competencies (AlQemzi, 2020), cognitive abilities (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2007), motivation, organizational culture (Mutonyi et al., 2020), personality traits (Abou-Shouk et al., 2022), job design (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2007), and leadership (Pundt, 2015). However, focusing on these factors in isolation may overlook the multifaceted nature of innovative behaviour. As Niu (2014) notes, personality traits often interact with other individual and contextual variables. Moreover, demographic and professional variables—such as age, tenure, experience, and gender—also significantly shape innovative tendencies (Hammond et al., 2011; Ng & Feldman, 2013; Cropley & Cropley, 2017; Woods et al., 2018).

The sports sector, which constitutes a significant field of work and service in many countries, holds similar importance within Turkey. Particularly under the influence of the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm, the transformation and development experienced by public institutions and organizations providing sports services have become critical topics warranting scientific investigation. The Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Türkiye (GSB), along with its central and provincial organizations, represents one of the largest economic and structural domains in the management and administration of sports. In this respect, the Ministry's managerial staff plays a key role in shaping and operationalizing public administration processes within the sports sector, thereby positioning the institution as a significant actor in the broader sphere of public governance. The growing importance of the characteristics of middle- and top-level managers especially those occupying critical positions in decision-making and innovation processes within the managerial structures of these organizations has become increasingly evident. In this regard, investigating the middle- and top-level

managers serving within the central and provincial organizations affiliated with the GSB is significant in terms of contributing to the literature on New Public Management.

Based on this context, the aim of the present study is to examine the relationship between the personality traits, basic motivation sources, and innovative behaviors of Middle and Top-level managers working in the institutions and organizations of the GSB

## METHOD

*Research Model and Sample*

This study was conducted within the framework of the quantitative research paradigm, using the relational survey model, one of the descriptive research designs. The study population consists of managers working in public institutions and organizations that provide sports services. The sample comprises 345 managers who were randomly selected from among Middle and Top-level administrators serving in the central and provincial organizations of the GSB during the 2022–2023 period and who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

**Table 1.** Distribution of the managerial sample by gender and managerial position

| Gender | **n** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 87 | 25,2 |
| Male | 258 | 74,8 |
| *Total* | 345 | 100,0 |
| Managerial Position | **n** | **%** |
| Middle-level | 221 | 64,1 |
| **Top-level** | 124 | 35,9 |
| *Total* | 345 | 100,0 |

Note. n: Number of Mangers

Table 1 shows that among the 345 managers selected through the random sampling method, 87 (25.2%) are female and 258 (74.8%) are male; additionally, 221 (64.1%) are Middle-level managers, while 124 (35.9%) are Top-level managers.

**Table 2.** Distribution of managerial levels by institutional positions of managers in GSB and its central and provincial organizations

| **Institutional Position** | | **n** | **%** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *A* | Middle-Level | 199 | 57,7 |
| *B* | Middle-Level | 22 | 6,4 |
| *Total* | | 221 | 64,1 |
| *C* | Top-Level | 73 | 21,2 |
| *D* | Top-Level | 13 | 3,8 |
| *E* | Top-Level | 22 | 6,4 |
| *F* | Top-Level | 16 | 4,6 |
| *Total* | | 124 | 35,9 |

Note. n: Number of Managers; A: Branch Manager; B: Youth Center Manager; C: District Director; D: Director of Sports Services; E: Director of Youth and Dormitory Services; F: Provincial Directors and Deputy Directors, Department Heads and Deputy Department Heads

Table 2 presents the distribution of managerial levels based on institutional positions. While branch managers (57.7%) and youth center managers (6.4%) represent Middle-level management, district directors (21.2%), directors of sports services (3.8%), directors of youth and dormitory services (6.4%), as well as provincial directors, deputy directors, department heads, and deputy department heads (4.6%) represent Top-level management. Öztürk (2019) notes that there is no consensus in the literature regarding the definition of Top-level managers, and that the classification of these managerial levels may vary depending on institutional structure. Therefore, in this study, relevant literature (Kılıçkaya, 2000; Gökçe & Şahin, 2003; Öztürk, 2019) was first reviewed to determine which institutional positions correspond to which management levels. Based on this review, and taking into account the specific organizational structure of the institution, the researcher developed a taxonomy for classification purposes.

