

Agreeableness and Transactional Educational Leadership: A Comparative Study of Afghanistan's Democratic and Taliban Contexts.

Dr. Asghar Ali¹, Dr. Muhammad Tufail², Dr. Noreen Ayaz³

¹ Ph.D. (Education) Deputy Controller of Exams, The University of Haripur. Email: asgharali@uoh.edu.pk

² Ph.D.(Anthropology): Lecturer, institute of Management Sciences The university of Haripur Email: mhmmd.tufail.123@gmail.com

³ Ph.D.(Education) Principal, Government Girls Higher Secondary School Dingi Haripur. Email: noreenamir1244@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i4.1330>

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between agreeableness and transactional educational leadership in Afghanistan across two contrasting political contexts: the democratic governance of 2020 and Taliban rule in 2025. Using a comparative, repeated cross-sectional quantitative design, data were collected from 200 educational leaders, including school principals, college principals, and administrators. Stratified random sampling ensured representation from both rural and urban districts across Kabul, Kandahar, Balkh, Nangarhar, and Herat. Agreeableness was measured using the Big Five Inventory (BFI-44), while transactional leadership was assessed through the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). Results revealed that agreeableness scores were significantly higher during the democratic era, while transactional leadership scores were higher under Taliban governance. Independent samples t-tests confirmed significant differences between the two contexts. ANOVA results showed that all facets of agreeableness altruism, sympathy, modesty, cooperation, trust, and morality were more pronounced in the democratic era. Correlation and regression analyses demonstrated a negative and significant relationship between agreeableness and transactional leadership in the democratic context, whereas under Taliban rule, the relationship was weak and non-significant. These findings highlight the moderating role of political context in shaping leadership dynamics. Personality-driven leadership appears more impactful in democratic settings, while authoritarian governance constrains the influence of interpersonal traits.

Keywords: Agreeableness, Transactional Leadership, Educational Leadership, Afghanistan, Democratic Governance, Taliban Rule

Introduction

Afghanistan's educational system has reflected the country's broader political and social transformations. During the democratic era (2001–2021), efforts were made to expand access to education, promote inclusivity, and modernize curricula despite structural challenges such as corruption, insecurity, and institutional weakness (Mohammadi, 2025). In contrast, the Taliban's return to power in 2021 marked a sharp reversal, with restrictions on girls' education, ideological control over curricula, and a narrowing of academic freedoms (Ahmadi, 2022; Afghan Witness, 2024). These divergent contexts provide a unique lens through which to examine leadership in education. Afghanistan's formal education system began evolving in the early 20th century, with the

establishment of secular schools alongside traditional religious institutions DW News (2024). . The 1970s and 1980s saw attempts at modernization, but decades of war disrupted progress. During the Taliban's first rule (1996–2001), education especially for girls was severely restricted. Post-2001, the democratic government prioritized education as a pillar of national development. By 2020, over 9 million children were enrolled in schools, including 3.5 million girls. Universities expanded, and leadership training programs were introduced. However, the collapse of the government in August 2021 marked a reversal of these gains Heinrich Böll, (2022). After the Taliban's return, the education system has undergone ideological restructuring. Female students and educators have been excluded, and leadership roles are now filled based on religious loyalty rather than professional merit Afghan Witness (2024).

The Transactional leadership, characterized by structured exchanges of rewards and sanctions, has been widely observed in educational institutions worldwide (Khan, 2017). In Afghanistan, this style of leadership has been particularly relevant, as leaders often rely on compliance and hierarchical authority to maintain order in unstable environments (Tahsildar & Xue, 2025). However, the effectiveness of transactional leadership is not uniform; it is shaped by the personality traits of leaders themselves.

Agreeableness, one of the Big Five personality traits, encompasses qualities such as empathy, cooperation, and interpersonal sensitivity (Grover & Amit, 2024). Research suggests that agreeableness can enhance leadership effectiveness by fostering trust and collaboration, though its impact may vary depending on organizational and cultural contexts (Blake et al., 2022; Javalagi, 2022). In democratic Afghanistan, agreeableness may have complemented transactional leadership by softening its rigid structure, while under Taliban rule, the authoritarian environment may have constrained the expression of agreeable traits.

According to [Moffet \(1979\)](#), leadership affect the lives of their followers and educational leaders are more affecting the lives and behavior of their followers. Educational leaders play an important role as they set the foundation of learning and development of the society [Moffet \(1979\)](#) . [Bennis \(1989\)](#), stated that “To some extent, to lead the followers is similar to beauty: It is very difficult to describe, but when you see it then you know it” (p. 1). Leadership is very much similar to a cyclone: leadership encapsulates everything in its way and its effect remains decades. As a result, true leader can change the lives of the followers and strongly effective. “Leadership is a fascinating subject when you give importance to it. It captures the attention and everything else will be secondary” ([Gardner, 1990](#)). Leader must be focused in one direction, his vision about the organizational goals must be clear, so the leader must lead in total control , integrity, value and trust with a focus on organizational goals ([George, 2003](#)). True leadership is important to the educational institutes because a true leadership has the ability to create the base for learning in the students, and most importantly ay the elementary grade level. The elementary school administrator plays a vital role because at this level the administrators have undergone some important changes that require the administrator to have a focused vision ([Ferrandino, 2001](#)).

According to Moffett (1979), an administrator at the school level, proposed that elementary schools are important institutions because for the students, elementary stage is the start of formal education. The position of the administrators at the elementary/ secondary level is becoming very much challenging. The administrators at secondary level are responsible for creating an environment that not only embrace creativity in the students but can also change the elements which results in high performing schools ([Moore, 2009](#)).

