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THE IMPLICATIONS OF MANAGERIAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT ON PERSONALITY ACCORDING TO THE BIG FIVE MODEL

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Purpose: The study aims to examine the relationship between Big Five personality traits and preferred career orientations among managers in the education sector, addressing an identified research gap. It focuses on identifying psychological predictors of career orientations and determining the prevalence of career preference patterns within the study population.
Methodology: The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, and correlational design to examine the relationships between Big Five personality traits and preferred career orientations among managers in the education sector. Data were collected using the CAWI method from 83 middle- and senior-level managers. Personality was measured using the IPIP-NEO-FFI questionnaire, and career orientations were assessed using a tool based on the classical typologies proposed by Derr and Schein. Analyses included Cronbach's alpha coefficients, Spearman's rank correlations, and group comparisons. This approach integrates personality psychology with classical career orientation theories, enabling the identification of psychological predictors of managers' career preferences.
Findings: The study revealed significant associations between personality traits and career orientations. Extraversion and conscientiousness emerged as the strongest predictors of managerial career preferences and career management activity. Openness was associated with creative career choices, while neuroticism showed negative relationships with career management activity but did not confirm the expected association with security-oriented careers. The findings indicate the co-occurrence of personality trait configurations and their importance for differentiating career preferences and development strategies among managers.
Research limitations/implications: The cross-sectional and correlational design limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. The moderate sample size and lower reliability of several career orientation scales indicate that selected results should be interpreted with caution. Moreover, the specific nature of the education sector limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should include larger samples, extend the analysis to other sectors, and improve the reliability of career orientation measures.
Practical implications: The results provide implications for human resource management practice. A personality profile based on extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness supports decisions related to recruitment, succession planning, and the design of individual development paths for managers. The findings may also inform the development of talent management programs, employee–role fit, and tools supporting career management.
Originality/value: This study advances research on the psychological determinants of managerial careers by integrating the Big Five Model with career orientation typologies and career management activity. Its originality lies in the profile-based analysis of co-occurring

patterns of traits and preferences in the education sector, which requires leadership, creativity, and adaptability but remains underexplored.
Keywords: Big Five; career orientations; career management; managerial careers; education sector.
Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Dynamic changes in the work environment and the growing complexity of organizations make professional development and conscious career shaping increasingly important. The literature emphasizes that an individual's career trajectory results from the interaction of individual, psychological, and contextual factors, rather than solely from organizational conditions (Hirschi et al., 2015, pp. 1-3; Woods, Hampson, 2010, pp. 1045-1050). Personality traits play a key role in this regard, consistently identified as a significant predictors of professional behaviors and decisions. Personality traits play a key role in this regard, as they are consistently identified as significant predictors of professional behaviors and career-related decisions.

Despite the growing body of research on the psychological determinants of careers, there remains a lack of studies integrating the Big Five Model with classical career orientation typologies within a profile-based approach. The education sector remains particularly underexplored, especially with regard to managerial roles. This article addresses this gap by examining the relationships between personality traits, career orientations, and career management activity among managers in the education sector. In doing so, it provides a more nuanced explanation of the mechanisms differentiating managerial career paths and supports the development of more tailored career models.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Professional Career

In everyday language, the concept of "career" is often equated with success and promotion; however, in the literature, it encompasses a much broader scope—including both behavioral and subjective aspects of professional development. Classical approaches define a career as a sequence of professional experiences and positions held over time, often linked to the attainment of higher positions and the development of specialization (Arthur et al., 1989; Greenhaus, 2003; Hall, 1976, p. 4; Ng et al., 2005, pp. 367-408). In organizational and management theory, a career is understood as a process of individual development

encompassing successive professional experiences and the roles and positions held within an organization, leading to the shaping of a career path over time (Arthur, Rousseau, 1996; Baruch, 2004). In a more synthetic view, it is emphasized as a sequence of professional experiences and roles undertaken by an individual over time (Adamson et al., 1998; Baruch, 2004).

