

## **The Impact of Personality Traits of subordinates in their assessment of the Followed Leadership Style (An Empirical Study on the Education Sector in Damascus City)**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study aimed to investigate the Impact of Big Five personality traits of subordinates in their assessment of the Leadership Style Followed by their managers in the public and private universities in Damascus. The sample consisted of 400 workers at the universities' administrative system and two scales were used in this study; (Costa & McCrae, 1997) scale to measure the personality traits of subordinates and (Bass & Avolio, 1995) scale to measure the Followed Leadership Style. The study found significant impact of subordinates' personality (Openness to Experience and Extraversion) in transformational leadership style and there is a significant impact of subordinates' personality (Agreeableness and Conscientiousness) in Transactional leadership style.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Big Five; subordinates' personality; transformational leadership; transactional leadership; passive-avoidant leadership*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Within both leadership research and practice, the focus is often on the leader as someone having unilateral influence on subordinates. Followers' characteristics are typically posited as a dependent variable, affected by the leader's traits, behavior, and power bases (Dvir & Shamir, 2003; Yukl, 1998). So far, the majority of the leadership literature has neglected the role of subordinates' characteristics in defining and shaping leaders' behavior (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001; Judge & Bono, 2001). Leadership literature has linked leadership behavior and attitude to followership, for instance, by focusing on how leaders' behavior affects motivation and satisfaction among subordinates. Many leadership theories and models have suggested how leaders affect and change followers through different types of influence processes (Yukl, 1998). Some theories, such as leader-member exchange theory, have specifically emphasized the dyadic aspect developing between a leader and a subordinate but have failed to investigate followers' characteristics in further detail. Thus, although an extensive literature has addressed the implications of leadership style for organizational outcomes, there has been a lack of studies examining followers' personality characteristics as indicators of differences in leadership (Dvir & Shamir, 2003; Meindl, 1995).

#### ***The Concepts of the study***

##### ***Neuroticism***

The factor represented by neuroticism is also sometimes referred to as emotional instability (Almlund et al., 2011). Life is full of challenges and emotional instability reflects the way people deal with such stressful events. Those that score high on neuroticism are rocked by challenges; they disrupt their lives and emotional balance so that they are often perceived as moody or unpredictable (Robbins & Judge, 2013). They are more likely to have high levels of anxiety and are more likely to develop posttraumatic stress disorder in response to highly emotional negative events, this can put a strain on their personal and professional relationships (Ramachandran, 2012).

##### ***Extraversion***

Extraversion includes traits such as talkative, energetic, assertive, and outgoing, Social interaction is the key here (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Extraverts often take on positions of leadership to offer their opinion and suggestions. They are often quick to approach others, especially on the dating scene (Ramachandran, 2012). They often report greater levels of happiness, so Many people consider extraversion a very positive trait but it can be problematic as they are often easily distracted from a task by their social interactions which can be hazardous under some circumstances (Robbins & Judge, 2013).

##### ***Agreeableness***

The trait of agreeableness includes the tendency to be cooperative, trusting, compliant, and kind (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Those traits most highly associated with the factor of agreeableness are kind, understanding, helpful, cooperative, trusting, and soft hearted (Almlund et al., 2011).

People who score high in agreeableness are highly invested in getting along well with others, They favor Strategies of negotiation rather than those of power and are likely to withdraw from confrontation. Harmony and cooperation are important to them in all their relationships, especially with family (Robbins & Judge, 2013). As a result, they tend to be well liked by others and are often best served by finding careers where this trait can pay off for them, in particular, those where establishing a friendly relationship with the customer or client is essential (Ramachandran, 2012).

#### ***Conscientiousness***

Characteristics associated with conscientiousness include organized, neat, perfectionist, responsible, practical, and dependable. People who score high on conscientiousness are those that tend to get ahead in life (Ramachandran, 2012). The result is success in a variety of domains including elementary/high school and college as well as high job performance and satisfaction (Almlund et al., 2011). High conscientious translates into playing by the rules which usually results not only in job success but also success at maintaining relationships, those that are romantic as well as family ties (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

#### ***Openness to Experience***

Traits associated with openness to experience include being imaginative and creative, inventive, open to unusual ideas, adventure, and nonconformity (Almlund et al., 2011). Those scoring high in this dimension are independent-minded and willing to tolerate more ambiguity or less certainty (Costa & McCrae, 1992). As a result, they are often the first to entertain new concepts and beliefs (which are sometimes later confirmed and other times refuted), Some studies have indicated a relationship between openness and IQ (Ramachandran, 2012).