*Data Collection Tools*

In this study, the survey method was employed as the primary data collection technique. Data were collected from managers who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study, using both Google Forms and printed questionnaires distributed in person. To measure the

participants' personality traits, basic sources of motivation, and innovative behaviors, three different scales were utilized. These instruments were selected in accordance with the sub-problems of the research and were chosen based on their demonstrated validity and reliability. Each tool used in the study is well-established in the literature and was administered through Turkish-adapted versions of the original validated scales.

*Big Five Inventory – Short Form (BFI-10):*

To measure participants' personality structures, the "Big Five Inventory – 10-Item Short Form (BFI-10)", originally developed by Rammstedt and John (2007) and adapted into Turkish by Horzum et al. (2017), was employed. This scale is based on the Big Five Personality Traits theory and is a shortened version of the original 44-item BFI, designed for use in research contexts with time constraints. The scale consists of five dimensions: "Extraversion", "Agreeableness", "Conscientiousness", "Neuroticism" and "Openness to Experience". Each dimension is represented by two items, making a total of 10 items. Participants respond to items using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always). The Turkish adaptation of the scale has been reported to yield psychometrically acceptable values (Horzum et al., 2017). In the Turkish version, the internal consistency coefficients were reported as follows: $\alpha = .88$ for Extraversion, $\alpha = .81$ for Agreeableness, $\alpha = .90$ for Conscientiousness, $\alpha = .85$ for Neuroticism, and $\alpha = .84$ for Openness to Experience.

*Basic Motivational Sources Scale:*

To determine the motivational tendencies of the managers, the *Basic Motivational Sources Scale* developed by Antalyalı and Bolat (2017) was utilized. The scale is based on McClelland's (1961) theory of learned needs, which identifies the needs for *Achievement*, *Affiliation*, and *Power*, as well as Cacioppo and Petty's (1982) concept of *Need for Cognition*. The scale consists of four subdimensions—*Need for Achievement*, *Need for Affiliation*, *Need for Power*, and *Need for Cognition* each comprising 6 items, making a total of 24 items. Participants rate the items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Does not describe me at all, 7 = Describes me perfectly). In the original

development study, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients obtained from analyses conducted on different sample groups were reported as follows: Need for Achievement α = .78; Need for Affiliation α = .73; Need for Power α = .82; Need for Cognition α = .79 (Antalyalı & Bolat, 2017). The scale aims to measure individuals' internal motivation profiles at varying levels and to support appropriate task allocation in organizational contexts.

*Innovative Work Behavior Scale:*

To measure the level of innovative behavior exhibited by managers in the workplace, the *Innovative Work Behavior Scale*, originally developed by Lukes and Stephan (2017) and adapted into Turkish by Osman and Turan (2020), was employed. The scale is designed to assess individuals' tendencies and actions across the entire innovation process, from generating new ideas to implementing them. The scale includes 23 items and consists of seven subdimensions: *Idea Generation*, *Idea Search*, *Idea Communication*, *Implementation Starting Activities*, *Involving Others*, *Overcoming Obstacles*, and *Innovative Outputs*. It uses a 5-point Likert-type rating system (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). In the Turkish adaptation study conducted by Osman and Turan (2020), the overall Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was reported as α = .93. The subdimension reliability coefficients were as follows: *Idea Generation* α = .81, *Idea Search*α = .77, *Idea Communication* α = .84, *Implementation Starting Activities* α = .79, *Involving Others* α = .79, *Overcoming Obstacles* α = .89, and *Innovative Outputs* α = .71. These findings indicate that the scale is valid and reliable for use with Turkish samples.

