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Employee Engagement:
Impact of Leadership Personality Traits

ABSTRACT

Low levels of employee engagement in organizations have been recognized globally as one of the biggest challenges for workplaces, currently resulting in billon of dollars in lost productivity. Leaders and decision makers would be in a much stronger position in devising strategies to engage with this challenge, if they understand the associations between the antecedents and employee engagement. Leadership is related to engagement and personality drives leadership. Prior research suggests that leader's personality plays a major role in increasing or inhibiting employee's engagement. The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of leadership personality traits on employee engagement in the telecommunication companies (Telcos) of Pakistan. A quantitative, hypothesis testing, cross sectional, survey research method was used to achieve the objectives of this study. To select the sample for this study, a simple random sampling technique was utilized. Findings of this study add to the existing understanding of the impact of leadership personality traits on employee engagement, which will facilitate organizations in devising their employee engagement strategy to enhance overall effectiveness.

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Introduction

Leadership: Historical Perspective

Research on leadership has found that many individuals have tried to define leadership resulting in many different available definitions (Stogdill, 1974). Leadership has been conceptualized by some scholars as a trait or a behavior, while others examine leadership from an "information-processing perspective or relational standpoint" (Northouse, 2018, p. 32).

In a foundational work covering research from 1900 to 1990, a scholar analyzed materials on leadership, and found over 200 definitions. His research offers a concise record, how leadership has been defined (Rost, 1993).

In the 1930s, definitions of leadership emphasized "control and centralization" with a general premise of "domination" (Moore, 1927). To define leadership, a traits approach became popular, with an emerged perspective of viewing leadership as power instead of domination, and explicit personality traits of leaders and his/her interactions with the followers were also recognized (Northouse, 2018).

During the 1940s, research was focused on the "group approach", with initiative being characterized as the conduct of an individual while engaged with coordinating groups (Hemphill, 1949).

There were 3 main themes which emerged in terms of leadership definitions in the 1950s: continuation of "group theory", which frame leadership as what leaders carry out in groups; leadership as an affiliation which extends common objectives, that define leadership as per the actions of the leaders; and efficiency, which defines leadership's capability to control the group's overall success (Northouse, 2018).

In the 1960s, leadership was further defined as "acts by persons which influence other persons in a shared direction" (Seeman, 1960, p. 53). From the "group focus" emerged the "organizational behavior approach", in the 1970s, which examined leadership as "initiating and maintaining groups or organizations to accomplish group or organizational goals" (Rost, 1993, p. 59). In 1978, another definition of leadership emerged, "leadership is the reciprocal process of mobilizing by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers" (Smith & Cooper, 1994, p. 425)

Another way of understanding leadership is that it is getting things done through followers. "Influence", in the 1980s was a very commonly used word in leadership definitions. To differentiate management from leadership, researchers maintained that leadership is non-coercive "influence" (Northouse, 2018).

In 1978, leadership was described as a "transformational process", and "leadership" happens "when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (Smith & Cooper, 1994, p. 83).

Some define "leadership" as the focal point of "group processes", and from that viewpoint, the leader is at the core of group transformation. Other definitions conceive "leadership" from a "personality" viewpoint, whereby it is proposed that "leadership" is a blend of unique traits that some people have, and those traits facilitate them to influence others in the accomplishment of objectives (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Overall, leadership can be understood as a process, that involves "influence", normally happens in groups, and comprises mutual objectives. Keeping these dimensions in mind, we can define leadership as a process where one individual persuades other group members for the achievement of mutual objectives (Northouse, 2018).

Traits Approach and Leadership

The traits viewpoint proposes that some people have particular "innate or inborn" uniqueness which makes them leaders, and those traits separate them from "non-leaders" For instance, intellect and confidence are commonly cited traits of leadership (Bryman, 1992). The traits standpoint conceptualizes leadership as "a property or set of properties" owned in unstable degrees by various individuals, and as a process, it can be studied through behaviors of the leaders (Jago, 1982).

In the earlier part of the twentieth century, leadership "traits" were considered to be the main reason for certain individuals to be effective leaders. As a result, the theories like the "great man" theory emerged, and their center of attention was to discover the natural "traits" and uniqueness of effective leaders. Individuals were considered to have certain traits by birth, which made them better leaders than others. Keeping this in mind, later research focused on establishing the list of "traits" that separated "leaders from non-leaders" (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Jago, 1982).

