

# Tác động của các đặc điểm tính cách nhà lãnh đạo đến sự tin tưởng của nhân viên trong các tổ chức phi chính phủ tại Việt Nam

Dương Thị Hoài Nhung<sup>1,\*</sup>, Đoàn Phương Anh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Khoa Quản trị kinh doanh, Trường Đại học Ngoại thương, Hà Nội, Việt Nam

<sup>2</sup>Tổ chức Phát triển Hà Lan SNV, Việt Nam

Ngày nhận bài: 05/12/2024; Ngày sửa bài: 03/03/2025;  
Ngày nhận đăng: 11/03/2025; Ngày xuất bản: 28/04/2025

## TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích khám phá tác động của các đặc điểm tính cách của nhà lãnh đạo dựa trên mô hình năm đặc điểm tính cách đến lòng tin của nhân viên. Dữ liệu được thu thập thông qua khảo sát trực tuyến qua email với 212 mẫu hợp lệ. Những người trả lời làm việc tại các tổ chức phi chính phủ có trụ sở tại Hà Nội, Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu sử dụng các phương pháp định lượng với kỹ thuật phân tích hồi quy để kiểm định các giả thuyết. Kết quả cho thấy sự dễ chịu, tận tâm, hướng ngoại, sẵn sàng trải nghiệm có tác động tích cực đến lòng tin của nhân viên, trong đó sự tận tâm của nhà lãnh đạo có ảnh hưởng đáng kể đến lòng tin của nhân viên. Ngoài ra, tính cách bất ổn tâm lý của nhà lãnh đạo có tác động tiêu cực đến lòng tin của nhân viên. Các phát hiện không chỉ đóng góp về mặt lý thuyết mà còn cung cấp những hàm ý thực tiễn để cải thiện các đặc điểm của nhà lãnh đạo trong các tổ chức phi chính phủ và đề xuất các chính sách thúc đẩy môi trường lãnh đạo đáng tin cậy để củng cố lòng tin của nhân viên.

**Từ khóa:** Tính cách cá nhân, mô hình năm đặc điểm tính cách, sự tin tưởng.

\*Tác giả liên hệ chính.

Email: nhungdth@ftu.edu.vn

# Impact of leader personality traits on employee trust in leaders of non-governmental organizations in Vietnam

Duong Thi Hoai Nhun<sup>1,\*</sup>, Doan Phuong Anh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Faculty of Business Administration, Foreign Trade University, Hanoi, Vietnam*

<sup>2</sup>*SNV Netherlands Development Organization in Vietnam*

*Received: 05/12/2024; Revised: 03/03/2025;*

*Accepted: 11/03/2025; Published: 28/04/2025*

## ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore the impact of the personality traits of leaders based on the Big five traits model on employee trust. Data were collected through an online survey via email with 212 valid samples. The respondents work at non-governmental organizations located in Hanoi, Vietnam. The study uses quantitative methods with regression analysis techniques to test hypotheses. The results show that agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, openness to experience have a positive impact on employee trust, in which conscientiousness has a significant influence on employee trust. In addition, neuroticism has a negative impact on employee trust. The findings not only contribute theoretically, but also provide practical implications to improve the traits of leaders in non-governmental organizations, and recommend policies to promote a trustworthy leadership environment to strengthen employee trust.

**Keywords:** *Personality traits, big five traits model, trust.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic and professional context of organizations, trust plays an important role in the complex interaction between leaders and employees, helping to enhance performance, promote positive attitudes, and support teamwork.<sup>1</sup> Workers are more likely to show dedication, communicate honestly, and actively participate in the accomplishment of company objectives when they trust their leaders.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, a lack of trust can result in mistrust, a defensive mindset, and hesitancy in sharing resources and information, which can lower operational performance and even cause an organization to fail. Scholars are actively working to unravel the complex dynamics of

trust in organizational dynamics, with the goal of understanding how to foster trust in leadership. Understanding the complex aspects of this crucial relationship and determining the elements that promote trust in leaders are of common interest to them.<sup>3</sup> Barrick and Mount discovered the role of individual leader personality traits in shaping employee trust, and believed that understanding this interaction mechanism is essential to developing strategies to promote trust in organizations.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Sicora's study also explored the complexity of personality traits and leadership styles, thereby examining how the leader-employee relationship contributes to the trust that forms between them.<sup>5</sup> In Vietnam, the study of personality traits has received

---

\*Corresponding author:

Email: nhungdth@ftu.edu.vn

attention from researchers in recent years. These studies mainly focus on the relationship between personality traits and employee creativity,<sup>6</sup> personal financial investment intentions,<sup>7</sup> employee commitment to the organization,<sup>8</sup> and social entrepreneurship intentions.<sup>9</sup> All of these studies were conducted at businesses or organizations operating in Ho Chi Minh city. However, studies on the relationship between personality traits and trust in leader-employee relationships have not received much attention in Vietnam.

This study primarily aims to analyze the impact of leaders' personality traits on employee trust within non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Vietnam. Non-governmental organizations play a key role in addressing social challenges such as poverty, environmental issues and health care in Vietnam. NGOs may engage in charitable endeavors, offer much-needed services, or empower society by raising awareness of their potential to exert control over individuals' lives. They may focus on a specific city, neighborhood, country, or region. NGO leaders are uniquely positioned to tackle society's most pressing issues across various domains. However, NGOs deal with more erratic externalities and resource constraints compared to for-profit companies.<sup>10</sup> In order to handle the uncertainty, complex tasks and responsibilities require NGOs' leaders to possess additional traits including personality and competency to encourage innovative resolution. Additionally, leaders need to have traits and qualities that encourage followers to engage with the organization and voluntarily share their expertise. The follower's commitment to stay in the relationship depends on the quality of the leader-follower relationship.<sup>11</sup> Followers are more likely to acquire mutual trust in their leader if they have a congenial relationship between leader and followers, and this relationship may be positively correlated with organizational members' commitment. Thus, trust is an essential foundation in organizations, not only in external relations with donors or partners, but also within