In the traditional approach, a career was viewed as a product of the organization and the profession, whereas the agentic approach emphasized the individual's agency. Today, it is defined more broadly as a sequence of roles, activities, and experiences spanning the entire professional life, emphasizing the accumulation of career capital and the importance of job satisfaction in the relationship between aspirations and career progression (Adamson et al., 1998; Hirschi et al., 2015).

Contemporary approaches reject linearity, viewing a career as a dynamic process based on individual preferences and values. Career orientations—that is, relatively stable preferences regarding professional activity—play a key role (Wiernik, Kostal, 2019, p. 281). Research indicates that these orientations do not function in isolation but form profile-based configurations combining elements of traditional, protean, and boundaryless careers (Pfrombeck, Grote, 2026, p. 25). Panel analyses confirm the relative stability of career patterns and the importance of enduring individual factors (Biemann et al., 2012, p. 163), while theoretical approaches emphasize the role of psychological mechanisms in shaping career choices (Yates, 2020, p. 131). In this context, classical career orientation typologies (Derr, 1986; Schein, 1990) form the basis for identifying the main dimensions of career preferences, such as orientation toward management, competence, security, independence, creativity, or work-life balance. Contemporary research indicates, however, that these preferences do not occur in isolation but combine into recurring configurations of preferences (Myszka-Strychalska, 2018, pp. 95-97). From the perspective of Schein's career anchor theory (1990, pp. 15-20), professional development reflects an individual's relatively stable values and motives, which form the basis of these configurations. More recent findings, however, indicate that individuals more often exhibit multidimensional preference profiles than a single dominant anchor (Wils et al., 2015, pp. 820-828). Similar relationships are identified by Abessolo, Hirschi, and Rossier (2017, pp. 249-254), demonstrating that career orientations share a common psychological basis rooted in the individual's value system.

2.2. Personality as a predictor of career orientation

Personality is a significant predictor of occupational functioning and career preferences, influencing—alongside contextual factors—the choice of work environment and career trajectories (Judge et al., 1999, pp. 621-652; Woods, Hampson, 2010, pp. 1045-1057).

Contemporary approaches to career development emphasize the role of individual resources and proactive behaviors, such as career exploration and self-directed career management (Hirschi et al., 2015). The dominant paradigm explaining individual differences remains the

Five-Factor Model of Personality, which identifies five relatively stable and universal dimensions: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Costa, McCrae, 1992, pp. 653-665). Its significance in career research stems from its high predictive value regarding occupational behaviors, including work performance and job satisfaction (Barrick, Mount, 1991, pp. 1-26; Judge, Heller et al., 2002, pp. 530-541).

Meta-analytic findings indicate that openness and conscientiousness promote career exploration, while extraversion is associated with actively seeking opportunities in the professional environment (Lee et al., 2023, pp. 49-52). At the same time, protean and boundaryless career orientations show strong links to proactivity and self-direction, which partially overlap with the influence of personality traits (Wiernik, Kostal, 2019, pp. 280-286). Consequently, the Big Five Model provides a coherent framework for explaining the diversity of career orientations and person–environment fit, thereby increasing the accuracy of predicting career trajectories.

3. Research Methodology

The aim of the study was to identify the psychological determinants of career orientation among managers in the education sector, with particular emphasis on Big Five personality traits and their relationships with preferred career types. Understanding these relationships provides insight into the mechanisms of career development and supports the design of interventions in human resource management (Lee et al., 2023, pp. 41-52; Wiernik, Kostal, 2019, pp. 280-303).

The following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Big Five personality traits significantly differentiate preferred career types among managers.

H1a. Individuals with high openness to experience are more likely to choose creative or independent careers,

H1b. Individuals with high conscientiousness prefer competence- or management-oriented careers,

H1c. Individuals with high neuroticism tend to choose careers oriented toward security and stability.

