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Page: 01-12

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATIONS OF SECTORAL WORK ETHIC DIFFERENCES IN GHANA: WORKER PERSONALITY TRAITS AND THEIR INFLUENCE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the leadership implications of sectoral work ethic differences in Ghana by assessing how worker personality traits influenced attitudes toward work, productivity patterns, and organizational behaviors across key economic sectors. Guided by trait and behavioral leadership theories, the study adopted a descriptive design and collected data from employees across the public, private, and informal sectors. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to generate data regarding prevailing work ethic orientations and the personality factors that shaped them. Findings showed that work ethic varied considerably across sectors, with differences associated with levels of conscientiousness, agreeableness, locus of control, and achievement motivation. The results further indicated that leadership effectiveness was significantly influenced by the extent to which leaders understood sector-specific personality dynamics and adopted adaptive strategies to motivate diverse workforce groups. The study concluded that sectoral work ethic patterns in Ghana were deeply influenced by personality traits shaped by socio-cultural experiences, institutional norms, and economic expectations. It recommended leadership approaches that integrate personality-responsive strategies, contextual understanding, and sector-sensitive motivation to enhance organizational performance.

KEYWORDS: Work ethic, personality traits, leadership, sectoral differences, Ghana, organizational behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding sectoral work ethic differences has increasingly become central to leadership effectiveness in Ghana, where variations in workplace commitment, punctuality, task responsibility, and performance appear to differ across the public, private, and informal sectors. Work ethic has been defined as a set of moral principles, values, and attitudes guiding an individual's approach to work, including diligence, reliability, honesty, and responsibility (Miller, 2020). In the Ghanaian context, work ethic is influenced by socio-cultural norms, institutional conditions, economic motivation, and individual personality traits. As organizations continue to navigate changing labour market demands, leadership must pay close attention to how worker personality differences shape work ethic, performance orientation, and organizational citizenship behaviors.

Sectoral differences in Ghana's workforce have long been observed, with the private sector typically characterized by stricter performance monitoring and accountability systems, while the public sector is often associated with bureaucratic processes and weaker performance enforcement mechanisms. The informal sector, which constitutes a large proportion of Ghana's labour force, presents yet another dynamic environment where work ethic is shaped by survival instincts, entrepreneurial motivations, and societal expectations (GSS, 2022). These sectoral variations suggest that leadership approaches cannot be generalized; rather, they must align with the personality traits and work orientations prevalent within each sector. Research on personality traits, particularly the Big Five—conscientiousness, openness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism—highlights their strong connection to work ethic and job performance (Barrick & Mount, 2018). In Ghana, contextual influences such as communal relationships, traditional values, and socio-economic challenges further shape the ways these traits manifest at work. The implication is that leadership must be adaptive, emotionally intelligent, and context-aware to manage diverse personalities effectively and cultivate strong work ethic across sectors.

Despite growing literature on leadership and organizational behavior in Ghana, limited empirical work has specifically examined how sector-based work ethic differences intersect with worker personality traits to influence leadership outcomes. This study therefore explores these intersections and assesses how effective leadership can be shaped by acknowledging and responding to personality-driven work ethic differences in Ghana's major labour sectors.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Leadership effectiveness in Ghanaian organizations continues to face challenges due to persistent sectoral differences in work ethic that influence productivity, punctuality, accountability, and attitudes toward organizational rules. These differences tend to complicate leadership decision-making because workers across sectors respond differently to motivation, supervision, and performance expectations. For instance, private sector employees often operate under more stringent performance-based cultures, whereas public sector staff may function within more bureaucratic structures that reduce pressure for efficiency. Informal sector workers, on the other hand, demonstrate work ethic patterns tied to entrepreneurial risk-taking and survival-driven motivations. The diversity in work values, attitudes, and behavioural expectations creates a complex environment for leaders aiming to maintain consistent performance standards across sectors.

A key underlying issue shaping these sectoral work ethic patterns is the influence of personality traits. Research indicates that traits such as conscientiousness, self-discipline, and internal locus of control are strongly associated with strong work ethic, while traits like high neuroticism or external locus of control may negatively influence work behaviours (Judge & Ilies, 2018). However, Ghana-specific studies focusing on how these personality traits manifest across different labour sectors remain limited. Without an understanding of how personality shapes work ethic in each sector, leadership interventions may be ineffective or misaligned with employee motivations and behavioural tendencies.