the organization. Trust is one of the most vital forms of capital a leader has today. In the face of global uncertainty and economic upheaval, people increasingly look to their employers and corporate executives for the truth rather than their institutions. Trust encourages and promotes cooperation and teamwork between employees and leaders. However, there is still a lack of significant empirical data on the impact of leaders' personality traits of leaders on employee trust in Vietnam, especially in NGOs. Therefore, this study was conducted to address the existing research gaps by examining and understanding the correlation between leader personality traits based on McCrae and John's big five traits model and employee trust in leadership.<sup>12</sup> This study goes beyond current research paradigms by emphasizing the interaction between employees and their leaders and focusing on the trust dynamic within an organizational framework. The objective is to investigate and pinpoint the aspects of a leader's personality that are crucial in forming and impacting trust in leader-subordinate relations in Vietnamese NGOs. Based on the theoretical foundation of social exchange and leader-member relationships, the findings of the study will provide valuable insights into theory and practical applications through proposing policy implications to improve leadership effectiveness in NGOs operating in Hanoi, Vietnam.

The structure of the article includes four parts: theoretical background and hypothesis development; methodology referring to scale development, questionnaire construction, data collection and analysis; presentation of research results; theoretical and practical contributions; conclusions, limitations and future research directions.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1. Theoretical background**

#### *2.1.1. Social exchange theory*

Social exchange theory is one of commonly-used theoretical frameworks for individuals who

control their social interactions by weighing the advantages and disadvantages of doing so from a self-interested perspective.<sup>13</sup> When transferring resources with others, people aim to reduce costs and increase advantages.<sup>14</sup> Since people may interact with the expectation of reciprocity, these advantages do not necessarily have to be tangible.<sup>15</sup> In these kinds of interactions, people provide a hand to others with the general expectation of receiving something in return, such as obtaining resources through social reciprocity. Konovsky and Pugh<sup>16</sup> indicated that trust is rooted in an individual's social exchange process, accompanied by employees' belief in the manager's commitment to fulfilling long-term obligations. Organ<sup>17</sup> notes that employee trust in a leader motivates increased mutual respect, while also encouraging behaviors beyond work requirements, such as organizational citizenship behavior.

#### 2.1.2. Leader-member exchange theory

Since its inception by Dansereau et al.,<sup>18</sup> leader-member exchange (LMX) theory has evolved from a focus on mutually dependent relationships and the interdependent functioning of dyadic relations inside an organization. The fundamental tenet of LMX theory is that a dyadic relationship between a supervisor and a subordinate will unavoidably develop, and that this relationship will manifest as a leader-member exchange relationship of either high or low quality. The LMX theory emphasizes trust as a motivator that contributes to motivating employees to invest more effort by demonstrating innovation and willingness to take on more responsibility. Shapiro asserts that trust facilitates good coordination and control in the work process to achieve organizational goals,<sup>19</sup> similar to the conclusions of Granovetter and Ferris et al.<sup>20,21</sup> In addition, Dirks and Ferrin<sup>22</sup> also demonstrated that in an environment that promotes trust, employees will work cooperatively with a positive attitude, thereby improving performance and quality of work. Beehr et al.,<sup>23</sup> acknowledged that the best communication, trust, and responsibility are always present. They

also discovered that when supervisors and their subordinates have a high-quality leader-member exchange, the supervisors are effective and highly satisfied with their work routine and job, leading to productive behavior and, eventually, organizational success. This theory helps explain the impact of leader personalities on promoting or inhibiting employee trust.

#### 2.1.3. Personality traits

Personality is the biological and cultural makeup of a person, a unique combination of heredity and environment. In terms of evolution, personality is a unique combination of biology, psychology, and sociology through natural and social selection to form the individual's worldview.<sup>24</sup> Barrick and Mount<sup>4</sup> further highlight the critical role of personality assessments in the workplace, emphasizing the strong link between an employee's personality traits and their behavior within the organization. This connection underlines the necessity of recognizing and valuing individual differences, as these are instrumental in crafting a diverse organizational culture. One of the most popular personality trait models, recognized and used by many studies in sociological research, is the Big five-personality model developed by McCrae and John.<sup>12</sup> The most prominent features of personality may be described by a five-factor model of personality, referred to as the Big Five traits.<sup>25</sup> Under analytic investigations of the current personality inventory, expert conclusions about the dimensionality of existing measures, the five-factor structure have been retrieved.<sup>12</sup> Research conducted in numerous nations has demonstrated the cross-cultural generalizability of the five-traits structure.<sup>12</sup> There is evidence that the Big Five traits are stable throughout time and heritable.<sup>12</sup> One of the most studied and well-established taxonomies of personality is the Big Five traits, which includes extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and neuroticism.<sup>26</sup> In personality psychology, these characteristics are seen to be fundamental trait dimensions.<sup>26</sup>

The first trait, neuroticism often equated with emotional instability, is a trait marked by

a tendency to experience negative emotions like tension, worry, and anxiety.<sup>12</sup> The second, extraversion is characterized by sociability, assertiveness, and enthusiasm. Barrick and Mount<sup>4</sup> indicated that extraverts are talkative, optimistic, and energetic, often actively engaging in social interactions and displaying dynamism. McCrae and John<sup>12</sup> define agreeableness as a personality dimension that encompasses traits like kindness, compassion, and altruism. Conscientiousness, the fourth component, encompasses traits like adaptability, impulsivity, and organization as well as duty.<sup>4</sup> Finally, openness to experience, as defined by Goldberg,<sup>25</sup> encompasses curiosity, open-mindedness, emotional awareness, and intellect, orienting individuals towards new experiences and ideas.

#### 2.1.4. Trust

In academic studies, the term "trust" has been defined in a variety of ways and is frequently interpreted in terms of vulnerability and risk. There are substantial stakes in every trusting connection, and it is important to recognize and accept the risks involved.<sup>27</sup> A trait shared by all trust situations is a readiness to take risks.<sup>28</sup> The concept of trust used in this study is consistent with that proposed by Mayer et al.<sup>29</sup> Trust is a willingness to be vulnerable, which is a notion that fits in well with the investigation of how a leader's personality trait affects an employee trust. The use of this concept emphasizes how crucial vulnerability is to the dynamics of trust in a leadership context. Leaders, through their personality traits, significantly shape the level of vulnerability employees are willing to accept and feel comfortable embracing, thereby molding the trust they place in their leaders.

