THE ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ONLINE UNETHICAL BEHAVIORS AND PERSONALITY TYPES

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzed the predictive effect of personality types on online unethical behaviors and the relationship between these two variables. Online unethical behaviors are discussed in terms of gender, educational level, and ethics course experience. The study group of the research conducted in the correlational survey model consisted of 269 female and 261 male university students studying at the associate and undergraduate levels. The research data were collected using the Five Factor Personality Scale and the Online Unethical Behavior Scale. Correlation, independent samples t-test, and stepwise regression analysis were used in the data analysis. As a result, agreeableness and conscientiousness personality types were found to predict online unethical behaviors. Further, the correlation analysis results indicated that all personality types except neuroticism had a negative and significant relationship with online unethical behaviors. Additionally, the t-test results suggest a significant relationship between gender and online unethical behaviors. Overall, the study concluded that there was no significant relationship in terms of ethics course experience and educational level. The findings were discussed within the literature framework, and suggestions are given.

Keywords: *ethics, unethical behavior, personality types, online unethical behavior*

INTRODUCTION

Rapid technological advancements enable people to gain access to knowledge more rapidly and conveniently. Computers and mobile devices now make it possible to use internet technology effectively. This has several advantages and disadvantages. The inability to use the internet within the framework of safety, responsibility, and ethical rules is among the most important disadvantages encountered today (Erdoğdu et al., 2017). Leys and Vandekerckhove (2014) classified unethical behaviors into three types: violating acceptable norms from an ethical point of view; neglecting the mission or pursuing faulty, inappropriate tasks; and causing undesirable consequences out of carelessness or intentionally.

The concept of ethics is estimated to have a 2,500-year history (Uçkun et al., 2004). Ethics is a field of philosophy concerned with how to live, what is right and wrong, what is good and bad, what to do and what not to do, what are obligations, and other concepts (Buckinghans, 2012; Garth-James, 2022). The concept has theoretical as well as practical elements. Ethical regulations or standards pertaining to a field are developed and applied to that field (Tosun et al., 2016).

ETHICS IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS

The internet, which is one of the areas where

technological development is accelerating, is a platform where some ethical values, principles, rules, and standards have been developed (Aydın, 2013; Dittmar & Eilks, 2019). In the online context, ethics involves directing the use of technology and how it should be utilized (Karim et al., 2009). Within the scope of this guidance, there are some rules on what to do and what not to do to respect other people's rights and reduce the negative effects of the internet while using it (MEB, 2004).

A review of the literature suggests that different names such as internet ethics (Karim et al., 2009; Lau & Yuen, 2014), informatics ethics (Duymaz, 2013; Erdem, 2008), cyberethics (Jamal et al., 2015; Yaokumah, 2020), and computer ethics (Cho et al., 2009; Moor, 2017) are used for the concept of ethics in digital environments. Informatics ethics is defined as the ethical use of information and communication (Duymaz, 2013). Informatics ethics is a branch of ethics that is concerned with the behaviors of those who provide information services and those who benefit from these services (TBD, 2010).

Unethical computer usage is described as causing harm to others by going beyond the written and unwritten standards that come from utilizing computer technology for purposes other than their intended ones. Ethical conduct in the use of information and communication technology is a crucial problem that individuals in society should address (Akgün & Özgür, 2014). Although computer and internet technologies are widely seen as areas of unrestricted freedom, any individual's freedom in an internet environment should end where the freedom of another individual begins (Yüce, 2010). According to Tosun et al. (2016), the most common unethical internet behaviors among young people are unauthorized access to other people's computers or email accounts, swearing and insulting speech, spamming the mailbox with phishing emails, sharing files containing malicious software, creating or advertising an illegal or pornographic website, sharing photos or texts belonging to others without permission, playing violent games, and visiting gambling sites. Overcoming such issues is only achievable if technology is utilized ethically (Genç et al., 2013b).

Researchers make some classifications for computer ethics, one of which was made by Mason (1986). Mason stated that the information age has four ethical problems: privacy, accuracy, property, and access. *Privacy* is the retention of information about someone or an institution, *accuracy* is about individuals' right to check the accuracy of information about themselves (Mollavelioğlu, 2003), *property* is about ownership (Uysal & Odabaşı, 2007), and *access* is regarded as the access to information (Uysal, 2006).

