

# **The Nature of Leaders' Personality Traits of Selected Technical Universities in Ghana**

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**Abstract:** *This research explored the leadership traits of leaders of selected Technical Universities (TUs) in Ghana. Descriptive quantitative approach was employed and a survey was conducted. Four TUs and a polytechnic were sampled using simple random sampling. A sample size of 214 was drawn from 461 staff. Means were used to determine the average response of the leaders to statements related personality traits studied and the Hotelling's T Test was used in analyzing the level of significance of the responses. The agreeableness, openness-to-experience, conscientiousness, and adjustment are the most prominent leadership traits among the respondents. The leaders need to adopt the right mix of traits in their handling of issues in the TUs.*

**Key Words:** *Leaders, Leadership, Personality, Big-Five factors*

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## **I. Introduction**

To Boateng (2012) leadership should be Ghana's main priority to developing and revitalizing technical education. Afeti (2003) had identified pertinent reasons why it is difficult for African tertiary institutions and particularly the polytechnics requirements to be innovative in their leadership. He has presented: the absence of a shared vision; absence of goal setting culture; and fear of disaffection among stakeholders of tertiary education among other reasons in her study of the effectiveness of the leadership styles of principals of technical institutions in Ghana. Therefore, with effective and efficient leadership, the right policies could be formulated, relevant goals could be set, and strategic programmes could be effectively implemented. The leaders' personally matter in this regards.

The above concern is supported by many researchers' view that the focus of the leaders' ability to manage complex social and personal dynamics, centered in the concept of emotional intelligence has made the role of emotions in organizations prominent in the leadership literature (Cann, 2004; Mayer., Dipaolo., & Salovey., 1990; Weisinger, 1998). The TUs having thoughtful plans is necessary but not a sufficient condition for the effective realization of their corporate essence of being. It requires people or specifically leaders with the right mix of traits, leadership emotional intelligence, leadership styles and strategic intent of the TUs.

In the like manner, a leader's personality determines his/her style of leadership to ensure collective team spirit for corporate goal attainment. Brown, Giluk, and Rynes (2007) posited that knowing personalities helps you to explain and predict others behavior and job performance. Also Judge, Scott and Llies (2002) concluded that "understanding peoples' personalities is important because personality affects behavior as well as perceptions and attitudes" (p.29). Thus leaders with the right trait can influence the successful realization of their goals. It is against this backdrop that this research examines the nature of personality of the leaders of selected TUs in Ghana.

## **II. Research Objectives**

The following research objectives were studied.

- i. To examine the nature of the leadership traits of leaders in selected Ghanaian TUs.
- ii. To determine the leadership traits mix used by leaders in selected Ghanaian TUs.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions were studied in a bid to address the research objectives.

- i. What is the nature of leadership traits of leaders of the selected TUs in Ghana?
- ii. What is the traits mix used by leaders of the selected TUs in Ghana?

### **III. Significance Of The Study**

This research would add to the stock of knowledge on the studies of leadership. It is hoped that, the body of knowledge of other researchers would be enriched on the subject matter studied. Future researchers would depend on the research report on this study to launch their study on the leadership traits. Findings realized from the study and recommendations made can be adopted by the TUs in Ghana in ensuring that effective leadership will be delivered at all levels of the TUs management structure to ensuring that the strategic goals of these institutions are realized.

### **IV. Research Design**

A quantitative approach was employed and descriptive survey was conducted. The study population was all the staff (both teaching and non-teaching with administrative responsibilities) in all the TUs in Ghana. Teaching and non-teaching staff who were placed at functional leadership positions in Tamale, Koforidua, Sunyani, and Kumasi TUs and Bolgatanga polytechnic constituted the target population.

Data on the respondents' personality type was gathered using a questionnaire. The staff who met the inclusion criteria (staff with more than three-month experience in leadership) were then made to answer the questionnaire. Means and standard deviations associated with the means were used to explain the variance of the data from the means. The Hotelling's T Test was used in analyzing the level of significance of the means averages of the types of leadership traits of the respondents.