Stogdill confronted the trait approach in the mid-20th century, raising concerns about the suppoaed "universality of leadership traits". He advocated that no steady "traits" distinguish, under various situations, leaders from non-leaders. He further argued that an individual may prove to be an effective leader under one situation but may not prove to be that effective in other situations. Thus, leadership was re-conceived as a connection among individuals in social circumstances. Individual traits associated with leadership were still considered significant, but studies argued that different situations or contexts also play an important role (Stogdill, 1974).

Stogdill examined the findings of one hundred and sixty-three studies and reported the role of traits in leadership. Earlier, he suggested that situational factors determine leadership effectiveness, but his second survey highlighted that both "leadership traits" and "situational factors" are important factors for leaders to be more effective. Thus, his findings provided support for the earlier "trait approach" that personality traits are an integral part of leadership (Stogdill, 1974).

Mann, carried out a comparable study which looked at about fourteen hundred results from research studies concerning "traits and leadership" in smaller groups, while placing less weight on the role of "situational factors" on leadership. He further advocated that to differentiate leaders from non-leaders, definite sets of traits can be used. His results also found that effective leaders share traits including intellect, "masculinity", change, governance, "extraversion, and conservatism" (Mann, 1959).

Other researchers proposed that "it is unequivocally clear that leaders are not like other people". Their research work suggested that 6 traits differentiate leaders from non-leaders, which are: drive, inspiration, honesty, self-confidence, "cognitive ability", and job know how. As per these findings, people can have these traits by birth, or they can also be learned, or both (Kirkpatick & Locke, 1991, p. 59). Zaccaro also supports the findings that leaders are more intelligent than the followers, and have sturdy vocal skills, emotional skills, and the way they think makes them an effective leader (Jacquart & Antonakis, 2015).

To sum up, the "trait approach" is active and sound. It started with highlighting and discovering the behavior of "great" individuals, then it moved to incorporate the role of various situations on leadership, and, now has moved again to reemphasize the significant role of "traits" in successful leadership (Northouse, 2018).

Research further provides an overall evaluation of leadership traits, theoretically enclosed around the "five-factor model of personality", and explains its relationship with leadership. Over the years, agreement has developed among scholars about the fundamental factors that structure any "personality" (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1987). Those factors known as "the Big Five, are neuroticism, extraversion (surgency), openness (intellect), agreeableness, and conscientiousness (dependability)"(Goldberg, 1990).

A meta-analysis of seventy eight research studies published from 1967 to 1998, which evaluated the associations among the Big Five personality factors and leadership, found a strong correlation between "the Big Five traits and leadership"(Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). Another study established that "conscientiousness" had the maximum relationship with overall job performance, and was also discovered to be the commonly

evaluated "trait" in "interviews" in a diversity of professions (Sackett & Walmsley, 2014).

The "trait approach" is backed by almost a century of research, which is also one of its greatest strengths, compared with many other theories which lack such intensity and extensiveness (Northouse, 2018).

The trait approach highlights that businesses would be more effective, if their employees in decision making roles, possess specific leadership traits. Therefore, many organizations commonly use "trait assessment" tools to select effective individuals, and the theory involved in this practice is that the selected right individuals will ultimately enhance overall performance of the organization (Fleeson & Jayawickreme, 2015).

Overall, the "trait approach" to leadership provides numerous benefits. First, it fits with the accepted thought that leaders are extraordinary individuals who lead followers. Second, this perspective is supported by a vast body of research in this area. Third, by keeping the spotlight on the leader, the trait approach presents a thorough perspective on the leader, in the leadership process. Above all, it provides certain standards against which people can assess their individual leadership attributes (Northouse, 2018).

Leadership and Employee Engagement

If individuals are recognized as having the right set of traits then it will become easier to discover leaders (Kiarie, Maru, & Cheruiyot, 2017a). Businesses now focus on their leader's abilities, their preferred leadership style as well as on the overall competencies of their senior leaders as there is confirmation that the personality of a leader influences the overall job effectiveness of workers (Carmeli, 2003; Castro & Martins, 2010; Kotze, 2004; Partington, 2002).

Employee engagement is "the genuine feelings of a worker toward his or her work output", with research conducted around the world showing positive link between "leadership and employee engagement" (Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006). In contrast, workers feel stressed if and when they have to work with a leader who is non-supportive and who has negative behaviors. As a result, this may cause reduced performance, more absenteeism and in worst cases employees leave their current employers in search off better working environments (Ribelin, 2003).