The use of technology within ethical limits is possible with technological precautions and ethical awareness of individuals. Ercan (2009) found out that most of the ethical problems were caused by internet users. He also remarked that individuals must have a feeling of responsibility based on ethical principles, or else the security mechanisms and legislation put in place will be insufficient. However, each person has unique traits, such as emotions, ideas, behaviors, and attitudes ,that set them apart from others. Hence, individual personalities are determined by variances in their feelings, ideas, attitudes, and behaviors (Şenel, 2019).

PERSONALITY TYPES

There is no universally accepted definition of personality. Personality is often described as the set of marked differences that distinguishes an individual from other individuals and separates them from others (Horzum et al., 2017; Osamika et al., 2021). Burger (2006), on the other hand, evaluated consistent behavioral patterns and intrapersonal processes that originate inside the individual. In this sense, personality is defined as the behavioral component and continuity associated with a certain scenario or attitude in a specific occurrence. Although there is no single definition, professionals in the field of psychology believe the five-factor personality model to be one of the essential models for addressing the idea of personality (Abd Rahim et al., 2021; Horzum et al., 2017; Padır et al., 2021). Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability/ neuroticism, and openness are the five aspects of personality examined in this model.

Extraverted people are friendly, open to establishing new social relationships, and energetic individuals (Lampropoulos et al., 2022; Lounsbury & Gibson, 2009). These people have low anxiety levels, enjoy the change in their lives, and are more respectful and tolerant (Caligiuri, 2000; Obuz, 2019). On the other side, introverts are quiet, shy, and like solitude (McCrae & Costa, 2003). According to Burger (2006), extroverts have more

friends and spend more time in social situations than introverts.

Agreeable people are understanding, reliable, kind, generous, cooperative, and forgiving, and they have a nonoffensive speaking style (Gosling et al., 2003; McCrae & Costa, 2008) with warm-blooded, sociable, and reliable personal characteristics (Glass et al., 2013). These individuals are also jealous, selfish, and unscrupulous (McCrea & Costa, 2003). On the other hand, agreeable individuals hold grudges and are aggressive, cold, rude, sarcastic, self-interested, suspicious, angry, and do not like cooperation (Cervone & Pervin, 2016; Gosling et al., 2003).

Conscientious people are self-disciplined, hardworking, responsible (Gosling et al., 2003), and have a strong sense of purpose. Moreover, these individuals show leadership characteristics, can make long-term plans, are determined, organized, cautious, ambitious, devoted to the task, meticulous, success-oriented, systematic, responsible, and adaptable (McCrae & Costa, 2008). People who do not have self-control, on the other hand, tend to act on their impulses, have a disorganized structure, and delay their duties and responsibilities (Bruck & Allen, 2003; John et al., 2008).

Neurotic people are highly delusional, anxious, pessimistic (Ciccarelli & White, 2016), sad, easily stressed, prone to depression, nervous, easily angered, and prone to feelings of guilt. Nonneurotic individuals are balanced, calm, able to manage stress (Glass et al., 2013; Lounsbury & Gibson, 2009), coldblooded, and self-confident (Gosling et al., 2003; McCrae & Costa, 2008).

People who are open to experience are evaluated as creative, open-minded, curious, thoughtful (Gosling et al., 2003), adventurous, artistic, and productive individuals. Individuals with insufficient openness to experience are defined as fixed-minded, conservative, traditional, and closed to innovations (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998).

Because the personality controls actions, an individual's behaviors may alter based on the personality features. Young people can easily use terms in a virtual setting that they cannot speak face-to-face. This comfort can go even further in circumstances where identity is kept hidden, resulting in even more harmful outcomes (Turan, 2013). Based on this scenario, it is possible that young people's personality types differ in terms of informatics ethics. When it comes to informatics ethics and online behavior regulations, Yüce (2010) argued that young people might easily injure themselves in the internet environment. In this context, it is critical to prioritize ethical teaching of young users. Similarly, Akyazı et al. (2008) stressed that informatics ethics is a topic that should be persistently emphasized.

