SILESIAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY PUBLISHING HOUSE

SCIENTIFIC PAPERS OF SILESIAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY 2026
ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT SERIES NO. 252

THE INFLUENCE OF INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS ON TRUST IN AN ORGANIZATION – AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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Purpose: The purpose of the work was the identification of cause-and-effect relationships between trust in the organisation (variable dependent) and characteristics, ingredients, personalities, and respondents according to the five-factor model (the so-called Big Five – variables independent).
Design/methodology/approach: The empirical material was obtained through a survey using a questionnaire. The survey was conducted in 2026 in the West Pomeranian province. 304 questionnaires were analysed. At work, they found application methods, descriptions, statistical analyses, correlations, and single-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA).
Findings: The ANOVA indicates three areas of personality analysis among individuals, in which statistically significant differences in trust levels are identified depending on self-assessment within a given personality component: neuroticism, conscientiousness, and agreeableness. The NIR tests conducted in the next stage of the analysis reveal the strongest differentiation in the synthetic measure of trust in the organisation across respondent groups. selecting individual personality characteristics was noted in the area of conscientiousness.
Research Limitations/implications: When pointing out research limitations, attention should be paid to the subjectivity of respondents' declarations and to the fact that they conduct subjective self-assessments within individual areas of personality analysis.
Practical Implications: Analysing the above, it should be noted that individual personality can influence trust within an organisation. Therefore, it is worthwhile to examine both analytical spheres, with particular emphasis on neuroticism, conscientiousness, and agreeableness.
Originality/value: The topic of such connections has not been explored in the literature. A query in the Scopus database identified one work (Ciganecova, Lukac, 2025), in which the analysed relationship was examined (although not in the enterprise segment but in public administration).
Keywords: trust in organisation, big five, personality characteristics.
Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

Many organisational relationships are established on trust. Trust can lead to cooperation among people, groups, and organisations (Fard, Karimi, 2015).

Trust in an organisation should be viewed as a positive process that promotes positive outcomes. Destructive relationships within an organisation are typically associated with distrust. It's important to remember that trust in an organisation isn't a homogeneous category. Rather, it encompasses several distinct constructs (institutional trust, trust in leadership or superiors, and trust in coworkers), which can, however, be studied in parallel.

It should be emphasised, however, that the individual constructs interpenetrating. The leader in an organisation is its key figure and representative; therefore, trust in the leader builds institutional trust. Trust in the leader can persist even in a climate of general distrust within the organisation. Opposite relationships are also possible. This study utilised the universal category of "trust in the organisation."

In this study, the influence of personality traits (independent variable) on organisational trust was considered. The analysis utilised the Big Five model, which characterises an individual's personality in five areas: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. The topic of such relationships has not been explored in the literature. A Scopus database search identified one study (Ciganecova, Lukac, 2025) that examined this relationship, though not in the enterprise segment but in public administration. Therefore, the analysis conducted in this study is groundbreaking.

The research presented in this paper fills this gap. The work begins with a theoretical introduction to the research topic. Methodological aspects of the research are then discussed, followed by a presentation of the results. These formed the basis for the discussion, which is presented in the next section, along with a presentation of the utilitarian aspects of the research, its limitations, and proposed directions for future research.

2. Theoretical Aspects

Trust should be viewed as a positive process. It induces positive expectations in individuals about others' intentions and behaviours. By trusting each other or the organisation, individuals are consequently more willing to take risks (without fear of deception), which can yield positive outcomes (e.g., higher levels of task performance or prosocial behaviour) (Mayer, Gavin, 2005; Dirks, Ferrin, 2001; Zhu, Akhtar, 2014). Using one widely accepted definition of trust, when people are in a trusting relationship, they are willing to expose themselves to vulnerability with

the other party, assuming that the other party will not exploit this vulnerability to act contrary to the individual's best interests (Meyer, Davis, Schoorman, 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998).

Destructive relationships in an organisation (e.g., ostracism, mobbing, or silence) are associated with distrust, reducing the previously mentioned willingness to take risks in specific actions, and inducing a negative perception of the environment and its members (Lazarus, 1995).