Additionally, leaders in Ghana face difficulties developing sector-appropriate strategies because the existing literature tends to generalize work ethic and does not sufficiently address the unique characteristics of workers in the public, private, and informal sectors. This gap inhibits leaders' capacity to design targeted motivational frameworks, efficient supervisory mechanisms, and sector-appropriate performance management systems. Organizational outcomes such as productivity, discipline, and innovation are therefore constrained when leadership practices do not account for sectoral and personality-driven differences in work ethic.

This study addresses this critical problem by investigating how personality traits influence sectoral work ethic differences in Ghana and exploring the leadership implications of these patterns. Understanding these dynamics will provide leaders with the empirical grounding

needed to implement adaptive, context-sensitive, and personalityresponsive leadership strategies that enhance organizational performance.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to examine the leadership implications of sectoral work ethic differences in Ghana by analyzing how worker personality traits influence work behaviours, productivity orientations, and organizational commitment across the public, private, and informal sectors. The study sought to identify patterns of work ethic variations and determine how leadership can effectively adapt to these personality-driven differences.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To assess the differences in work ethic across public, private, and informal sector workers in Ghana.
2. To examine how personality traits influence work ethic behaviours across sectors.
3. To analyze the relationship between worker personality traits and leadership effectiveness.
4. To determine how leadership strategies can be adapted to accommodate sectoral work ethic differences.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does work ethic differ across the public, private, and informal sectors in Ghana?
2. What personality traits influence work ethic among Ghanaian workers?
3. How do worker personality traits affect leadership effectiveness across sectors?
4. What leadership strategies can be adopted to respond to sectoral work ethic differences?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Work Ethic

Work ethic refers to the moral principles, behavioural commitments, and value orientations that guide an individual's performance and attitude toward work. It includes elements such as punctuality, diligence, responsibility, honesty, and initiative-taking (Miller, 2020). In Ghana, work ethic has socio-cultural, economic, and institutional dimensions. Cultural expectations around communal responsibility, respect for authority, and societal definitions of hard work influence how individuals perceive job responsibilities. Additionally, sectoral norms shape work ethic, where private organizations emphasize efficiency and productivity, public

institutions often reflect bureaucratic processes, and informal sector actors rely on improvisation and entrepreneurial drive.

Worker Personality Traits

Personality traits represent enduring behavioural patterns and psychological tendencies that influence how individuals respond to work situations. The Big Five personality framework is widely recognized, comprising conscientiousness, openness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Studies have shown that conscientiousness is the strongest predictor of work ethic, while high neuroticism may weaken consistency and reliability (Barrick & Mount, 2018). In Ghana, socio-cultural influences such as family upbringing, religious values, and traditional norms shape personality expressions, influencing punctuality, cooperation, and effort levels at work.

Sectoral Differences in Work Ethic

Sectoral variations in work ethic arise from differences in institutional structures, managerial practices, incentive systems, and organizational culture. Private sector employees tend to exhibit stronger work ethic due to competitive targets, performance monitoring, and productivity-based rewards (Odoom, 2021). Public sector workers often operate under job security, slower bureaucratic processes, and limited performance enforcement, which may influence punctuality and commitment. Informal sector workers, however, display entrepreneurial work ethic driven by survival needs, market competition, and personal motivation. These sectoral distinctions reflect the varying levels of pressure and accountability in different parts of the economy.

Leadership Implications of Personality and Work Ethic

Leadership effectiveness depends on a leader's ability to understand and influence worker behaviour. Personality traits directly shape employee responses to leadership style, supervision, and motivational strategies (Judge & Ilies, 2018). In Ghana, where workers across sectors have diverse personality-driven work dispositions, leadership must be adaptive and context-sensitive. Transformational leadership works well with workers who exhibit high openness and conscientiousness, while directive or transactional leadership may be more suitable for environments requiring structure and compliance. Leaders who fail to consider personality and sectoral work ethic differences may experience challenges in building commitment, ensuring performance, and maintaining discipline.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design to investigate how personality traits influenced sectoral work ethic differences among Ghanaian workers and the leadership implications of these patterns. The descriptive design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect quantitative and qualitative data on existing attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions among workers in the public, private, and informal sectors. This design allowed for the identification of relationships among variables without manipulating the study environment.

