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In the Eyes of the Beholder: Leaders' Personality and Courageous Followership

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ABSTRACT

The literature on leadership through the lens of followership does not provide empirical evidence of leaders' personalities and their perception of subordinates' courageous followership behaviors. This paper explores the connection between personality and courageous followership. The study sample is 190 school leaders working in the top private schools in Pakistan as regular employees. The responses collected through simple random sampling techniques and Stata 16 software are used for data analysis. Data analysis indicates that leaders having extraversion, agreeableness, consciousness, and openness to intellectual/imagination personality traits perceive their subordinates' behaviors as courageous followers, whereas the neuroticism personality trait resulted in a negative perception of courageous followership behaviors among Pakistani school leaders. This paper is prominent research in a new direction of leadership through followership. This study recommends emphasizing the development of positive personality traits in leaders so that they can transform their subordinates into courageous followers which is an antidote to toxic leadership.

KEYWORDS

personality, big five traits, followership, courageous followership, proactive

Introduction

Good leadership and followership are important for organizational success. Leadership along with followership reflect the behaviors, actions, or roles that individuals play in their respective positions in organizations. The role of followership and followers has recently been considered a crucial component of leadership research (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). In addition to leadership, focusing on followership helps to explain the complex relational interaction among leader-followers to understand more about organizational dynamics and complexities (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2018). Considering the changing environment and lessons learned owing to COVID-19, we need to develop leadership and followership equally to deal with the complexities and challenges of today's organizational problems (Uhl-Bien, 2021). Management theories also need revisions and should refocus by adding an ethical dimension in research (Ghoshal, 2005) that places all responsibility on leaders for the failure or success of organizations, which is not a viable solution. Individuals in academia should also see their role as proactive and responsible as well as accountable members of society. The seven important skills needed for the 21st century include critical thinking, integrity, resilience, adaptability, empathy, optimism, and being proactive (Prince, 2019). A proactive role demands individuals, to be honest, committed, and proactive in their respective roles whether a leader or followers.

Education is the key builder of society, and the education sector plays a key role in the development of society. According to the Global Competitiveness Index 2020 (Schwab et al., 2020), institutions play a pivotal role in a country's development. Among institutions, the education sector is considered the fifth pillar for efficiency enhancers of a country. In Pakistan Vision 2025 document (Ministry of Planning, Development & Reform, 2014), the Government of Pakistan (GOP) set a target of increasing public expenditure on education from 0.2% of the gross domestic product (GDP) to 1.4 % by 2025. Despite all the efforts, Pakistan is ranked 110 out of 141 nations in the world on the global competitive index (Schwab et al., 2020), where institutions are ranked 107 among 141 countries in terms of the performance of institutions. One of the reasons for its low ranking is the high level of corruption and lack of transparency, which is also reflected in its low rank on the transparency indicator where Pakistan is ranked 101. To improve transparency, organizations need to promote transparent leadership and encourage effective and honest followership as this helps in promoting a culture of transparency.

We have toxic triangles in our institutions, which is a combination of unethical leaders, conformer followers, and an environment of corruption (Padilla et al., 2007). Employee silence is one of the mediating factors in the development of toxic leadership and low organizational performance (Saqib & Arif, 2017). The deference to authority on unethical standards along with fighting against a toxic work environment remains a matter of concern in an Asian country like Pakistan (Anjum et al., 2018). Particularly, in Asian cultures, such as in Pakistan, a leader's authority is many folds, and it is the leadership style that develops followership behavior. It is necessary to identify the dimension of a leader's personality that promotes a proactive type of followership.

Courageous followership is a type of behavior that develops the capacity of the manager to speak up against unethical practices and make them partners with leaders (Chaleff, 2009). This proactive behavior not only challenges unethical practices, but it also makes individuals support their leaders by assuming responsibility, serving the leader, and taking part in the transformation. Research on courageous followership in Pakistan found a positive impact on exemplary leadership practices among public and private sector managers (Ghias et al., 2018). Moreover, in the Pakistani context, Islamic work ethics also value the individual behavior of courageous followership in non-profit organizations (Ghias et al., 2020). We need to inculcate and promote courageous followership behavior among institutions to get rid of toxic triangles and overcome inefficiencies to compete with world countries.