University-age individuals are more on the internet than other peer groups due to the widening of their social circles and the increase in their use of the internet for various reasons (Şenel, 2019). All individuals using the internet may experience victimization or victimize others due to some offenses committed online (Chen et al., 2017). Considering the current situation, it is crucial to determine the online unethical behaviors of university students who are intertwined with technology and examine them according to their personality types. The relevant literature review suggests that while there are studies that focus on information ethics (Bellé & Cantarelli, 2017; Şendağ et al., 2012) and personality types with different variables (Ozan Leymun, 2018; Özdemir, 2019), it is noteworthy that the unethical behaviors experienced in online exams due to the COVID-19 pandemic are also of great interest to researchers (Abdelrahim, 2021; Bilen & Matros, 2021; Ebaid, 2021; Elsalem et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2020). However, no study concentrates on the relationship between personality types and online unethical behavior. This study is significant in analyzing the relationship of young people with online ethics according to their personality types and guiding other studies to be carried out on this subject. To this end, this study mainly determines the relationship between personality types and online unethical behaviors.

RESEARCH PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this research is to reveal the predictive effect of personality types on online unethical behaviors and the relationship between them in a sample of university students. To this end, we asked the following research questions:

1. Do online unethical behaviors change according to gender, educational level, and ethics course experience?

2. What is the relationship between personality types and online unethical behaviors?

3. What is the predictive power of personality types on online unethical behaviors?

METHOD

Model

This study is descriptive research conducted in the correlational survey model. With this model, the presence and/or degree of change between two or more variables is determined (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

Study Group

The study group of this research consists of university students studying at various grade levels. The convenience sampling method, one of the random sampling methods, was used in the selection of the research group. The goal of this sampling approach is for the researcher to achieve speed and practicality by selecting a sample that is close by and easily accessible (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). In this sense, the research participants consisted of 530 students studying at different universities in Turkey in the 2019-2020 fall academic year. Of these students, 269 were women (50.8%), while 261 were male (49.2%), and the average age was 21.

Data Collection Tools

The data collections tools of Demographics Form, Online Unethical Behavior Scale, and Five Factor Personality Scale were used in this research. Researchers designed the personal information form, which asked questions about demographics such as gender, educational level, and whether or not they have taken ethics courses in this form. Researchers further used the Online Unethical Behavior Scale. This scale was developed by Gençet al. (2013a) using the scale developed by Namlu and Odabaşı (2007) to determine individuals' online unethical behavior levels. The 5-point Likert-type scale consisted of 40 items. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was .94. Lastly, researchers used the Five-Factor Personality Scale. This scale was developed by Rammstedt and John (2007) and adapted into Turkish by Horzum et al. (2017). The 5-point Likert-type, 10-item scale consisted of five subdimensions of personality (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability/neuroticism, and openness). In the validity and reliability studies conducted for the subdimensions of the scale, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was between .81 and .90.

Procedure

Twenty-five universities across Turkey were selected based on convenience and accessibility. Detailed information about the research was given to 12 faculty members who agreed to participate in the research within these universities, and the research forms were delivered to the students.

Data Analysis

We used SPSS version 27, a statistical package software, to evaluate the data. First, missing data and extreme values were discovered in the examination of the obtained data. Out of 545 participants, 15 were deemed outliers, and their data was removed from the analysis. As a result, the research was analyzed using 530 data points.

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was utilized to demonstrate the link between the variables in the data analysis, and stepwise regression analysis was conducted to see if personality types could predict the variance of online unethical behavior. Additionally, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted to test whether descriptive statistics online unethical behaviors differ by gender, educational level, and ethics course experience to give information about the participants.