Trust in organisations is not perceived as a homogeneous category in the literature (Kunasz, 2025b). In various analyses, authors refer to different conceptual categories. The classic division includes institutional and interpersonal trust (Meyer, Davis, Schoorman, 1995). Institutional trust develops through a network of structured relationships and formalised organisational rules (Fox, 1974). Interpersonal trust refers to individual relationships between employees. In this case, a distinction should be made between vertical trust (to managers and leaders) and horizontal trust (to co-workers) (Ellonen, Blomqvist, Puumalainen, 2008). Interpersonal trust depends on individuals' personal characteristics and develops through (sometimes voluntary) frequent interpersonal contact.

Institutional trust refers to people's positive expectations regarding the behaviour of organisational employees, based on relationships, organisational roles, and interrelationships (Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, Winograd, 2000). Institutional trust refers to an employee's belief in the power of institutional structures to achieve success and shape their own future (McKnight, Cummings, Chervany, 1998). This type of trust focuses on the organisation as a whole. The individual assumes that the organisation will act to their benefit, or at least not to their detriment (Saglam, 2016). A high level of trust in the organisation translates into low evaluation costs and other control mechanisms (Khanifar et al., 2009).

Organisational trust can be built on positive expectations of organisational members regarding competence, benevolence, and reliability (Meyer, Davis, Schoorman, 1995; Ellonen, Blomqvist, Puumalainen, 2008; Knoll, Gill, 2011). By trusting a leader, employees believe that the leader possesses the knowledge, skills, and experience required for the job and can ensure the organisation's success. Trust in a leader's benevolence is based on an individual employee's belief that the leader serves them well by caring for their well-being, understanding their needs, and helping without expecting compensation. Trust in leaders' reliability refers to their adherence to acceptable rules (Zwiech, 2024). Subordinates believe that leaders have a strong sense of justice and, as a result, are honest and keep their word (Abdillah et al., 2021).

When employees are treated fairly by a leader they trust, they are likely to view their relationship with that leader in terms of social rather than economic exchange. According to social exchange theory, the relationship-based perspective assumes that followers (in this case, subordinates) will reciprocate toward the other party in the relationship (the leader). They will be motivated to go beyond what is expected of them (Walumbwa, Schaubroeck, 2009; Dirks, Ferrin, 2002).

(Galford, Drapeau, 2003) categorise trust somewhat differently, though also using a three-component typology. Theoretically, the different types of trust are equally important. Employees refer to them when they use the word trust. The first type of trust is based on employees' perceptions of the organisation's competence to cope with challenges, achieve goals, and manage effectively. The second element of the typology is trust in leadership. This refers to subordinates' belief that senior managers are sufficiently competent at allocating resources and responsibilities within the organisation and at making decisions. At the third level, the category of personal trust is introduced. This still encompasses trust in superiors. Employees know that their immediate superiors are trustworthy and can manage people fairly. This concept does not account for horizontal trust among coworkers.

On the one hand, these distinct areas interpenetrate (Kunasz, 2025a). For example, trust in the leader builds trust in the organisation, as the leader is perceived as the organisation's key representative. Therefore, the leader plays a key role in building an atmosphere of mutual trust (Kim et al., 2019). On the other hand, each of the previously mentioned forms of trust is treated in the literature as a separate construct (with distinct determinants and consequences). However, there is a positive relationship between trust in the supervisor and trust in the organisation (Tan, Tan, 2000).

3. Method

The study aimed to identify the cause-and-effect relationships between trust in an organisation (dependent variable) and the characteristics of the respondents' personality components in accordance with the five-factor model of personality (the so-called Big Five – independent variables).

The analysed empirical material was collected during the period November 2025 - January 2026 (time scope of the research) from respondents in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship (spatial scope of the research). The empirical material was obtained from 304 respondents.