## 2.2. Hypotheses development and proposed research framework

### 2.2.1. Leader openness to experience and employee trust in their leader

Openness to experience is a personality trait characterized by curiosity, openness, emotional awareness, and a desire to learn, which orients individuals toward new experiences and ideas.<sup>23</sup>

This personal trait is essential for leaders to overcome challenges, foster innovation, and adapt to changes in a dynamic environment. Previous research has shown that leaders with this personality trait tend to embrace new ideas and demonstrate flexible decision-making.<sup>30-31</sup> These qualities promote an organizational culture that values transparency, encourages dialogue, creativity, and embraces change, which in turn fosters employee trust. Sicora emphasized that leaders with high openness to experience are often perceived as more trustworthy because they manage complex situations effectively with creative solutions.<sup>5</sup>

*H1: Leader openness to experience positively influences employee trust in their leader*

### 2.2.2 Leader conscientiousness and employee trust in their leader

Conscientiousness includes personality traits such as diligence, accuracy, and a strong sense of duty.<sup>4</sup> Leaders who exhibit high levels of conscientiousness are often perceived as well-organized, trustworthy, and morally committed.<sup>32</sup> These traits are necessary to build trust based on Mayer et al.'s organizational trust theory.<sup>29</sup> Several recent studies support the strong link between conscientiousness and a leader's ability to be trusted, while others confirm its role in fostering trust within organizations.<sup>5,33,35</sup> Thus, the hypothesis 2 for this research is:

*H2: Leader conscientiousness positively influences employee trust in their leader*

### 2.2.3. Leader extraversion and employee trust in their leader

Extraversion is a personality trait characterized by sociability, assertiveness, and enthusiasm.<sup>4</sup> This trait aids leaders in effective communication and relationship building – two key components of trust. Bono and Judge<sup>30</sup> concluded in their previous research that extraverted leaders are particularly good at creating a team environment that fosters and nurtures positive relationships. Shahzad et al.,<sup>34</sup> also successfully demonstrated a positive correlation between extraversion and a leader's ability to gain trust. Additionally,

employees tend to perceive extraverted leaders as more approachable and open, which can promote increased employee confidence in the leader's abilities and goals.<sup>35</sup> Considering these reasons, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H3: Leader extraversion positively influences employee trust in their leader*

#### 2.2.4. Leader agreeableness and employee trust in their leader

Agreeableness is closely linked to kindness, compassion, and altruism.<sup>12</sup> Sicora<sup>5</sup> has shown a strong relationship between likeability and perceptions of trustworthiness in leaders. Personal qualities related to likeability, such as fairness, honesty, and concern for others, are consistent with the principles of authentic leadership.<sup>32</sup> A leader's likeability toward employees will promote a supportive work environment, thereby easily gaining trust from employees. In addition, research by Mooradia et al.,<sup>36</sup> also confirmed that individuals with an approachable personality tend to view the behavior of others more positively. In addition, likeability also helps directly shape the behavior of managers, affecting trust in the organization.<sup>35,37</sup> The following hypothesis is proposed:

*H4: Leader agreeableness positively influences employee trust in their leader*

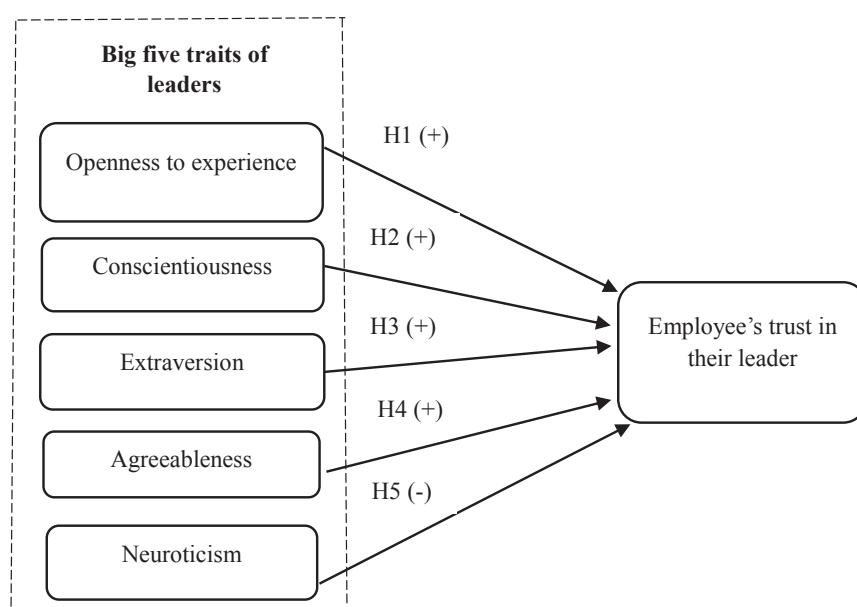
#### 2.2.5. Leader neuroticism and employee trust in their leader

Neuroticism is a personality trait characterized by frequent negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, and restlessness.<sup>12</sup> Leaders with high levels of neuroticism often have difficulty making consistent decisions and maintaining a stable, confident demeanor-qualities that are important for developing trust among employees.<sup>38</sup> The tendency to react emotionally when stressed may pose a risk of undermining their leadership abilities in critical situations, which in turn negatively impacts team motivation.<sup>34</sup> Such traits can erode trust, as employees may perceive these leaders as incompetent, unreliable, and unpredictable.<sup>33,35</sup> Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H5: Leader neuroticism negatively influences employee trust in their leader*

#### 2.2.6. Proposed research model

The proposed research model includes five independent variables representing the personality traits of the leader, including: Openness to experience (O), conscientiousness (C), extraversion (E), agreeableness (A) and neuroticism (N). In addition, employee trust in the leader (T) plays the role of the dependent variable in this model (see in Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Proposed research framework.