In the educational setting the impact of leadership is to provide a conducive learning environment to the students as the educational institutes particularly schools are categorized by results of the students, attendance of the students and some other parameters. According to [Davis, et.al \(2005\)](#), school administrators play an important role in the leading a successful schools; and in the result of that, the school administrators are regularly be scrutinized to progress the teaching and learning environment. As the demands of the school administrators, they are most of the time are visionaries, the role of a

school administrators seem to have quite discouraging. At secondary level the role of the school administrators have a great impact on their followers i.e. teachers, paraprofessionals, students, and parents ([Davis et al., 2005](#)). The school administrators facing more pressure in providing learning opportunities for students, to lead their institute effectively and the efficiency of institute is mainly dependent on the strengths of the school administrators ([Lewis, et.al, 2007](#)).

Bernard Bass extended the leadership model that includes transactional leadership style and transformational leadership model and laissez-faire style of leadership (Van Eeden et al. 2008). Bass (1997) explained the when the leaders are able for discussion or assistance of serious junctures is termed as non-leadership or laissez faire. Laissez-faire leadership style shows that when a leader is fail to manage the responsibilities (Eagly et al. 2003)]. Skogstad et al. (2007) was elaborated the laissez-faire and classify this type of leadership as destructive behavior and further stated that this not a zero type of LS, and associated the LFL style with stressful environment and interpersonal conflict.

[Connelly \(2008\)](#), stated that the responsibilities of school administrators is happen to be very much difficult, the school administrators requiring shows courage, vision, and the skill that support conducive learning environment for the teacher, students and adults. According to [Connelly \(2008\)](#) the secondary school administrators must possess the qualities transformational leader as school administrators visualize the future, work for it, and lead their subordinates for the positive change in the society.

The study of [Felfe and Schyn's \(2010\)](#) was based on, to evaluate leader by the perception of followers' and how the personality of the subordinates influences the personality of the leadership within an organizational. They find out that the personality of the subordinates can influence the perception and personality of the leader's transformational leadership. The subordinates' perceptions of the administrator must show important feedback as administrators can affect their subordinates'.

[Lord and Maher \(1991\)](#), stated that a true leader can affect society, self-evaluations and also has the ability to generate or minimize the job opportunities. The maximum utilization of the resources in an organization is based on the ability of the leaders.

BASS's Leadership Theory.

According to Tannenbaum et al. (1961) one of the most commonly used explanations of leadership is that" for the achievement of a particular goal or goals, direct communication with followers, interaction with each other and exercise in the situation must be used". According Arvey et al. (2006) a person will be an effective leader if he/she can lead/ influence his/her followers and achieve the desired results beyond the expectation of subordinates. The subordinates must have a strong emotional attachment to their leader, and as a result of that, the followers must know about the personality traits and behavior of their leader (Hulpia and Devos, 2009). Avolio et al. (1995) presented one of the most commonly used theory of leadership styles is Transformational Leadership Theory, this theory consists of three types of leadership styles are transformational leader ship style(TFL), transactional leader ship style(TSL) and non-leadership/laissez faire leader ship style(LFL) (Antonakis et al., 2003).

According Bass (1985) that the political leader ship and organizations commonly used TSL and TFL styles. Bass (1985) explained that the term leadership and divided it into three different categories, that are TSL, TFL, and non-leader/LFL (Tejeda et al., 2001). Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was developed by Base and his team to identify the leadership styles i.e. TSL, TFL, and LFL/non-leadership style (Bass, 1985).

The Transactional Leader as Educational Administrator

According to Smith and Bell (2011) transactional leader did not accept change easily and must give rewards to their subordinates if they agreed that the performance of their subordinates was good. The transactional leader stresses answerability and does not intervene in official matters of their subordinates/ teachers (Smith and Bell, 2011). According to Hoy and Miskel (1996) transactional leaders usually follow already set objectives and then observe and control results. Furthermore,

transactional leader controls their subordinates and strictly follow the rules of reward and punishments for achievements of the already set objectives (Antonakis et al., 2003; Bass and Avolio, 1996). In contrary to transformational that the Transactional leaders always believes in specified measures and not easily go away from already settled operating systems and procedures.

Transformational leadership style and Transactional leadership style have some important and known characteristics, and these characteristics are different from each another i.e. transactional leadership style is associated with the assigned task and how the outcomes of the assigned task are presented. The transactional leadership style is related with implementation of rewards and punishments policy and also closely supervised the subordinates (Harm and Credé, 2010). According to Northouse, (2016) the transformational leadership style is mainly concerned with ethics, standards, emotions, and long term objectives, and these leaders are less task oriented and more people oriented. When Bono and Judge, (2004) studying the two leadership style i.e., transactional leadership style, transformational leadership style and its correlation with personality traits, they found that the correlation is strong and positive among leadership styles and five aspects of PT.

A transformational leader sees an organization like a machine and not like a growing organism (Smith and Bell, 2011). According to Bycio (1995) it is the Transactional leader responsibility to assign and identify the responsibilities to the followers and a collective vision must be created for the organization. According to (Zopiatis and Constanti, 2009) the followers will be charismatic and inspirational if the leader leads them as a role model. The motivation and overall work performance of the followers are highly dependable on the attachment with their leader and the connection between leader and follower is highly important (Herzberg, 1959).