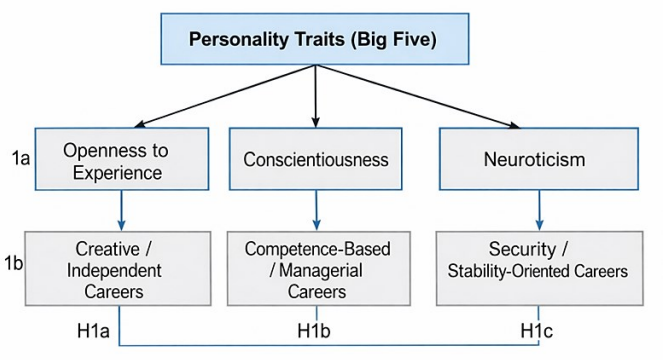

Figure 1. Research model.

Source: own study.

Data were collected in the first quarter of 2025 using the CAWI method. The study was conducted on a sample of 83 managers employed in administration within the education sector (N = 83). Invitations were sent to employees of six organizations, and the survey was distributed to 210 individuals. Responses were obtained from 83 participants, all of whom were included in the analysis.

Women constituted the majority of the sample (68.9%). The largest age group was 41-50 years (43.4%). Respondents were classified into three managerial categories: top management (10.8%), directors (28.9%), and supervisors/managers (60.2%).

Personality was measured using the Polish adaptation of the IPIP-NEO-FFI questionnaire (Goldberg, 1999; Strus et al., 2016). The instrument included 5 scales: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale.

Preferred career types were measured using a tool based on classical career development concepts (Derr, 1986; Schein, 1990). The questionnaire covers six orientations: management, competence, security, independence, creativity, and harmony (*Osobowościowe i Sytuacyjne Wyznaczniki Sukcesu Zawodowego Kobiet i Typu Ich Kariery*, 2014). Responses were given on a 1–5 Likert scale, and the scale score was the sum or average of the items.

The study was correlational in nature, allowing for the simultaneous examination of independent and dependent variables. The collected data were subjected to the following analyses: Cronbach's alpha reliability (1951), Spearman's rank correlation (1904, pp. 72-101), and differences between groups. The analyses were performed in the SZTOS system (Hryniewicz, Milewska, 2023), and the results were visualized using the "ggplot2" package (Wickham, 2016). To verify the measurement accuracy of the variables, a reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha for individual scales, which showed varying measurement accuracy (Cronbach's α value).

Table 1.
Results of the reliability analysis for scales W5, career management, and career types

Scale	α	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Neuroticism	0.85	2.12	0.63	10
Extraversion	0.85	3.47	0.63	10
Openness	0.70	3.83	0.53	10
Agreeableness	0.64	3.84	0.44	10
Conscientiousness	0.76	3.55	0.51	10
Career management	0.73	4.19	0.61	6
Type: Management	0.72	3.29	0.82	5
Competence Type	0.71	3.86	0.78	5
Safety type	0.40	3.58	0.54	5
Independence type	0.55	3.60	0.68	5
Creativity type	0.73	4.30	0.57	5
Harmony type	0.51	4.01	0.57	5

Source: own analysis.

Lower α values in some scales indicate the need for cautious interpretation of the results and treating them as exploratory[1].

4. Results

To examine the influence of personality traits on proactive career management, an analysis of the relationship between career type variables and personality types (W5) was conducted. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used[2] . The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Results of the Spearman correlation analysis between the variables: W5 components, Career Management, Career Types

Variable	Id.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Neuroticism	1											
Extraversion	2	-0.34**										
Openness	3	-0.06	0.24*									
Agreeableness	4	-0.25*	0.19	-0.16								
Conscientiousness	5	-0.15	0.37**	-0.18	0.17							
Career management	6	-0.27*	0.58***	0.13	0.15	0.40***						
Management Type	7	-0.25*	0.38***	-0.05	0.01	0.44***	0.47***					
Competence type	8	0.18	0.07	0.14	0.11	0.08	0.15	-0.09				

[1] Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the dimensions of security (α = 0.40), harmony (α = 0.51), and independence (α = 0.55) are very low and well below the scientifically accepted threshold of 0.70. Such low internal consistency of these instruments in the study group limits the statistical reliability of the obtained results and requires caution in their interpretation.