Further, evidence from Pakistan (Sharar & Nawab, 2020) suggests that schools must encourage the development of leadership traits among young teachers by encouraging and developing their leadership skills. Leaders should be aware of the behaviors of their followers and to ensure that they attain the maximum benefit, leaders must be trained to appreciate the proactive behavior of followers. Organizations need to encourage the proactive behavior of their employees and develop leaders who can promote and encourage proactive behavior (McCormick et al., 2019). Courageous followership is a form of proactive behavior in followership roles that inculcate the development of exemplary leadership (Ghias et al., 2018) and develop individuals to be transformational leaders (Green, 2018). Personality studies taking a research approach to followers' personality traits on the perception of their leadership style (Hetland et al., 2008) found that avoidant leadership is preferred by subordinates having personality traits of openness and agreeableness.

D.R. Kudek (2018) studied two dimensions of followership styles, independent thinking, and active engagement (Kelley, 1992) as outcomes of the big five personality traits. To measure personality, the researcher used the mini-international personality. The item pool developed by Donnellan et al. (2006) was in a non-student population. The results of the study concluded that four personality traits, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, have a positive relation with followership dimensions of independent thinking and active engagement, while neuroticism is negatively associated. This study also recommended seeing leaders' perceptions of their followers in different cultural and organizational contexts.

From the cultural perspective, Arun and Gedik (2020) analyzed the role of Asian values on leadership styles and leaders' roles and found that Asian cultural values have a different application to Mintzberg's leadership roles. This research study will be meaningful from different cultural perspectives as leaders' perception of subordinates' followership is still untapped in leadership and followership research. Therefore, literature reasoning also supports undertaking this study in Pakistani private schools to research leaders' personalities and their perceptions of subordinates' courageous followership behavior. The United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015) adopted by 193 member countries in September 2015 also represents a renewed focus on inclusive, lifelong, and equitable education. Based on statistics mentioned in *Annual Status of Education*

Report 2019 (ASER Pakistan, 2020), 62% of children are attending private schools which are preferred over government schools. It is pertinent to understand the leader's perception of followership behavior as they are inculcating values and ethics to future generations. If such a culture is present in school leadership, it will be transformed for future generations.

Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

Courageous Followership

The history of followership behavior is as primitive as human civilization; leadership and followership are processes co-created for social exchange. Management scholars in the twentieth century recognized the independent role of followers (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Earlier leadership theories of Great Man, where leaders were considered heroes, have evolved with the growing changes in the social-economic paradigm recommending a shared form of leadership (Northouse, 2019). The followership research is still in its infancy; the word search on Web of Science (WOS) by the authors resulted in 171 articles on "followership" and 25,585 articles on "leadership" that reflect the minimum focus of research on the followership construct. Seminal work on followership in the management domain was introduced by Kelley (1988) in the article *In Praise of Followers* in which he highlighted that role of followers in an organization deserves equal importance as leadership. Kelley introduced the followership styles grounded on two behavioral dimensions—*independent and dependent thinking*, and *active/passive engagement of followers*. The followers adopt five different styles; *passive, alienated, conformist, pragmatic, and collaborative or star followers*.

While extending the work of star followers, Chaleff (2009), a management practitioner, introduced the concept of *courageous followership*—a proactive form of followership with dimensions of *assuming responsibility, serving the leader, taking part in organizational transformation, challenging the wrongdoings of leaders, and undertaking actions such that the follower is sufficiently capable to leave the organization due to unethical practices of the leaders to take moral action*. The work of followership is still in its infancy as most of the followership models in management are developed by practitioners and theory building needs more empirical investigations (Northouse, 2019). The overarching theory of followership posits to analyze the role of a leader's personal behavior as an outcome of their follower's behavior, as leadership is a process where leaders and followers interact to complete the leadership process. (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). This study will answer the question that what type of personality of leader encourages proactive courageous followership behavior.

