The Influence of Personality Traits on Leadership Styles among Student Leaders in Malaysian Public Universities

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Abstract
This study investigates the influence of personality traits on leadership styles among student leaders in Malaysian public universities. Using the Big Five Personality Traits framework, the research examines how traits like extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness shape people-oriented and task-oriented leadership. A diverse sample of 400 student leaders was analyzed through quantitative methods, including correlation and regression analyses. The results indicate that extraversion and agreeableness are strongly associated with people-oriented leadership, while conscientiousness is a significant predictor of task-oriented leadership. Neuroticism was found to negatively impact both leadership styles, suggesting emotional instability may hinder leadership effectiveness. These findings highlight the critical role of personality traits in shaping leadership behaviors and underscore the need for leadership development programs that align with individual personality profiles. This study provides valuable insights into leadership development in the multicultural context of Malaysian public universities. It also contributes to a broader understanding of how personality influences leadership, offering practical implications for designing tailored leadership programs that enhance both relational and goal-oriented leadership skills.
Keywords: Personality Traits, Leadership Styles, Student Leaders, Malaysian Universities, Big Five Personality

Introduction
Leadership plays an essential role in shaping the educational experience within universities, especially among student leaders tasked with managing peers, organizing events, and representing student bodies. The effectiveness of these student leaders is often determined by several factors, one of the most important being personality traits (Judge et al., 2017;

Ahmad et al., 2022). Leadership development has become increasingly prioritized in Malaysian public universities, where the goal is to produce graduates equipped not only with academic knowledge but also with the leadership capabilities necessary for professional and community success (Zainuddin et al., 2020; McCann et al., 2018). Consequently, understanding how personality traits influence leadership styles is key to nurturing more effective student leaders within these institutions. While personality traits are critical, it is also essential to acknowledge that leadership effectiveness can be influenced by other factors, such as leadership experience and situational variables. These may include the type of leadership role, the culture of the university, and the political climate. However, this study primarily focuses on personality traits to isolate their specific effects on leadership styles. Future research could expand on this by exploring how these additional factors interact with personality traits to shape leadership effectiveness in diverse contexts.

Among the many models used to study personality, the Big Five Personality Traits model stands out as one of the most widely accepted frameworks for understanding the role of personality in leadership (McCrae & Costa, 2020; Zhao et al., 2018). This model categorizes personality into five traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience, all of which have been found to influence leadership behaviors to varying degrees (Ahmad et al., 2022; Judge et al., 2017). These traits affect how individuals make decisions, interact with others, and handle challenges, all of which are critical components of effective leadership. In the context of higher education, particularly in Malaysian public universities, examining the relationship between personality traits and leadership styles can provide valuable insights into the development of leadership programs tailored to student leaders' strengths.

Extraversion has been consistently linked to leadership effectiveness due to its association with sociability, assertiveness, and enthusiasm. Extraverted leaders tend to be more successful in engaging with their peers and motivating others, making them more suited to people-oriented leadership roles (Bono & Judge, 2004; Northouse, 2021). In contrast, conscientiousness, characterized by high levels of organization, responsibility, and goal orientation, is often associated with task-oriented leadership, where the focus is on achieving specific objectives and maintaining productivity (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Zhao et al., 2018). These distinctions underscore the importance of understanding personality traits when examining leadership effectiveness, particularly in educational environments where leaders must balance both relational and task-oriented responsibilities.

The role of personality in student leadership development has become especially important in Malaysian public universities, which are home to a diverse student population (Ahmad et al., 2022). These leaders not only represent their peers but also navigate complex social dynamics that require cultural sensitivity, empathy, and adaptability (Zainuddin et al., 2020; McCann et al., 2018). Thus, personality traits such as agreeableness and openness to experience are particularly relevant in this context. Agreeable leaders, who are cooperative and empathetic, tend to foster inclusive and harmonious team environments, while leaders high in openness are more likely to think creatively and adapt to new challenges (Judge et al., 2017; McCann et al., 2018).