Research findings propose that even in a developed country like the United States of America employee engagement rate is very low, and employees feel disconnected and fatigued at work (Khan, 2013). Another report points out that "71 %" of millennial were "actively disengaged" at their jobs (Devendhiran & Wesley, 2017). Research findings also suggest that employee engagement can be increased with the improvement of close associations between leaders and their workers, and leader's personality has been found to increase or hamper this relationship. In short, employee

engagement is achieved through leaders and leaders are driven by their personality (Saks & Gruman, 2011).

To summarize the above discussion, the personality of a leader has been found to have a major association with enhancing employees engagement (Cano & Castillo, 2004). Therefore, businesses now concentrate more on the capabilities of their leaders. Research also confirms that leaders' personality traits influence on employee contentment and overall performance (Carmeli, 2003; Castro & Martins, 2010; Kotze, 2004; Partington, 2002).

Research Gap

Prior research has proposed that to conduct further research on "the role of leadership on employee engagement" (E. B. McCrae, 2019), would be an addition to the existing scholarly knowledge and understanding of leadership and employee engagement to enhance productivity through studies in different geographical settings, in diverse type of organizations (Green, 2019), and conclusions drawn along ethic, gender, age, and other demographic lines (Mason, 2019). Quantitative research on the study of employee engagement may be valuable, as organizations may find further causes of low levels of employee engagement and find alternative methods for maintaining an engaged workforce (Hutchins, 2019). Moreover, existing research has proposed that future researchers should study the impact **of** leaders' personalities on employee engagement (Luta, Powell, & Spence, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Low levels of "employee engagement" have been recognized globally as one of the major challenges for all type of businesses, and estimates suggest that low levels of employee engagement annually causing "billions of dollars in lost productivity" (Gallup, 2013; Lawler III, 2017). But, "despite growing awareness of the issue, low levels of engagement still remain a critical crisis. Addressing employee engagement requires a comprehensive approach that acknowledges both individual and organizational factors as antecedents" (S. B. d. A. Meskelis, 2017, p. 8).

Prior research suggest that effective leaders possess specific "personality traits" (Judge et al., 2002). While research has indicated leadership is key to developing "employee engagement", there is still a gap regarding which leadership traits or behaviors influence employee engagement (Shuck & Herd, 2012; Soieb, Othman, & D'Silva, 2013).

Even if research suggests that leaders contribute to employee engagement (Shuck & Herd, 2012; Soieb, Othman, & D'Silva, 2013), questions remains as to what makes good leaders. Businesses also search for individuals with the right personality traits, because they consider them as assets who can enhance their overall organizational performance (Northouse, 2018).

One potential solution to enhance employee engagement is to select the right individuals with specific personality traits as leaders who then have overall positive impact on the organization (Welbourne, 2011). In this regards, if employees are recognized with the right traits then it would become easier to spot leaders (Kiarie et al., 2017a). Also, contemporary researchers are urging other scholars to research leadership in greater detail to enhance employee engagement (Luta et al., 2019; E. B. McCrae, 2019).

Thus, in-depth knowledge of leadership personality traits may be a predictive tool which could increase "employee engagement" and overall business performance.

Overall, the central objective of this research was "to examine the impact of leadership personality traits on employee engagement in the telecommunications (Telcos) sector of Pakistan".

Research Question (RQ)

- What is the impact of leadership personality traits of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness on employee engagement in the telecommunication (Telco) sector of Pakistan?

Literature Review

Personality Assessment and Leadership

Personality is defined as "a construct that makes a person's behavior, thoughts and feelings reasonably consistent, but at the same time differentiates individuals" (Siemon & Wessels, 2022)

Prior research refers personality as "psychological qualities that contribute to an individual's enduring and distinctive patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaving" (Leão & Gomes, 2022). Also, "personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psycho-physical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment" (Morfaki & Skotis, 2022).

An understanding of personality is essential for self-development. Improved familiarity with oneself and others, in terms of motivators, strengths and weaknesses, and thinking as well as working styles, contributes to effective self-management and to being a useful team member. The more a person understands about his or her own personality and the personalities of others, the better the individual's understanding of how others react to him or her, how they recognize him or her, and how they respond to his or her personality and style of working (Osborne, 2012).

Irrespective of the types of organization, leaders' personality directly influence employees' performance (Gilbert, 1999). and the employees' job engagement can greatly affect overall organizational output (Dessler, 1980). Leaders could considerably impact the engagement of their staff, and facilitate more favorable results (Ekman, 2013). As a result, industries as well as human resources professionals must accept the value of using leadership personality profiles to comprehend organizational performance.