***Note:*** Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Social and Human Sciences at Ondokuz Mayıs University, under the decision number 2021-840, during the session dated 22.10.2021 (Session No: 10). Additionally, necessary permissions were secured from the relevant institutions for the administration of the questionnaire to the sample group. Prior to data collection, the researchers provided detailed explanations to the participating managers regarding the purpose and procedure

of the study. The study was conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration.

*Data Analysis*

The data were processed using Microsoft Excel and the SPSS 25.0 statistical package program. To assess the internal consistency of participants' responses to the scale items, reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were calculated. The assumption of normality was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov or Shapiro-Wilk test ($p>0.05$). In the study, Student's t-test was employed to determine whether the total and subdimension scores of the scales differed significantly based on the variables of gender and managerial position. To examine the relationships between total and subdimension scores of the scales, Pearson correlation coefficients were used. The research findings are presented as n (%), mean (M), and standard deviation (SD). Statistical significance was accepted at the level of $p < 0.05$.

## RESULTS

**Table 3.** Internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) for the responses given by the managers to the items of the Big Five Personality Traits Scale, the Basic Motivation Sources Scale, and the Innovative Behavior Scale.

| **Scales and Subdimensions** | α | **Evaluation** |
|---|---|---|
| Big Five Personality Traits Scale | | |
| Extraversion | 0.543 | Low Reliability |
| Agreeableness | 0.406 | Low Reliability |
| Conscientiousness | 0.451 | Low Reliability |
| Neuroticism | 0.724 | Moderate Reliability |
| Openness to Experience | 0.437 | Low Reliability |
| Basic Motivation Sources Scale | 0.837 | High Reliability |
| Need for Achievement | 0.642 | Moderate Reliability |
| Need for Affiliation | 0.687 | Moderate Reliability |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Need for Power | 0.789 | Moderate Reliability |
| Need for Cognition | 0.766 | Moderate Reliability |
| Innovative Behavior Scale | 0.961 | High Reliability |
| Idea Generation | 0.875 | High Reliability |
| Idea Seeking | 0.877 | High Reliability |
| Idea Communication | 0.850 | High Reliability |
| Initiation of Implementation Activities | 0.869 | High Reliability |
| Involving Others | 0.808 | High Reliability |
| Overcoming Obstacles | 0.900 | High Reliability |
| Innovative Outputs | 0.734 | Moderate Reliability |

Note. α: Cronbach's Alpha

Based on the responses provided by the managers within the scope of the research, the internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) obtained for the Big Five Personality Traits Scale, the Basic Motivation Sources Scale, and the Innovative Behavior Scale indicated varying levels of reliability, ranging from low to high across the total scales and their subdimensions (Table 3).

**Table 4.** Personality traits of managers by gender

| **Dimension** | **Gender** | **n** | **X̄** | **S.D.** | **p** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Extraversion | Male | 258 | 8.35 | 1.39 | 0,013* |
| | Female | 87 | 7.89 | 1.76 | |

Note.*: p< 0.05; n: Number of Participants; X̄: Arithmetic Mean; S.D.: Standard Deviation

Based on the findings of the study, no statistically significant difference was found between managers' personality traits in terms of gender, except for extraversion (p>0.05). It was found that male managers exhibited significantly higher levels of extraversion compared to female managers (p=0.013; Table 4).

**Table 5.** Basic motivation sources of managers by gender

| **Scale and Subdimensions** | **Gender** | **n** | **X̄** | **S.D.** | **p** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Basic Motivation Sources | Male | 258 | 118.95 | 14.51 | 0,009* |
| | Female | 87 | 114.09 | 16.12 | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Need for Power | Male | 258 | 26.88 | 5.55 | <0,001* |
| | Female | 87 | 24.15 | 6.28 | |
| Need for Cognition | Male | 258 | 29.68 | 5.22 | 0,005* |
| | Female | 87 | 27.80 | 5.93 | |

Note.*: p< 0.05; n: Number of Participants; X̄: Arithmetic Mean; S.D.: Standard Deviation;

In terms of basic motivation sources, a statistically significant difference was found between male and female managers, except for the need for achievement and the need for affiliation ($p<0.05$). Specifically, male managers scored significantly higher than female managers in the overall motivation level, as well as in the need for power and need for cognition subdimensions (Table 5).