#### ***Transformational Leadership Factors***

Transformational leadership is concerned with improving the performance of followers and developing followers to their fullest potential (Bass & Avolio, 1999). People who exhibit transformational leadership often have a strong set of internal values and ideals, and they are effective at motivating followers to act in ways that support the greater good rather than their own self-interests (Kuhnert, 1994).

#### ***Idealized Influence.***

Factor 1 is called charisma or idealized influence. It is the emotional component of leadership (Antonakis, 2012). Idealized influence describes leaders who act as strong role models for followers; followers identify with these leaders and want very much to emulate them. These leaders usually have very high standards of moral and ethical conduct and can be counted on to do the right thing. They are deeply respected by followers, who usually place a great deal of trust in them. They provide followers with a vision and a sense of mission. In essence, the charisma factor describes people who are special and who make others want to follow the vision they put forward (Northouse, 2013).

#### ***Inspirational Motivation.***

Factor 2 is called inspiration or inspirational motivation. This factor is descriptive of leaders who communicate high expectations to followers, inspiring them through motivation to become committed to and a part of the shared vision in the organization (Northouse, 2013). In practice, leaders use symbols and emotional appeals to focus group members' efforts to achieve more than they would in their own self-interest, so Team spirit is enhanced by this type of leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1999).

#### ***Intellectual Stimulation.***

Factor 3 is intellectual stimulation. It includes leadership that stimulates followers to be creative and innovative and to challenge their own beliefs and values as well as those of the leader and the organization (Northouse, 2013). This type of leadership supports followers as they try new approaches and develop innovative ways of dealing with organizational issues. It encourages followers to think things out on their own and engage in careful problem solving (Bass & Avolio, 1999).

#### ***Individualized Consideration.***

Factor 4 of transformational leadership is called individualized consideration. This factor is representative of leaders who provide a supportive climate in which they listen carefully to the individual needs of followers (Northouse, 2013). Leaders act as coaches and advisers while trying to assist followers in becoming fully actualized. These leaders may use delegation to help followers grow through personal challenges (Bass & Avolio, 1999).

### ***Transactional Leadership Factors***

Transactional leadership differs from transformational leadership in that the transactional leader does not individualize the needs of subordinates or focus on their personal development (Northouse, 2013). Transactional leaders exchange things of value with subordinates to advance their own and their subordinates' agendas (Kuhnert, 1994). Transactional leaders are influential because it is in the best interest of subordinates for them to do what the leader wants (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

#### ***Contingent Reward.***

Factor 5, contingent reward, is the first of two transactional leadership factors. It is an exchange process between leaders and followers in which effort by followers is exchanged for specified rewards. With this kind of leadership, the leader tries to obtain agreement from followers on what must be done and what the payoffs will be for the people doing it (Northouse, 2013).

#### ***Management-by-Exception.***

Factor 6 is called management-by-exception. It is leadership that involves corrective criticism, negative feedback, and negative reinforcement. Management-by-exception takes two forms: active and passive. A leader using the active form of management-by-exception watches followers closely for mistakes or rule violations and then takes corrective action (Northouse, 2013).

#### ***Passive-avoidant.***

Factor 7 describes leadership that falls at the far right side of the transactional–transformational leadership continuum. This factor represents the absence of leadership. As the French phrase implies, the laissez-faire leader takes a “hands-off, let-things-ride” approach. This leader abdicates responsibility, delays decisions, gives no feedback, and makes little effort to help followers satisfy their needs. There is no exchange with followers or attempt to help them grow (Northouse, 2013).

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Studies by Hautala (2005) and Roush (1992) are among the few exceptions to leader-centered trend. However, these authors use the category based Myers-Briggs type indicator in their investigation of followers' personality, and Hautala only addressed one leadership style, transformational leadership, in her article. Thus, the focus of the study presented in this article is to investigate the relationship between the dimensional five-factor structure of personality and three leadership styles. An assumption underlying the study is that the personality characteristics of subordinates may be related to leadership ratings basically through two mechanisms. First, as pointed out by several investigators (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001; Klein & House, 1995), subordinates may form different relationships with their leaders based on their personalities. Second, stable individual differences in perceptual orientation may be related to subjective evaluations of leadership (Zellers & Perrewe, 2001).