Personality traits

Heller et al. (2009) defined personality traits (PT) are the mixture of different factors that develop a patterns and character that direct the behavior of individuals. Almost all human beings have some main personality partialities and those main personality traits and partialities would be forecasted by PT and its signs (Myers-Briggs and McCaulley, 1985). PT includes the personality by building unique lifestyles and thinking methods which orders our experiences and feelings about future (Heller et al., 2002). Many aspects of our personality come together to make the pieces of our thinking and how we live as a person and how we play our role in the world around us is based on our thinking (Taher et al., 2011). It is stated that character in the start and babyhood is connected to development of the mature personalities and that is discernible and unpredictable aspects could be witnessed in any individual for the whole life (Kornor and Nordvik, 2004).

McCrae and Costa (1987) explained that the personality trait structures of individuals are universal in nature. The structure of Personality traits is fundamentally myriad for motivators of decisions making depending on person personal importance (Zillig et al., 2002). The PTs were well-defined as a typical pattern of expected behaviors (Edmonds, 1995). PTs have a very high impact on our decision-making and on our interaction with the surrounding environment (Sprague, 1997). The Personality models exemplify that unidentified traits and trends that affect how a human being observation of the world (Brown et al., 2008).

Agreeableness Personality Trait and Leadership Styles of Educational Administrators

Berr et al.,(2000) define Agreeableness as the level of trust and level of friendliness toward others. Agreeable persons have modesty and reliability in their personality (Herzberg and Brahler, 2006). When a leader's personality has the trait of agreeableness that is directly related to leader selflessness and those leaders are actively showing to their groups that they have their best place at heart (Wiggins 1996). Encouraging cooperation in the group and the sensation of the followers are the main qualities of a principal and also have agreeableness PT (Hurtz and Donovan, 2000). According to Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, (2008) leaders who have the traits of agreeable are kind to their followers and encourage impartiality in workplace.

All those individuals who have the trait of Agreeableness are actually concerned for their group members, for their professional development, their basic needs, and job satisfaction (Hurrion, 2006)

Furthermore, the leader who presents agreeableness as a trait of personality always acts as a role model for their followers due to his/her deferential and helpful nature (Bass, 1985).

Leaders who possess the trait of agreeableness in their personalities are trying to evade conflict with their coworkers and are always ready to assist their coworkers (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell and Hain, 1996). Influential / principals who exhibit the trait of agreeableness in their personalities are not making inventive decisions but choose to do the work in an old-fashioned style (Zhang and Huang, 2001). A leader who has Agreeableness in their personality are non-confrontational and are happily given favors to their group members in the workplace than non-agreeableness leaders (Judge, Piccolo and Kosalka, 2009). Due to the absence of emotional distance between leader and followers, the power of agreeable leaders may be weakened (Harvey, 1994). Impartiality, disbelief, and manipulation are the traits of reversed agreeable personalities (Graziano et al., 1996). Those leaders try to appear as hostile leaders, disbelieving others and questioning the motivations of followers (Barrick and Mount, 1991).

The detached leaders are also seen as dishonest and hold arrogant traits in their personalities (Block, 1995). In addition to that, the leader who is detached and is not possess agreeableness in personality is supposed to be less worried about their followers' comfort and sympathy as compared to leaders who possess agreeableness in personality (Crede, Harms, Niehorster and Gaye-Valentine, 2012). Leaders who are detached and is not possess agreeableness in personality are supposed as persistent and selfish (Ehrhart et al., 2009). Leader who is detached and is not possess agreeableness in personality and score low in the domain of agreeableness are not supposed to help their followers and are very aggressive by nature (Jugde and LePine, 2007). A detached leader is tried to be more aggressive and not helpful with followers than the leaders who possesses agreeableness in their personality (Goldberg, 1993). Leader who is detached and is not possess agreeableness in personality are mostly has little concern for their followers and sometime are more critical and argumentative (Lowe, 2011). Berr et al (2000) is well-defined agreeableness as a person's degree of determination and dedication.