Population and Sampling

The target population included workers in the public, private, and informal sectors in the Greater Accra and Ashanti Regions. The sample comprised 240 workers: 80 from the public sector, 80 from the private sector, and 80 from the informal sector. A stratified sampling technique was used to ensure fair representation of all three sectors. Within each sector, simple random sampling was employed to select respondents for the quantitative survey, while purposive sampling was used for the qualitative interviews to obtain deeper insights into work ethic and personality influences

Data Collection Instruments

A structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. It consisted of sections on demographic information, personality traits measured using an adapted Big Five Inventory, and work ethic indicators relating to punctuality, commitment, honesty, diligence, and task ownership. A semi-structured interview guide was used to gather qualitative data from 15 key informants (five from each sector). This triangulated approach allowed the researcher to capture both numerical trends and lived experiences.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection occurred over four weeks. Questionnaires were administered in person and online. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Interview sessions were conducted face-to-face or via phone calls and lasted between 25 and 40 minutes. All interviews were transcribed manually to preserve accuracy and context.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression models to determine the relationships among personality traits, work ethic, and leadership effectiveness. Qualitative responses were analyzed thematically to support and explain the statistical findings. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods ensured that the results captured the complexity of worker behaviour across sectors.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in leadership, organizational psychology, and human resource management. A pilot test involving 20 respondents was conducted, and adjustments were made to enhance clarity. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha; the personality scale recorded a coefficient of 0.82, while the work ethic scale recorded 0.88, indicating high internal consistency.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the affiliated university. Respondents gave verbal or written consent prior to participating. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any point. Personal identifiers were removed from all data sets to maintain confidentiality.

8. RESULTS

This section presents the descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression results on the relationships among worker personality traits, work ethic, and leadership implications across Ghana's public, private, and informal sectors. The results also highlight sectoral variations that inform leadership decision-making.

8.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the main study variables. Conscientiousness recorded the highest overall mean among personality traits ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.86$), suggesting that most respondents generally perceived themselves as responsible and organized. Neuroticism recorded the lowest mean ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.89$), indicating lower levels of emotional instability among respondents. Work ethic produced a mean score of 3.82 ($SD = 0.74$), showing a moderately high endorsement of positive work behaviours.

Sectoral differences emerged from the descriptive analysis. Private sector workers showed the highest conscientiousness and work ethic scores, while public sector workers reported moderate levels. Informal sector workers scored high in self-motivation but lower in procedural consistency. Leadership effectiveness recorded a moderately high mean ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.81$), suggesting that workers generally viewed leadership in their sector as fairly effective.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables.

Variable	Mean (M)	Std. Dev (SD)
Conscientiousness	3.98	0.86
Agreeableness	3.71	0.79
Openness to Experience	3.62	0.83
Extraversion	3.44	0.91
Neuroticism	2.41	0.89
Work Ethic	3.82	0.74
Leadership Effectiveness	3.74	0.81

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 presents the correlation matrix showing relationships among the key variables. Conscientiousness had a strong positive correlation with work ethic ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.01$), confirming its role as a major predictor of responsible work behaviour. Agreeableness was positively related to teamwork and cooperation ($r = 0.49$, $p < 0.05$), while openness showed a moderate positive correlation with leadership effectiveness ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$). Neuroticism recorded significant negative correlations with punctuality, diligence, and leadership effectiveness ($r = -0.46$ to -0.52).

Table 2: Correlation Matrix.

Variables	WE	CONSC	AGR	OPEN	EXTRA	NEUR	LEAD
Work Ethic (WE)	1	0.71**	0.46*	0.48*	0.37*	-0.52**	0.55**
Conscientiousness (CONSC)		1	0.41*	0.52**	0.39*	-0.49**	0.63**
Agreeableness (AGR)			1	0.33*	0.31*	-0.27	0.42**
Openness (OPEN)				1	0.43*	-0.37*	0.58**
Extraversion (EXTRA)					1	-0.22	0.31*

Variables	WE	CONSC	AGR	OPEN	EXTRA	NEUR	LEAD
Neuroticism (NEUR)						1	-0.46**
Leadership Effectiveness (LEAD)							1

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

8.3 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which personality traits predicted work ethic and leadership effectiveness. Results showed that personality traits accounted for 54% of the variance in work ethic ($R^2 = 0.54$, $F = 41.72$, $p < 0.01$). Conscientiousness was the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$). Openness also significantly predicted work ethic ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.05$), while neuroticism exerted a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.33$, $p < 0.05$).