Source. Authors proposed

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Scales and survey questionnaires

##### 3.1.1. Scales

Personality traits of leaders are measured based on the Mini-International Personality Item Pool (Mini-IPIP) which effectively assesses 5 personal personality factors including agreeableness (4 items), conscientiousness (4 items), extraversion (4 items), neuroticism (4 items) and openness to experience (4 items).<sup>34</sup> Employee trust in their leaders is measured by a 10-item behavioral trust inventory (BTI).<sup>3</sup> The scale of employee trust in leaders focuses on professional and personal trust.

##### 3.1.2. Survey questionnaire design

The survey questionnaire was built with three parts including (i) an overview of the purpose of the survey and a commitment to ensure confidentiality regarding the personal information of respondents; (ii) demographic information including screening questions about whether the target audience is currently working for a non-governmental organization in Vietnam or not and personal information about age, gender, education level, job position and years of experience; (iii) a questionnaire survey about variables in the study, with responses evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = 'Strongly disagree' and 5 = 'Strongly agree'.

#### 3.2. Data collection and analysis

##### 3.2.1. Sampling

The sample was able to meet the data gathering standards and was recognized as representative. As a result, the number of employees in the NGOs was used to determine the sample of respondents. Data were gathered voluntarily and in compliance with formal approval and ethical norms. Particularly, the study focuses on people with a variety of educational backgrounds, professional experiences, and positions within their organizations. They are employed in the NGOs and range in age from 20 to over 45. These workers operate under the direction of a designated leader. This study's analyses focused

on employee perception of leader personality and their trust in the leader.

The minimum sample size is calculated as  $N = 5 * P$  (where N represents the number of samples to be surveyed, and P represents the number of observed variables).<sup>33</sup> Considering this study includes 30 variables, the minimum sample size required is  $5 * 30 = 150$ , equating to 150 samples. Finally, to ensure generalizability and compensate for any incomplete or unsuitable survey samples, the sample size was set at 220 samplings (N=220), surpassing the minimum requirements. This decision was influenced by the availability of participants within the author's network across various NGOs, adhering to the principle that larger samples enhance the accuracy of the results.

##### 3.2.2. Data collection

Organizations were selected to participate in the study through a snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling was used to find organizations within the researchers' network. Organizations could only participate in the study once. Therefore, before approaching an organization, the research team had to verify whether the organization had already participated. Our research team contacted human resource departments of NGOs located in Hanoi, Vietnam, to gather information on targeted employees. The study used a purposive sampling method through a survey questionnaire with an online survey form via email with confidentiality of personal information. The survey reached 220 employees working at NGOs, in Vietnam, headquartered in Hanoi. The number of valid ballots collected was 212.

##### 3.2.3. Data analysis

The study uses descriptive statistics to analyze the characteristics of the research sample, quantitative research with techniques of scale reliability analysis (Cronbach Alpha), exploratory factor analysis (EFA), Pearson correlation analysis, and regression analysis to test the research hypotheses. The analysis was performed using SPSS software.

## 4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

### 4.1. Demographics of the sample

The study reached 220 participants from 11 NGOs through a personal email survey, of which 216 responses were received. After carefully screening the collected data, 212 responses

were deemed valid. This represents a substantial response rate of 96.36% (n = 212) for the study. The table below presents the demographic details of the respondents. Table 1 below shows the demographic characteristics of the survey participants.

**Table 1.** Demographics of the sample.

| Demographics of Sample        |                            | Frequency | Valid Percent (%) | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                 | <i>Male</i>                | 86        | 40.6              | 40.6               |
|                               | <i>Female</i>              | 126       | 59.4              | 100.0              |
| <b>Age</b>                    | <i>From 20 to under 30</i> | 42        | 19.8              | 19.8               |
|                               | <i>From 30 to under 45</i> | 138       | 65.1              | 84.9               |
| <b>Educational background</b> | <i>Over 45</i>             | 32        | 15.1              | 100.0              |
|                               | <i>College/University</i>  | 148       | 69.8              | 69.8               |
| <b>Job title</b>              | <i>Post-graduate</i>       | 64        | 30.2              | 100.0              |
|                               | <i>Intern</i>              | 11        | 5.2               | 5.2                |
| <b>Working experience</b>     | <i>Staff</i>               | 159       | 75.0              | 80.2               |
|                               | <i>Manager</i>             | 42        | 19.8              | 100.0              |
|                               | <i>Under 1 year</i>        | 32        | 15.1              | 15.1               |
|                               | <i>1 - 3 years</i>         | 85        | 40.1              | 55.2               |
|                               | <i>Over 3 years</i>        | 95        | 44.8              | 100.0              |

*Source.* Authors' own work

*Gender:* there were more female respondents (59.4%) than male respondents (40.6%), indicating that women make up the majority of the workforce in Vietnamese NGOs.

*Age profile:* The majority of respondents (65.1%) are between the ages of 30 and 45, suggesting that the workforce is largely made up of professionals in the middle of their careers, with a notable proportion of workers under 30 (19.8%).

*Educational background:* The workforce in the NGOs is highly educated, with a considerable majority (69.8%) holding at least a college or university degree and 30.2% having a postgraduate degree.

*Job titles:* The majority of responders (75.0%) are employees, followed by managers (19.8%) and interns (5.2%). It implies that a

wide range of viewpoints, from those in lower-level positions to those in positions of decision-making, are included in the study.

*Work experience:* Nearly half, 44.8%, have more than three years of experience, while a sizable percentage, 40.1%, have worked for one to three years. This range provides insights on how employee tenure affects trust in leadership by showcasing a mix of more seasoned workers and relatively recent hires.