**Table 6.** Innovative behavior levels of managers by gender

| **Subdimensions** | **Gender** | **n** | **X̄** | **S.D.** | **p** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Idea Generation | Male | 258 | 5.50 | 2.34 | <0,001* |
| | Female | 87 | 6.57 | 2.47 | |
| Idea Communication | Male | 258 | 7.94 | 2.95 | 0,050* |
| | Female | 87 | 8.62 | 2.32 | |

Note.*: p< 0.05; n: Number of Participants; X̄: Arithmetic Mean; S.D.: Standard Deviation

Regarding innovative behavior, statistically significant gender-based differences were found in the subdimensions of idea generation and idea communication ($p<0.05$). Female managers scored significantly higher than male managers in both dimensions ($p<0.001$ and $p=0.050$, respectively; Table 6). For the other subdimensions and total innovative behavior scores, no statistically significant differences were found ($p>0.05$).

**Table 7.** Personality traits of managers by managerial position

| **Dimensions** | **Managerial Position** | **n** | **X̄** | **S.D.** | **p** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Extraversion | Mid-Level | 221 | 8.11 | 1.57 | 0,042* |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Neuroticism | Top-Level | 124 | 8.45 | 1.36 | <0,001* |
| | Mid-Level | 221 | 5.51 | 1.87 | |
| | Top-Level | 124 | 4.54 | 1.62 | |

Note.*: p< 0.05; n: Number of Participants; $\bar{X}$: Arithmetic Mean; S.D.: Standard Deviation

According to Table 7, statistically significant differences were found between mid-level and Top-level managers in the personality traits of extraversion and neuroticism ($p<0.05$). Top-level managers demonstrated significantly higher levels of extraversion ($p = 0.042$), while mid-level managers exhibited higher neuroticism scores, suggesting that Top managers tend to be more emotionally stable ($p<0.001$). For other personality dimensions, no significant differences were observed based on managerial position ($p>0.05$).

No statistically significant differences were found in the total and subdimension scores of basic motivation sources and innovative behavior among managers based on their positions (mid-level vs. Top-level) ($p>0.05$).

**Table 8.** Correlation between managers' personality traits and innovative behavior

| | | E | A | C | N | O |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *IB* | r- value | 0,211 | 0,178 | 0,217 | -0,067 | 0,219 |
| | p- value | <0,001* | 0,001* | <0,001* | 0,214 | <0,001* |
| *IG* | r- value | 0,246 | 0,177 | 0,165 | -0,016 | 0,185 |
| | p- value | <0,001* | 0,001* | 0,002* | 0,764 | 0,001* |
| *IS* | r- value | 0,127 | 0,253 | 0,151 | -0,072 | 0,219 |
| | p- value | 0,018* | <0,001* | 0,005* | 0,184 | <0,001* |
| *IC* | r- value | 0,191 | 0,065 | 0,080 | -0,049 | 0,107 |
| | p- value | <0,001* | 0,228 | 0,137 | 0,366 | 0,046* |
| *II* | r- value | 0,198 | 0,235 | 0,167 | -0,135 | 0,277 |
| | p- value | <0,001* | <0,001* | 0,002* | 0,012* | <0,001* |
| *IO* | r- value | 0,103 | 0,128 | 0,149 | 0,009 | 0,078 |
| | p- value | 0,056* | 0,017* | 0,005* | 0,867 | 0,149 |
| *OO* | r- value | 0,183 | 0,109 | 0,305 | -0,053 | 0,172 |
| | p- value | 0,001* | 0,042* | <0,001* | 0,327 | 0,001* |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *IOP* | r- value | 0,204 | 0,110 | 0,255 | -0,083 | 0,274 |
| | p- value | <0,001* | 0,041* | <0,001* | 0,124 | <0,001* |