Big Five Personality Traits

Personality traits can be defined as the persistent, cognitive behavior that individuals exhibit with consistency in different situations. Parks-Leduc et al. (2015) define personality traits as behavioral components that differentiate it from other individuals. Many research concepts and theories have been studied over time, but the big five personality traits are the most widely researched, which focus on the researcher's

understanding of the behavior and attitudes of individuals in an organization (Lynn, 2021). The big five personality traits can be differentiated into five personality traits, namely extroversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness to experience such as intellectual/imagination (John & Robins, 2021). The extroversion personality is related to sociability and high energy, while agreeableness is related to compassion, trust, and respect toward others. Conscientiousness personality is related to productivity and responsible behavior, while openness is related to imaginative and open-mindedness towards experiential life, whereas neuroticism is related to negative emotions such as anxiety and depression (John & Robins, 2021, p. 42).

The research on followers' personality traits found that the big five personality traits are related to followers' perceptions of transformational and transactional leadership (Hetland et al., 2008). The personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience are positively related to authentic leadership and negatively associated with neuroticism in a dyadic time-lagged study among students in Pakistan (Shahzad et al., 2021). Many research studies have examined personality with leadership traits or leader's personality impact on job outcomes of employees (Ishaq et al., 2021; Sameer & Priyadarshi, 2021) but the research on big five personality traits do not answer the relationship of leader's personality and their perception of the subordinate's courageous followership behavior. In this regard, the following section will build a theoretical understanding of the relation of a leader's perception of subordinates' followership with leaders' personalities.

Extraversion and Courageous Followership

Extraversion personality traits are associated with individuals' attitudes towards energy assertiveness and adaptive nature to change. Extravert leaders tend to be more sociable and encourage team performance which is highly related to subordinates' attitudes, such as organizational commitment (Simic et al., 2017) while playing a positive role. Extraversion leaders show a high level of leader-follower exchange relationship (Dust et al., 2021), which means that extraversion leaders like to promote individuals in their group having traits of confidence, dedication, and proactive behavior. Courageous followership is also related to a high level of organizational commitment (Dixon, 2003) and inculcates exemplary leadership (Ghias et al., 2018). This aspect that extraversion leaders might like courageous followership behavior of their subordinates leads to the following hypothesis:

H₁: Extraversion leaders' personality is positively related to the leaders' perception of subordinates' courageous followership.

Agreeableness and Courageous Followership

Agreeable traits of personality are related to accepting, conforming, and nurturing attributes (Northouse, 2019). Individuals with agreeableness traits are warm and honest, and never tend to affront their subordinates (Zhang et al., 2021). Even leaders with agreeableness traits are perceived as authentic leaders by their subordinates (Shahzad et al., 2021). Individuals with agreeableness traits are kind, trusting, and welcoming to subordinate action which helps to boost the morale of followers (Ishaq

et al., 2021). Courageous followership is an authentic form of behavior that naturally works for the common purpose of the organization and leader's success (Chaleff, 2009) and such behavior might be liked by agreeableness leaders.

H₂: Agreeableness leaders' personality is positively related to leaders' perception of subordinate courageous followership.

Consciousness and Courageous Followership

The consciousness personality trait of leaders is related to the behavior of being careful, ambitious, and practical (Northouse, 2019). Leaders high on this trait are self-disciplined and honor integrity and values at the workplace (Kalshoven et al., 2011), follow the organizational rules and regulations and enhance positive leadership behavior among individuals. Research literature reflects that consciousness personality traits are associated with positive leadership and organizational attitudes of employees, while courageous followership is nurtured when leaders are open and allow their subordinates to access them (Chaleff, 2009). The consciousness trait is also related to the active engagement of followers (Kudek, 2018). Leaders with this trait will likely have positive perceptions and likeness for courageous followership behavior of their subordinates.

H₃: Consciousness of leaders' personality is positively related to leaders' perception of subordinate courageous followership.