[2] Significant correlations were identified, characterized by moderate strength of association (rho values ranging from 0.3 to 0.6 and a significance level of $p < 0.05$).

Cont. table 2.

Security type	9	0.11	-0.12	-0.24*	0.11	0.21	-0.05	0.01	0.17			
Type: Independence	10	0.03	-0.01	-0.01	-0.18	-0.16	-0.07	-0.10	0.33**	0.13		
Type of work	11	-0.21	0.63***	0.29**	-0.01	0.27*	0.64***	0.46***	0.13	-0.11	0.13	
Harmony type	12	-0.25*	0.00	-0.08	0.26*	0.10	0.02	-0.09	0.25*	0.16	0.18	0.08

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Source: own compilation.

The analysis revealed a pattern of statistically significant relationships between personality traits and career-related variables. First, it was noted that Extraversion was moderately and significantly negatively correlated with neuroticism, suggesting that individuals with higher levels of extraversion tend to report lower levels of emotional instability.

Conscientiousness was positively correlated with extraversion, indicating the co-occurrence of these traits in managerial personality profiles. Career management showed moderate positive associations with both extraversion and conscientiousness, suggesting that more socially active and organized individuals are more likely to engage in deliberate career management. The management career type was significantly and positively associated with extraversion, conscientiousness, and career management activity, indicating a preference for leadership-oriented career paths among individuals with these traits. Similarly, the creativity-oriented career type demonstrated moderate positive associations with extraversion, conscientiousness, career management, and the management orientation, suggesting that creative career preferences are more characteristic of active and development-oriented managers. In addition, the independence orientation was moderately positively correlated with the competence orientation, indicating that preferences for autonomy may co-occur with the aspiration to develop specialized skills.

The verification of the sub-hypotheses partially confirmed the assumed relationships between personality traits and preferred managerial career types. Openness to experience was positively associated with a preference for creative career orientations, consistent with theoretical expectations. Its negative relationship with the security orientation suggests a tendency to avoid stable and predictable career orientations. Conscientiousness showed a significant positive relationship with both the management orientation and career management, indicating a preference for structured, goal-oriented career orientations. No significant association was found with the competence orientation. The hypothesis regarding neuroticism was not confirmed. No significant relationship was found with the security orientation, while neuroticism was negatively associated with management orientation, harmony, and career management. This may indicate lower engagement in proactive career behaviors rather than a preference for stability.

The results indicate that openness favors the choice of creative careers, while conscientiousness favors managerial paths. Preferences for managerial career types co-occur with a personality profile that supports agency and proactivity, whereas neuroticism correlates negatively with these tendencies. The strongest associations involve extraversion and

conscientiousness, which are key predictors of both career types and career management strategies.

5. Discussion of the results

The aim of the study was to analyze the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and the preferred career type of managers in the education sector. The results confirm that personality traits play a key role in differentiating both preferred career orientations and career management approaches. This aligns with a growing body of literature pointing to the relatively stable nature of career orientations. Wiernik and Kostal (2019, pp. 281-284) demonstrated that protean and boundaryless career orientations form a coherent construct of a proactive approach to career, closely linked to personality traits and preferences regarding agency and self-direction in one's career. Similar conclusions were presented by Pfrombeck and Grote (2026, pp. 24-26), who identified stable career orientation profiles across various cultural contexts.