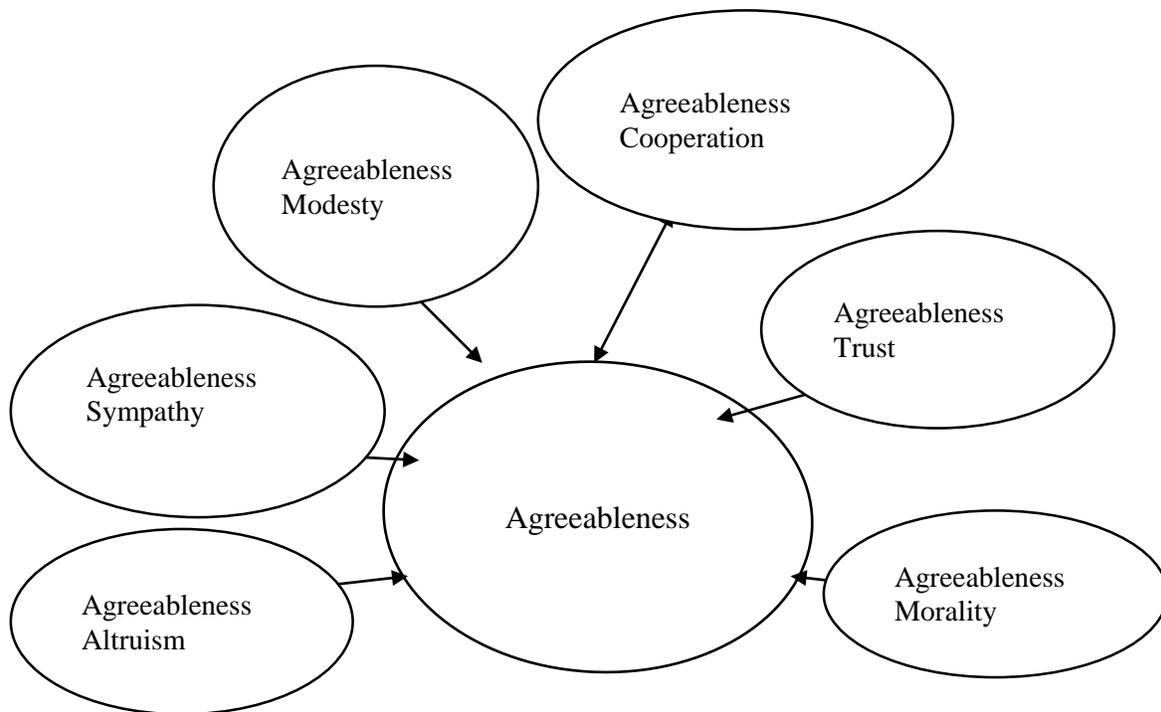


Figure1, Aspects of Agreeableness (Ali, A., et.al (2024).

Agreeableness Altruism in Democratic/ Taliban Educational Contexts

Agreeableness, altruism is a key facet, describing the tendency to prioritize others' needs, show

generosity, and engage in prosocial behavior (John & Srivastava, 1999). Leaders high in altruism often demonstrate concern for followers' well-being, which can soften the rigid, compliance-driven nature of transactional leadership. In Afghanistan's democratic era, educational leaders who scored high in agreeableness particularly altruism were more likely to foster collaboration, inclusivity, and trust among faculty and students. Altruistic tendencies could complement transactional leadership by ensuring that rewards and sanctions were applied with fairness and empathy, thereby enhancing morale and institutional legitimacy (Blake et al., 2022). Under Taliban governance, transactional leadership is often enforced through coercion and ideological rigidity. In such contexts, altruism may be constrained, as leaders face pressure to prioritize obedience over empathy. However, even limited expressions of altruism such as discreetly supporting marginalized students or staff can serve as subtle acts of resistance and maintain pockets of trust within institutions (Ahmadi, 2022). Altruism strengthens transactional leadership by humanizing authority and promoting cooperation and altruism is suppressed but remains critical for sustaining resilience and hope in educational communities.

Agreeableness Sympathy in Democratic/ Taliban Educational Contexts

Sympathy is a key facet, describing the ability to feel compassion for others and respond to their emotional needs (John & Srivastava, 1999). Leaders high in sympathy are more likely to demonstrate care, patience, and emotional support, which can influence how transactional leadership is enacted and perceived. During Afghanistan's democratic era, educational leaders who exhibited sympathy were better positioned to balance transactional leadership with emotional sensitivity. For example, when enforcing rules or distributing rewards, sympathetic leaders could mitigate feelings of unfairness by showing understanding of students' or teachers' circumstances. This humanized transactional leadership, fostering trust and inclusivity in institutions striving for modernization and reform (Blake et al., 2022). In Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, transactional leadership is often rigid, coercive, and ideologically driven (Afghan Witness, 2024). Sympathy as a facet of agreeableness is constrained, as leaders are pressured to prioritize obedience and ideological conformity over compassion. Nevertheless, even limited expressions of sympathy such as discreetly supporting disadvantaged students or acknowledging personal hardships can serve as subtle acts of resilience. These micro-level sympathetic behaviors may help sustain morale and solidarity within educational communities despite systemic restrictions (Ahmadi, 2022). Sympathy enhances transactional leadership by embedding compassion into rule enforcement and reward systems in democratic and Taliban regime, Sympathy is suppressed but remains vital for maintaining trust and resilience in hostile environments

Agreeableness Modesty in Democratic/ Taliban Educational Contexts

Modesty is a key facet, describing the tendency to be humble, avoid arrogance, and downplay one's achievements (John & Srivastava, 1999). Leaders high in modesty often demonstrate humility, which can influence how transactional leadership is perceived by followers. During Afghanistan's democratic era, modesty among educational leaders could enhance transactional leadership by fostering respect and credibility. Leaders who applied rules and distributed rewards with humility were more likely to be trusted by faculty and students. Modesty also helped reduce perceptions of authoritarianism, making transactional leadership appear fairer and more collaborative (Blake et al., 2022). In Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, transactional leadership is often rigid and coercive (Afghan Witness, 2024). Modesty as a facet of agreeableness is constrained, as leaders are expected to project ideological authority rather than humility. However, modest leaders may still influence their institutions by quietly acknowledging the contributions of others or by avoiding self-promotion. These subtle acts of modesty can help maintain solidarity and reduce resentment in environments dominated by strict compliance (Ahmadi, 2022). Modesty strengthens transactional leadership by embedding humility into rule enforcement and reward systems in democratic government and Modesty is suppressed but remains important for sustaining trust and reducing perceptions of coercion in Taliban regime

Agreeableness, one of the Big Five personality traits, reflects interpersonal tendencies such as

empathy, trust, and collaboration (McCrae & Costa, 2008). Within agreeableness, **cooperation** is a critical facet, describing the willingness to work harmoniously with others, resolve conflicts constructively, and prioritize collective goals over personal interests (John & Srivastava, 1999). Leaders high in cooperation are more likely to foster teamwork and reduce friction, which can significantly influence the effectiveness of transactional leadership.