A sample size of 214 was drawn from 461 staff in leadership position using the Taro Yamane's (1973) sample size formula with an error margin of 5 per cent:  $n = N / \{ 1 + N (a) \}^2$

*Where n is the sample size, N is the population size, and 'a' is the error margin.*

### **V. Literature Review**

There is existing knowledge that leadership is a fundamental requirement for the realization of the strategic goals of every organization. To Cann (2004) it is inevitable for organizations to have effective leaders at all hierarchical levels. This is because no business can run successfully without effective leaders among other factors. This is corroborated by Juras (2010) as he contends that organizations require a special organization resource such as an effective leader, who will with his or her special traits, developed skills and appropriate leadership styles, strongly and honestly lead the organization. Therefore, personality traits of the leader can influence leadership performance. As Rue and Byars (2007) concluded that many characteristics can distinguish leaders from followers. Pech, Jacob and Jabeen (2012) have put it that the focus on personality has coincided with a breakthrough in research suggesting that personality traits can be broadly organized into five major categories or the Big Five Personality Factors: neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience; and conscientiousness.

### **VI. Leadership And Personality**

Employee personality and effective leadership are considered to be key variables that impact the performance of organizations (Pech, Jacob, & Jabeen, 2012). Observing the behavior of people, we can see that people behave differently (Al-Kahtani et al. (2011). The personalities of people are in some ways unique; each person has a different pattern of traits and characteristics that is not fully duplicated in any other person. This pattern of traits according to Greenberg and Baron (2003) tends to be stable overtime.

Personality refers to a person's consistent patterns of feeling, thinking and behaving (Pervin et al., 2005), meaning that each person has a different pattern of traits and characteristics that is not fully duplicated in any other person, (with the possible exception of twins). Greenberg and Baron (2003) contend that this pattern of traits has a predictable developmental path. Numerous studies have shown that personality traits have a large influence on workers' behavior and attitude (Barrick, Mount and Judge, 2001; Hogan & Holland, 2003; Tett, Jackson & Rothstein, 1991). Pech et al. (2012) also established that there is ample evidence that there is a relationship between personality traits and leadership effectiveness.

### **VII. The Five Factor Model Of Personality**

With over a thousand and one of the personality traits known to many, it gets increasingly difficult to harmonize all these traits and be able to easily determine their effects on successful leadership outcomes. Al-Kahtani et al., (2011) have put it that psychologists have studied thousands of different personality dimensions for many years and that their studies were not that productive for the study of organizational behavior as there were huge number of potential personality traits and the things that made it difficult to validate which dimensions organizations should focus on. Al-Kahtani et al., (2011) further posit that since early 1990s, it has become accepted that all these personality dimensions can be distilled into the "Big Five Model". Developments in traits models and particularly to the Big Five Models of personality (B5M; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Digman, 1990; Widger, 2005) are the key reasons for this emergence.

Costa and McCrae (1999) have put it that the Five-Factor Model (FFM) has set the tone for rival models with respect to personality structure. Lazaro, Sanchez and Ledesma (2011) alluded that the FFM has demonstrated how five biologically based dimensions (Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Openness to experience) can encompass most personality traits. Lazaro et al. (2011) concluded that these personality dimensions share considerable consensus among researchers. Goldberg (1990) also acknowledged the consensus emerging that the five factor model of personality (often termed the Big Five) can be used to describe the most salient aspects of personality.

### **VIII. Classification Of The Five Factors Of The B5m**

The five factor model of personality is presented in this section.

#### ***Extraversion***

Achua and Lussier (2013) put it that extraversion is a on a continuum between extravert and introvert. They further asserted that extraverts are outgoing, like to meet new people, and are assertive and willing to confront others, whereas introverts are shy. Related to Achua and Lussier (2013) thought on extraversion, Al-Kahtani et al. (2011) allude that the broad dimension of extraversion includes specific traits such as talkative, energetic and assertive. Bernstein (2011) advocated that when we deal with people who are the opposite of us, we need to understand the need to adjust our level of extraversion to create good relationships. Leaders, according to Hmieleski and Baron (2009), tend to have high energy with a positive drive to work hard to achieve goals. Their positive attitude and optimism influences their high tolerance for frustration as they strive to overcome obstacles through being persistent; they do not give up early.

