

A Conceptual Framework: The Role of Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness in Leadership for Human Resource Crisis Management

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ABSTRACT

Human resource (HR) crisis management has become increasingly important as organizations face disruptions such as pandemics, economic instability, and organizational restructuring. Leadership traits, particularly those in the Big Five model, play a critical role in shaping responses to crises. However, limited research has examined how these traits influence HR crisis management. This paper addresses that gap by developing a conceptual framework linking three traits—extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness—to HR crisis management effectiveness. The framework suggests that extraversion enhances communication and motivation, conscientiousness supports structured decision-making and accountability, while agreeableness fosters trust and collaboration during uncertainty. Building on leadership and personality theories, the study proposes three hypotheses for future testing and outlines a quantitative methodology using validated personality and HR crisis management measures. The contribution of this paper is twofold: theoretically, it extends the application of personality traits to HR crisis contexts; practically, it highlights traits organizations may prioritize in leader development and selection. The article concludes with directions for future research, including cross-cultural testing of the model and examining additional Big Five traits.

Keywords— leadership traits, HR crisis management, SMEs, Big Five, conceptual framework.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations today operate in increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments, where crises such as pandemics, economic downturns, cyberattacks, and large-scale organizational restructuring occur with growing frequency. Human resource (HR) functions are often placed at the forefront of these crises, as they involve employee safety, well-being, and the continuity of organizational operations [1]. In such contexts, effective crisis management requires not only robust systems and procedures but also strong leadership capable of guiding employees through uncertainty. HR crisis management therefore extends beyond administrative processes, demanding leadership that is adaptive, empathetic, and strategically oriented [2].

Crisis management has been widely studied across disciplines such as management, psychology, and communication. Existing literature emphasizes that leadership effectiveness is central to mitigating crisis impact, preserving employee trust, and ensuring business continuity [3]. However, most studies on leadership during crises have focused on general organizational responses rather than HR-specific challenges. For instance, while research highlights the importance of decision-making speed and communication during crises, relatively few studies explore how leaders' underlying personality traits influence HR crisis management effectiveness [4]. This constitutes a gap in the literature, as HR crises often require more relationally sensitive responses than operational or financial crises.

The Big Five personality traits—extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness, and neuroticism—have long been recognized as robust predictors of behaviour and leadership outcomes [5]. Among these, extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness are particularly relevant for HR crisis contexts. Extraverted

leaders, characterized by assertiveness and sociability, are often better communicators and motivators, enabling them to reassure employees during periods of uncertainty [6]. Conscientious leaders demonstrate responsibility, organization, and goal orientation, traits that enhance structured crisis responses and accountability [7]. Agreeable leaders, who are cooperative and empathetic, foster trust and collaboration, thereby reducing resistance and conflict in crisis situations [8]. Despite the relevance of these traits, their integrative role in HR crisis management remains underexplored.

Another limitation of existing research is the lack of comprehensive conceptual frameworks connecting personality traits to HR crisis outcomes. While individual studies have examined specific traits in relation to leadership performance, most fail to theorize how such traits collectively influence HR crisis management effectiveness [9]. This absence restricts theoretical advancement and leaves practitioners without evidence-based models to guide leader selection and development for crisis readiness. Moreover, cultural and organizational differences are often overlooked, despite evidence suggesting that personality trait expression and leadership effectiveness vary across contexts [10].

To address these gaps, this paper develops a conceptual framework linking extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness to HR crisis management effectiveness. By synthesizing existing literature, the study proposes three hypotheses and outlines a methodology for future empirical testing. The framework highlights not only direct effects of traits on HR crisis management but also the potential role of communication, decision-making, and trust as underlying mechanisms. The contribution of this study is threefold. First, it enriches theoretical understanding by integrating personality psychology into HR crisis research. Second, it offers practical insights for organizations seeking to identify and train leaders with the traits most conducive to managing crises. Finally, it provides a foundation for future empirical studies that can test, refine, and expand the proposed model across cultural and organizational settings.