Neuroticism and Courageous Followership

The neuroticism trait is the tendency of individuals to exhibit behaviors of anxiety, low self-esteem, and hostility (Northouse, 2019). Individuals with neuroticism traits cannot handle difficult situations (Djurkovic et al., 2006) which lead to more anxiety and low patience levels, and increased emotional distress. The neurotic behavior of individuals will lead to distressful behaviors in the workplace and individuals will not be ready and comfortable to interact with other members of the organization (Friedman, 2019). Leaders with neuroticism are more likely to exhibit destructive leadership behavior, such as abusive supervision (Ryan et al., 2021). Abusive supervision enhances employee silence behavior due to the fear of low-performance evaluation by leaders and takes the lead towards more neurotic employees (De Clercq et al., 2021). On the other hand, a courageous follower is a form of proactive behavior, an antinode to destructive leadership (Chaleff, 2009), and promotes the positive side of leadership (Green, 2018). Therefore, considering the above literature discourse, we can propose that neuroticism among leaders is a negative trait that is less likely to appreciate the courageous followership behaviors of subordinates.

H₄: Neuroticism of leaders' personality is negatively related to leaders' perception of subordinate courageous followership.

Openness to Intellect/Imagination

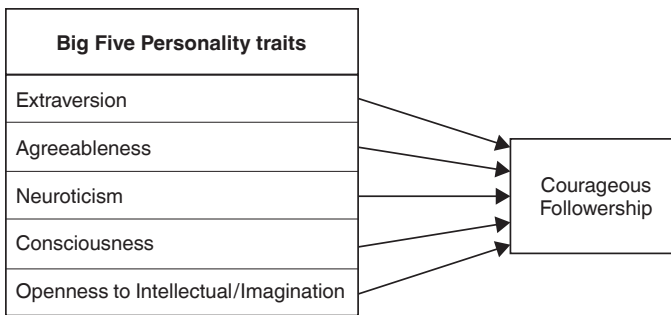
Individuals with openness to intellect/imagination traits of personality exhibit creativity, innovation, and curiosity about new ideas (Northouse, 2019). It develops the capacity of individuals to seek feedback from subordinates (Shahzad et al., 2021) and they show a higher tendency to enhance social relationships and

development activities for organizational change. Individuals with openness to intellect and imagination will support subordinates’ behaviors of courageous followership as this behavior also leads to organizational change and improvements (Chaleff, 2009). Furthermore, openness to intellect and imagination is also related to the independent thinking of followers (Kudek, 2018). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H₅: Openness to intellect /imagination leaders’ personality is positively related to leaders’ perception of subordinate courageous followership.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework: Personality and Courageous Followership



Note. Source: Developed by Authors.

Methodology

The study is descriptive while considering leaders in private sector schools as units of analysis. The data collection is cross-sectional with minimal interferences of researchers in a non-contrived environment.

Sample

The population constitutes private schools in Islamabad. A list of private schools was obtained from the Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority Islamabad¹ (PEIRA-ICT). A total of 337 schools are registered in PEIRA-ICT. The selection of schools and school heads was based on research criteria. Firstly, schools with a less rigid hierarchy and a framework of open communication and critical thinking were selected. Secondly, schools with international certifications and standards with a higher student enrollment were included in the research study. Lastly, the schools willing to participate and available for research due to COVID-19 constraints and the availability of staff were included in the study. Totally, 30 schools were included in the study. Each school administration was contacted personally by researchers through small interactive sessions. The list of school heads and coordinators in

¹ Registered Institutes. (n.d.). Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority ICT-PEIRA. <https://peira.gov.pk/institutes/registered.php>

leadership positions was collected from the administration. In each school, there are 10 key leadership positions including school head and coordinators who supervise five or more teachers in their daily activities and decision-making. Totally, 300 questionnaires, 10 in each school, were distributed through simple random sampling techniques. Totally, 242 questionnaires were returned with an 80% response rate. After data screening, a total of 190 responses were included for analysis in the Stata 16 software (StataCorp, 2019).