The five-factor model of personality, a widely recognized taxonomy of personality dimensions, will be used as a framework to investigate individual differences in the article. This five-dimensional model with its measure has proven to be a reliable and valid measure of personality and is among the most robust (Costa & McCrae, 1985, 1992). According to this model, neuroticism, extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness are the five central dimensions of personality.

Regarding to transformational leadership (Bono et al., 2012), (Felfe & Schyns, 2010), (Green & Torti, 2010) pointed out the existence of a significant effect of subordinates' personality (Openness to Experience, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness) in transformational leadership style. While (Felfe & Schyns, 2006), (Nielsen, 2008), (Kuhn, 2011) Found this effect for subordinates' personality (Extraversion, Agreeableness). Whereas (Do & Park, 2009 & Johnsen, 2008) (Kandalla & Krishnan, 2007) reach this effect for subordinates' personality (Agreeableness, Openness to Experience) Respectively.

With regard to Transactional leadership style (Bono et al., 2012) revealed that there is a significant effect of subordinates' personality (Extraversion, Agreeableness). Finally, concerning the passive avoidance Leadership (Bono et al., 2012) and (Johnsen, 2008) found a negative impact of Agreeableness and positive one of (Openness to Experience and neuroticism).

## **III. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

Given the aforementioned conceptual arguments and empirical evidence, we hypothesize that leadership will be associated with subordinates' personality, reflected in how they perceive and interact with the leader, all mirrored in their ratings. Thus, to sum up and integrate the arguments based on theory and research, we propose the following hypotheses of how these traits may relate to leadership ratings:

**Hypothesis 1:** High levels of agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness among subordinates will be associated with ratings of transformational leadership. The opposite relationship is expected for neuroticism as this trait is related to negative views of the world and negative human interactions.

**Hypothesis 2:** High levels of agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness among subordinates will be associated with ratings of transactional leadership. The opposite relationship is expected for neuroticism as this trait is related to negative views of the world and negative human interactions.

**Hypothesis 3:** Low levels of agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness among subordinates will be associated with ratings of passive-avoidant leadership. The opposite relationship is expected for neuroticism as this trait is related to negative views of the world and negative human interactions.

#### IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

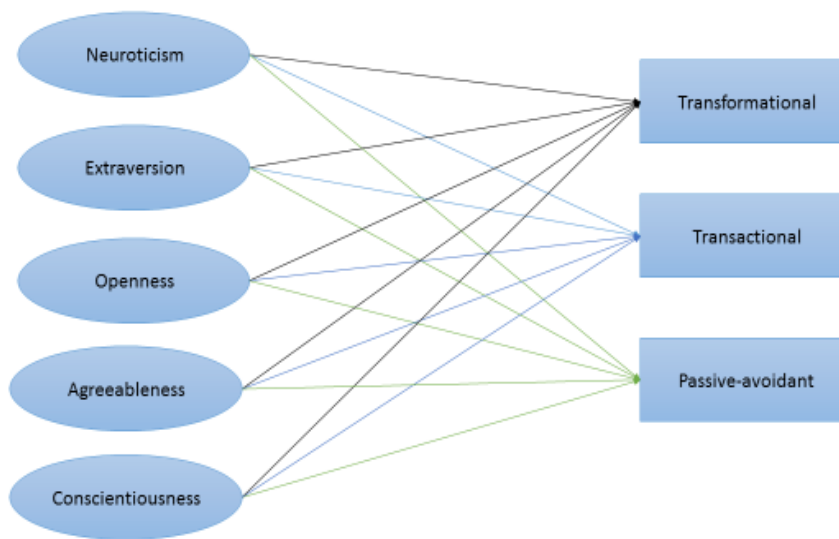


Figure 1

Hypothesized model of the Effect of Independent Variables on Dependent Variables.