In summary, leadership remains a decisive factor in organizational resilience during crises, yet the role of personality traits in shaping HR crisis management effectiveness has been insufficiently theorized. This paper responds by offering a structured conceptual framework that clarifies these relationships, proposes hypotheses for empirical validation, and outlines methodological guidance for researchers. The following section reviews relevant literature on leadership, crisis management, and personality traits, forming the basis for the proposed framework.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Traits

Leadership has long been identified as a decisive factor in shaping crisis management outcomes. Crises often disrupt organizational routines, threaten stability, and undermine employee morale, placing leaders at the centre of crisis responses [1]. Human resource (HR) crises, in particular, require leaders to demonstrate sensitivity, adaptability, and resilience as they deal with employee well-being, psychological safety, and communication across the organization [2]. While much of the existing literature confirms the importance of leadership in organizational crises, it often emphasizes operational or financial recovery. Far less attention has been devoted to HR-specific crises, such as workforce downsizing, health emergencies, or employee unrest, where leadership traits may determine the effectiveness of crisis resolution [3]. This lack of focus represents a limitation in the literature and necessitates new conceptual approaches.

Personality has been widely studied as a determinant of leadership effectiveness. The Big Five personality framework—extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness, and neuroticism—has emerged as the most widely accepted model for understanding leadership behaviour [4]. Numerous studies have established links between personality traits and leadership outcomes, showing that personality shapes communication styles, decision-making, and interpersonal effectiveness [5]. However, findings are not always consistent. Some traits appear to be context dependent, with their impact varying across crisis and non-crisis settings [6]. Moreover, while many scholars have examined traits in isolation, relatively few have theorized how multiple traits interact to shape leadership effectiveness in HR crises. This gap calls for a more integrative framework.

Extraversion

Extraversion is often associated with assertiveness, sociability, and energy, making it a strong predictor of leadership emergence [7]. Extraverted leaders are typically more effective in motivating employees and maintaining morale, especially during times of uncertainty. In crisis contexts, extraversion enhances leaders' ability to communicate openly, provide reassurance, and project confidence [8]. For example, as shown in [9] found that extraversion positively influenced leadership effectiveness across organizational settings. However, not all studies are consistent. Excessive extraversion can sometimes manifest as dominance or overconfidence, which may hinder careful decision-making under pressure [10]. Moreover, introverted leaders, though less visible, have been shown to excel in listening and reflective decision-making, suggesting that extraversion is not universally superior [11]. This indicates the need for a more nuanced understanding of how extraversion operates in HR crises, where both communication and empathy are required.

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness leaders are characterized by dependability, responsibility, and organization. This trait is often linked to structured decision-making and consistent performance [12]. In HR crisis contexts, conscientiousness is particularly valuable because leaders must act systematically, follow procedures, and ensure accountability [13]. Research also shows that conscientious leaders contribute to trust and credibility within organizations [14]. However, the evidence is mixed. Some studies argue that excessive conscientiousness may lead to rigidity, reducing leaders' ability to adapt to rapidly changing crisis conditions [15]. In addition, while conscientiousness promotes discipline, it may limit creativity and innovation, which are sometimes necessary during crises [16]. These contradictions highlight the importance of examining conscientiousness not in isolation but as part of a broader framework that considers situational demands and complementary traits.

Agreeableness

Agreeable leaders are cooperative, empathetic, and supportive, qualities that foster collaboration and trust among employees. In HR crises, where emotions often run high, agreeableness helps leaders maintain positive relationships, reduce conflict, and encourage teamwork [17]. Kiarie et al. [18] found that agreeableness was associated with higher employee satisfaction in organizational contexts, suggesting its potential importance in crisis management. Nevertheless, agreeableness is not without limitations. Some studies suggest that highly agreeable leaders may avoid making difficult decisions or delivering unpopular messages, which are sometimes unavoidable during crises [19]. This implies that while agreeableness enhances relational effectiveness, it must be balanced with assertiveness to ensure timely and effective action. Furthermore, cultural contexts may shape how agreeableness is valued; for instance, in collectivist cultures, agreeableness may be more strongly associated with effective leadership than in individualist cultures [20].