The study's findings indicate that extraversion and conscientiousness are key factors in active career management and in the preference for career paths that require engagement and social interaction. Extraversion promotes professional development, relationship building and proactivity (Judge, Heller et al., 2002, pp. 771-773; Kang et al., 2023, pp. 4-7; Lee et al., 2023, pp. 49-52). Conscientiousness remains one of the most consistent predictors of positive work outcomes, job satisfaction, and long-term achievements (Barrick, Mount, 1991, pp. 1-26; Kordsmeyer et al., 2024, pp. 1052-1056; Wilmot, Ones, 2019). Individuals with high conscientiousness are more likely to choose career paths requiring structure, responsibility and planning, in line with classical approaches to career orientation. Openness to experience also proved to be a significant variable, positively correlating with a preference for creative paths requiring creativity, innovation, and cognitive flexibility (Ivcevic, Brackett, 2015, pp. 480-487; Tan et al., 2019, pp. 109-119). At the same time, the negative correlation between openness with the "security" type indicates a tendency among open-minded individuals to avoid paths based on routine and predictability, which is consistent with the model of career values and orientations, in which openness to change forms the basis for preferences for protean and boundaryless career (Abessolo et al., 2017, pp. 249-254). In contrast to the other traits, neuroticism showed a negative relationship with career management activity and a tendency to avoid high – visibility roles. This relationship points to potentially greater emotional instability, lower self-efficacy, and a tendency to avoid situations perceived as stressful (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2015, pp. 333-347). Similarly, models of proactivity and career adaptability emphasize that negative evaluations and low tolerance for uncertainty weaken behaviors associated with conscious career management (Peng et al., 2021, pp. 3-10). The study's results did not confirm the hypothesized correlation between neuroticism and career stability, indicating that

neuroticism limits readiness for developmental activities and taking on complex roles. More broadly, the results confirm that personality traits do not function as independent predictors but rather form configurations that translate into distinct career orientation profiles. Modern approaches are moving away from unidimensional typologies in favor of profile analyses (Pfrombeck, Grote, 2026, pp. 6-10; Wils et al., 2015, pp. 820-824).

The configurations observed—combining, for example, high extraversion with a preference for managerial paths and high openness with a preference for creativity—align with the profile-based nature of career orientations. The results support an interactive approach, in which career development results from the interaction of individual traits and organizational contexts (Arthur, Rousseau, 1996, pp. 22-45), as well as integrated approaches that describe careers as dynamic systems (Yates, 2020, pp. 131-133).

6. Summary

Incorporating personality assessment into recruitment and succession planning processes improves the accuracy of matching candidates with leadership positions, while simultaneously enhancing team stability and management effectiveness (Barrick, Mount, 1991, pp. 3-8; Judge, Bono et al., 2002; Kang et al., 2023, pp. 4-7; Kordsmeyer et al., 2024, pp. 1052-1056; Wilmot, Ones, 2019). Designing career paths based on aptitudes enables the planning of professional development and the provision of adequate support to managers in the process of making career decisions (Pfrombeck, Grote, 2026, pp. 5-10; Wils et al., 2015, pp. 820-824).

Individuals with openness to experience are predisposed to roles requiring creativity and innovation, where they can initiate change and engage in development activities (Ivcevic, Brackett, 2015, pp. 480-487; Tan et al., 2019, pp. 219-225). Employees with high neuroticism require psychological support and mentoring, which helps build mental resilience and increases their engagement in development activities (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2015, pp. 333-340; Peng et al., 2021, pp. 3-10). Tailoring development paths to personality profiles increases motivation and job satisfaction (Pfrombeck, Grote, 2026, pp. 5-10; Wiernik, Kostal, 2019, pp. 281-284).

The originality of the study stems from the analysis of co-occurring patterns of personality traits and career preferences among managers, which offers a better understanding of the mechanisms of career choices and professional development in the education sector—an area requiring leadership, adaptability, and innovation competencies (Arthur, Rousseau, 1996, pp. 22-45; Yates, 2020, pp. 131-135). The comparison of career orientation profiles with personality measures and activity indicators demonstrates the influence of individual dispositions on career management, serving as a starting point for further research in other industries.

At the same time, the cross-sectional and correlational nature of the study limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. Moderate statistical power resulting from the sample size and low reliability of selected career orientation scales (particularly security and harmony) suggest that the results should be treated as exploratory. The specific nature of the education sector makes generalization difficult; therefore, it is recommended to increase the sample size and extend the analysis to other professional environments (sectors, industries), as well as to improve the measurement tools (reliability of career orientation scales).

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