Note.*: p< 0.05; E: Extraversion, A: Agreeableness, C: Conscientiousness, N: Neuroticism, O: Openness to Experience; IB: Innovative Behavior; IG: Idea Generation; IS: Idea Seeking; IC: Idea Communication; II: Initiation of Implementation; IO: Involving Others; OO: Overcoming Obstacles; IOP: Innovative Outputs; p: Significance level; r: Pearson correlation coefficient

As shown in Table 8, there was a low but statistically significant positive correlation between managers' personality traits and their innovative behavior, with the exception of neuroticism, which was not significantly associated (p> 0.05).

**Table 9.** Correlation between managers' innovative behavior and basic motivation sources

| | | BMR | ACH | AFF | POW | COG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *IB* | r- value | 0,347 | 0,281 | 0,424 | 0,040 | 0,285 |
| | p- value | <0,001* | <0,001* | <0,001* | 0,454 | <0,001* |
| *IG* | r- value | 0,221 | 0,150 | 0,307 | 0,006 | 0,200 |
| | p- value | <0,001* | 0,005* | <0,001* | 0,911 | <0,001* |
| *IS* | r- value | 0,260 | 0,197 | 0,337 | -0,040 | 0,287 |
| | p- value | <0,001* | <0,001* | <0,001* | 0,454 | <0,001* |
| *IC* | r- value | 0,276 | 0,165 | 0,375 | 0,119 | 0,160 |
| | p- value | <0,001* | 0,002* | 0,000* | 0,027* | 0,003* |
| *II* | r- value | 0,306 | 0,280 | 0,392 | 0,004 | 0,236 |
| | p- value | <0,001* | <0,001* | <0,001* | 0,934 | <0,001* |
| *IO* | r- value | 0,238 | 0,210 | 0,355 | -0,008 | 0,164 |
| | p- value | <0,001* | <0,001* | <0,001* | 0,883 | 0,002* |
| *OO* | r- value | 0,372 | 0,356 | 0,389 | 0,036 | 0,312 |
| | p- value | <0,001* | <0,001* | <0,001* | 0,501 | <0,001* |
| *IOP* | r- value | 0,372 | 0,294 | 0,353 | 0,112 | 0,321 |
| | p- value | <0,001* | <0,001* | <0,001* | 0,037* | <0,001* |

Note. *: p< 0.05; BMR: Basic Motivation Sources; IB: Innovative Behavior; IG: Idea Generation; IS: Idea Seeking; IC: Idea Communication; II: Initiation of Implementation; IO: Involving Others; OO: Overcoming Obstacles; IOP: Innovative Outputs; ACH: Need for

Achievement; AFF: Need for Affiliation; POW: Need for Power; COG: Need for Cognition; p: Significance level; r: Pearson correlation coefficient

According to Table 9, a weak to moderate positive correlation was found between managers' innovative behavior and their basic motivation sources, with the exception of need for power, which did not yield a significant result ($p > 0.05$). Notably, the strongest correlation was observed between innovative behavior and the need for affiliation ($r = 0.424$), indicating that affiliation may be a key motivational factor in fostering innovative tendencies among managers.

## DISCUSSION

In the present study, the BFI-10 (Soto & John, 2009) was employed to measure personality traits, primarily due to practical constraints such as participants' limited availability and demanding managerial responsibilities. Nonetheless, the internal consistency of the scale was generally low across dimensions, with only the neuroticism subscale demonstrating an acceptable level of reliability (see Table 3). This outcome aligns with prior research indicating that brief personality inventories, such as the BFI-10, may yield reduced reliability due to their two-item-per-dimension structure (Rammstedt & John, 2007; Soto et al., 2011). These findings underscore the recommendation that, where feasible, longer instruments such as the full BFI or NEO-PI-R should be preferred to enhance psychometric robustness.

