



The impact of leader personality on new product development teamwork and performance: The moderating role of uncertainty

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Abstract

We examined the affect of leader personality on new product development (NPD) project performance under differing conditions of uncertainty. Our model posits teamwork as a mediating variable between leader personality and NPD performance. We hypothesized that the personality variable of openness would have a stronger influence on teamwork and NPD performance when uncertainty was high, and that the personality variables of extraversion, conscientiousness and stability would have a stronger indirect influence on NPD performance through teamwork when uncertainty was low. We used structural equation modeling to test two models of the influence of personality. In our study of 143 development projects, we support the importance of teamwork as a process variable linking leader personality to NPD performance and confirm that the effects of leader personality on these criteria depend on the level of uncertainty operating in NPD projects, thus substantiating all our hypotheses. Recommendations to re-consider hiring criteria and training for NPD project leaders are provided.

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1. Introduction

In today's dynamic workplace, organizations must increasingly contend with varying degrees of uncertainty resulting from global competition, economic changes, turbulent or new markets and changing technology. Uncertainty, it can be argued, increases the need for effective

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leadership in organizations and projects. Researchers such as Atuahene-Gima (2003), Brown and Eisenhardt (1995), Barczak and Wilemon (2001), Clark and Fujimoto (1991) and Sheremata (2000) demonstrate that leader behaviors can enhance or impede project performance. Scholars including Atuahene-Gima (2003), Gupta and Wilemon (1990), Hoegl et al. (2003), Jassawalla and Saahittal (1999), Lynn and Akgun (2003) and Moenaert and Souder (1990) document the value of teamwork behavior for project performance which has strong implications for leadership.

The project leader is a pivotal figure, critically affecting both the process and performance of the new product development project. Several behaviors of the project team leaders are particularly germane. These individuals are highly effective in obtaining resources such as more personnel and larger budgets for the project team, and are able to keep teams motivated and focused. Project team leaders also facilitate teamwork and are small-group managers of their project teams. Such leaders often are central to the creation of the overall product concept and communicate it to project team members (Atuahene-Gima, 2003; Sheremata, 2000; Brown and Eisenhardt, 1995). We are concerned with understanding what personality traits are characteristic

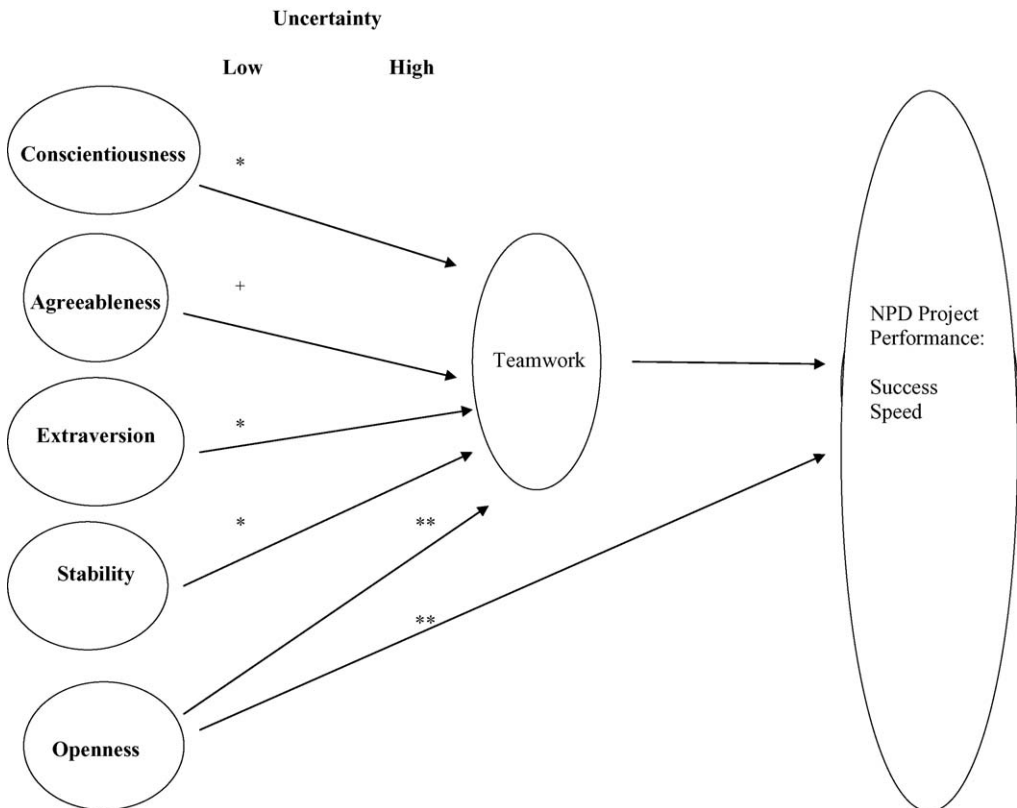


Fig. 1. Model: impact of leader personality on new product development teamwork and performance for high and low uncertainty conditions. * The relevant leader personality trait will have a stronger positive effect on NPD teamwork under low levels of uncertainty. ** The relevant leader personality trait will have a stronger positive effect on NPD teamwork and project performance under high levels of uncertainty. + The agreeableness of the leader is not expected to influence NPD project outcomes under either level of uncertainty.

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