### 4.2. Reliability and validity analysis

#### 4.2.1. Reliability analysis

Table 2 provides data on the reliability and convergent validity of scales including leader personality traits and employee trust in the leader. The reliability of the scale is measured by the Cronbach's Alpha value of the 5 personality traits, with values ranging from 0.785 to 0.823

(see in Table 2). Based on the standard thresholds, these values range from acceptable (0.7 to below 0.8) to good (0.8 to 1), ensuring a high level of consistency and reliability for the data collected from the scales. The item-total correlation values of the independent observed variables are all greater than 0.3; reflecting a strong correlation between that observed variable and all the remaining observed variables in the same scale. However, the item-total correlation value of the dependent variable employee trust in their leader with the observed variables T7 (I confide in my leader about personal problems that affect my work), T9 (I share my personal feelings

with my leader) and T10 (I share my personal trust with my leader) was below the required threshold of 0.3, so it was removed from the scale of the variable. To explain the removal of these observed variables, the research team interviewed experts and employees participating in the survey, and it was suggested that these questions focused more on personal connections than professional trust, and may not have been appropriate for the organizational context of this study and were therefore removed from the scale. The reliability value of the employee trust in leader scale with the remaining 7 scales was 0.839 (see in Table 2).

**Table 2.** Results of reliability and validity analysis.

|   | Components       |                               |                 |                   |                    | Cronbach Alpha |
|---|------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|
|   | Extraversion (E) | Openness to experience (O)    | Neuroticism (N) | Agreeableness (A) | Conscientious (C)  |                |
| E4  | 0.783            |                               |                 |                   |                    |                |
| E1  | 0.755            |                               |                 |                   |                    | 0.791          |
| E2  | 0.737            |                               |                 |                   |                    |                |
| E3  | 0.736            |                               |                 |                   |                    |                |
| O3  |                  | 0.778                         |                 |                   |                    |                |
| O1  |                  | 0.760                         |                 |                   |                    | 0.800          |
| O2  |                  | 0.757                         |                 |                   |                    |                |
| O4  |                  | 0.750                         |                 |                   |                    |                |
| N4  |                  |                               | 0.782           |                   |                    |                |
| N3  |                  |                               | 0.758           |                   |                    | 0.788          |
| N2  |                  |                               | 0.744           |                   |                    |                |
| N1  |                  |                               | 0.731           |                   |                    |                |
| A1  |                  |                               |                 | 0.798             |                    |                |
| A2  |                  |                               |                 | 0.760             |                    | 0.784          |
| A3  |                  |                               |                 | 0.739             |                    |                |
| A4  |                  |                               |                 | 0.727             |                    |                |
| C3  |                  |                               |                 |                   | 0.777              |                |
| C4  |                  |                               |                 |                   | 0.754              | 0.785          |
| C2  |                  |                               |                 |                   | 0.722              |                |
| C1  |                  |                               |                 |                   | 0.716              |                |
| <b>Employee trust in their leader (T)</b> |                  |                               |                 |                   |                    | 0.839          |
| KMO                                       | 0.821            |                               |                 |                   | Approx. Chi-Square | 1428.730       |
|   |                  | Bartlett's Test of Sphericity |                 |                   |                    |                |
| Cumulative percentage                     | 62.247%          |                               |                 |                   | Df                 | 190            |
|   |                  |                               |                 |                   | Sig.               | 0.000          |

Source. Authors' own work

#### 4.2.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

KMO coefficient and Bartlett test: KMO value is very good (KMO = 0.821, which is greater than 0.5); Bartlett test results are statistically significant with Chi-square value of approximately 1428.730 and Sig. value of 0.000 (less than 0.05). From there, it can be affirmed that the variables are correlated in the data set, and the EFA analysis is appropriate and effective (see in Table 2). The rotated component matrix below shows the loadings of each variable on the extracted factors after rotation. The factor loadings of all items are above 0.5, it shows a strong relationship and association of variables with a factor.

The total variance extracted reflects the cumulative percentage of explained variance increasing with each factor, reaching over 50% with 5 factors, each group representing an individual personality trait. Specifically, these five extracted factors are capable of explaining 62.247% of the total variance (see in Table 2).

#### 4.3. Pearson correlation analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was used to explore the mechanism of influence of the five leader personality traits on employee trust. All individual personality traits had Sig. values very small at 0.0001 (see in Table 3). This confirms that the relationships found between leader personality traits and employee trust are not purely random; they are statistically significant and ensure reliability.

**Table 4.** Regression analysis results.

| Model                     | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients |        | Collinearity Statistics |           |       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|-------------------------|-----------|-------|
|                           | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      | t      | Sig.                    | Tolerance | VIF   |
| 1 (Constant)              | 0.774                       | 0.287      |                           | 2.692  | 0.008                   |           |       |
| Openness to experience    | 0.248                       | 0.040      | 0.282                     | 6.146  | 0.000                   | 0.810     | 1.235 |
| Conscientiousness         | 0.267                       | 0.043      | 0.291                     | 6.154  | 0.000                   | 0.763     | 1.311 |
| Extraversion              | 0.232                       | 0.041      | 0.256                     | 5.595  | 0.000                   | 0.813     | 1.230 |
| Agreeableness             | 0.188                       | 0.041      | 0.205                     | 4.563  | 0.000                   | 0.846     | 1.182 |
| Neuroticism               | -0.152                      | 0.040      | -0.175                    | -3.829 | 0.000                   | 0.812     | 1.231 |
| <b>R-Squared value</b>    | 0.649                       |            |                           |        |                         |           |       |
| <b>Adjusted R-Squared</b> | 0.641                       |            |                           |        |                         |           |       |

*Note: Dependent Variable: T=Trust*

Source. Authors' own work

**Table 3.** Correlations analysis.

| Pearson correlation        | Trust in leader (T) |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Extraversion (E)           | 0.540**             |
| Openness to experience (O) | 0.562**             |
| Agreeableness (A)          | 0.479**             |
| Conscientiousness (C)      | 0.587**             |
| Neuroticism (N)            | -0.477**            |