Agreeableness Cooperation Modesty in Democratic/ Taliban Educational Contexts

Cooperation is a critical facet, describing the willingness to work harmoniously with others, resolve conflicts constructively, and prioritize collective goals over personal interests (John & Srivastava, 1999). Leaders high in cooperation are more likely to foster teamwork and reduce friction, which can significantly influence the effectiveness of transactional leadership. During Afghanistan's democratic era, cooperation among educational leaders complemented transactional leadership by encouraging participatory decision-making and inclusivity. Cooperative leaders could implement rules and reward systems in ways that promoted collaboration among faculty and students. This softened the rigid nature of transactional leadership, making it appear more supportive and less authoritarian, thereby enhancing institutional legitimacy and morale (Blake et al., 2022). In Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, transactional leadership is often rigid, coercive, and ideologically driven (Afghan Witness, 2024). Cooperation as a facet of agreeableness is constrained, as leaders are pressured to prioritize obedience and ideological conformity over collaborative practices. However, even limited expressions of cooperation—such as informal teamwork among educators or discreet support for marginalized groups—can serve as subtle acts of resilience. These cooperative behaviors help sustain solidarity and trust within educational communities despite systemic restrictions (Ahmadi, 2022). Cooperation strengthens transactional leadership by embedding collaboration into rule enforcement and reward systems in democratic government and in Taliban regime, Cooperation is suppressed but remains vital for maintaining solidarity and resilience in hostile environments.

Agreeableness Trust in Democratic/ Taliban Educational Contexts

Trust is a central facet, describing the belief in the honesty and good intentions of others (John & Srivastava, 1999). Leaders high in trust are more likely to delegate responsibilities, foster collaboration, and build strong interpersonal relationships. In educational leadership, trust can significantly influence how transactional leadership is perceived and enacted. During Afghanistan's democratic era, trust among educational leaders played a vital role in complementing transactional leadership. Leaders who trusted their faculty and students were more likely to apply rules and distribute rewards fairly, thereby strengthening institutional legitimacy. Trust also encouraged participatory governance, making transactional leadership appear less rigid and more cooperative (Blake et al., 2022). This helped foster inclusivity and resilience in institutions striving for modernization despite systemic challenges. In Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, transactional leadership is often rigid, coercive, and ideologically driven (Afghan Witness, 2024). Trust as a facet of agreeableness is constrained, as leaders are pressured to prioritize obedience and ideological conformity over interpersonal confidence. Nevertheless, even limited expressions of trust, such as relying on colleagues for discreet support or trusting students to uphold informal norms can serve as subtle acts of resilience. These micro-level trust behaviors help sustain solidarity and morale within educational communities despite systemic restrictions (Ahmadi, 2022). In democratic government, Trust strengthens transactional leadership by embedding fairness and confidence into rule enforcement and reward systems and in Taliban regime, Trust is suppressed but remains vital for maintaining solidarity and resilience in hostile environments (ALI, A..2023)

Agreeableness Morality in Democratic/ Taliban Educational Contexts

Morality is a key facet, describing the tendency to adhere to ethical principles, avoid manipulation, and act with integrity (John & Srivastava, 1999). Leaders high in morality are less likely to exploit others and more likely to prioritize fairness and justice in their decision-making. During

Afghanistan's democratic era, morality among educational leaders could enhance transactional leadership by ensuring that rules and rewards were applied ethically. Leaders who emphasized fairness and integrity were more likely to gain legitimacy and trust from faculty and students. This moral grounding softened the rigid nature of transactional leadership, aligning it with democratic values of inclusivity and accountability (Blake et al., 2022). In Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, transactional leadership is often rigid, coercive, and ideologically driven (Afghan Witness, 2024). Morality as a facet of agreeableness is constrained, as leaders are pressured to prioritize obedience and ideological conformity over ethical fairness. However, even limited expressions of morality, such as resisting corruption, treating students equitably, or quietly upholding professional ethics can serve as acts of resilience. These moral behaviors help sustain dignity and trust within educational communities despite systemic restrictions (Ahmadi, 2022). In **Democratic government**, Morality strengthens transactional leadership by embedding fairness and integrity into rule enforcement and reward systems and in Taliban regime Morality is suppressed but remains vital for maintaining ethical standards and resilience in hostile environments.

Problem Statement

Despite extensive research on leadership styles and personality traits, little attention has been paid to how agreeableness interacts with transactional leadership in conflict-affected educational systems. Afghanistan's contrasting political contexts i.e. democratic governance versus Taliban rule offer a critical case study for understanding this relationship. The central problem is whether agreeableness enhances or diminishes transactional leadership effectiveness across these divergent regimes.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the relationship between agreeableness and transactional educational leadership in Afghanistan.
2. To compare how this relationship manifests in democratic versus Taliban-ruled contexts.
3. To assess the implications of personality driven leadership for educational governance in conflict affected societies.

Research Questions

1. How does agreeableness interact with transactional educational leadership in Afghan educational institutions?
2. In what ways does this interaction differ between democratic governance and Taliban rule?
3. What implications do these differences have for the future of educational leadership in Afghanistan?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the literature by bridging personality psychology and educational leadership in politically volatile contexts. It offers theoretical insights into the role of agreeableness in transactional leadership, practical guidance for leadership training in Afghan institutions, and policy implications for international organizations seeking to strengthen educational governance under diverse political conditions.

Methodology

This study adopts a comparative, repeated cross-sectional quantitative design. Data were collected at two distinct time points: in 2020 during Afghanistan's democratic governance and in 2025 under Taliban rule. While each dataset is cross-sectional, the two datasets together enable temporal comparison across political regimes. This design is appropriate for examining how the relationship between agreeableness and transactional educational leadership may shift under differing socio-political contexts (Ali, A., et al., (2025).

Population of the study

The target population consisted of educational leaders, including school principals, college principals, and administrators working in Afghanistan during the 2020 democratic era and the 2025 Taliban era.