Instrument

The study used a courageous followership questionnaire developed by Dixon (2003) with 19 items scale rated by leaders about their subordinates' courageous followership behavior. This scale is widely used in research to study courageous followership behavior among faculty members with an overall reliability $\alpha = .74$ (Schwab, 2017). This instrument is used in a variety of sectors, such as military organizations (Green, 2018) in Pakistan to measure managers' followership and leadership behaviors (Ghias et al., 2018) with $\alpha = .78$. It is also used in measuring the relationship between Islamic work ethics and project managers in NGOs (Ghias et al., 2020). This instrument is also used in studying students' courageous followership behavior and its impact on authentic leadership among university students in Pakistan (Zafar et al., 2021). In this study, the reliability of courageous followership $\alpha = .83$ shows consistency with previous research.

A mini scale of personality with 20 items has been used to measure the leader's personality. The scale was developed by Donnellan et al. (2006) from an international personality pool of 50 items through rigorous tests. The properties of the scale were further validated by R. E. Baldasaro and colleagues (2013) considering 15,701 young individuals and the reliability of the instrument was within the acceptable range. The mini-scale of personality has been widely used in different populations with acceptable scale validity and consistency (Perry et al., 2020). To check the reliability of the instrument, data were processed in Stata software, where items with reverse codes were adjusted. The reliability of each is as follows: extraversion $\alpha = 0.88$, agreeableness $\alpha = 0.76$, conscientiousness $\alpha = 0.86$, neuroticism $\alpha = 0.77$, and openness to intellect/imagination $\alpha = 0.82$.

Results

Respondents Profile

The results of the study are obtained using Stata 16 software through descriptive, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The sample demographics consist of 76% female and 24% male, where 35% are 20–29 years, 51% are 30–39, and 14% are 40 years and above. The education level of the school leaders represents 10% having doctorates, 56% having master's degrees, and 34% having bachelor's degrees. Considering the work experience, 26% had 1–6 years, 45% had 7–13 years, and 29% had 14 years and above. Concerning the nature of the job, 81% were regular employees and 19% were on a contractual basis.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

The descriptive statistics table explains the mean and standard deviation values of the variables. The Pearson correlation matrix reflects those values of *r* should be from -1 to +1 (Cohen, 1988). The association of courageous followership is significantly positive with extraversion *r* = 0.47, *p* ≤ 0.05, agreeableness, *r* = 0.54, *p* ≤ 0.05, consciousness, *r* = 0.43, *p* ≤ 0.05, and openness to experience, *r* = 0.38, *p* ≤ 0.05. The neuroticism trait of personality has a negative significant association with courageous followership *r* = -0.40, *p* ≤ 0.05.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistic and Correlation Matrix (n = 190)

	Correlation						Statistics	
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Mean	SD
I	-						3.16	.59
II	0.48*	-					3.38	.58
III	0.32*	0.38*	-				3.05	.59
IV	-0.37*	-0.44*	-0.25*	-			2.72	.65
V	0.26*	0.29*	0.36*	-0.18*	-		3.58	.48
VI	0.47*	0.54*	0.43*	-0.40*	0.38*	-	3.64	.55

* Correlation is significant *p* ≤ 0.05.

Note: I = Extraversion, II = Agreeableness, III = Consciousness, IV = Neuroticism, V = Openness to Intellectual/Imagination, VI = Courageous Followership

Note. Source: Developed by Authors from research data.

Hypothesis Testing Regression Analysis

The multiple regression analysis was computed with standardized variables to test hypothesized relationships in H₁, H₂, H₃, H₄, and H₅. The results of multiple regression analysis are exhibited in Table 2. The data was analyzed for regression assumptions. The Pearson correlation Table 1 confirms no multicollinearity in data as the values of Pearson correlations are less than 0.80. The variance of inflation values was less than 10 as exhibited in Table 2. The data is normally distributed as the assumption of variance is met, heteroscedasticity $\chi^2_2 = 2.14$, *p* ≥ 0.001. No variance in residual of data was found.

Table 2
Multiple Regression Analysis Personality and Courageous Followership (n = 190)

Model	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.	VIEW
(Constant)	1.08	.73	1.97	2.70	.000	-
Extraversion	.21	.072	.19	3.10	.001	1.39
Agreeableness	.25	.065	.27	4.08	.002	1.30
Consciousness	.16	.062	.16	2.67	.001	1.25
Neuroticism	-.11	.052	-.13	-2.26	.001	1.26
Openness to Intellect/Imagination	.20	.069	.17	2.98	.005	1.15
R ² = .44, ΔR ² = .41 F = 28.18**, df (5,184)						

* *p* ≤ .05, ** *p* ≤ 0.01, *** *p* ≤ 0.001

Note. Source: Developed by Authors from research data.