The data relating to the research were entered into the SPSS software after the preliminary examination, and the subdimensions were calculated by considering the reverse items of the scales. Before the data analysis was performed, normality tests were performed by examining the skewness and kurtosis values to see the normality assumptions. The kurtosis and skewness values were found to be within acceptable limits. Then, the multiple correlations of the data were examined by considering the correlations between the variables. According to Field (2005), a correlation of predictive variables between .80 and .90 causes multiple correlations. In this study, values were calculated between .6 and .36. In addition, the Durbin-Watson (D-W) statistic, calculated as 1.87, showed no autocorrelation problem (Akbulut, 2010). The Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values revealed that the Tolerance (greater than 0.2) and VIF value (less than 10) met the necessary conditions (Field, 2005). The tolerance value of the study was between 0.942 and 1, and the VIF value was

between 1 and 1.062. The margin of error was accepted as .05 in the study.

FINDINGS

Demographics of the Study Group

Percentage and frequency values of the demographic data of the study group regarding gender, educational level, and ethics course experience are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of the Study Group

		n	%
Gender	Male	261	49.2
	Female	269	50.8
Educational level	Associate Degree	292	55.1
	Undergraduate Degree	238	44.9
Ethics Course Experience	Yes	248	46.8
	No	282	53.2
	Total	530	100

Table 1 shows that the number of participant female (50.8%) and male (49.2%) students was close. In terms of educational level, there were more students with an associate degree (55.1%) than those with an undergraduate degree (44.9%). The number of students (53.2%) who stated that they had not taken an ethics course before was higher than those who took an ethics course (46.8%).

Online Unethical Behaviors by Gender, Education Level, and Ethics Course Experience

The independent samples *t*-test results of university students' online unethical behaviors regarding gender, educational level, and ethics course experience are shown in Table 2.

University students' online unethical behavior scores showed a significant difference by gender ($t_{(528)}$ = 3.86, $p < .05$). This suggests that the scores of male students ($\bar{X}$ = 62.18) were significantly higher than female students ($\bar{X}$ = 54.51). This finding can be interpreted that online unethical behaviors differ by gender.

According to the analysis results in terms of educational level, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of online unethical behavior of undergraduate students ($\bar{X}$ = 59.34) and those of associate degree students ($\bar{X}$ = 57.43) ($t_{(528)}$ = .094, $p > .05$). Similarly, it was indicated that the mean of the students who took an ethics course before ($\bar{X}$ = 58.48) did not differ significantly from the mean of the students who did not take an ethics course ($\bar{X}$ = 57.29) ($t_{(495)}$ = 0.57, $p > .05$). The interpretation of these findings reflects that educational level and ethics course experience do not differ significantly from online unethical behaviors.

The Relationship Between Online Unethical Behaviors and Personality Types

The relationship between online unethical behaviors and personality types, which are discussed within the scope of the research, was examined by Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation analysis. The obtained results are presented in Table 3.

The correlation coefficients of personality types subdimensions and online unethical behavior scores ranged from $r = .060$ and $r = -.221$ (Table 3). The highest correlation ($r = -.221$; $p < .001$) with online unethical behavior scores was with

Table 2. t-Test Results of Online Unethical Behavior Scores by Gender, Educational Level, and Ethics Course Experience

		N	$\bar{x}$	S	df	t	p
Gender	Female	269	54.51	21.31	528	3.86	<.001*
	Male	261	62.18	24.29			
Educational Level	Associate Degree	292	57.43	26.33	528	.945	.345
	Undergraduate Degree	238	59.34	18.46			
Ethics Course Experience	Yes	282	57.29	20.31	495	.579	.563
	No	248	58.48	23.86			

p<0.05

Table 3. Relationships Between Online Unethical Behaviors and Personality Types

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	x̄	sd
Online Ethical Behaviors (1)	1.000	−.104*	−.221*	−.189*	.060	−.131*	58.28	23.12
Extraversion (2)		1.000	.183*	.354*	−.166*	.245*	6.79	2.11
Agreeableness (3)			1.000	.241*	−.100*	.194*	7.9	1.75
Conscientiousness (4)				1.000	−.058	.367*	7.75	1.79
Neuroticism (5)					1.000	−.036	5.59	1.97
Openness (6)						1.000	7.04	1.8

*p<.05

agreeableness. According to the findings in Table 3, as the university students' extraversion (r = −.104, $p < .05$), agreeableness (r = −.221, $p < .05$), conscientiousness (r = −.189, $p < .05$) .05), and openness (r = −.131, $p < .05$) increased, their online unethical behaviors decreased. This means a significant inverse relationship between these personality type scores and online unethical behavior scores. Remarkably, the inverse relationship in neuroticism is not significant. The findings obtained can be explained as that with the decrease in personality type scores other than neuroticism, online unethical behaviors increase, and, on the contrary, online unethical behaviors decrease.