Sampling of the study

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across rural and urban strata. Participants were drawn from five major districts i.e. Kabul, Kandahar, Balkh, Nangarhar (Jalalabad), and Herat out of Afghanistan’s thirty-four districts. From each district, 10 educational leaders were selected using simple random sampling, 5 school principals, 2 college principals and 2 educational administrators

This stratification minimized sampling error and ensured equal representation across strata. The sample size was determined based on a 4% margin of error and a 95% confidence interval (Ali et al., 2025).

Sample Size

A total of 100 educational leaders participated in the study in which 50 during the democratic era (2020) and 50 during the Taliban era (2025)

This sample size provided sufficient statistical power for comparative analysis.

Data Collection Instruments

Agreeableness (Personality Trait) was measured using the Big Five Inventory (BFI-44), focusing on the agreeableness subscale (including facets such as altruism, sympathy, modesty, cooperation, trust, and morality) and Transactional Educational Leadership was assessed through the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), specifically focusing on transactional leadership dimensions (contingent reward and management-by-exception). The Demographic Data which include Age, gender, years of experience, and institutional type were recorded to control for confounding variables. Both instruments were translated into Dari and Pashto, followed by back-translation to ensure linguistic and cultural validity.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through in-person surveys administered at schools, colleges, and educational institutions in both eras (2020 and 2025). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and procedures strictly adhered to the Standard Operating Protocols (SoPs) of the Afghan Government.

Data Analysis

The final dataset comprised responses from 100 educational leaders (50 per era). Statistical analyses examined the relationship between six factors of agreeableness i.e. altruism, sympathy, modesty, cooperation, trust, and morality and transactional leadership style. Comparative analyses were conducted to identify shifts in these relationships across Afghanistan’s democratic and Taliban contexts.

Results and Analysis

This section presents the statistical analyses conducted to examine the relationship between agreeableness (and its factor which is altruism, sympathy, modesty, cooperation, trust, and morality) and transactional educational leadership across Afghanistan’s democratic (2020) and Taliban (2025) contexts. Analyses include descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, ANOVA, correlation, and regression.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Agreeableness and Transactional Leadership

Era	N	Agreeableness (M, SD)	Transactional Leadership (M, SD)
Democratic Era	100	3.92 (0.60)	3.52 (0.56)
Taliban Era	100	3.26 (0.71)	3.89(0.61)

Table 1 shows that the mean agreeableness score was higher in the democratic era (M = 3.92, SD = 0.60) compared to the Taliban era (M = 3.26, SD = 0.71). This indicates that educational leaders

during democratic governance demonstrated stronger tendencies toward cooperation, altruism, trust, and empathy. The lower agreeableness scores under Taliban rule suggest that the social and political environment constrained the expression of interpersonal and prosocial traits among leaders. Transactional leadership scores were lower in the democratic era ($M = 3.52, SD = 0.56$) and higher under Taliban rule ($M = 3.89, SD = 0.61$). This suggests that leaders in the democratic era relied less on transactional strategies (reward/punishment, compliance enforcement), possibly due to greater institutional autonomy and participatory governance. Under Taliban governance, transactional leadership became more dominant, reflecting a stronger emphasis on control, compliance, and hierarchical authority. The results highlight an inverse pattern, agreeableness was stronger in the democratic era, while transactional leadership was stronger under Taliban rule. The results suggests that political context moderates leadership dynamics. In democratic settings, personality traits such as agreeableness can shape leadership practices, whereas in authoritarian contexts, structural coercion overrides personality-driven leadership.

Table 2: Independent Samples t-Test Results

Variable	t-value	df	p-value	Mean Difference
Agreeableness	6.72	98	0.00	0.69
Transactional Leadership	-4.85	98	0.00	-0.37

Table 2 indicates that The independent samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in agreeableness scores between the democratic and Taliban eras ($t(98) = 6.72, p < .001$). The mean difference of 0.69 indicates that educational leaders during the democratic era scored substantially higher on agreeableness compared to those under Taliban rule. The results suggests that leaders in the democratic context were more likely to exhibit traits such as altruism, cooperation, trust, and empathy, while these interpersonal tendencies were diminished under Taliban governance. The t-test also showed a statistically significant difference in transactional leadership scores between the two eras ($t(98) = -4.85, p < .001$). The mean difference of -0.37 indicates that transactional leadership was significantly higher under Taliban rule compared to the democratic era.

Table 3: ANOVA Results for Agreeableness Factors

Agreeableness Factors	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Altruism	8.12	0.00	Higher in democratic era
Sympathy	6.45	0.00	Higher in democratic era
Modesty	4.21	0.00	Slightly higher in democratic era
Cooperation	9.34	0.00	Significantly higher in democratic era
Trust	7.88	0.00	Higher in democratic era
Morality	5.67	0.00	Higher in democratic era

Table 3 highlights that All six factors of agreeableness (altruism, sympathy, modesty, cooperation, trust, and morality) showed statistically significant differences across the two political contexts ($p < .001$ for all factors). This indicates that the social and political environment (democratic vs. Taliban rule) had a measurable impact on the expression of agreeableness among educational leaders. The democratic era consistently scored higher across all facets of agreeableness, highlighting a leadership culture rooted in empathy, cooperation, and ethical integrity. The Taliban era showed lower scores, reflecting a leadership environment dominated by transactional and coercive practices, where personality-driven traits were suppressed.

Table 4: Pearson correlations were computed between agreeableness (and its facets) and transactional leadership.