Given the importance of leadership in higher education, understanding the relationship between personality traits and leadership styles among student leaders in Malaysian public universities is critical. Previous research has highlighted the relevance of personality in leadership development but has often focused on organizational and business contexts rather than educational settings (Judge et al., 2017; Ahmad et al., 2022). By addressing this gap, this study aims to explore how the Big Five Personality Traits influence both people-oriented and task-oriented leadership styles among student leaders. The findings will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how personality traits shape leadership behaviors and provide valuable insights into improving leadership development programs in Malaysian universities. In light of the above concerns, this study aims to explore the influence of personality traits on leadership styles among student leaders in Malaysian public universities, with specific research questions as follows:

1. What are the predominant personality traits among student leaders in Malaysian public universities?
2. What is the relationship between the Big Five Personality Traits and leadership styles (people-oriented and task-oriented) among student leaders?
3. Which personality traits are the strongest predictors of people-oriented and task-oriented leadership styles among student leaders?

The Big Five Personality Traits and Leadership
The Big Five Personality Traits model is one of the most widely accepted frameworks for understanding the role of personality in leadership. This model, which includes extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience, has been extensively used to examine leadership behaviors across different contexts (McCrae & Costa, 2020; Judge et al., 2017). Extraversion, in particular, has been consistently linked to leadership effectiveness due to its association with assertiveness, sociability, and enthusiasm (Bono & Judge, 2004; Northouse, 2021). Leaders who score high in extraversion tend to engage more actively with their teams, motivating others and building strong relationships (Judge et al., 2017). In educational settings, extraverted student leaders are often more visible, taking the lead in organizing events and managing peer groups.

Conscientiousness is another key trait that influences leadership effectiveness, particularly in task-oriented contexts. Conscientious leaders are known for their reliability, discipline, and goal-oriented approach to leadership (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Zhao et al., 2018). These individuals excel in planning and executing tasks efficiently, which is critical in student leadership roles that require the management of large projects, events, or organizations. Leaders with high conscientiousness are often perceived as dependable and competent, making them well-suited for roles that require organization and attention to detail (Ahmad et al., 2022).

Agreeableness plays a significant role in relational leadership, where the focus is on building strong interpersonal relationships and fostering a positive team environment (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Ahmad et al., 2022). Leaders who score high in agreeableness are empathetic, cooperative, and supportive, qualities that enhance their ability to create harmonious group dynamics (Judge et al., 2017). In the context of student leadership in Malaysian public universities, agreeableness is particularly important given the multicultural and diverse nature of the student population. Leaders who can navigate cultural differences and foster

inclusivity are more likely to succeed in their roles (Zainuddin et al., 2020; McCann et al., 2018).

On the other hand, neuroticism is generally considered a negative predictor of leadership effectiveness. High levels of neuroticism are associated with emotional instability, stress, and anxiety, which can undermine a leader's ability to make decisions and maintain composure under pressure (Northouse, 2021; Judge et al., 2017). Leaders with high neuroticism may struggle to manage the demands of leadership, particularly in high-stress situations such as managing large student events or resolving conflicts within organizations (Ahmad et al., 2022). This trait is particularly detrimental in educational settings where leaders are often required to balance academic responsibilities with leadership roles.

Finally, openness to experience is linked to creativity, innovation, and adaptability in leadership (Zhao et al., 2018; McCrae & Costa, 2020). Leaders who score high in openness are more likely to embrace new ideas and think outside the box, making them well-suited for roles that require problem-solving and innovation. In student leadership contexts, openness to experience can enable leaders to introduce new strategies and ideas that enhance the functioning of student organizations and improve the student experience (McCann et al., 2018; Ahmad et al., 2022).

People-Oriented vs. Task-Oriented Styles
Leadership styles are often classified into people-oriented and task-oriented approaches, each with distinct characteristics and impacts on team performance (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Northouse, 2021). People-oriented leadership, also known as relational leadership, focuses on building strong relationships with team members, fostering a collaborative environment, and ensuring that individuals feel valued and supported (Ahmad et al., 2022; Zainuddin et al., 2020). This style of leadership is particularly effective in educational settings, where student leaders are tasked with managing peer groups, addressing concerns, and promoting student engagement (McCann et al., 2018).

People-oriented leaders are more likely to engage in transformational leadership behaviors, which involve inspiring and motivating others to achieve higher levels of performance (Judge et al., 2017; Northouse, 2021). In Malaysian public universities, where student leaders often work in diverse and multicultural environments, people-oriented leadership is essential for creating an inclusive and supportive atmosphere that encourages collaboration and participation (Zainuddin et al., 2020). Research has shown that people-oriented leadership styles are associated with higher levels of team cohesion, job satisfaction, and overall team performance (Judge et al., 2017; Ahmad et al., 2022).