What drives and motivates individuals, personality traits provide much understanding (Botha & Sibeko, 2022), and The Big Five traits are commonly used to study how individual differences may relate to different outcomes (Erdös, Wilt, & Tichelmann, 2022). Many organizations use personality assessment tools to predict individual behavior under different circumstances and it helps them in better utilizing every employee to their best possible potential (King, 2012).

Employee Engagement: The role of Leadership

The concept of "personal engagement" was proposed in 1990 (Kahn, 1990), and despite recognizing low levels of employee engagement as one of the global challenges, not much has been done to fix to date. For example, the "2009 MacLeod Report" presented to the government of United Kingdom highlights the significance of this issue, but little progress has been witnessed since the report in improving levels of employee engagement (Tomlinson, 2010). Another study proposes that "engaged employees" are 20% more expected to perform better than their non-engaged contemporaries, and 80% more likely to stay with their current employers (Lockwood, 2006).

Business organizations have always been challenged to develop strategic advantages and enhance productivity to stay competitive in the marketplace, and the overall employee performance causes success or failure of an organization (Kahn, 1990). Research on leader's impact, employee job satisfaction, and productivity suggested that employees need motivation to enhance performance (Woehl, 2011) and employees engage at work "based on the theory of reciprocity, or "social exchange" when their financial and socio-emotional requirements are met (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Research also suggests that engaged employees are a competitive advantage for an organization (Hoon Song, Kolb, Hee Lee, & Kyoung Kim, 2012), and are normally less stressed and enjoy better overall health, therefore also resulting in low insurance costs for their employers (Valentin, Valentin, & Nafukho, 2015). A major challenge for an organization to keep their workers engaged is through understanding their needs and wants and providing them such an environment where they can grow and as a result they become an effective part of their teams (Glavas & Piderit, 2009). At the same time, engaged employees feel empowered, motivated and learn to perform their work in better ways (Yalabik, Popaitoon, Chowne, & Rayton,

2013). Such employees are also found to be much happier at their jobs and to demonstrate better commitment towards the organization's success (Bhatnagar & Biswas, 2010). Keeping in mind the positive effects of engaged employees, as demonstrated by existing research, organizations have started taking this issue more seriously (Whitman, Van Rooy, & Viswesvaran, 2010). In particular, effective leaders try their best to understand and to increase their employee's engagement levels (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010).

Research studies from around the world have found a positive link between "leadership and employee engagement" (Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006). Indeed, every business is looking for best available engaged human resources, because they apply more efforts and work hard to attain overall business goals (Blakely, Andrews, & Fuller, 2003; Dormann & Zapf, 2001). This is important in a context in which overall business performance depends on employee's engagement (Shaukat, Senin, & Ahmed, 2012).

Other studies demonstrate the impact that employee engagement (EE) has on worker's intentions to stay or depart from their current workplace. When effective employees do leave it proves very costly for the respective organization and greatly effects their overall performance (Huselid, 1995). Also, effective "commitment and EE" have been found to be among the most important indicators of worker's decision to remain or to abandon their current employment (Shuck, Reio Jr, & Rocco, 2011).

Overall, the working environment promotes employee's engagement (Macey, Schneider, Barbera, & Young, 2009), and can lead to numerous "behavioral outcomes" which depend on the circumstances (Rothbard & Patil, 2011). Organizations take care of "engaged employees" as priceless assets because they add to elevated organizational performance, overall effectiveness, and also provide "competitive advantage" to the organization against their competitors (Devendhiran & Wesley, 2017).

Theoretical Rationale
- **Trait Theory**

The trait approach developed from the "Great Man theory", which proposes that some individuals are by birth leaders and not made (Carlyle & Cobden-Sanderson, 1907). The vital proposition of trait theory promotes effective leaders display certain, or a pattern of innate traits. Multiple meta-analytic research findings support associations between traits and leader effectiveness, perceptions, and emergence. Creativity, personality, and interpersonal skills associate with efficiency (Hoffman, Woehr, Maldagen-Youngjohn, & Lyons, 2011; Lux, 2011; O'Reilly III, Doerr, Caldwell, & Chatman, 2014). Traits persuade behaviors leading individuals to do things synchronized with the trait. The emphasis of trait theory remains on the individuality of a person and the "inner cognitive and motivational processes that influence behavior" (Freud, 2015).

Unlike inherent leadership theories, which suggest traits symbolize perceptual labels, trait theory suggests that great leaders show certain characteristics and/or trait profiles, and the three key points from trait theory findings to date are:
1. There are constantly identified leader traits,
2. Effects are improved when the trait is relevant, and
3. Traits persuade behaviors to a greater degree.