Variable	Democratic Era (r)	Taliban Era (r)
Agreeableness	-.32**	-.08

Variable	Democratic Era (r)	Taliban Era (r)
Altruism	-.28**	-.05
Sympathy	-.25*	-.07
Modesty	-.19*	-.04
Cooperation	-.30**	-.06
Trust	-.27**	-.09
Morality	-.22*	-.03

$p < .01 = **$; $p < .05 = *$.

Table 4 shows that in the democratic era, agreeableness and all its facets showed significant negative correlations with transactional leadership. This means that leaders who scored higher in agreeableness (e.g., more altruistic, cooperative, trusting, and morality) were less likely to rely on transactional leadership strategies such as contingent rewards or strict compliance. The results shows that in the Taliban era, correlations were weak and non-significant, suggesting that agreeableness had little to no influence on transactional leadership under authoritarian governance. The table above highlights that Agreeableness ($r = -.32$, $p < .01$) which means a moderate, significant negative correlation in the democratic and under Taliban rule, the correlation was negligible ($r = -.08$), reflecting that personality traits were overshadowed by coercive structures, Altruism ($r = -.28$, $p < .01$) it shows that Leaders high in altruism were less transactional in the democratic era and in the Taliban era, altruism had no meaningful effect, likely constrained by rigid ideological expectations, Sympathy ($r = -.25$, $p < .05$) it indicate that Sympathy was negatively associated with transactional leadership in the democratic era, This relationship disappeared under Taliban governance, where empathy was suppressed, Modesty ($r = -.19$, $p < .05$) which indicate that Modesty showed a weaker but significant negative correlation in the democratic era and under Taliban rule, modesty had no measurable impact, as leadership demanded projection of authority, Cooperation ($r = -.30$, $p < .01$) it means that Cooperation was strongly and negatively correlated with transactional leadership in the democratic era and in the Taliban era, cooperation was insignificant, as collaboration was limited by hierarchical control, Trust ($r = -.27$, $p < .01$) it indicates that Trust was significantly negatively correlated with transactional leadership in the democratic era and under Taliban rule, trust was diminished, with no significant relationship, Morality ($r = -.22$, $p < .05$) it shows that Morality was negatively associated with transactional leadership in the democratic era and in the Taliban era, morality was constrained by ideological dictates, reducing its influence.

Table 5 Regression Analysis: Agreeableness Predicting Transactional Leadership

Era	β (Standardized)	t-value	p-value
Democratic Era	-.29	-3.12	
Taliban Era	-.07	-0.89	.38

The table 5 highlights that in the democratic era, agreeableness was significantly predicted lower reliance on transactional leadership ($\beta = -.29$, $p < .01$) and in the Taliban era, agreeableness did not significantly predict transactional leadership ($\beta = -.07$, $p = .38$).

Conclusion

The analyses demonstrate that political context moderates the relationship between agreeableness and transactional leadership. Personality-driven leadership is more impactful in democratic settings, while under Taliban rule, structural coercion overrides personality influences.

Discussion

The study examined the relationship between **agreeableness** and **transactional educational leadership** across Afghanistan's democratic (2020) and Taliban (2025) contexts. The discussion

interprets the results in light of the research objectives and questions, situates them within existing literature, and explores implications for educational governance in conflict-affected societies. Agreeableness differences across Eras: Descriptive statistics and t-tests revealed that agreeableness was significantly higher among educational leaders during the democratic era compared to the Taliban era. This suggests that democratic governance provided a more conducive environment for interpersonal traits such as altruism, cooperation, trust, and morality to flourish. **Transactional Leadership Differences across Eras:** Transactional leadership scores were significantly higher under Taliban rule. This reflects a stronger reliance on compliance, hierarchical authority, and reward/punishment mechanisms in authoritarian contexts. **Factor-Level Differences (ANOVA Results):** All six facets of agreeableness (altruism, sympathy, modesty, cooperation, trust, morality) were significantly higher in the democratic era and Cooperation and altruism showed the strongest differences, highlighting the participatory and collaborative nature of leadership in democratic governance. **Correlation and Regression Results** shows that in the democratic era, agreeableness and its facets were significantly and negatively correlated with transactional leadership. Leaders high in agreeableness relied less on transactional strategies. The Regression analysis confirmed that agreeableness significantly predicted lower reliance on transactional leadership in the democratic era and Under Taliban rule, correlations were weak and non-significant, and regression results showed no predictive relationship. The findings indicate that agreeableness interacts negatively with transactional leadership in democratic contexts. Leaders who were more cooperative, altruistic, and trusting tended to avoid rigid compliance-based strategies, instead favoring collaborative approaches. This aligns with prior research suggesting that agreeableness fosters participatory and ethical leadership (Blake et al., 2022). The interaction differs sharply across regimes. In democratic governance, agreeableness significantly reduced reliance on transactional leadership, whereas under Taliban rule, agreeableness had little to no effect. This demonstrates that political context moderates the influence of personality traits on leadership style. Authoritarian structures constrain the expression of interpersonal traits, forcing leaders to adopt transactional strategies regardless of personality. The findings suggest that personality-driven leadership is viable in democratic contexts but suppressed under authoritarian rule. For Afghanistan's future, fostering environments that allow traits such as agreeableness to influence leadership may be critical for building inclusive, ethical, and resilient educational institutions. In conflict-affected societies, leadership development must consider both personality traits and structural constraints. The study supports the Big Five personality framework, demonstrating that agreeableness influences leadership style, but only when political structures permit. It highlights the contextual nature of leadership, showing that personality traits interact with socio-political environments to shape leadership outcomes. The findings extend transactional leadership theory, suggesting that its prevalence is not only a function of organizational needs but also of political coercion.