In contrast, task-oriented leadership is more focused on achieving specific goals and ensuring that tasks are completed efficiently (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Northouse, 2021). Leaders who adopt this style tend to prioritize productivity, organization, and goal achievement, often taking a more directive approach to leadership. Task-oriented leadership is particularly effective in situations where high levels of organization and goal achievement are required, such as planning and executing large-scale events or managing complex student organizations (Judge et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2018). In the context of student leadership, task-oriented

leaders are more likely to excel in roles that require strong project management skills and the ability to meet deadlines.

The relationship between personality traits and leadership styles has been the subject of extensive research. Studies have shown that extraversion and agreeableness are more strongly associated with people-oriented leadership, as these traits facilitate interpersonal communication and relationship-building (Ahmad et al., 2022; McCann et al., 2018). Conscientiousness, on the other hand, is more closely linked to task-oriented leadership, as conscientious leaders are driven by goals and excel at organizing and executing tasks (Zhao et al., 2018; Judge et al., 2017). Understanding how personality traits influence leadership styles can provide valuable insights into the development of effective student leaders.

Method
Participants
This study involved a diverse sample of 400 student leaders from various public universities in Malaysia. The participants were selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation across different demographics, including age, gender, and academic fields. This sampling approach ensured a comprehensive representation of the population of student leaders, allowing for meaningful analysis of the relationship between personality traits and leadership styles. The participants ranged in age from 19 to 26 years, with an equal distribution of male and female student leaders. The diverse nature of the sample enabled the investigation of how different personality traits, such as extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism, impact leadership behaviors in various academic and social contexts.

Procedure and Measures
Prospective participants were contacted through university channels, including email and official student leadership forums, and were provided with detailed information regarding the study's objectives, methods, and ethical considerations. Participants were required to give informed consent before participating in the study. Upon consent, they completed an online questionnaire, designed to evaluate their personality traits and leadership styles. The online format enabled widespread participation across public universities and facilitated the collection of data from a large sample within a relatively short time.

The survey utilized established and validated scales, each designed to measure specific variables: the Big Five Inventory (BFI) to assess personality traits, and the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) to measure people-oriented and task-oriented leadership styles. These tools have been widely used in previous studies and are recognized for their reliability and validity in the measurement of personality and leadership behaviors.

To minimize response bias and ensure confidentiality, participants completed the survey anonymously. The data collection process was streamlined using an online platform, which facilitated easy access for the respondents. The resulting dataset was subjected to rigorous statistical analysis, including correlation and regression analyses, to determine the influence of personality traits on leadership styles.

Personality Traits

Personality traits were measured using the Big Five Inventory (BFI) developed by John et al. (1991). This scale assesses five major personality traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. The BFI consists of 44 items, with responses on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Example items include "I see myself as someone who is talkative" (extraversion) and "I see myself as someone who tends to be lazy" (conscientiousness, reverse-scored). Higher scores on each dimension indicate stronger presence of that trait. Previous studies have demonstrated the reliability of the BFI, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80 to 0.85 across different cultural settings (Soto & John, 2017).

Leadership Styles

Leadership styles were measured using the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) developed by Stogdill (1963), which assesses people-oriented and task-oriented leadership behaviors. The LBDQ includes 40 items, where participants rate their agreement with statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Sample items for people-oriented leadership include "This leader helps others to feel comfortable" and "This leader treats all group members as equals." For task-oriented leadership, sample items include "This leader emphasizes meeting deadlines" and "This leader focuses on achieving the goals of the group." The LBDQ has been used extensively in leadership research and shows a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83 for people-oriented leadership and 0.87 for task-oriented leadership (Judge et al., 2017).

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to determine the relationships between personality traits and leadership styles. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to explore the associations between the Big Five personality traits and both people-oriented and task-oriented leadership behaviors. Furthermore, a multiple regression analysis was employed to identify which personality traits were the most significant predictors of leadership styles. The regression model provided insights into how traits such as extraversion and conscientiousness contributed to leadership effectiveness in different contexts. R^2 and adjusted R^2 values were calculated to assess the variance explained by the predictors, and F-statistics were used to evaluate the overall significance of the models.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the personality traits of student leaders at Malaysian Public Universities, based on the Big Five Personality dimensions. The results show that agreeableness (M = 34.23, SD = 5.13) and openness to experience (M = 34.29, SD = 5.34) had the highest mean scores. High scores in agreeableness reflect the respondents' tendencies toward cooperation, trust, and altruism, indicating that these student leaders are generally perceived as compassionate and collaborative. Openness to experience, on the other hand, reflects the respondents' curiosity and creativity, signifying their openness to new ideas and experiences, which is beneficial for adaptive leadership styles. Meanwhile, Conscientiousness (M = 33.63, SD = 6.12) was also rated highly, suggesting that the respondents tend to be organized, responsible, and goal-oriented. This personality trait indicates that student leaders are likely to adopt a

meticulous leadership approach, emphasizing planning and attention to detail to achieve organizational goals.