The data of responses collected from school leaders on the big five personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness to intellectual/imagination as independent variables and leader's perception of their subordinate's courageous followership as a dependent variable is regressed using Stata 16 software. The results in Table 2 verify the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The value of R^2 in H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , H_4 , and H_5 as a significant contribution is made to leaders' perception of their subordinates' courageous followership behavior due to extraversion ($\beta = .19, p < .01$), agreeableness ($\beta = .27, p < .01$), conscientiousness ($\beta = .16, p < .01$), neuroticism ($\beta = .13, p < .01$), and openness to intellectual/imagination ($\beta = .17, p < .01$).

Discussion

This study aims to resolve the research problem in an untapped area of followership and personality from cultural and theoretical perspectives using a sample of Pakistani private school leaders. More specifically this study answers the research question: What type of personality of leader encourages proactive courageous followership behavior? Our analysis of leaders' personalities and their perception of subordinates' courageous followership behavior shows that the personality dimensions of extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience and conscientiousness positively influence leadership perception of courageous followership behavior of their subordinates. On the other hand, neuroticism has a negative influence on courageous followership behavior. Among the personality traits, agreeableness has the highest beta value ($\beta = .27, p < .01$), which means that if a leader has high agreeableness traits, they will encourage the subordinates to exhibit more courageous followership behavior. This is evident as agreeableness is related to conforming, accepting, and listening to advice behavior and leaders high on this trait are most likely to accept and promote courageous followership as a proactive form of subordination.

According to Zhang et al. (2021), highly agreeable leaders tend to have a high level of information-seeking behavior from their subordinates, and leaders who are information seekers accept the subordinates' proactive behavior. The result that agreeableness is a high predictor of courageous followership is different from the results of agreeableness relation with leadership (Shahzad et al., 2021) in which agreeable has a low moderate effect. This may be because agreeable personality traits promote fairness and justice, and such a personality will be more inclined towards courageous followership as subordinates are fair with the leader as well as with the organization (Chaleff, 2009). Another reason may be that the data was collected from diverse sectors (Shahzad et al., 2020), whereas the current study's data constitutes academic leaders who seem more responsible as nurturers of society.

Extraversion personality trait is another high personality trait in relationship with courageous followership (after agreeableness). An extraversion personality is change-driven and always appreciates individuals with proactive personalities

because such leadership traits are more transformational (Schreyer et al., 2021). Extroversion leaders show a high level of leader-follower exchange relationship (Dust et al., 2021) and like to promote individuals in their group with traits of confidence, dedication, and proactive behavior which is confirmed by the result of this study. Conscientiousness is also related to courageous followership which is consistent with previous research, such as Kudek (2018) in which teachers' conscientious trait is related to Kelley's active engagement and independent thought. This is true in this study's results as academic leaders' conscientious traits influence leaders' perceptions of their subordinates' courageous followership behavior which is also derived from Kelley's followership styles (Chaleff, 2009). Such leaders value integrity and carefulness, and such personalities are high on information seeking and promoting employee advice (Zhang et al., 2021). This is true in this study result as the conscientious personality trait was found to be influencing the leaders' perceptions of their subordinates' behaviors. From a cultural perspective, the result of this study is rather true as in Pakistan, conscientious traits of leadership are also moderately related to sustainable intentions and individuals high on this dimension appreciate feedback (Ishaq et al., 2021). Similarly, courageous followership is nurtured if leaders allow their subordinates to access them (Chaleff, 2009).