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source. Authors' own work

#### 4.4. Multivariate regression analysis and discussion

##### 4.4.1. Multivariate regression analysis

The regression analysis of the relationship between five personality traits and employees trust in their leaders in NGOs in Vietnam has the following results. The model has R-squared and adjusted R-squared values of 0.649 and 0.641, respectively (see in Table 4). This confirms that the personal personality traits of leaders in the research model can explain about 64.9% of the variation in the employee trust factor (greater than 50%). The Sig. values of the 5 independent variables all reach 0.000; lower than the required threshold of 0.05 (see in Table 4). Thus, all of the above personal personality traits are considered reliable predictors of employee trust. The VIF values of the independent variables range from 1.182 to 1.311 (below 10), indicating that multicollinearity does not occur in the research model (see in Table 4)

The regression equation with standardized coefficients is presented as follows:

$$T = 0.282*I + 0.291*C + 0.256*E + 0.205*A - 0.175*N + \epsilon$$

**Table 5.** Hypothesis final testing results.

| Hypothesis  | Results  | Consistent with previous research                        |
|---|----------|--|
| <b>H1:</b> Leader openness to experience positively influences employee trust in their leader | Accepted | Sicora <sup>5</sup> , Hendarsja <sup>h3</sup> 1          |
| <b>H2:</b> Leader conscientiousness positively influences employee trust in their leader      | Accepted | Ping et al. <sup>33</sup> , Shahzad et al. <sup>35</sup> |
| <b>H3:</b> Leader extraversion positively influences employee trust in their leader           | Accepted | Quinlan <sup>35</sup> , Shahzad et al. <sup>35</sup>     |
| <b>H4:</b> Leader agreeableness positively influences employee trust in their leader          | Accepted | Quinlan <sup>35</sup> , Stavrova, et al <sup>37</sup>    |
| <b>H5:</b> Leader neuroticism negatively influences employee trust in their leader            | Accepted | Quinlan <sup>35</sup> , Ping et al. <sup>33</sup>        |

Source. Authors' own work

#### 4.4.2. Discussion of findings

Conscientiousness (C) with a beta coefficient of 0.291; this trait holds the highest regression coefficient and has the most significant influence on employee trust. This confirms that leaders who exhibit more conscientiousness tend to receive greater trust. In a leadership role, conscientiousness is associated with ethical, organized, and ambitious behaviors – the necessary factors that make up authentic leadership.<sup>32</sup> This result is consistent with the study of Ping et al.<sup>33</sup> and Shahzad et al.<sup>34</sup> showing that from the subordinate's view, these kinds of leaders can be strong executives and they will be active in exploring their work. These behavioral traits are linked to politeness, sportsmanship, civic and moral dimensions. This trait may make individuals more likely to do the right thing, not only for themselves, but also for others. Leaders with high conscientiousness scores would readily gain the respect of their subordinates, and their attitude and attention to detail can offer more reliable proof of trust.

From the data analyze above for all hypotheses in this study, the testing results was finalized the proposed hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5) that emerged from the literature review are supported (see in Table 5).

Openness to experience (O) with a beta coefficient of 0.282 shows that this is the trait that has the second largest influence on employee trust. There is a positive correlation between openness to experience and trusting behavior. If individuals have high openness to experience, their self-perception does not satisfy their need for better knowledge of a situation, then they will grow to trust their exchange partners.<sup>29</sup> Employees tend to place more trust in leaders who have a personality that is inclined towards openness to experience.<sup>5</sup> Because leaders with openness to experience are considered to be adaptable, self-reliant, and thoughtful, making them suitable for dynamic work environments.<sup>28</sup>

Extraversion (E) is the third most influential trait on employee trust with a beta coefficient of 0.256. Extraverted leaders are observed to be more effective in leadership due to their ability to convey confidence to employees through their positive and ambitious nature.<sup>30</sup> Shahzad et al.<sup>34</sup> and Quinlan<sup>35</sup> also found similar results. Evidence has shown that certain traits

of a leader's personality can indicate whether or not they will be able to satisfy expectations, which is essential for building and maintaining trust in organizations. However, there are also different research results that suggest that leader extraversion negatively affects employee trust in the context of Chinese culture.<sup>33</sup> Ping et al.<sup>33</sup> indicated that leader extraversion is often perceived as self-centered, they are more likely to ignore communication and idea-sharing with subordinates, which results in weak emotional bonds and little affective trust or emotional investment with employees.

Agreeableness (A) has a beta coefficient of 0.205. Although this trait has a lower influence than the above personality traits, it still shows a positive relationship with employee trust. In the context of leadership, leaders who demonstrate an approachable nature are perceived as trustworthy and caring role models, which positively contributes to employees' perceptions of their leadership abilities.<sup>34</sup> Our results are consistent with previous research results.<sup>35,37</sup> They contend that people trust more agreeable persons and that agreeableness is significant in social crisis circumstances. Interestingly, Stavrova et al.,<sup>37</sup> found that partner agreeableness affected individuals' trust decisions even when they did not have any explicit knowledge about their partner's standing on the agreeableness scale.

In contrast to other personality traits, neuroticism (N) has a negative beta coefficient (-0.175), indicating that this trait has a negative impact on employee trust. This highlights that the higher the leader's emotional instability, the lower the employee's trust in them. In the context of organizational leadership, neuroticism creates challenges for leaders in making decisions under stress, which in turn negatively impacts employees' perceptions of their trustworthiness and leadership quality.<sup>34</sup> Agreeing with our findings, Quinlan<sup>35</sup> and Ping et al.,<sup>33</sup> support that leaders showing stability in emotion (low

neuroticism) will be more successful in positively affecting upward trust in their subordinates.

The results demonstrate how important a role leaders' personalities play in influencing staff trust in NGOs. Regression studies offer a thorough grasp of the distinct ways in which various attributes influence employee trust in leadership. The importance of these qualities in a leadership setting is shown by the favorable connections found between employee trust and traits including conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and openness to experiences. Conscientiousness in particular stands out as the most significant effect of employee trust, highlighting the significance of moral principles and dependability in leadership for building trust. However, the detrimental effect that neuroticism has on trust emphasizes how important it is for leaders to be emotionally stable.