#### ***Agreeableness***

Daft (2005) define agreeableness as the degree to which a person is able to get along with others by being good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, compassionate, understanding and trusting. He further posits that a leader who scores high in agreeableness seem warm and approachable and the other who score low may seem cold, distant and insensitive. To Al-Kahtani et al. (2011), agreeableness includes traits like sympathetic, kind, and affectionable.

Judge and Bono (2000) contend that agreeableness has to do with tendencies to be kind, gentle, trusting, and trustworthy, and warm. Achua and Lussier (2013) opine that agreeableness includes traits of sociability and emotional intelligence. Jokisaari and Nurmi (2009) contended that socialization affects our behavioral performance. Achua and Lussier (2013) corroborate the thought on socialization as they put it that strong sociability personality types spend more time with people than things, and tends to have lots of friends. They are friendly, courteous, easy to get along with, and diplomatic. Sensitivity is said to be part of being sociable and that it refers to understanding group members as individuals, what their positions on issues are, and how best to communicate with and influence them (ibid). To McNatt (2010), agreeableness is the ability to work well with people and it influence our assessment of people. As team members are agreeable, they can be easily able to resolve toward the attainment of group goals.

#### ***Conscientiousness***

Conscientiousness is the degree to which a person is responsible, dependable, and persistent and achievement oriented (Daft, 2005). This dimension of personality relates to the work itself rather than relationship with the people (ibid). Achua and Lussier (2013) on the other hand, put it that conscientiousness includes traits of dependability and integrity. Dependability, according to them is a continuum between responsible/dependable to irresponsible/undependable. Delal, Lam, Weiss, Welch and Hulin (2011) contend that people low on the trait of dependability have low commitment and tend to have counterproductive work behavior. Johnson and Chang (2009) on the other hand put it that high dependable people get the job done and are characterized as loyal, committed to their coworkers and the organisation.

Integrity on the other hand is on a continuum between being honest and ethical or not (Achua & Lussier, 2013). Montgomery and Ramus (2011) posit that behavior that is honest and ethical makes a person trustworthy. Integrity is about being honest-not lying, cheating (manipulating) or stealing. Conscientious team members are therefore easily influenced by a conscientious leader towards team goal attainment.

#### ***Emotional Stability (Neuroticism)***

This trait embodies emotional stability and self-confidence (Achua & Lussier, 2013). Von Kleef, Homan, Beersma, Van Knipperberg and Damen (2009) allude that we all have emotions in leader-follower interactions. Adjustments, to Achua and Lussier (2013) is a continuum between being emotionally stable and unstable. Stable, to them, refers to self-control, being calm-good under pressure, relaxed, secure, and positive-praising others. Self-confidence is on a continuum from strong to weak, indicating whether we are self-assured in our judgments, decision making, ideas, and capabilities (Achua & Lussier, 2013). Effective leaders know

when to lead and when to follow; they compensate for weakness by letting others with the strength lead in those areas (ibid).

### Openness to Experience

Openness to experience is also called intellect and culture (Al-Kahtani et al., 2011). That is, it has to do with having interest and being imaginative (ibid). Daft (2005) define this dimension as the degree to which a person has a broad range of interest and in imaginative, creative, and willing to consider new ideas. Achua and Lussier (2013) put it that openness to experience includes traits of flexibility, intelligence, and internal locus of control. To them, intelligence refers to cognitive ability to think critically to solve problems and to make decisions. Flexibility refers to the ability to adjust to different situations and change and locus of control is on a continuum between external and internal belief in control over one's destiny or performance (ibid). Further, they put it that people who are internally oriented tend to be future oriented, setting objectives and developing plans to accomplish them.