In this study, gender-based differences in managers' personality traits, motivation sources, and innovative behaviors were examined. Among personality traits, only extraversion showed a significant difference, with male managers scoring higher (Table 4), although prior research presents mixed results (Rahmani & Lavasoni, 2012; Lehman et al., 2013; Polatcı & Sobacı, 2014; South et al., 2018; Soba et al., 2019). These inconsistencies may be explained by cultural norms and gender roles, as suggested by Social Role Theory (Eagly et al., 2000). In terms of motivation, male managers scored higher in need for

power and need for cognition, while no significant gender differences were found in need for achievement and affiliation (Table 5). The variability observed in previous research findings (Andersen & Hansson, 2011; Schuh et al., 2014; Barutçu & Çöllü, 2020) is often explained through theoretical perspectives that emphasize the role of leadership expectations, evolutionary mechanisms shaping behavioral tendencies, and the shaping power of socio-cultural and organizational structures (Yukl, 2010; Diekman & Eagly, 2008; Waldman et al., 2012). Higher cognitive motivation in men may reflect stronger analytical and information-seeking tendencies (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Although total innovative behavior scores did not differ by gender, women scored higher in idea generation and communication (Table 6), aligning with research emphasizing women's strength in collaboration and communication (Lapuente & Suzuki, 2021). However, findings on gender and innovation remain inconclusive (DiTomaso & Farris, 1992; Fox & Schuhmann, 1999; Damanpour & Schneider, 2009; Yılmaz & Beşkaya, 2018).

In relation to managerial positions, statistically significant differences were observed exclusively in the personality dimensions of extraversion and neuroticism. Specifically, top-level managers demonstrated higher levels of extraversion and lower levels of neuroticism compared to their mid-level counterparts (Table 7). These findings are consistent with prior research indicating that individuals occupying senior executive roles tend to exhibit greater sociability and emotional stability (Furnham & Crump, 2015; Moutafi et al., 2007). The reciprocal relationship between personality traits and occupational roles has been widely associated with critical organizational outcomes such as leadership effectiveness, creativity, and career progression (Morgeson et al., 2005; Rothmann & Coetzer, 2003; Lee & Wu, 2011). Low levels of neuroticism, which reflect emotional resilience and stress tolerance, are often linked to greater leadership success, as such individuals are better equipped to manage pressure and uncertainty (Howard & Howard, 2001). Furthermore, extraverted individuals, characterized by social confidence, emotional intelligence, and a generally optimistic disposition, are frequently perceived as more effective leaders due to their enhanced interpersonal and communication skills (Hogan, 2006).

In the present study, weak positive correlations were found between managers' extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience and their innovative behaviors, while neuroticism was negatively associated only with the "initiation of implementation" subdimension (Table 8). These findings suggest that although the impact may be limited, positive personality traits can support innovative behavior, whereas higher levels of neuroticism may hinder participation in the innovation process. These results are in line with numerous studies in the literature. For example, Bozkurt et al. (2017) and Dangmei et al. (2020) emphasized the positive effects of openness to experience, conscientiousness, and extraversion on innovative behavior. Similarly, Olakitan (2011), Hsieh et al. (2011), and Abdullah et al. (2019) highlighted the significant impact of extraversion and openness to experience on innovative performance. However, not all findings are consistent. For instance, Woods et al. (2018) found no significant relationship between openness to experience, conscientiousness, and innovation, indicating that the personality–innovation link may vary across different contexts. Particularly, research findings related to neuroticism have shown more complex and inconsistent patterns in the literature. While studies by Fırın and Sevim (2022), Yılmaz (2019), and Ali (2019) reported no significant relationship between neuroticism and innovative behavior, Buijs (2022) suggested that individuals with high levels of neuroticism may be more sensitive to emotional uncertainty, which could lead to reduced motivation for engaging in innovative activities. On the other hand, some scholars argue that stress may enhance creative problem-solving in certain individuals, suggesting that the effects of neuroticism on innovation are multifaceted and should not be evaluated unidimensionally (Buijs, 2022). Overall, personality traits play an important role in shaping individuals' tendencies toward innovation. Traits such as extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness may foster individuals who are open to new ideas, cooperative, and capable of systematic thinking. In contrast, high levels of neuroticism may limit one's willingness to take risks and engage in innovative processes.