Several research findings also support the trait approach, suggesting certain personalities or profiles influence leadership (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano, & Dennison, 2003; Colbert, Judge, Choi, & Wang, 2012).

From the personality theories, the "Five Factor Model" with "the Big Five Inventory" tool is determined to be more suitable theory for this research. One of the greatest strengths of using the Big Five taxonomy is that it's more inclusive tool and can confine at broad levels of abstraction the commonalities among most of the accessible systems of personality traits, providing an integrative descriptive model for research (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). Furthermore, the Big Five Model has excellent cultural compatibility and good applicability (Zhao, 2009). Also, as derived from the "trait theory", "The Big Five Model" encompasses "the five personality traits" of a person: "extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience" (R. R. McCrae & John, 1992).

Leadership Personality Traits:
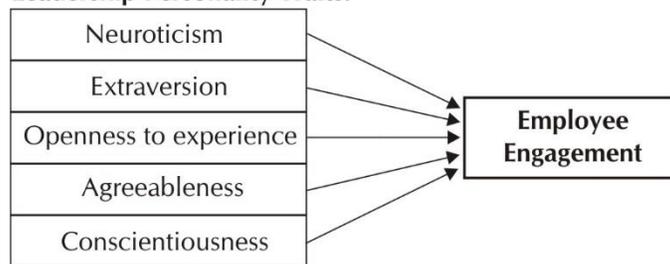
Hypotheses:

This research tested the following hypotheses:

H1: Leadership personality trait neuroticism has negative impact on employee engagement in the Telco sector of Pakistan

H2: Leadership personality trait extraversion has positive impact on employee engagement in the Telco sector of Pakistan

H3: Leadership personality trait openness to experience has positive impact on employee engagement in the Telco sector of Pakistan

H4: Leadership personality trait agreeableness has positive impact on employee engagement in the Telco sector of Pakistan

H5: Leadership personality trait conscientiousness has positive impact on employee engagement in the Telco sector of Pakistan

Research Methodology

Philosophical Stance of the Study

Through a positivist approach research questions or hypotheses can be generated, and tested based on data collection and analysis. These research can also be replicated by other researchers to arrive at the same results (Sahay, 2016). According to positivism, "the world exists independently of our knowledge of it", and positivists can make causal statements predicting causal relationships about various social phenomena (Marsh & Stoker, 1995).

In this study, the philosophy of positivism was used because "the purpose of this study was to identify the impact of leadership personality traits on employee engagement".

Research Design

To accomplish the objectives of a research project, a research design provides a thorough plan which is used by researchers to fit between the "research questions, methods, and components" (Yin, 2018). The research design also prepares a researcher about the "methods" to be utilized for data collection and for the analysis procedure for this collected data, while keeping in mind the research objectives as well as accessibility of personnel, time and resources (Kothari, 2004).

Quantitative researchers study "causal relationships" among "variables" by utilizing "statistical and numerical analysis" to validate or "reject" a hypothesis (Brick, Velicer, Redding, Rossi, & Prochaska, 2016). Research scholars employ "quantitative estimates to generalize" the findings and to offer equivalent "statistical data" to carry further studies (Barnham, 2015).

The quantitative research approach was applied for this study because the focus was to respond to questions about differences or relations among variables to predict, clarify, and control the phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Quantitative research uses specific questions for measuring and exploring differences or associations between variables. By explaining the association among variables, the researcher is interested in determining whether one or more variables might manipulate another (Creswell, 2002).

This quantitative, hypothesis testing research explored the impact of leadership personality traits on employee engagement. Survey research method was utilized as a research design to study the identified problem. Survey method was used to ask same set of questions on a specific topic from chosen sample to measure individual's approaches, principles, and beliefs on their previous and current behavior. Normally, in a particular survey, researchers measure variables or test the hypothesis. Also, survey method is utilized to learn the attitude of audience towards a particular trend, their buying behavior or any program preferences (Danesi, 2014; Neuman & Robson, 2007).

Population

"Population can be defined as, a group or class of subjects, variables, concepts or phenomena" (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013).

Telecommunications (Telco) is a vital sector in Pakistan, and provides a stimulus to the economy. For Pakistan's economic development, employment generation, and the digitization of various segments of the society like education, health, agriculture, small and medium enterprises, and manufacturing, the telecommunications sector plays a significant role (PTA, 2018).