## IX. Analysis And Discussion

### Leadership Traits of Respondents

Objective one of the research sought to examine the nature of leadership traits of the respondents in the Ghanaian TUs and the second objective was to determine the leadership traits mix employed by leaders of the selected Polytechnics. To realise these objectives, the research considered the question: What is the nature of leadership traits of leaders of the selected TUs in Ghana? and What is the right mix of traits used by leaders of the selected TUs in Ghana? were researched on. Descriptive statistics of means of the various elements of leadership traits and their respective sample average of traits is examined. Also the Hotelling's T-Squared Test is used to assess the level of significance of each of the leadership traits.

From Table 1, data on extraversion personality profile of the respondents indicate that the most representative characteristics of the extravert respondents are 'I am, at ease at handling situations', 'I feel comfortable around people', and 'I feel at ease with people. They recorded mean of 4.12, 4.10 and 4.09 respectively. They score above the sample average of 3.6. 'I make friends easily', 'I know how to captivate people' also had their means above the sample average and they as well had corrected item total correlation of above 0.5. 'I exercise dominance over others', 'I act as an extravert' had their means below the sample average. It thus implies that extraversion is not a bad leadership practice once it is geared towards influencing team members for collective goal realisation. This confirms Bernstein (2011) admonition that when we deal with people who are the opposite of us, we need to understand to adjust. The reliability of this data is confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.789 and the Hotelling's test is implying that the data is very significant as illustrated on Table 1.

**TABLE 1 EXTRAVERSION PERSONALITY DIMENSION PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Corrected Correlation	Item-Total Squared Multiple Correlation
I exercise dominance over others	2.47	1.388	.304	.207
I act as an extrovert	3.07	1.409	.389	.186
I love competing and Wining	3.69	1.223	.464	.292
I am the life of the group	3.32	1.199	.470	.333
I try to Influence others on my way	3.48	1.336	.478	.300
I feel comfortable around people	4.10	1.080	.381	.295
I do not mind being at centre of attention	3.51	1.270	.466	.267
I make friends easily	3.87	1.223	.534	.375
I know how to captivate People	3.69	1.100	.533	.382
I feel at ease with people	4.09	.991	.439	.406
I am at ease at handling situations	4.12	1.003	.487	.427
<b>Total mean average</b>	3.58			
<b>Reliability Statistics</b>				
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items		Number of Items	
.789	.796		11	
<b>Hotelling's T-Squared Test</b>				
Hotelling's T-Squared	F	df1	df2	Sig
236.875	22.605	10	188	.000

Source: Field Survey, March 2014

On the agreeable personality profile of respondents, a very high sample average of 4.3 was got and the respondents response to statements 'I am interested in people', 'I sympathize with others', 'I make people feel at ease', 'I enquire about others wellbeing' and 'I love to help others' have their average mean responses equal or

above the total sample average with 4.48, 4.51, 4.40 and 4.58 respectively. The agreeableness trait has a very high reliability coefficient of 0.906 and the Hotelling's T-Square test confirms the significance of the data. That means the respondents are most agreeable. Therefore, Judge, Bono, Illies and Gerhardt (2002) assertion that altruism, tact, and sensitivity are the hallmarks of an agreeable personality and that effective leaders should be agreeable is confirmed. Table 2 illustrates data on the agreeableness of the respondents.

**TABLE 2 AGREEABLENESS PERSONALITY DIMENSION PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Corrected Correlation	Item-Total Squared Multiple Correlation
I am interested in people	4.48	.834	.654	.500
I sympathize with others	4.51	.840	.723	.576
I have a soft heart	4.21	.965	.555	.386
I do take time out for others	4.03	.980	.619	.425
I feel others' emotions	4.24	.828	.636	.443
I make people feel at ease	4.40	.774	.702	.506
I enquire about others' wellbeing	4.35	.849	.569	.357
I know how to comfort others	4.23	.807	.709	.523
Am in good terms with nearly everyone	4.16	.916	.570	.408
Have a very good word for everyone	4.10	.930	.713	.570
Love to help others	4.58	.783	.737	.585
Total mean average	4.30			

  

Reliability Statistics			
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items	
.906	.909	11	

  

Hotelling's T-Squared Test				
Hotelling's T-Squared	F	df1	df2	Sig
176.467	16.879	10	198	.000