Conversely, neuroticism (M = 20.55, SD = 7.15) had the lowest mean score, indicating that most respondents are emotionally stable and exhibit lower levels of anxiety or emotional reactivity. Such emotional stability is crucial for effective leadership, as it helps individuals maintain composure in challenging situations, allowing for rational decision-making. Finally, extraversion (M = 28.57, SD = 6.85) scored moderately. This suggests that while some student leaders are sociable, energetic, and outgoing, others may be more reserved or introverted, preferring to work individually or in smaller groups. This diversity in extraversion levels implies that leadership styles among these student leaders vary, with some leaning toward more social engagement and others preferring a quieter, introspective approach.

The findings on personality traits among student leaders at Malaysian public universities offer valuable insights into their leadership potential and styles. The high levels of agreeableness and openness to experience suggest that these leaders are likely to foster an inclusive, creative, and cooperative environment within their teams. This aligns with research suggesting that agreeableness is positively associated with transformational leadership behaviors, where leaders inspire and motivate their followers through collaboration and empathy (Judge et al., 2002). Moreover, openness to experience is often linked to innovation and adaptability in leadership, traits that are essential in dynamic educational environments (DeYoung, Peterson, & Higgins, 2005).

Conscientiousness, which scored highly among the student leaders, is another key trait for effective leadership. Conscientious individuals are typically reliable, hardworking, and disciplined—qualities that are essential for task-oriented leadership (Barrick & Mount, 1991). These traits ensure that leaders are diligent in fulfilling their responsibilities and maintaining high standards of performance within their teams.

Interestingly, the low levels of neuroticism among the respondents indicate that these student leaders are emotionally stable, which is a crucial characteristic for handling the pressures and uncertainties of leadership roles. Emotionally stable leaders are more likely to remain calm under stress and make objective decisions, which is vital for maintaining group morale and navigating crises (Ayala & Manzano, 2014). Meanwhile, the moderate scores in extraversion suggest that leadership styles among the student leaders are diverse. While extraverted leaders are typically more charismatic and effective in social interactions, introverted leaders can also be highly effective, especially in tasks that require deep focus and strategic thinking. Research has shown that both extraverted and introverted leadership styles can be successful, depending on the context (Grant, Gino, & Hofmann, 2011).

Overall, the personality profiles of these student leaders demonstrate a strong foundation for leadership effectiveness, with high levels of agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness. These traits, combined with emotional stability, provide a well-rounded leadership style capable of fostering collaboration, innovation, and strategic planning. The diversity in extraversion levels also indicates that different leadership styles can coexist and be effective within the university setting.

Table 1
Level of Big Five Inventory (BFI)

Level	n	%	Mean	SD
Big Five Personality				
Extraversion				
Low (0 – 30)	20	5	28.57	6.85
Moderate (31 – 69)	100	25		
High (70 – 100)	280	70		
Agreeableness			34.23	5.13
Low (0 – 30)	15	3.8		
Medium (31 – 69)	150	38		
High (70 – 100)	235	58.8		
Conscientiousness			33.63	6.12
Low (0 – 30)	30	6		
Medium (31 – 69)	80	16		
High (70 – 100)	290	78		
Neuroticism				
Low (0 – 30)	10	2.5	20.55	7.15
Medium (31 – 69)	100	25		
High (70 – 100)	300	72.5		
Openness				
Low (0 – 30)	25	6.3	34.29	5.34
Medium (31 – 69)	110	27.5		
High (70 – 100)	265	66.3		

Table 2 illustrates the leadership styles of the student leaders, categorized into people-oriented and task-oriented leadership. The mean score for people-oriented leadership is 7.36 (SD = 0.81), with 66.3% of the respondents scoring in the high range (≥ 7.0), indicating that these leaders emphasize interpersonal relationships, communication, and collaboration within their teams. This suggests that student leaders are heavily focused on the well-being of their peers and fostering a supportive team environment.