As of June 2018, the mobile subscribers figure in Pakistan stood at 150 Million people, off which the telecommunications company Jazz provided services to 36%, Telenor 29%, Zong 21%, and UFone 14%. Total tele-density stood at 74% and the broadband subscribers of 58 Million with broadband penetration of 28.3%. "The telecom sector contributed Rs. 147.23 Billion to the national exchequer, and the total telecom sector revenue during Fiscal Year 2017-18 was Rs. 488.7 Billion. The total investment made in the telecom sector in the year 2017-18 was US$ 670 Million of which Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow was US$ 247 Million" (PTA, 2018, p. x).

Initial research also highlighted that the Telco sector is facing employee engagement as one of their biggest challenges. Total of 8,076 employees in these Telco companies i.e. Telco1 (2875), Telco2 (1347), Telco3 (2416), and Telco4 (1438) was the survey population of this study (On their specific request, actual names of these organizations have not been mentioned).

Sample

A sample is a subset or subgroup of members chosen from the total population. Through the study of the selected sample, the investigator can draw findings and can generalize them to the studied population, subject to the sampling process (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Current employees working at 3 Telcos in Pakistan was the sample for this study.

Sample Size

The sample size for this research was selected through Cochran's method (Cochran, 1977), and consisted of 367 permanent employees working at 3 telcos out of a total of 8,076 currently working at 4 Telcos of Pakistan, at the time at which this study was undertaken.

Units of analysis refer to observe or measure the variable and to what or whom being studied (Babbie, 2012; Riff, Lacy, & Fico, 2014). A single respondent of the questionnaire was taken as a unit of analysis. For this research work, primary data was used by the researcher, and the survey questionnaire was utilized to collect this data.

Sampling Technique
"Sampling" is the method of selecting an adequate "number of elements" from the total "population", which enables to "generalize findings" to the studied population. The probability sampling design provides the same possibility to all the "elements" in the "population" for selection as a sample. In the "unrestricted probability sampling" design, more generally known as "simple random sampling", all elements in the total population have a known and equal chance of being chosen as a subject (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

In this study, "probability sampling i.e. simple random sampling technique" was utilized for data collection from the employees from 3 Telcos. Questionnaire was distributed to employees through the respective human resources departments, while utilizing Google forms.

Research Instrument
In this study the following instrument was used for primary data collection:
- "Big Five Inventory" (BFI) (John & Srivastava, 1999) for the independent variable i.e. leadership personality traits
- "Utrecht Work Engagement Scale" (UWES) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003), for the dependent variable i.e. Employee Engagement

Data Analysis
SPSS (v26) application software was used to run different tests. Reliability of collected data was checked through Cronbach's Alpha values, and to check the magnitude as well as the direction of the relationship among the study variables, Pearson's correlation analysis was used. Further, to explore the impact of independent variables (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness) on dependent variable (Employee Engagement), regression analysis was utilized.

Results

This section provides analytical results of this study. After data collection it was thoroughly analyzed for errors, coded and was entered in SPSS v26 for further analysis. Data was analyzed for its reliability and validity, and hypothesis testing for the proposed model of this study was conducted.

Reliability Analysis
Reliability which indicates the internal consistency of responses and Cronbach's Alpha value of greater than .70 is considered an acceptable level of reliability (Ursachi, Horodnic, & Zait, 2015).

The following table highlights the Cronbach Alpha values of this study's variables:

Table 1
Cronbach alpha values

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha value	No. of items
Neuroticism	.73	*8*
Extraversion	.82	8
Openness to Experience	.85	10
Agreeableness	.82	9
Conscientiousness	.85	9
Employee Engagement	.97	*17*

The Cronbach Alpha values, as shown in **Table 1**, are within acceptable range i.e. >.70, so we can conclude that data set is reliable and we can perform further data analysis.

Correlation Analysis

To check the associations among variables, the Pearson's r correlation was utilized. This shows the magnitude as well as the direction of the relationship among the variables (Cooper, Schindler, & Sun, 2006). Correlations between .0 to .2 are considered very week, .2 to .4 weak, .4 to .6 moderate, .6 to .8 strong, and .8 to 1.0 very strong (Salkind & Rainwater, 2006).