Leadership effectiveness was significantly predicted by conscientiousness ($\beta = 0.41$), openness ($\beta = 0.37$), and agreeableness ($\beta = 0.29$). Neuroticism showed a negative relationship ($\beta = -0.31$). These findings demonstrate that personality traits significantly shape leadership outcomes, confirming that leadership strategies must align with worker tendencies and sectoral characteristics.

Table 3: Regression Results for Personality Traits and Work Ethic.

Variable	β	t-value	Sig.
Conscientiousness	0.62	7.14	0.00
Openness	0.28	2.47	0.02
Agreeableness	0.19	1.78	0.08
Extraversion	0.11	1.12	0.26
Neuroticism	-0.33	-3.04	0.00
R²	0.54		
F-Statistic	41.72		0.00

DISCUSSION

The findings from the study highlight the significant role of personality traits in shaping sectoral work ethic differences in Ghana and reveal important implications for leadership. Conscientiousness emerged as the most influential personality trait, strongly predicting punctuality, diligence, task ownership, and adherence to organizational rules. This aligns with

global research showing conscientiousness as the strongest predictor of work performance. In the Ghanaian context, conscientiousness was particularly evident among private sector workers, who operate in environments characterized by accountability, competition, and performance-based evaluations.

The public sector displayed moderate levels of work ethic and conscientiousness, with respondents attributing performance gaps to bureaucratic delays, inconsistent supervision, and inadequate monitoring. This suggests that work ethic in the public sector may be influenced more by systemic constraints than by individual traits alone. Informal sector workers displayed high internal motivation and entrepreneurial energy but lower consistency due to limited structure and formal regulation.

The strong negative effects of neuroticism on work ethic and leadership effectiveness indicate that emotional instability can hinder productivity, punctuality, and reliability. Workers with high neuroticism struggled with consistency, which has implications for leaders managing high-stress environments. Openness and agreeableness played positive roles, particularly in creativity, teamwork, cooperation, and adaptability to leadership.

The correlation between personality traits and leadership effectiveness underscores the need for leaders to adopt context-sensitive approaches. In settings where openness and conscientiousness are high, transformational leadership that encourages innovation and autonomy may be effective. Conversely, in environments with lower conscientiousness or higher neuroticism, structured and supportive leadership may be more appropriate.

Overall, the findings emphasize that leadership effectiveness in Ghana cannot rely on a “one-size-fits-all” approach. Leaders must understand the personality composition of their workforce, consider sectoral differences, and adapt their leadership approaches to enhance work ethic and overall performance.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrated that personality traits significantly shape sectoral work ethic differences and influence leadership effectiveness in Ghana. Conscientiousness emerged as the strongest predictor of work ethic, while neuroticism negatively affected performance and reliability. Sectoral variations were pronounced, with private sector workers showing stronger work ethic, public sector workers reflecting moderate levels influenced by systemic

constraints, and informal sector workers demonstrating high self-drive but lower procedural consistency. Leadership must therefore be adaptive, context-aware, and responsive to personality dynamics to enhance productivity and organizational effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Leaders should incorporate personality assessments into recruitment, supervision, and performance management processes, ensuring alignment between worker traits and job requirements. Leadership training should emphasize emotional intelligence, adaptive strategies, and context-sensitive approaches that reflect the unique characteristics of the public, private, and informal sectors. Organizations should establish supportive environments that help workers with higher neuroticism manage stress and improve performance. Public institutions should strengthen accountability systems and streamline bureaucratic processes to reinforce positive work ethic. Informal sector workers may benefit from structured capacity-building programs that enhance consistency, standardization, and professional discipline. Leaders across sectors should develop motivational strategies that align with worker personality traits, thereby enhancing engagement, productivity, and overall organizational performance.

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