Source: Field Survey, March 2014

Another element of the Big Five personality traits studied was the adjustment profile of respondents. From Table 3, a total sample average of 3.9 was scored and all the statement of adjustment traits respondents responded to have their means above 3.9. Statement such as 'I am exact in my work'; 'I sympathize with other'; and 'I make people feel at ease' had scores of 4.48, 4.51, and 4.40 respectively. The trait adjustment had a reliability score of 0.912 and the Hotelling's T-Square test also present very high significance of the data. The data reflects Achua and Lussier (2013) assertion that adjustment trait embodies emotional stability and self-confidence and the fact that the responses had higher means implies the respondents have high leadership emotional stability and self-confidence.

**TABLE 3 ADJUSTMENT PERSONALITY DIMENSION PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Corrected Correlation	Item-Total Squared Multiple Correlation
I am always prepared	4.48	.834	.605	.427
I pay attention all details	4.51	.840	.660	.481
I get chores done right away	4.21	.965	.696	.522
I like order and regularity	4.03	.980	.723	.621
I follow schedule	4.24	.828	.714	.617
I am exact in my work	4.40	.774	.716	.561
I do things according to plan	4.35	.849	.727	.565
I like to tidy up	4.23	.807	.738	.557
I have confidence in my judgments	4.16	.916	.658	.492
I give lots of praise and encouragement	4.10	.930	.543	.376
Total mean average	3.90			

  

Reliability Statistics			
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items	
.912	.912	10	

  

Hotelling's T-Squared Test				
Hotelling's T-Squared	F	df1	df2	Sig
92.471	9.872	9	196	.000

Source: Field Survey, March 2014

Conscientiousness was another trait of the respondents' studied. This trait also had a higher total sample average of 4.0 with statements 'I am dependable (4.19)', 'I work hard to be successful (4.62)', 'I am considered to be credible (4.45)' and 'I am a well-organised person (4.41) scoring means above the sample average. Statements such as 'I rarely get irritated (3.49)', 'I am not easily bored by things (3.64)'

scored below the total sample average. Data on the traits conscientiousness had a reliability coefficient of 0.822 and the Hotelling's T-square test show that the data presented is very significant. This implies that the leaders surveyed are dependable and work towards the attainment of the goals of the TUs. Daft (2005) assertion that conscientiousness is the degree to which a person is responsible, dependable, persistent and achievement oriented is confirmed by this data on the respondents. Also, Johson and Chang (2009) contention that high dependable people get the job done and are characterised as loyal and committed to their co-workers and the organisation is also evidenced here. Table 4 illustrates data on conscientiousness.

**TABLE 4 CONSCIENTIOUSNESS PERSONALITY DIMENSION PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation
I am relaxed most of the time	3.48	1.184	.469	.305
I am not easily bored by things	3.64	.991	.524	.386
I rarely get irritated	3.49	1.167	.628	.508
I do not often get mad at things	3.73	1.136	.516	.424
I do not often get confused	3.92	1.012	.586	.393
My mood remains friendly at all times	3.79	1.160	.489	.266
I am dependable	4.19	1.076	.351	.184
I work hard to be successful	4.62	.726	.574	.608
I am considered to be credible	4.45	.767	.551	.609
I am well-organized person	4.41	.783	.483	.418
Total mean average	4			
<b>Reliability Statistics</b>				
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items		Number of Items	
.822	.832		10	
<b>Hotelling's T-Squared Test</b>				
Hotelling's T-Squared	F	df1	df2	Sig
290.744	31.013	9	192	.000

Source: Field Survey, March 2014

The fifth of the Big Five personality factors studied was openness-to-experience. From Table 5, the openness-experience trait had a total sample average of 3.7 with all the elements of the trait respondents rated having their means above the sample average, apart from 'I volunteer to be the first to learn (3.42)', statements such as 'I am a fast learner (4.27)', 'I can handle a lot of information (4.23)', 'I have excellent idea (4.15)' and 'I try to do things differently to enhance performance' had very high scores. The openness-to-experience features prominently among the respondents studied and the trait had a very high reliability coefficient of 0.873. The Hotelling's T-Squared test suggests the data on the openness-to-experience is very significant.