#### V. RESEARCH METHOD

##### Sample

Data for the study of the relationship between subordinates personality characteristics and leadership ratings were collected from 338 employees in public and private universities in Damascus city. The response rate was 90.5%. Of the respondents, 43.2% were Female and 56.8% were Male. In addition, 30.5% of the respondents were younger than 30 years, 45.6% were between 30 and 45 years, 24% were older than 45 years. Also, 19.5% had worked in the universities for less than 5 years, 37% between 30 and 45 years of Experience and 25.4% had worked More than 15 years.

##### Measures

Raters completed three measures, including a self-report personality inventory, a leadership behavior questionnaire, and a self-report demographic information questionnaire

**Personality.** The Big Five traits were assessed with the 60-item NEO-FFI (Costa & McCrae, 1989), a widely used and extensively validated measure (Botwin, 1995). Participants provided self-reports of personality, by indicating their level of agreement with 12 items for each of the five traits, using a five-point scale (1 =strongly disagree to 5 =strongly agree). The internal consistency for 60 items was  $\alpha= 0.89$ .

**Leadership behavior.** Transformational, transactional leadership and passive (laissez faire) behaviors were measured with the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-Form 5x; Avolio et al., 1999). rating their immediate superior. Items were evaluated on a five point scale anchored by 1= (not at all) to 5= (always) in reference to the behavior of the target leader. The internal consistency for 21 items was  $\alpha= 0.91$ .

**Study Results**

**The Impact of subordinates' personality on Transformational Leadership Style**

Based on stepwise regression analysis results outlined in table (1), The findings show that in the first step, subordinates' openness Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> was 64.7%, in the second step, subordinates' openness and extraversion Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> was 73.4%, and in the all rest steps, subordinates' Openness, extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness and conscientiousness Total Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> was 76.4% of Leaders' Transformational Leadership variance. F-statistic was significant at p <0.01, therefore, it is generalizable to the target population, The results show that in correlation between variables, the largest effect on Transformational Leadership occurs through subordinates' openness and extraversion. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is partially supported.

**Table 1: stepwise regression analysis of subordinates' personality and Transformational Leadership Style**

<i>Statistical indicator</i>		<i>Predictive variable</i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Significance level</i>
<i>Criterion variables</i>					
<i>Transformational Leadership</i>	<i>First Step</i>	openness	0.648	0.647	0.000
	<i>Second Step</i>	Openness, extraversion	0.735	0.734	0.000
	<i>Third Step</i>	Openness, extraversion, neuroticism	0.750	0.748	0.000
	<i>Fourth Step</i>	Openness, extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness	0.763	0.760	0.000
	<i>Fifth Step</i>	Openness, extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness	0.768	0.764	0.000

**The Impact of subordinates' personality on Transactional Leadership Style**

Based on stepwise regression analysis results outlined in table (2), The findings show that in the first step, subordinates' agreeableness Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> was 52.1%, in the second step, subordinates' agreeableness and conscientiousness Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> was 63.4%, and in the all rest steps, subordinates' agreeableness, conscientiousness, Openness and neuroticism Total Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> was 67.9% of Leaders' Transactional Leadership variance. F-statistic was significant at p <0.01, therefore, it is generalizable to the target population, The results show that in correlation between variables, the largest effect on Transactional Leadership occurs through subordinates' agreeableness and conscientiousness. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is partially supported.

**Table 2: stepwise regression analysis of subordinates' personality and Transactional Leadership Style**

<i>Statistical indicator</i>		<i>Predictive variable</i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Significance level</i>
<i>Criterion variables</i>					
<i>Transactional Leadership</i>	<i>First Step</i>	agreeableness	0.523	0.521	0.000
	<i>Second Step</i>	Agreeableness, conscientiousness	0.637	0.634	0.000
	<i>Third Step</i>	Agreeableness, conscientiousness, Openness, neuroticism	0.676	0.673	0.000
	<i>Fourth Step</i>	Agreeableness, conscientiousness, Openness, neuroticism	0.683	0.679	0.000

**The Impact of subordinates' personality on passive-avoidant Leadership Style**

Based on stepwise regression analysis results outlined in table (3), The findings show that subordinates' conscientiousness Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> was 3.2%, of Leaders' passive-avoidant Leadership variance. F-statistic was significant just for conscientiousness trait at p <0.01, therefore, it is generalizable to the target population, the results show that the effect on passive-avoidant Leadership occurs only through subordinates' conscientiousness. Thus, Hypothesis 3 is partially supported.