Table 2
Correlations

Variables	N	E	O	A	C	EE
Neuroticism (N)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Extraversion (E)	-.761**	-	-	-	-	-
Openness to Experience (O)	-.730**	.872**	-	-	-	-
Agreeableness (A)	-.757**	.854**	.820**	-	-	-
Conscientiousness (C)	-.721**	.869**	.793**	.828**	-	-
Employee Engagement (EE)	-.675**	.817**	.792**	.681**	.659**	-
Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	347	347	347	347	347	347

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

Correlation analysis results
Table 2 shows the correlations for the study variables. Neuroticism (N) is negatively associated with employee engagement (EE) i.e. (r = -.675, p<.01). In contrast, (E) Extraversion (r = .817, p<.01), (O) Openness to Experience (r=.792, p<.01), (A) Agreeableness (r = .681, p<.01), (C) Conscientiousness (r = .659, p<.01), are positively associated with Employee Engagement.

Regression Analysis

To explore the impact of the leadership personality traits of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness on Employee Engagement, regression analysis was conducted. The following **Table 3** highlights the findings of this regression analysis:

Table 3
Regression Analysis

R	R²	Model	Summary Adj. R²	Std. error of the estimates
.804	.647		.642	.592
		ANOVA		
Sum of squares		Df	Mean Sqs.	F	Sig.
Regression	219.334	5	42.867	125.096	.000
Residual	119.615	341	.351		
Total	**338.949**	**346**			

Note: dependent variable: employee engagement; predictors: (constant), neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness

Linear regression results leadership personality traits and employee engagement

The results presented in **Table 3** show the model to be statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ level and that 64 percent (adjusted R^2 = .642) of the variance in employee engagement can be explained by the leadership personality traits of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.

The following **Table 4** shows the impact of independent variables (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) on dependent variable (employee engagement):

Table 4
Relationship among variables

VARIABLES	Beta	R²	Sig.
		.650	
Neuroticism	-.262		.000
Extraversion	.017	-	.813
Openness to Experience	.810	-	.000
Agreeableness	-.015	-	.867
Conscientiousness	.001	-	.990

As per above **Table 4**, Neuroticism has a significant negative impact (β = -.262, p>.01) on employee's engagement (EE) and it supports this study's H1: Leadership personality trait neuroticism has negative impact on "employee engagement" in the Telco sector of Pakistan.

Extraversion has been found to have a positive impact (β = .017) on employee's engagement, which does support H2: Leadership personality trait extraversion has positive impact on "employee engagement" in the Telco sector of Pakistan.

Openness to experience has a positive significant impact (β = .810) on employee's engagement and this finding also supports H3: Leadership personality trait openness to experience has positive impact on "employee engagement" in the Telco sector of Pakistan.

Agreeableness has been found to have negative impact (β = -.015) on employee's engagement and it does not support this study's H4: Leadership personality trait agreeableness has positive impact on employee engagement in the Telco sector of Pakistan.

Conscientiousness has been found to have positive impact (β = .001) on employee's engagement, which does support this study's H5: Leadership personality trait conscientiousness has positive impact on "employee engagement" in the Telco sector of Pakistan.

Discussion

Overview

Low levels of employee engagement has been recognized as a global challenge and is currently causing billions of dollars in lost productivity (Gallup, 2013; Lawler III, 2017). Despite this awareness much still needs to be done.

Leaders are one of the main causes for the success or failure of an organization and therefore one of the most researched topic in business literature. To understand leadership, the traits approach, is utilized by many researchers (Northouse, 2018). Specific list of traits have been identified through extensive research that can be used to separate the leaders from non-leaders (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Jago, 1982). The traits approach also suggests that businesses would be more effective, if their employees in decision making roles, possess specific leadership personality traits (Fleeson & Jayawickreme, 2015).

Better employee engagement can be achieved though leaders and leaders are basically driven by their personalities (Saks & Gruman, 2011). In this context, contemporary researchers are urging other scholars to research leadership in further detail in order to enhance employee engagement (Luta et al., 2019; E. B. McCrae, 2019).

Overall, keeping in mind the above facts, the purpose of this research was "to explore the impact of leadership personality traits on employee engagement in the Telco sector of Pakistan".

The following section discusses the main findings of this study on each research question and also presents the main conclusions along with the limitations and areas for future research.

Discussion

RQ: What is the impact of leadership personality traits of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness on employee engagement in the telecommunication (Telco) sector of Pakistan?

Neuroticism was found to have a significant negative impact (β = -.262, p > .01) on employee's engagement (EE). This finding is consistent with results reported by other studies (Kiarie, Maru, & Cheruiyot, 2017b; Mhlanga, Mjoli, & Chamisa, 2019; Sulea, Van Beek, Sarbescu, Virga, & Schaufeli, 2015).