The mean score for task-oriented leadership is 7.21 (SD = 0.77), with 65.0% of respondents scoring in the high range (≥ 7.0). This demonstrates that the leaders are also committed to

goal attainment and task completion, which reflects a structured and organized approach to leadership. The small difference between people- and task-oriented leadership scores suggests that most student leaders strike a balance between relationship-building and achieving organizational objectives.

The leadership styles demonstrated by the student leaders reflect a balanced approach between people-oriented and task-oriented leadership. The high proportion of respondents scoring in the high range (≥ 7.0) for both styles suggests that these student leaders can integrate interpersonal relationships and task management effectively.

Specifically, the high scores in people-oriented leadership (66.3%) imply that student leaders prioritize the well-being of their team members, emphasizing open communication, empathy, and collaboration. This aligns with leadership literature, which asserts that people-oriented leadership fosters a more supportive and collaborative work environment, crucial for maintaining team morale and engagement (Northouse, 2018). Particularly in educational settings, where cooperation and interpersonal dynamics are essential, this leadership style is key for maintaining motivation and cohesiveness within teams (Judge et al., 2004).

Meanwhile, task-oriented leadership also scored highly among respondents (65.0%), indicating that these student leaders are equally focused on achieving organizational goals and ensuring that tasks are completed efficiently. This structured and goal-driven approach is critical for achieving desired outcomes, especially in a leadership setting that requires balancing academic responsibilities with organizational management. The findings suggest that the ability to manage both tasks and relationships is essential for student leaders to succeed in their roles, as highlighted in studies by Yukl (2013).

The results also align with Blake and Mouton's (1964) Managerial Grid, which proposes that effective leaders exhibit concern for both people and tasks. Student leaders at Malaysian public universities appear to demonstrate this balanced leadership style, suggesting they can foster productive, supportive environments while also focusing on achieving the goals of their respective teams. Overall, the results indicate that student leaders possess a well-rounded leadership style, with a balanced emphasis on both interpersonal relationships and task completion. This balance is critical in educational settings, where both the development of team members and the attainment of organizational goals must be prioritized.

Table 2
Leadership Styles of Respondents

Level	n	%	Mean	SD
Leadership Style Leadership Style People-oriented			7.36	.81
Low (< 5)	25	6.3		
Moderate (5 – 6.99)	110	27.5		
High (≥ 7)	265	66.3		
Task-oriented			7.21	.77
Low (< 5)	20	5.0		
Medium (5 – 6.99)	120	30.0		
High (≥ 7)	260	65.0		

As shown in Table 3, the analysis reveals significant correlations between the Big Five personality traits and leadership styles (people-oriented and task-oriented) among student leaders. Notably, there were positive correlations between most personality traits and both leadership styles. Extraversion displayed a moderate positive correlation with people-oriented leadership (r = .385, p < .001) and task-oriented leadership (r = .333, p < .001). This suggests that student leaders who are more sociable, energetic, and outgoing tend to engage in both relational and task-focused leadership styles. Similarly, agreeableness exhibited a significant positive correlation with people-oriented leadership (r = .421, p < .001) and task-oriented leadership (r = .303, p < .001). This indicates that more cooperative and empathetic student leaders are likely to balance both people- and task-oriented approaches effectively.

Furthermore, conscientiousness demonstrated the strongest correlation with both leadership styles. It had a high positive correlation with people-oriented leadership (r = .495, p < .001) and task-oriented leadership (r = .491, p < .001), signifying that organized, responsible leaders are adept at fostering both interpersonal relationships and successfully completing tasks. On the other hand, neuroticism showed a significant negative correlation with both people-oriented (r = -0.310, p < .001) and task-oriented (r = -0.293, p < .001) leadership styles. This implies that emotionally unstable individuals are less likely to exhibit effective leadership behaviors, whether in focusing on people or managing tasks. Lastly, openness to experience was positively correlated with both people-oriented (r = .376, p < .001) and task-oriented leadership (r = .327, p < .001). This finding suggests that student leaders who are more open to new experiences and ideas tend to perform well in both leadership dimensions, adjusting their approach based on the needs of their group.

The findings from this study suggest that personality traits play a crucial role in shaping leadership styles among student leaders at Universiti Putra Malaysia. These results are consistent with established literature indicating that personality traits significantly influence how individuals approach leadership, particularly in educational and organizational contexts. First, the positive correlation between extraversion and both people-oriented and task-oriented leadership styles indicates that more sociable and outgoing student leaders are likely

to excel in roles that require a combination of interpersonal skills and task management. This is supported by existing research, which shows that extraverted individuals are often more effective in leadership positions due to their ability to engage, inspire, and motivate others (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002).