The dependent variable was a construct derived from respondents' answers to six sub-questions within a six-item scale. The scale did not include reverse-ended questions. The synthetic measure for a given respondent was the average of their individual choices on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated complete disagreement, and 5 indicated complete agreement. To reflect the intensity of organisational trust in the population, the mean value of the synthetic measures was also calculated.

Respondents also self-assessed the intensity of personality traits within individual areas in accordance with the five-factor model of personality - the so-called Big Five (Fiske, 1949; Norman, 1963). Self-assessment took place within a semantic differential, where opposite characteristics were presented at the extremes within five distinct areas:

- extraversion (I am an extroverted – introverted person),
- agreeableness (I am a person: agreeable – quarrelsome),
- conscientiousness (I am a person: conscientious – unconscientious),
- neuroticism (I am a person: neurotic – emotionally stable),
- openness to experience (I am a person: creative – conventional).

The respondent could choose the following options:

- 1 - fully feature X,
- 2 - feature X dominates,
- 3 - the proportions of the intensity of both features are equal,
- 4 - feature Y dominates,
- 5 - fully Y feature.

To assess the intensity of individual characteristics within a given area, a weighted average of the responses for each response option was also calculated for the sample. A measure value approaching unity indicated significant intensity of characteristic Y, while an extreme value of 5 indicated significant intensity of characteristic Y.

The approach used in the data collection procedures determined the design of the subsequent analysis. Respondents in a given area could be divided into five groups based on the selected option (1-5). Within these groups, differences in trust in the organisation in the sample (measured using the mean measure presented earlier) were examined.

To determine the statistical significance of these differences, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used, as the number of distinct groups exceeded two (in such cases, Student's t-tests were sufficient). In the first stage of the analysis of trust in the organisation, it was generally determined whether such differentiation of mean measures in the sample in a given area existed. Then, based on post-hoc tests, the data were analysed within pairs of groups (e.g., groups 1 and 4). Post hoc testing procedures were performed using NIR tests. In both the overall analyses and intergroup comparisons, the cut-off p-value was set at $p = 0,05$.

The relevant calculations were performed using the Tibco statistical package. Statistica ver. 13.3.

4. Research results

The first stage of presenting the research results involved a statistical description of the variables used in the analyses. The study examined the relationship between organisational trust (dependent variable) and respondents' personality characteristics, consistent with the Big Five model (independent variable). Table 1 presents selected statistical measures for these variables. The subsequent tables present the distributions of the variables: the dependent variable, shown in the histogram in Figure 1 (a continuous variable ranging from 1 to 5), and the independent variables (5 choices within a semantic differential) in Table 2.

Table 1.
Selected measures of statistical description of dependent and independent variables

variables	mean	standard deviation	skewness	kurtosis
trust	3,40	0,99	-0,30	-0,62
extroversion	2,88	1,08	-0,08	-0,57
agreeableness	2,64	1,06	0,43	-0,33
conscientiousness	2,24	0,95	0,64	0,31
neuroticism	3,28	1,09	-0,32	-0,43
openness	2,39	1,07	0,34	-0,78

Source: Author's own compilation based on author's own research.

The strongest left-sided distribution among the individual's personality characteristics was identified for neuroticism (skewness -0,32). The highest weighted mean level for the analysed measure was observed in this category (3,28). 78.3% of respondents chose the neutral option and options close to emotional stability. It is also worth noting that a similar pattern of relationships (negative skewness and a relatively high mean) can be identified for the construct of trust in the organisation.

The lowest mean value (2,24) was observed in the analysis of respondents' responses regarding conscientiousness. This area also showed the highest positive skewness (right-skewed distribution, with responses indicating conscientiousness, with option 2 selected most frequently).

It should also be noted that in the analysed area of individual personality characteristics (conscientiousness), the variable's distribution is clearly platykurtic (positive kurtosis). In the remaining areas, negative kurtosis values are noted (ranging from -0,78 for openness to -0,33 for agreeableness – leptokurtic distributions).

A pattern with high positive skewness and relatively low mean values was also observed for agreeableness (dominance of agreeable individuals) and openness (dominance of creative individuals). A distribution without significant asymmetry was observed for extraversion.