In this study, low to moderate positive correlations were identified between managers' basic motivation sources and their innovative behaviors (Table 9). Among these, the need

for affiliation demonstrated the strongest relationship with innovation, whereas needs for achievement, power, and cognition showed weaker associations. Notably, the need for power was significantly related only to idea communication and innovative outputs, but not to other subdimensions.

A review of the literature shows that motivation is often examined in relation to entrepreneurship—a concept closely linked to innovation and creativity (Edwards-Schachter et al., 2015; Eckhardt & Shane, 2003). Studies have consistently shown that basic motivational needs—achievement, power, affiliation, and cognition—are associated with entrepreneurial and innovative tendencies, though their effects vary (Hornaday & Bunker, 1970; Lachman, 1980; Ceylan & Demircan, 2002; Apospori et al., 2005; Özçoban & Özkul, 2018; Buijs, 2022). While achievement and power needs are generally positively related to innovation, the need for affiliation is often seen as less influential. However, this study found a moderate positive relationship between affiliation and innovative behavior, suggesting that socially supportive environments may enhance innovation. Given the complex and multidimensional nature of motivation, innovative behavior is best understood as the outcome of interacting psychological and contextual factors.

*Limitations*

Findings are also limited to managers working in Türkiye's public sports sector institutions.

## CONCLUSIONS

The quality of public administration should be directly associated with the competence and qualifications of public personnel. The fulfillment of increasingly complex and expanding governmental functions depends on the selection of appropriately qualified managers. This implies that public affairs cannot be effectively conducted by individuals lacking the necessary qualifications. In Türkiye, there is a prevailing belief that public work will somehow run itself, regardless of individual competence or managerial effort. This mindset undermines the importance of human capital and thereby hinders the

delivery of high-quality public services. Consequently, abandoning this mentality is essential for enhancing the performance and service quality of public institutions.

## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several theoretical and practical recommendations can be provided. The relationships among personality traits, basic motivation sources, and innovative behaviors represent a complex structure shaped not only by individual differences but also by multi-layered contextual factors such as organizational structure, cultural norms, institutional dynamics, societal roles, and prevailing socio-economic conditions. In this regard, future research should consider using larger and more representative samples that include individuals from various organizational cultures and management levels to enhance the generalizability and contextual relevance of the results.

Although the BFI-10 was employed as a time-efficient tool for measuring managers' personality traits, the low internal consistency observed in this study suggests a potential limitation in terms of measurement reliability. Therefore, when conditions permit, the use of more comprehensive and psychometrically robust personality inventories—such as the BFI-44 or NEO-PI-R—is recommended to obtain more scientifically sound data.

From a practical standpoint, personality traits, motivational sources, and innovative behaviors are key psychosocial components that directly affect organizational performance. Hence, managerial selection and evaluation processes should not rely solely on individual qualifications. Instead, the dynamic interaction of these factors should be taken into account through a holistic framework to improve management efficiency and institutional effectiveness.

One notable finding of the study is that an increase in managers' need for affiliation is positively associated with higher levels of innovative behavior. This suggests that managers are more likely to engage in innovation when operating within socially supportive and trust-based organizational environments. Therefore, it is recommended that strategic initiatives be developed to foster social cohesion and strengthen institutional

support mechanisms, ultimately enhancing interaction among managers and cultivating a shared sense of belonging.

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