**TABLE 5 OPENNESS-TO-EXPERIENCE PERSONALITY DIMENSION PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Corrected Total Correlation	Item-Squared Correlation	Multiple
I try to do things differently to enhance performance	4.17	.924	.552	.352	
I go to new places and enjoy travelling	3.48	1.187	.410	.257	
I volunteer to be the first to learn new things	3.72	1.073	.610	.406	
I am always optimist around innovations	4.05	.924	.557	.463	
I have a Vivid imagination	4.00	.884	.655	.514	
I have rich vocabulary	3.95	.813	.506	.362	
I have excellent ideas	4.15	.730	.595	.491	
I am fast learner	4.27	.827	.614	.479	
I spend time reflecting on things	4.26	.824	.585	.420	
I can handle a lot of information	4.23	.801	.603	.461	
Total mean average	3.7				
<b>Reliability Statistics</b>					
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items			Number of Items	
.865	.873			11	
<b>Hotelling's T-Squared Test</b>					
Hotelling's T-Squared	F	df1	df2	Sig	
145.880	13.938	10	193	.000	

Source: Field Survey, March 2014

The research also sought to determine the right mix of traits of leaders of the TUs. Respondents were made to choose more than one trait and it turned out that about 28%, 34% and 22% chose adjustment, openness-to-experience and agreeableness respectively. This suggests that respondents see these three traits the most effective that can influence team members towards the collective goal realisation. From Table 6, data on the

leadership traits discussed reveals that the traits agreeableness, openness-to-experience, conscientiousness, and adjustment are the most prominent leadership traits among the respondents. For, the research reveals that the dominant traits among the respondents are: the agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness-to-experience and adjustments.

**TABLE 6 DETERMINATION OF RESPONDENTS' BEST LEADERSHIP TRAITS**

Leadership Traits	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Extraversion	22	5.3%	11.1%
Adjustment	115	27.8%	58.1%
Openness to Experience	140	33.8%	70.7%
Agreeableness	90	21.7%	45.5%
All the Above	47	11.4%	23.7%
Total	414	100.0%	209.1%

Source: Field Survey, March 2014

From these one may conclude that leaders of the TUs need the right mix of traits to be able ensure that they are able to influence the team members and carry them along towards the attainment of the strategic goals. The leaders need not to be rigid but should be agreeable with high level of conscientiousness in their effort to respond to the innovative demands of all stakeholders of education that they serve or work with. This requires the leaders to be ready to adjust to and respond to the dynamism of the educational market.

From the above, one may conclude that leaders of the polytechnics need the right mix of traits to ensure that they are able to influence team members and carry them along towards the attainment of the strategic goals of the polytechnics. They do not need to be rigid but should be agreeable with high level of conscientiousness in their effort to respond to the innovative demands of all stakeholders of education that they serve or work with. This requires the leaders to be ready to adjust to and responds to the dynamism of the educational market.

## X. Conclusions

It is found that the agreeableness, openness-to-experience, conscientiousness, and the adjustment traits are the most prominent among the leaders of TUs researched. This suggests that the leaders in the Ghanaian TUs do not need to keep to one rigid trait but they need to adopt the right blend of traits that will help elicit the work interest of the team members to work to realize the strategic leadership outcomes of the TUs.

The leaders need to be flexible in their readiness to adopt and adapt to the changing demands of the TUs stakeholders and therefore the dynamism of the TUs stakeholders' interests will have to compel the need for flexibility of the leaders in the trait they employ to realize the strategic goals of the TUs. Leaders of the Ghanaian TUs need to align their personality traits to the work expectations.

Peculiar traits that the leaders have that will not inure to influencing team members to work toward the organizational goals attainments should be corrected. More importantly, individuals do not make an organization but teams, therefore all members of the TUs need to see the essence of adjusting their traits to fit into desired change situations. Through this, the strategic goals of the TUs can be realized.

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