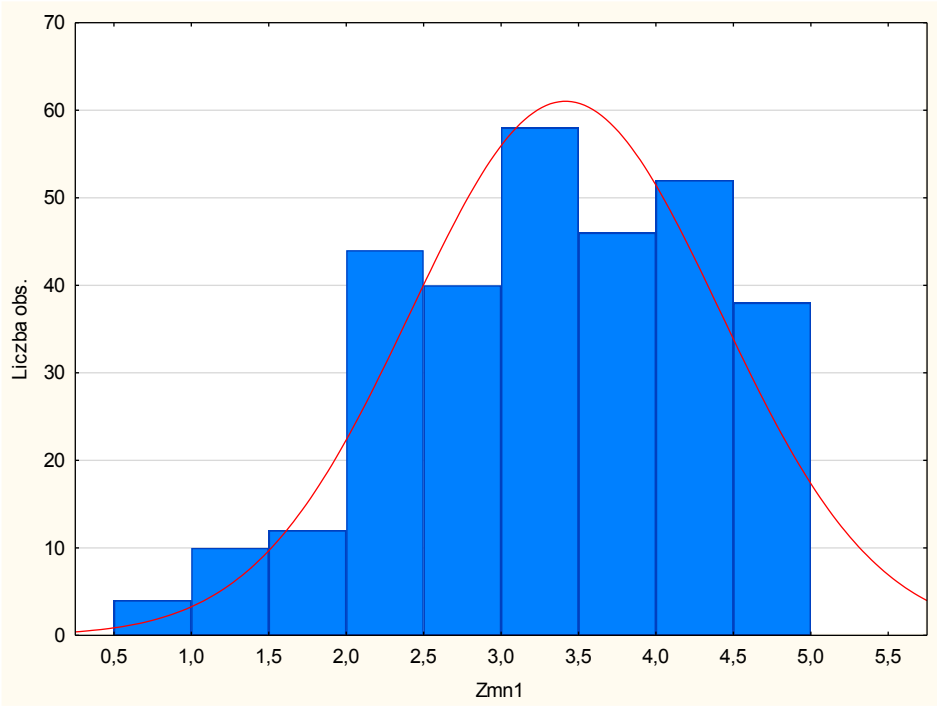

Figure 1. Histogram of the distribution of the dependent variable.

Source: Author's own compilation based on the author's own research.

Table 2.

The structure of respondents ' declarations regarding their self-assessment of their personality in selected areas

field	trait X	1	2	3	4	5	trait Y
extroversion	ekstroverted	12,5	21,1	38,2	22,4	5,9	introverted
agreeableness	conciliatory	12,5	36,8	30,9	13,8	5,9	quarrelsome
conscientiousness	conscientious	22,4	42,1	27,0	5,9	2,6	unscrupulous
neuroticism	neurotic	7,2	14,5	34,2	31,6	12,5	emotionally stable
openness	creative	23,7	33,6	25,0	15,8	2,0	conventional

Source: Author's own compilation based on author's own research.

A correlation matrix was constructed to capture the relationships among the variables analysed in the study. The data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Correlation matrix of dependent and independent variables

variables	trust	extroversion	agreeableness	conscientiousness	neuroticism
extroversion	0,041				
agreeableness	-0,021	-0,026			
conscientiousness	0,075	0,092	**0,343**		
neuroticism	**0,156**	-0,090	**-0,448**	**-0,167**	
openness	0,077	**0,189**	-0,045	0,094	-0,013

Source: Author's own compilation based on author's own research.

No high correlations were observed between the dependent variable (organisational trust) and variables reflecting respondents' opinions on individual personality areas. The highest value was observed in the relationship between organisational trust and neuroticism. This relationship

is positive. However, the correlation measure was relatively low (0,156). Due to the large sample size, this relationship is statistically significant.