Taken together, these three traits named extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness—emerge as particularly relevant to HR crisis management. Each has demonstrated positive associations with leadership effectiveness, yet each also carries potential drawbacks that depend on situational factors. The inconsistencies across studies underscore the importance of developing a conceptual framework that integrates these traits into a coherent model for HR crisis contexts. Existing literature has not adequately theorized how these traits collectively influence HR crisis management effectiveness, nor has it addressed the contextual moderators that may alter their impact. This paper responds by proposing a framework that positions extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness as independent variables influencing HR crisis management effectiveness, thereby addressing an important gap in both leadership and crisis management research.

Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis

Drawing upon the Big Five personality framework, this study proposes that extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness play significant roles in shaping leaders' ability to manage human resource crises effectively. Literature indicates that these traits influence leaders' communication, decision-making, and relational management during crises [6], [12], [17]. However, no integrative model has yet been developed to explain their

collective impact on HR crisis management. This paper addresses this gap by proposing a conceptual framework (Fig. 1) that links these traits with HR crisis management effectiveness.

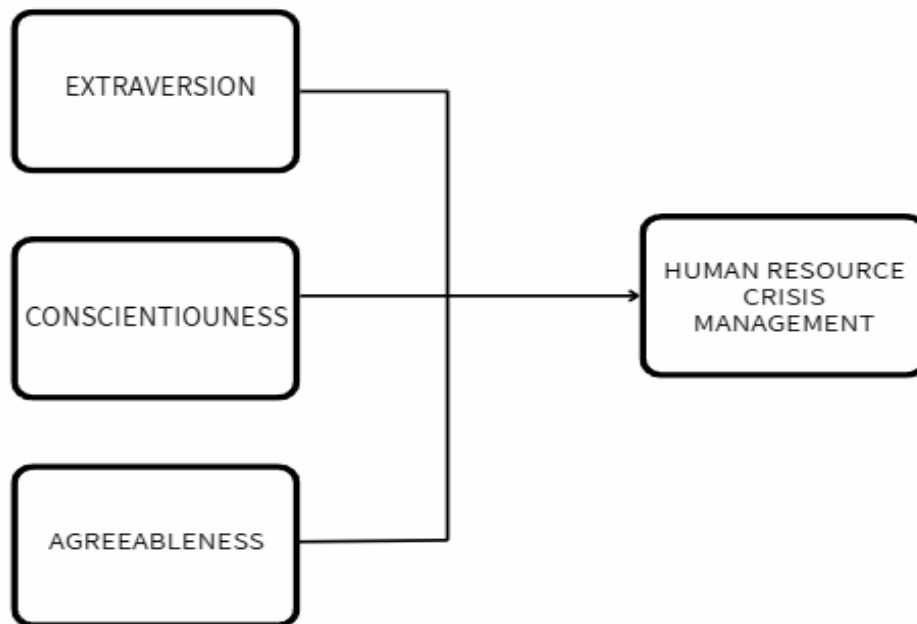


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework

The framework suggests that extraversion enhances leaders' ability to communicate openly and motivate employees under pressure; conscientiousness promotes structured planning, accountability, and systematic crisis responses; while agreeableness fosters trust, empathy, and collaboration during uncertainty. Together, these traits are expected to increase the overall effectiveness of HR crisis management.

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. H1: Extraversion has a significant positive relationship with HR crisis management effectiveness.
2. H2: Conscientiousness has a significant positive relationship with HR crisis management effectiveness.
3. H3: Agreeableness has a significant positive relationship with HR crisis management effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

This paper has proposed a conceptual framework that links three personality traits—extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness—to human resource (HR) crisis management effectiveness. By synthesizing literature on leadership, personality, and crisis management, the framework highlights how these traits influence leaders' ability to communicate, plan, and build trust in times of uncertainty. Three hypotheses were also formulated to guide future empirical research.

Theoretically, this paper extends the application of the Big Five traits into HR crisis contexts, which remain underexplored in existing studies. Practically, it offers insights for organizations to consider personality traits in leadership development and selection, particularly for crisis-sensitive positions. Although this is a conceptual study, it establishes a foundation for future research to test and refine the proposed model using quantitative approaches across different industries and cultures.

In short, the study emphasizes that effective HR crisis management relies not only on systems and procedures but also on the personal attributes of leaders. By highlighting the role of personality traits, this paper contributes to advancing both theory and practice in leadership and crisis management.

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