Extraversion was found to have a positive impact (β = .017) on employee's engagement, but was not statistically significant. This is not consistent with the findings reported by other studies, where extraversion was found to have significant positive relationship (Kiarie et al., 2017b; Mhlanga et al., 2019; Sulea et al., 2015).

One of the reasons for this inconsistent finding could be that even introverted leaders can have a significant impact on the overall employee's performance as well as on organizational success (Collins, 2001). Another study compared the extraverted and introverted leaders and their impact on employee's performance and reported that success of extraverted or introverted leaders mostly depends on the group of employees they lead. The same study also found that introverted leaders instead of extraverted leaders achieve better results from the group of "proactive" employees they lead (Grant, Gino, & Hofmann, 2011).

As per the findings of this study, leader's openness to experience was found to have a positive significant impact (β = .810) on employee's engagement, which is consistent with the results reported by another research study (Kiarie et al., 2017a).

Leader's agreeableness personality trait was found to have negative non-significant impact (β = -.015) on employee's engagement. This finding is consistent with the results reported by another study (Judge et al., 2002; S. Meskelis & Whittington, 2020), but inconsistent with the findings of other studies (Kiarie et al., 2017b; Mhlanga et al., 2019; Sulea et al., 2015).

One of the reasons for this inconsistent finding could be the specific sample of employees and their industry, different sample in a different industry might show different results. The other reason could be the type of organization studied for this research, where leader's agreeableness might not effect much on employee's engagement. There is still a room for further studies in other types of organizational settings.

Conscientiousness was found to have positive but non-significant impact (β = .001) on employee's engagement, which is not consistent with the findings reported as significant (Kiarie et al., 2017b; Mhlanga et al., 2019; Sulea et al., 2015). This inconsistency in findings could be due to the specific sample size of this study.

Conclusion

Based on the survey undertaken for this study, neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were each found to be significantly correlated with employee engagement. Nevertheless, in a regression analysis, only neuroticism and openness to experience remained significantly related to employee's engagement.

Overall, the results of this study found the studied model as statistically significant with 64 percent (adjusted R^2 = .642) of the variance in employee engagement being explained by the leadership personality traits of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.

The findings of this study highlight that leader's "individual characteristics" (personality traits) influence employee's engagement. Organizations can benefit, if their leaders exercise these traits, and can also promote organizational cultures where such traits are valued.

Thus, research is ongoing around the world to search and find strategies to enhance employee's engagement (Jena & Pradhan, 2017). Leaders and decision makers in different sectors can be in a better position in enhancing, and developing employee engagement strategies if they understand the associations among the antecedents and employee engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

Different studies conducted around the world found positive relationship among leadership and employee job engagement (Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006). That is one of the main reasons why organizations want engaged employees, which add more towards the achievement of organizational objectives (Blakely et al., 2003; Dormann & Zapf, 2001; Shaukat et al., 2012).

This study has the potential to enhance the limited literature on the impact of leadership personality traits on employee engagement. It might raise more awareness about the impact of leaders' personality on overall

organizational performance. The current research will also increase the understanding about employee engagement in the Telecommunication sector of Pakistan, and provide important understanding to management seeking to improve employee engagement levels. The current study will also offer a basis for future research potential into leadership personality and employee engagement in various other sectors of Pakistan.

Limitations and directions for future research
Like all research studies, this study has some limitations. The first limitation is the specific sample, based on the telco industry. Future research can study samples in other industries to further extend understandings based on findings of this study.

The second limitation is that there could be mediators and moderators, which could influence the model proposed in this research. Future research must consider the role of different mediators as well as moderators. For example, the role of organizational culture, education level of leaders, trust, and organizational citizenship behavior can be explored in future studies.

Third limitation of this study is that leader's personality traits were measured through the perceptions of employees, which could include their biasness, prior grudges, and faking. Therefore, future studies might adopt mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) to validate current findings and to check the impact of personality traits styles on employee engagement.

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Descriptive Statistics

	Frequency	%	N
Organization			
Telco 1	107	30.8	
Telco 2	153	44.1	
Telco 3	87	25.1	347
Department			
Operations	128	36.9	
Customer Services	140	40.3	
Sales	79	22.8	347
Gender			
Male	198	57.1	
Female	149	42.9	347
Age			
Below 30 years old	137	39.5	
31-40 years old	170	49	
41-50 years old	39	11.2	347
Above 50 years old	1	3	
How long you have worked in this org.?	167	48.1	
1-3 years	137	39.5	347
4-6 years	43	12.4	
More than 6 years			