Slightly stronger correlations can be identified by analysing relationships among variables that reflect individual personality characteristics. The most strongly correlated variable from this group of characteristics is agreeableness. It exhibits a statistically significant negative relationship with neuroticism (correlation coefficient value of -0,448) and a statistically significant positive relationship with conscientiousness (correlation coefficient value of 0,343). The relationship between neuroticism and conscientiousness is also statistically significant, although the correlation coefficient is lower (a negative value of -0,167). A statistically significant positive relationship was also noted between extraversion and openness (correlation coefficient = 0,189).

Despite the relatively weak correlation coefficients recorded between the dependent and independent variables, and given the potential for significant variation in respondents' declarations within each area (due to the ability to choose one of five options), an analysis of differences in trust levels was conducted within the areas, based on responses, across groups of respondents with varying degrees of extreme traits. Data were collected using a semantic differential, but responses were coded on a Likert scale from 1 (highest intensity of trait X) to 5 (highest intensity of trait Y). Therefore, five such groups can be distinguished within each area. For more than two groups, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used. Table 4 presents SS and MS for the effect and error term (for each case, the degrees of freedom are 4 for the effect and 299 for the error term), as well as data for determining the statistical significance of differences for all groups (F test statistic and p-value for this statistic).

Table 4.
ANOVA analysis for individual areas of personality analysis

variables	SS effect	MS effect	SS error	MS error	F	p
extroversion	3,02	0,76	296,16	0,99	0,76	0,550
agreeableness	**16,40**	**4,10**	**282,78**	**0,95**	**4,33**	**0,002**
conscientiousness	**19,97**	**4,99**	**279,21**	**0,93**	**5,35**	**0,000**
neuroticism	**12,03**	**3,01**	**287,15**	**0,96**	**3,13**	**0,015**
openness	3,50	0,87	295,68	0,99	0,88	0,474

Source: Author's own compilation based on author's own research.

Statistically significant differences in the mean level of the dependent variable (organisational trust) were identified across the selected respondent groups in three personality domains: conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism (in ascending order of p-value). In each case, the p- value for the F-test was lower than the accepted threshold of p = 0,05. For extraversion, the p- value for the F-test was 0,550 (F = 0,76), and for openness, it was 0,474 (F = 0,88).

The above analyses only allow us to identify areas where statistically significant differences in the averages reflecting the level of trust within the organisation are revealed in the identified groups. However, it is not possible to clearly determine which groups exhibit this phenomenon.

Such information can be obtained by conducting a series of post-hoc tests. There are many techniques for conducting such tests. In this study, NIR tests were selected for analysis.

For the areas of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism, Tables 5-7 present matrices of NIR test values that represent all possible combinations of relationships among individual respondent groups within each area. These are areas where statistically significant relationships for selected combinations could be expected. Statistically significant differences in means within the groups comprising a given pair should be indicated by values below the threshold p-value of 0,05 (these cases are highlighted in Tables 5-7).

In the areas of extraversion and openness (where the p- value for the F test was clearly higher than the threshold value), the NIR tests performed did not indicate statistically significant differences in the means for all combinations of the identified groups of respondents; the effects of the procedures performed were not reported in the tables.

Table 5 presents data on the agreeableness dimension.

Table 5.
NIR test value matrix for the agreeability area

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
2	0,414			
3	**0,004**	**0,004**		
4	0,430	0,898	**0,040**	
5	0,357	0,101	**0,002**	0,119

Source: Author's own compilation based on author's own research.

In this area, in each set of pairs with statistically significant differences in the mean of the dependent variable, a group of respondents who choose the neutral option (3) will appear. Statistically significant differences in the mean are shown here for each of the remaining groups (1, 2, 4, 5). The above findings correspond to the observed symmetry in this region of the variable's distribution (with skewness slightly below zero).

Table 6 presents data for the area of conscientiousness.

Table 6.
NIR test value matrix for the consistency area

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
2	**0,018**			
3	0,075	0,643		
4	0,368	**0,018**	**0,042**	
5	**0,009**	**0,000**	**0,001**	0,078

Source: Author's own compilation based on author's own research.