## 5. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATION

### 5.1. Theoretical contribution

This study enriches the theoretical landscape regarding leadership and organizational trust, particularly within NGOs in Vietnam. It underscores the significant influence that specific leader personality traits have on employee trust. The research identifies conscientiousness—defined by organization, dependability, and ethical conduct—as a key trait that fosters trust among employees. Employees in high-quality exchanges have a positive relationship with their leaders, based on leader-member exchange and social exchange theories. Conscientious leaders usually take the necessary actions (such as being hardworking, goal-oriented, and persistent) to complete tasks. Drawing on the insight's fairness perceptions on the benefits of matching source and target and the premise of the social exchange perspective and the norm of reciprocity, conscientious individuals provide trustworthiness partners and make them more believe.<sup>4</sup>

It also reveals that traits such as openness to experience and agreeableness contribute to a more inclusive and trusting environment, which is vital in dynamic NGO settings. Trust has a critical role in managing organizations. People who are willingly vulnerable in such situations will place their good expectations on the trustees when they are trusted. Decision-making may be a situational strength in the relationship between trusting behavior and openness to experience, as used in this study. If individuals deal with a challenging situation, they will develop their trust in others to gain knowledge in coping with the situation because individuals have limitations in processing various information.

Moreover, the study delves into the positive effects of extraversion and emotional stability in leadership. It points out that while extraversion is typically seen as beneficial, particularly in terms of communication, in the Vietnamese context. This shows that expressions of extraversion such as sociability, optimism, and energy help leaders convey messages and create trust for employees in the organization. On the other hand, leaders who exhibit high levels of emotional stability are shown to instill greater trust, aligning with findings from previous research but extending them specifically to the NGOs in Vietnam.

The study extends the understanding of the relationship between leaders and followers from the perspective of social exchange theory. Under the lens of the social exchange perspective, employee trust is enhanced when leaders behave conscientiously at the workplace with ethical conduct, because these traits bring positive values to the work and build mutually beneficial relationships with followers, thereby increasing employee trust in the leader. Additionally, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experiences are traits of leaders that foster employee trust, which is defined as the belief that an exchange partner would act in a non-exploitative manner based on assumptions about the partner's character and intentions.

## 5.2. Practical implication

The practical implications of this study are for leaders and human resource managers in NGOs in Vietnam settings. The recommendations are aimed at improving leadership effectiveness via personality traits and building stronger trust among employees, there are some suggestions to improve leader's traits.

For human resource practices, organizations can select leaders from outside or from within the organization based on their possession of traits. The traits (such as conscientiousness, openness to experience, extraversion) should be paid attention to recruit leaders to build trust in organizations. Leaders should regularly be engaged in self-assessment tests to gain a better understanding of their own personality traits and understand which aspects of their personality are at risk of hindering trust from others. The organization should offer leaders opportunities of personal development, such as training or coaching, that can help to enhance beneficial personality traits and improve those that are detrimental to building trust in employees. Furthermore, organization should provide young leaders to join in leader development programs which support them to improve necessary traits to foster employee trust.

From a strategic standpoint, this study provides implications for leaders at different levels of the organization on how to enhance leader traits. For a team or organization to remain cohesive and stable, reliability is crucial. As a result, leaders should focus on the details of a project or job are better able to spot any problems early on and take proactive measures to resolve them. This makes employee recognize leader's conscientiousness. This dedication motivates others to follow suit and fosters a culture of excellence within the organization. A leader neuroticism is discovered as a factor mitigating employee trust in the organization. Therefore, solutions to curb the emotional instability of leaders are necessary. Leaders should take a step

back and objectively assess their own emotions, as well as the feelings of those around them. It allows them to respond appropriately to the emotional needs of their team members, and acknowledge their emotions without becoming overwhelmed.

By incorporating the above solutions effectively and systematically, NGOs and leaders can promote employee trust. At the same time, they increase employee satisfaction and thereby improve overall organizational performance.

## 6. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

### 6.1. Conclusion

This study has successfully explored the impact of leader personality traits (including extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism) on employee trust in the leader. Among these, a leader's conscientiousness has the most significant and positive impact on employee trust. From a practical perspective, the practical contributions made from this study have great significance for those in leadership positions and responsible for human resource management in non-governmental organizations. Empirical research evidence shows that leaders can foster a more trusting and positive organizational climate through focusing on and nurturing individual personality traits. By understanding the mechanisms for developing these traits properly, organizations and individuals will be able to create a more positive and effective working environment.

### 6.2. Limitations and future research directions

Although the study has solved the proposed objectives, there are still some limitations:

First, the study conducted cross-sectional method that means the study carried out at a certain point in time, so the respondents' opinions reflect the opinions at the time of implementation, so future research can consider observing variables

over a long period of time to further validate the results of the study with longitudinal method. Second, the study has not considered analyzing the influence of demographic factors (gender, age, experience), organizational environmental factors, or organizational culture on the variables in the model to explore more interesting results.

Given the findings and acknowledging the limitations of this study, we suggest that future research could expand our understanding of leader personality traits and employee trust, such as comparing these findings across different cultural and organizational contexts to understand the specificity of the observed relationships; considering control variables in the model to provide deeper understanding between leader personality traits and employee trust; or examining the effectiveness of leadership training programs in developing desirable personality traits and their subsequent impact on employee trust that could provide practical insight for organizational development.

## REFERENCES

1. X. Liu, X. Ren. Analysis of the mediating role of psychological empowerment between perceived leader trust and employee work performance, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, **2022**, 19(11), 6712.
2. K. T. Dirks, D. L. Ferrin. Trust in leadership: Meta-analytic findings and implications for research and practice, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **2002**, 87(4), 611-628.
3. F. Lyon, G. Mollering, M. N. K. Saunders. *Handbook of trust methodology (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2011.
4. M. Barrick, M. Mount. The Big five personality dimensions and job performance: a meta-analysis, *Personnel Psychology*, **1991**, 44(1), 1-26.
5. R. T. Sicora. *Personality and trust: a qualitative study on the personality styles/traits of leaders and employees and the impact on culture of trust within organizations*, Doctoral thesis, University of St.Thomas, 2015.