Another personality trait is neuroticism in which individuals high on this trait show mood swings, anxiety, and low level of self-esteem. The results of this study demonstrate that leaders high in neuroticism do not perceive their subordinates as courageous followers as neuroticism is negatively related to courageous followership behavior. This is true as neurotic leaders, due to their negative attitude, reflect ostracism and high feelings of jealousy (Howard et al., 2020). Another reason why neurotic leaders do not perceive their subordinates as courageous followers is envy at the workplace. Meta-analysis drawn on social comparison theory based on workplace envy indicates that neuroticism tends to enhance individuals' ability to feel more with workplace envy (Li et al., 2021). Lastly, the result of this study indicates openness to intellect/imagination has a high moderating impact after extraversion traits on courageous followership. The reason for this may be that highly creative leaders have shown high congruence with highly proactive subordinates (Peng et al., 2020) as it benefits and supports the leaders.

Conclusion

To conclude, this research study implies that the big five personality traits of leaders are linked to their perception of the courageous followership behavior of their subordinates. Although from a cultural perspective the deference to authority is still a matter of concern in an Asian country such as Pakistan (Anjum et al., 2018), leaders prefer and like the passive behaviors of followers. Interestingly, the overall results of the study indicate novel findings as positive personality traits of leaders provide a high perception of their subordinates' courageous followership behaviors, and negative personality traits, such as neuroticism, negatively impact subordinates' courageous followership. This result may be due to the collection of data after the breakthrough

of COVID-19 scenarios where leaders need the proactive behaviors of followers (Uhl-Bien, 2021). In a collective culture, especially in crisis due to COVID-19, leaders promote creative followers while fostering social relationships to enhance social capital (Tang et al., 2021).

The present study has certain implications, particularly in the education sector of Pakistan. The study results provide a ray of hope for the cultural acceptance of subordinate proactivity. If leaders in schools are ready to perceive their subordinates proactivity positively, it will enhance the overall culture of transparency as it is one of the problems in which Pakistan is ranked 101 among 141 world countries (Schwab et al., 2020). Moreover, in the contemporary world, we need to promote transparent leadership and encourage effective and honest followership (Uhl-Bien, 2021) as effective followership helps promote a culture of transparency. Another important implication is that if courageous followership, a form of moral and ethical behavior (Chaleff, 2009), has acceptance in academia, the future generation will be in safe hands. Further, earlier studies (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016) have emphasized that teachers' professional development in ethical education not only adds value to the teachers' professional career, but it also promotes students' intellectual ability toward cognitive moral judgment. This is more required in the present situation as hope and self-leadership are moderated by a proactive personality (Abid et al., 2021).

The present study has a few limitations. Firstly, the data was collected from only private school leaders of the top schools in Islamabad, Pakistan, while it did not include public school leaders. The results could have been different as there is a difference in public and private sector leadership and followership behavior (Ghias et al., 2018). The questionnaire used for data collection is self-reporting in a personality perspective that might have created biases towards leaders' perceptions. Importantly, another limitation may be the collection of data post the COVID-19 outbreak that might have changed the perception of leaders towards courageous followership. The deference to authority is a matter of concern in an Asian country such as Pakistan (Anjum et al., 2018).

Future research should explore a better understanding of personality and followership. It would be interesting to undertake a comparative analysis of public and private school teachers along with other schools which are not even at the top. The results of such an analysis may identify leadership and followership problems. The longitudinal study can be very beneficial in the future, after training leaders on good personality and subordinates on courageous followership behavior, the research can measure the impact of change. This will lead to a better understanding of behavioral components as training of individuals for exemplary followership is part of Islamic teaching too (Nurhadi, 2020) and can be beneficial to build an environment of ethical culture because practicing Islamic work ethics enhances the capacity of individuals' courageous followership behavior (Ghias et al., 2018) that might be true in the teaching profession too. Future research can also examine the same study at the end of the pandemic as life goes back to normal, to understand the impact of the pandemic on the personality of leaders and followers' behavior.

Conflict of Interest

Author 1 and Author 2 states that there is no conflict of interest for this publication. The research was conducted without any financial assistance.

Authors Contributions

Author 1 has contributed to the conceptualization, methodology, writing & reviewing of original draft and approved it for publication. Author 2 has contributed to the methodology, writing & reviewing of original draft, supervision, and approved of it for publication.

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