The Prediction of Personality Types on Online Unethical Behaviors

Stepwise regression analysis was performed to determine whether personality types predict online unethical behaviors. With this analysis, variables that contributed significantly to predicting the level of online unethical behavior were identified. Additionally, the contribution of these variables to the total variance explained in the prediction of online unethical behaviors was analyzed. The total variance explaining the online unethical behavior was acquired at the end of the two models (see Table 4).

[a] Dependent variable: Online unethical behavior

[b] Predictors: (constant), Agreeableness

[c] Predictors: (constant), Agreeableness, Conscientiousness

According to the regression analysis findings, in the first model, agreeableness significantly predicts online unethical behavior (t = −5.200, $p < .05$). The agreeableness personality type alone explains approximately 5% of online unethical behavior (R = .221, R^2 = .049, $F_{(1-528)}$ = 27.037, $p < .05$). In the second step of the analysis, conscientiousness was included in the model. The analysis results suggest that conscientiousness significantly predicts online unethical behavior scores (t = −3.324, $p < .05$). Agreeableness and conscientiousness personality types together explain approximately 7% of online unethical behavior R = .261, R^2 = .068, $F_{(2-527)}$ = 19.300, $p < .05$).

Table 4. Stepwise Regression Analysis Results on the Prediction of Online Unethical Behavior by Personality Types

Model[a]	Variables	R	R^2	B	SE	β	t	p
1[b]	Constant term	-	-	81.224	4.519	-	17.976	<.001*
	Agreeableness	.221	.049	−2.909	.558	.221	−5.200	<.001*
2[c]	Constant term			92.031	5.532	-	16.635	<.001*
	Agreeableness	.261	.068	−2.446	.570	.186	−4.292	<.001*
	Conscientiousness			−1.859	.559	.144	−3.324	<.001*

*p<.05

The negative beta (β) values in Table 4 indicate an inverse relationship between agreeableness or conscientiousness scores and online unethical behavior scores. In other words, as agreeableness or conscientiousness scores increase, online unethical behavior scores decrease.

DISCUSSION

Unethical behavior is defined as behavior that is not accepted by society and is viewed as illegitimate (Uz, 2019). If the behaviors that are illegitimate and not accepted by society are realized online, they can be defined as online unethical behaviors. To this end, this study examined the relationship between online unethical behaviors and personality types and discussed whether online unethical behaviors led to a significant difference in terms of gender, educational level, and ethics courses experience. The analysis results show there was a positive relationship between university students' online unethical behaviors and neuroticism personality type, albeit a negative relationship with extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness personality types. In other words, the more personality type scores other than neuroticism decrease, the more online unethical behaviors increase, and on the contrary, the more online unethical behaviors decrease. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the research findings are based on the students' personal opinions and preferences in the research sample.

The literature review shows that the studies in which the variables examined in this study are handled together are quite limited. The examination of the studies on neuroticism reports that neuroticism is emphasized as low self-esteem and a tendency to display emotional and irrational behaviors (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975). Batıgün and Kılıç (2011) defined neuroticism as a reckless, unreliable, and easily angered personality trait. The positive relationship between online unethical behaviors and neuroticism can be explained by the fact that people with neuroticism personality type tend to display emotional and irrational behaviors by nature. Indeed, character is a variable that affects movement and motivation (Duruk, 2018). Neurotic people use social networks more often than others since they are not social (Duruk, 2018). The possibility of hiding their identity on the internet (Gölcü et al., 2019) and pretending to be someone else may

reduce the anxiety of neurotic people, such as not being accepted and mocked, in online environments. This may indicate that neurotic individuals display online unethical behaviors.