6. T. D. N. Nguyễn, P. L. Lê. Các yếu tố tính cách ảnh hưởng đến năng lực sáng tạo của nhân viên tại các doanh nghiệp ở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, *Tạp chí Khoa học Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh - Kinh tế và Quản trị kinh doanh*, 2017, 12(2), 144-161.
7. N. H. Trần, N. H. Dương, T. N. Nguyễn, N. A. V. Trương. Sự tác động của các đặc điểm tính cách đến ý định đầu tư tài chính cá nhân: một nghiên cứu trên thế hệ Y, *Tạp chí Khoa học Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh - Kinh tế và Quản trị kinh doanh*, 2020, 15(3), 114-126.
8. D. N. Nguyễn, T. N. L. Uông. Mối quan hệ giữa tính cách cá nhân, vốn tâm lý và sự hài lòng trong công việc đến cam kết gắn bó đối với tổ chức của nhân viên khu vực công - nghiên cứu trường hợp tỉnh Kiên Giang, *Tạp chí Khoa học Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh - Kinh tế và Quản trị kinh doanh*, 2022, 17(3), 17-35.
9. T. L. Phan. Mối quan hệ giữa năm đặc điểm tính cách lớn và ý định khởi sự kinh doanh xã hội, *Tạp chí Nghiên cứu Tài chính - Marketing*, 2023, 14(1), 89-101.
10. J. H. Koo, K. T. Kim, J. H. Kim. The relationship between transformational leadership of environmental NGO leader and trust and organizational commitment, *Global Business & Finance Review (GBFR)*, 2017, 22(1), 23-37.
11. S. K. Waweru, M. Kamara, A. Kyule, J. Gitari. Leadership empathy and employee retention in health sector NGOs in Kenya, *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 2024, 7(1), 276-297.
12. R. R. McCrae, O. P. John. An introduction to the five-factor model and its applications, *Journal of Personality*, 1992, 60(2), 175-215.
13. P. M. Blau. *Exchange and power in social life*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1964.
14. L. D. Molm, G. Peterson, N. Takahashi. The value of exchange, *Social Forces*, 2001, 80(1), 159-184.
15. A. W. Gouldner. The norm of reciprocity: a preliminary statement, *American Sociological Review*, 1960, 25(2), 161-178.
16. M. A. Konovsky, S. D. Pugh. Citizenship behavior and social exchange, *Academy of Management Journal*, 1994, 37(3), 656-669.
17. D. W. Organ. The motivational basis of organizational citizenship behavior, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 1990, 12(1), 43-72.
18. F. Dansereau, G. Graen, W. Haga. A vertical dyad linkage approach to leadership within formal organizations, *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 1975, 13(1), 46-78.
19. S. P. Shapiro. The social control of impersonal trust, *American Journal of Sociology*, 1987, 93(3), 623-658.
20. M. Granovetter. Economic action and social structure: the problem of embeddedness, *American Journal of Sociology*, 1985, 91(3), 481-510.
21. G. R. Ferris, R. C. Liden, T. P. Munyon, J. K. Summers, K. J. Basik, M. R. Buckley. Relationships at work: toward a multidimensional conceptualization of dyadic work relationships, *Journal of Management*, 2009, 35(6), 1379-1403.
22. K. Dirks, D. Ferrin. The role of trust in organizational settings, *Organization Science*, 2001, 12, 450-467.
23. T. A. Beehr, M. J. Beehr, D. A. Wallwey, K. M. Glaser, D. E. Beehr, D. Erofeev. The nature of satisfaction with subordinates: its predictors and importance to supervisors, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 2006, 36, 1523-1547.
24. N. Aboot. Big five traits: a critical review, *Gadjah Mada International Journal of Business*, 2019, 21(2), 159-186.
25. L. R. Goldberg. An alternative “description of personality”: the big-five factor structure, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1990, 59(6), 1216-1229.
26. C. Aydogmus, S. M. Camgoz, A. Ergeneli, O. T. Ekmekci. Perceptions of transformational leadership and job satisfaction: the roles of personality traits and psychological empowerment, *Journal of Management and Organization*, 2018, 24(1), 81-107.

27. H. W. Kee, R. E. Knox. Conceptual and methodological considerations in the study of trust and suspicion, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, **1970**, 14(3), 357-366.
28. C. J. George, W. C. Swap. Measurement of specific interpersonal trust: construction and validation of a scale to assess trust in a specific other, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **1982**, 43(6), 1306-1317.
29. R. Mayer, J. Davis, D. Schoorman. An integrative model of organizational trust, *The Academy of Management Review*, **1995**, 20, 709-734.
30. J. E. Bono, T. A. Judge. Personality and transformational and transactional leadership: a meta-analysis, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **2004**, 89, 901-910.
31. H. Hendarsjah. The effect of openness to experience on trust behavior: the moderating role of situational strength, *Humaniora*, **2023**, 14(1), 39-48.
32. K. Kalshoven, D. N. D. Hartog, A. H. B. D. Hoogh. Ethical leadership at work questionnaire (ELW): development and validation of a multidimensional measure, *The Leadership Quarterly*, **2011**, 22(1), 51-69.
33. H. Ping, B. G. Mujtaba, D. A. Whetten, Y. Wei. Leader personality characteristics and upward trust: a study of employee-supervisor dyads in China, *Journal of Applied Business Research*, **2012**, 28(5), 1001-1016.
34. K. Shahzad, U. Raja, S. D. Hashmi. Impact of Big Five personality traits on authentic leadership, *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, **2020**, 42(2), 208-218.
35. L. M. Quinlan. *Leader personality characteristics and their effects on trust in the organizational setting*, Doctoral thesis, Walden University, 2008.
36. T. Mooradian, B. Renzl, K. Matzler. Who trusts? Personality, trust and knowledge sharing, *Management Learning*, **2006**, 37(4), 523-540.
37. O. Stavrova, A. M. Evans, I. V. Beest. The effects of partner extraversion and agreeableness on trust, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, **2023**, 49(7), 1028-1042.
38. L. A. Pervin, O. P. John. *Handbook of personality: theory and research (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*, Guilford Press, New York, 1999.



© 2025 by the authors. This Open Access Article is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).