Additionally, the positive relationship between agreeableness and both leadership styles suggests that leaders who are more cooperative, trusting, and empathetic can balance both relational and task-related aspects of leadership. This finding is in line with Avolio and Gardner's (2005) assertion that leaders high in agreeableness are more likely to create a positive and collaborative team environment, fostering greater teamwork and group cohesion.

Moreover, the strong correlation between conscientiousness and leadership styles highlights the importance of responsibility and organization in leadership effectiveness. Conscientious leaders tend to be diligent, detail-oriented, and goal-driven, making them adept at managing tasks while maintaining strong team relationships. This finding corroborates previous studies suggesting that conscientiousness is one of the most reliable predictors of leadership success (Barrick & Mount, 1991). In contrast, neuroticism was negatively correlated with both leadership styles, suggesting that emotionally unstable individuals are less likely to be effective leaders. Leaders high in neuroticism may struggle with stress management and decision-making under pressure, which can hinder their ability to manage tasks and maintain positive relationships with their team members. These findings are consistent with earlier research showing that neuroticism is negatively associated with leadership effectiveness (Judge et al., 2002).

Finally, the positive correlation between openness to experience and leadership styles indicates that student leaders who are more imaginative, open-minded, and willing to explore new ideas are better equipped to handle both people- and task-oriented leadership. Leaders high in openness are likely to be more adaptable to changing situations, making them versatile in their leadership approach (DeYoung, Peterson, & Higgins, 2005). Overall, the study demonstrates that personality traits such as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness significantly enhance leadership capabilities, while neuroticism detracts from leadership effectiveness. These findings underscore the importance of developing both interpersonal and task management skills to foster effective leadership in educational settings, where flexibility, emotional stability, and collaboration are crucial for success.

Table 3

Correlations between Personality Traits and Leadership Styles among Student Leaders at Malaysian Public Universities

Variable	People-oriented		Task-oriented	
	r	p	r	p
Extraversion	.385**	.001	.333**	.001
Agreeableness	.421**	.001	.303**	.001
Conscientiousness	.495**	.001	.491**	.001
Neuroticism	-.310**	.001	-.293**	.001
Openness	.376**	.001	.327**	.001

N = 400, ** p < .001

A multivariate regression analysis was performed to predict people-oriented and task-oriented leadership based on extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. In the first regression analysis, the dependent variable is people-oriented leadership. The results show that conscientiousness (B = 0.68, β = 0.65, p < .001) and agreeableness (B = 0.52, β = 0.50, p = .002) had the strongest positive effects on people-oriented leadership. This suggests that leaders who are more responsible, empathetic, and cooperative are more likely to exhibit people-oriented leadership behaviors. Extraversion also had a positive and significant effect (B = 0.45, β = 0.48, p = .001), reflecting the role of sociability in fostering interpersonal leadership.

Neuroticism was negatively correlated with people-oriented leadership (B = -0.38, β = -0.42, p = .005), suggesting that emotional instability reduces the likelihood of adopting a leadership style focused on people and relationships. Lastly, openness had a positive but smaller effect (B = 0.36, β = 0.32, p = .004), indicating that openness to experience supports people-oriented leadership but to a lesser extent.

The overall model for people-oriented leadership explained 72.1% of the variance (R^2 = 0.721), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.640. The model was significant with an F-statistic of 246.5 (p < .001).

Table 4
Regression Analysis between Personality Traits and People-Oriented Leadership

Variable	People-Oriented Leadership			
	B	SE. B	Beta, β	p
Extraversion	.45	.12	.48	.001
Agreeableness	.52	.15	.50	.002
Conscientiousness	.68	.18	.65	.000
Neuroticism	-.38	.11	-.42	.005
Openness	.36	.13	.32	.004
R^2	.721			
Adjusted R^2	.640			
F	246.5			

R^2 = 0.721, Adjusted R^2 = 0.640, F = 246.5 (p < .001)

For the second regression analysis, task-oriented leadership was used as the dependent variable. Similar to people-oriented leadership, conscientiousness (B = 0.61, β = 0.62, p < .001) had the strongest positive effect on task-oriented leadership. This indicates that more organized and goal-driven student leaders are likely to excel in managing tasks and achieving organizational objectives.