The analysis of the examined relationships can be approached in two directions. In the first case considered, the axis for the analyses is Group 2. Statistically significant differences in means are observed in comparisons with Groups 1 (conscientiousness) and 4 and 5 (unconscientiousness). Statistically significant differences in means relative to Group 3 (neutral position) can be identified for Groups 4 and 5 (unconscientiousness). Additionally, statistically significant differences in means were also observed in the relationships between the opposing

Groups 1 and 5. This area clearly identified the largest number of statistically significant relationships. The distribution of the variable in this area is clearly right-skewed. 42,1% of respondents chose option 2 (closer to conscientiousness) in this area; therefore, the group choosing this option forms the main axis of differentiation in this area.

Table 7 presents data on the neuroticism domain.

Table 7.
NIR test value matrix for the neuroticism area

	1	2	3	4
2	0,834			
3	0,778	0,501		
4	0,173	0,142	**0,006**	
5	0,080	0,061	**0,005**	0,439

Source: Author's own compilation based on author's own research.

In the last area examined, a pattern familiar from previous analyses emerged – statistically significant differences in the mean between the group choosing the neutral option (3) and the options indicating emotional stability (i.e., 4 and 5). The distribution of this variable is left-skewed. The weighted mean for this area is significantly higher overall than in the other areas (3,28 vs values below 3 for all other areas). Statistically significant differences in group means were noted in this area only in these two cases. For the remaining eight cases, the analysed pairwise differences are not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be assumed that the differentiation of relationships in this group is relatively small.

5. Discussion

The topic of cause-and-effect relationships between trust in an organisation and the personality traits of individuals (the so-called Big Five model) was used in this work and is an unexplored topic, and can even be said to be innovative.

The study identified a statistically significant positive relationship (measured by the correlation coefficient) between the intensity of organisational trust and the saturation of individuals with given characteristics within the domain of neuroticism. Individuals' emotional stability promotes the perception of reality as trustworthy. Increases in individual neuroticism correlate with decreased levels of trust within the organisation. To some extent, this differentiation in the analysed area is confirmed by the univariate analysis of variance (at the overall level) conducted in the next stage. Still, NIR tests indicate statistically significant differences in the mean, reflecting the intensity of trust in only two cases (related to emotional stability). It is worth emphasising that individuals with a strong intensity of personality traits associated with the emotional stability factor dominate the sample.

Most NIR tests, in turn, indicate a discrepancy in means for individuals who choose different personality traits within the area of conscientiousness. Therefore, this area provides the strongest evidence of the influence of a specific personality type on perceptions of trust in an organisation. It is worth noting that the sample is clearly dominated by individuals who rate themselves as conscientious.

The ANOVA indicates yet another possible connection between the variables considered in this study and the relationship under study: agreeableness. It's worth emphasising that the distribution of this trait in the sample shows no significant asymmetry. The neutral option (3) is the axis of potential differentiation.

Research has failed to identify specific relationships between personality characteristics and the level of trust in organisations. In the case of the two personality domains introduced above (conscientiousness and agreeableness), the relevant correlation coefficients, which hovered practically around zero, indicated statistically insignificant relationships.

ANOVA also identified areas of personality analysis in which no statistically significant differences in trust intensity were observed across these characteristics. These are the areas of extraversion and openness to experience. Consequently, these areas make it difficult to direct actions that may influence trust levels within an organisation.

Analysing the above, it should be noted that individual personality can influence trust within an organisation. Therefore, it is worthwhile to examine both analytical spheres, with particular emphasis on neuroticism, conscientiousness, and agreeableness.

In identifying the limitations of the research, it is important to note the subjectivity of respondents' declarations and that they assessed themselves within specific areas of personality analysis. It is worthwhile to conduct research using a broader questionnaire assessing personality components to ensure greater objectivity in the assessment. It is also worthwhile to conduct analyses in further studies that separate trust into different categories: organisational trust, trust in leadership and the leader, and trust in colleagues.

Acknowledgements

Co-financed by the Minister of Science under the “Regional Excellence Initiative”.





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