The research results inferred a negative relationship between extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness personality types and online unethical behaviors. The characteristics of these personality types stress that extroverted people are friendly and love to talk and interact, while agreeable people are sensitive to human relations, harmonious, and reliable. Conscientious people avoid disrupting the order and have a high sense of responsibility and a strong will. Individuals open to experience are also open to differences, cultured, and sensitive (Duruk, 2018). The general characteristics of these personality types show that they are responsible individuals (Hayta Önal, 2005). Considering that as responsibility increases, unethical behaviors decrease (Çınar, 2011), it can be said that these individuals engage in less unethical behavior online due to their responsibility.

The regression analysis results suggest that agreeable and conscientious individuals significantly predict unethical behavior online. In this context, we concluded that there is an inverse relationship between agreeableness or conscientiousness and online unethical behavior scores. Considering the general characteristics of agreeable people who are warm and friendly and conscientious individuals who are responsible and leaders (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2007; as cited in Çivitci & Arıcıoğlu, 2012), this finding is thought to be an expected result. Responsible individuals obey the rules more (Witt et al., 2002). Sarıcaoğlu (2011) also reported that responsible individuals are clearly committed to ethical principles and values. Francis & Pocock (2009) found a positive correlation between friendship and being ethical.

According to the study results, we found that university students' online unethical behavior scores showed a significant difference by gender. The scores of male students are significantly higher than female students. Where the literature is concerned, there are many studies supporting this result (Betz et al., 1989; Erdem, 2008; Erdoğdu et al., 2017; Genç et al.; 2013b; Glover et al., 2002; Lane, 1995; Whipple & Swords, 1992). This result may be because women think more about how their decisions affect other people than men (Loo,

2003). Although the literature proposes that men generally display more unethical behavior than women, there are also studies showing that women exhibit more unethical behavior (Kentsu, 2007; Küçükkaraduman, 2006; Uğurlu, 2010). Therefore, gender-based analyses can be made with different social and economic variables because women and men can exhibit more unethical behavior than each other depending on the research context (Özen-Kutanis et al., 2005).

As a result of the study, we concluded that there was no significant difference between online unethical behaviors and the educational level and ethics course experience variables. Özpınar et al. (2010) reported that training on ethics is effective. Considering that individuals can become more conscious of ethical behaviors with ethics education, the lack of a relationship between online unethical behaviors and ethics course experience may be due to the ineffectiveness of the ethics course in terms of curriculum or presentation. Moreover, it could be due to the lack of an education that allows students to transform their education into behavior. There is no significant difference between the participants' educational levels and their online unethical behaviors because the study group included university students, and therefore, they were in the close age group.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we investigated the prevalence and predictors of online unethical behavior among university students. Our results indicate that male students exhibit significantly higher scores of unethical online behavior compared to their female counterparts. However, we found no significant differences in unethical behavior scores between undergraduate students and those taking an ethics course. In terms of personality traits, our findings suggest that higher levels of compassion and self-control are associated with lower levels of unethical online behavior. Furthermore, all personality types except neuroticism show a significant negative correlation with unethical online behavior. These findings highlight the importance of promoting ethical behavior in online learning environments and the need for further research in this area.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

With the proliferation of the internet, online unethical behavior has also become prevalent. As a result, it is critical to promote awareness so that individuals do not engage in unethical behavior in both real and virtual contexts. To raise awareness of students' ethical behavior, information and instructional activities relating to this subject might be carried out. Seminars and conferences, which can be organized at various times, might seek to reach a large number of people. Posters and booklets that promote awareness of the issue can also be created and distributed.

By applying different personality tests in future studies, the study can be repeated with different dimensions of personality and the results compared with the findings of this study. Furthermore, more in-depth results may be acquired by performing a qualitative study to identify online unethical behaviors based on personality types. The topic can be examined in more detail with the personality types that show the most online unethical behavior. Given that university students are in the process of transitioning from youth to adulthood and have some social and individual obligations while they experience various emotions, the study may be revised to include participants of different ages. Because of the social, economic, and sociological disparities amongst Turkey's provinces, the study can be replicated by provinces and regions.

LIMITATIONS

This research is limited to university students and by the use of the Online Unethical Behavior Scale and Five-Factor Personality Scale measurement tools.

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