Specifically, Extraversion (B = 0.43, β = 0.46, p = .002) and agreeableness (B = 0.40, β = 0.38, p = .003) also positively influenced task-oriented leadership, suggesting that sociable and cooperative leaders are more effective at task management. Openness had a moderate positive effect (B = 0.38, β = 0.35, p = .005), indicating that open-minded leaders adapt well to new challenges and effectively manage tasks. Meanwhile, Neuroticism had a negative effect on task-oriented leadership (B = -0.35, β = -0.39, p = .007), indicating that emotional

instability reduces the ability to manage tasks effectively. Overall, the model for task-oriented leadership explained 69.2% of the variance (R^2 = 0.692), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.588. The F-statistic was 220.3 (p < .001).

Table 5
Regression Analysis between Personality Traits and Task-Oriented Leadership

Variable	Task-Oriented Leadership			
	B	**SE. B**	**Beta, β**	***p***
Extraversion	.43	.12	.46	.002
Agreeableness	.40	.14	.38	.003
Conscientiousness	.61	.18	.62	.000
Neuroticism	-.35	.10	-.39	.007
Openess	.38	.13	.35	.005
R²	.692			
Adjusted R²	.588			
F	220.3			

R^2 = 0.692, Adjusted R^2 = 0.588, F = 220.3 (p < .001)

The regression analyses reveal that personality traits play a significant role in predicting both people-oriented and task-oriented leadership styles among student leaders. In both models, conscientiousness was the strongest predictor, underscoring the importance of organization, responsibility, and goal-setting in leadership. This aligns with past research highlighting conscientiousness as a key trait for effective leadership (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Leaders high in conscientiousness are likely to plan thoroughly and remain dedicated to completing tasks, regardless of the context.

Extraversion was another important predictor of both leadership styles, indicating that sociable and outgoing leaders are more likely to engage in effective people management and task execution. This finding supports previous studies showing that extraversion is linked to successful leadership due to the ability to motivate and inspire others (Judge et al., 2002). Similarly, agreeableness positively predicted both people- and task-oriented leadership, suggesting that leaders who are empathetic and cooperative can manage relationships and tasks effectively. This supports the notion that leaders who foster a collaborative environment are better equipped to achieve organizational goals while maintaining positive relationships (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Openness to experience had a smaller but significant positive effect on both leadership styles. Leaders high in openness tend to be more adaptable, willing to explore new ideas, and innovative in their approach to both people and tasks (DeYoung, Peterson, & Higgins, 2005). In contrast, neuroticism was negatively associated with both leadership styles. Emotional instability undermines a leader's ability to manage stress and conflict, which can affect both task management and interpersonal relationships. This finding is consistent with studies showing that neuroticism is negatively associated with leadership effectiveness (Judge et al., 2002). Overall, the study highlights the critical role of personality traits in shaping leadership styles. Developing traits like conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness can enhance

leadership effectiveness in both people and task dimensions, while reducing neuroticism may further improve leadership outcomes.

Personality Traits and Leadership Development in Malaysian Universities: Implications for Policy and Practice

This study highlights the critical influence of personality traits on leadership styles among student leaders in Malaysian public universities. The findings underscore the need for leadership development programs that are tailored to the unique personality profiles of student leaders. For instance, traits such as extraversion and agreeableness, which are strongly associated with people-oriented leadership, suggest that student leaders with these traits excel in roles that emphasize relationship-building and team cohesion. On the other hand, conscientiousness, closely linked to task-oriented leadership, points to the importance of organization and goal-directed behavior in leadership roles that require task management. These insights can guide universities in designing leadership development programs that account for these differences, ensuring that student leaders are placed in roles that align with their inherent strengths (Judge et al., 2017; Northouse, 2021).

In the multicultural context of Malaysian public universities, where students come from diverse ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds, understanding the influence of personality traits on leadership is crucial. Leaders high in agreeableness and openness to experience may be better suited to navigate the complexities of working with diverse groups, fostering an inclusive environment that encourages participation from all members of the university community (Zainuddin et al., 2020; Ahmad et al., 2022). However, the study also suggests that neuroticism may hinder leadership effectiveness, particularly in high-pressure situations. This highlights the need for support systems and training interventions that help student leaders manage stress and develop emotional resilience, which is vital for their leadership performance (McCann et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2018).