**Table 3: stepwise regression analysis of subordinates' personality and passive-avoidant Leadership Style**

<i>Criterion variables</i>	<i>Statistical indicator</i>	<i>Predictive variable</i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Significance level</i>
passive-avoidant Leadership		conscientiousness	0.034	0.032	0.000

**Table 4: Excluded Variables**

<i>Model</i>	<i>Beta In</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Partial Correlation</i>	<i>Collinearity Statistics</i>		
					<i>Tolerance</i>	<i>VIF</i>	<i>Minimum Tolerance</i>
neuroticism	.070 <sup>a</sup>	1.302	.194	.071	1.000	1.000	1.000
extraversion	-.035 <sup>-a</sup>	-.564-	.573	-.031-	.753	1.328	.753
Openness	.021 <sup>a</sup>	.320	.749	.017	.649	1.540	.649
agreeableness	.096 <sup>a</sup>	1.463	.144	.080	.660	1.514	.660

- a. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), conscientiousness
- b. Dependent Variable: passive-avoidant Leadership

## VI. DISCUSSIONS / CONCLUSIONS

The study presented in this article sought to investigate whether followers' traits are related to the leadership style of their immediate superior. Our findings are consistent with previous research, which indicates that part of the variance in multisource ratings is idiosyncratic to the rater (Mount & Scullen, 2001). The significant impact detected support for the hypothesis that high openness and extraversion were associated with the occurrence of transformational leadership. Moreover, high agreeableness and high conscientiousness among subordinates were related to evaluations of the immediate superior as Transactional Leadership. Finally, contrary to our hypothesis, conscientiousness was related to evaluations of the immediate superior as passive-avoidant. Considered as a whole, our results suggest that subordinates' personality plays a non-trivial role in explaining differences between subordinates in their reports of leader behavior in a naturalistic field setting. We identified four traits that influence ratings of leader behavior: agreeableness, extraversion, openness to experience, and conscientiousness. In this study, as in other studies, we find an effect with respect to extraversion, indicating that followers who are similar to transformational leaders perceive more transformational leadership. The same is true for openness to experience. Again, followers who are more openness to experience are more similar to transformational leaders (Bono et al., 2012; Bono & Judge, 2004; Judge & Bono, 2001), (Felfe & Schyns, 2010), (Green & Torti, 2010) and therefore perceive more transformational leadership. Consequently and generally speaking, we can see that the personality of followers is indeed related to the perception of leadership. The specific contribution of this study is not only to replicate previous results, but also to make sure that the assumption of the impact of followers' personality on the perception of leadership holds true not just across European and American cultures but also across Asian cultures. The results of our study and the results of the studies we summarized lead us to assume that it is a worthwhile endeavor to look deeper into followers' personality and its effect on the perception of leadership. In terms of practical implications, knowing that the perception of a certain leadership style is biased can help leaders to understand their followers' reactions. According to our study and prior studies, these reactions can be expected to be different (toward the same leaders) depending on the followers' personality. Research is still needed to explore how these perception biases affect an individual's or a group's performance. Up to now, research has worked with follower characteristics that should be similar to specific leadership style, but the extent to which the actual similarity to one's own leader is involved in the perception process has not yet been examined. An examination of this would include assessing leader personality and linking it to follower personality, looking at the perceived similarity between leader and follower characteristics, more research is necessary to confirm this idea. In addition, as mentioned above, research on the perception of leadership should also address the question concerning the effect of different perceptions (e.g., within groups) on performance. We could imagine that the consensus in the perception of leadership within a group will have an impact on how followers cooperate and, in turn, on how well they perform as a team. More studies should investigate followers' characteristics and behaviors in relation to the leadership process. However, although the findings emphasize the need to incorporate subordinate characteristics in the leadership equation, the results suggest that subordinates' personality per se only explains part of the picture. Further studies including data from more than one country could shed light on cross-cultural differences and issues of generalizability. Leader personality could also be a variable to include in future studies addressing the relationship between leaders and followers. Moreover, our findings lay the groundwork for future research aimed at determining the mechanisms by which subordinates' personality affects leadership ratings.

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