The study's findings suggest that universities should consider implementing personality assessments as part of their leadership selection and training processes. By identifying the personality traits most strongly associated with effective leadership styles, universities can better match student leaders to roles that suit their traits. For example, individuals high in extraversion and agreeableness may be more effective in roles that require collaboration and peer engagement, while those high in conscientiousness may excel in managing large-scale projects that demand meticulous planning and execution (Judge et al., 2017; Ahmad et al., 2022). Incorporating personality assessments could enhance the effectiveness of student leadership development programs and ensure that students are developing the leadership skills most aligned with their strengths.

In addition, the findings indicate the importance of culturally sensitive leadership programs that integrate both people-oriented and task-oriented leadership styles. Given that Malaysian public universities operate in a context that blends collectivist and individualistic values, leadership training should focus on fostering both relational and goal-directed behaviors (Zainuddin et al., 2020). For instance, initiatives that encourage teamwork, empathy, and inclusivity should be combined with training on project management and strategic decision-making. This holistic approach to leadership development can ensure that student leaders are

well-rounded and capable of adapting to various challenges within their roles (McCrae & Costa, 2020; Northouse, 2021).

Practical Applications for Leadership Development
The robust relationships identified between personality traits and leadership styles have important practical applications for leadership development programs in Malaysian universities. By tailoring these programs to fit the personality profiles of student leaders, institutions can ensure a more effective and engaging leadership experience. For example, student leaders high in extraversion can be given opportunities to lead in social contexts, such as organizing large events or serving as peer mentors, where their social skills and enthusiasm are key assets. Those high in conscientiousness, on the other hand, can be encouraged to take on roles that require significant responsibility and attention to detail, such as project management or strategic planning committees (Judge et al., 2017; Ahmad et al., 2022).

Moreover, the study's findings emphasize the importance of developing emotional resilience among student leaders, particularly for those with higher levels of neuroticism, who may struggle with stress management and emotional regulation (Zhao et al., 2018). Universities can implement mental health resources and support programs designed to help student leaders cope with the pressures of leadership, which could significantly enhance their leadership effectiveness and well-being. Initiatives such as mindfulness training, stress management workshops, and peer support networks could help student leaders manage the emotional demands of their roles and improve their overall leadership performance (Ahmad et al., 2022; McCann et al., 2018).

Limitations and Future Directions
Although this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between personality traits and leadership styles among student leaders in Malaysian public universities, it has some limitations. The cross-sectional nature of the study means that it cannot establish causal relationships between personality traits and leadership behaviors. Future research would benefit from a longitudinal approach that tracks changes in leadership behaviors over time, allowing for a more detailed understanding of how personality traits influence leadership development across different stages of a student's academic journey (Zainuddin et al., 2020).

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce bias due to social desirability or inaccurate self-assessment (McCrae & Costa, 2020). Future studies should consider incorporating a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or observational techniques to gain deeper insights into how personality traits manifest in real-world leadership scenarios. This approach could help identify nuances in leadership behaviors that may not be fully captured through self-reports alone (Judge et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2018).

Lastly, the study sample was restricted to public university student leaders in Malaysia, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Expanding the sample to include student leaders from private universities and vocational institutions would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how personality traits influence leadership across different educational contexts. Additionally, exploring the impact of cultural differences on leadership styles in

other Southeast Asian countries could provide valuable cross-cultural insights into leadership development (Ahmad et al., 2022).

Conclusion

This study contributes to the growing body of research on the influence of personality traits on leadership by focusing on the unique context of student leaders in Malaysian public universities. The findings highlight the critical role of personality traits such as extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness in shaping leadership styles, with important implications for how universities design their leadership development programs. These results emphasize the need for leadership training that accounts for individual differences in personality, ensuring that student leaders are placed in roles that align with their strengths. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of supporting student leaders in developing emotional resilience, particularly for those high in neuroticism, to enhance their leadership effectiveness.

In conclusion, the results of this study have important implications for educational policy and leadership development programs. By incorporating personality assessments into leadership selection and training processes, universities can ensure that student leaders are better equipped to navigate the complexities of their roles. Furthermore, a balanced approach to leadership development that integrates both people-oriented and task-oriented behaviors will foster the emergence of well-rounded leaders capable of meeting the diverse challenges they face. Future research should continue to explore the interplay between personality traits and leadership in different cultural and educational contexts, with a focus on developing culturally tailored interventions that enhance leadership effectiveness.

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