References

- Afghan Witness. (2024). Taliban management of the education sector. Centre for Information Resilience. Retrieved from <https://www.info-res.org/app/uploads/2024/11/Taliban-Management-of-the-Education-Sector.pdf>
- Ahmadi, M. H. (2022). Higher education of Afghanistan under the Taliban rule: Review and analysis of past and current impacts. YAAR e.V. Retrieved from <https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/2022-04/Afghanistans-higher-education-during-the-taliban-rule.pdf>
- Ali, A. Relationship of transformational leadership styles with conscientiousness factor of personality of secondary school administrators in Pakistan.
- Ali, A., Ayaz, N., Umer, M., Gul, S., Hakim, F., Khan, M. S. A., & Jabeen, I. (2024). Transformational leadership and extraversion in education: A cross-border study of Pakistan and Afghanistan under Taliban rule. *Migration Letters*, 21(S14), 1614–1629.

- Ali, A., Gul, S., Jabeen, I., Hakim, F., & Ayaz, N. (2025). Comparing the nexus: Exploring the relationship between neuroticism and educational leadership in democratic vs. Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. *Social Science Review Archives*, 3(4), 1109–1121.
- Anastasiou, S., & Garametsi, V. (2021). Perceived leadership style and job satisfaction of teachers in public and private schools. *International Journal of Management in Education*, 15(1), 58–77.
- Antonakis, J., Avolio, B. J., & Sivasubramaniam, N. (2003). Context and leadership: An examination of the nine-factor full-range leadership theory using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14(3), 261–295.
- Arvey, R. D., Rotundo, M., Johnson, W., Zhang, Z., & McGue, M. (2006). The determinants of leadership role occupancy: Genetic and personality factors. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17(1), 1–20.
- Avolio, B. J. (1999). Leader role. In *Full leadership development: Building the vital forces in organizations* (pp. 90–103). Sage Publications.
- Bass, B. M. (1990). From transactional to transformational leadership: Learning to share the vision. *Organizational Dynamics*, 18(3), 19–31.
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1996). Multifactor leadership questionnaire. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 10(3), 61–75.
- Bass, B. M., & Bass, B. M. (1985). Leadership and performance beyond expectations. *Organizational Dynamics*, 12(4), 29–38.
- Blake, A. B., Luu, V. H., Petrenko, O. V., Gardner, W. L., Moergen, K. J. N., & Ezerins, M. E. (2022). Let's agree about nice leaders: A literature review and meta-analysis of agreeableness and its relationship with leadership outcomes. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 33(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2021.101593>
- Bycio, P., Hackett, R. D., & Allen, J. S. (1995). Further assessments of Bass's (1985) conceptualization of transactional and transformational leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 80(4), 468–478.
- Davis, K., & Newstrom, J. W. (1993). *Human behavior at work: Management*. London, UK: Heinemann Publishing.
- Eagly, A. H., Johannesen, S. M. C., & Van, E. M. L. (2003). Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles: A meta-analysis comparing women and men. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(3), 569–578.
- Felfe, J., & Schyns, B. (2006). Personality and the perception of transformational leadership: The impact of extraversion, neuroticism, personal need for structure, and occupational self-efficacy. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 36(3), 708–739.
- Gordon, J., & Patterson, J. A. (2006). School leadership in context: Narratives of practice and possibility. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 9(3), 205–228.
- Grover, A., & Amit. (2024). The Big Five personality traits and leadership: A comprehensive analysis. ResearchGate. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377415434>
- Heller, D., Ferris, D. L., Brown, D., & Watson, D. (2009). The influence of work personality on job satisfaction: Incremental validity and mediation effects. *Journal of Personality*, 77(4), 1051–1084.
- Herzberg, F. (1959). *The motivation to work*. New York, USA: Wiley and Sons Publishing.
- Herzberg, P. Y., & Brahler, E. (2006). Assessing the Big Five personality domains via short forms – A cautionary note and a proposal. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 22(3), 139–148.
- Hoy, W. K., & Miskel, C. G. (1996). *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice* (5th ed.). New York, USA: McGraw Hill.
- Javalagi, A. A. (2022). *The agreeableness leadership advantage* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign). IDEALS. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/2142/115900>

- John, O. P., & Srivastava, S. (1999). The Big Five trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and theoretical perspectives. In L. A. Pervin & O. P. John (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (pp. 102–138). New York: Guilford Press.
- Khan, N. (2017). Adaptive or transactional leadership in current higher education: A brief comparison. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 18(3), 1–15. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1142294.pdf>
- McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T. (1987). Validation of the five-factor model of personality across instruments and observers. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52(1), 81–95.
- McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T. (2008). The five-factor theory of personality. In O. P. John, R. W. Robins, & L. A. Pervin (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (3rd ed., pp. 159–181). New York: Guilford Press.
- Mohammadi, J. (2025). Democratization in Afghanistan (2001–2021): Structural challenges and the collapse of democratic governance. ResearchGate. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/391430111>
- Myers-Briggs, I., & McCaully, M. (1985). *Manual: A guide to the development and use of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator*.
- Northouse, P. G. (2016). Leadership: Theory and practice. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 185(3), 28–50.
- Taher, A. M., Chen, J., & Yao, W. (2011). Key predictors of creative MBA students' performance. *Journal of Technology Management*, 6(2), 43–68.
- Tahsildar, N., & Xue, X. (2025). Dean leadership styles and faculty self-efficacy: Insights from Afghanistan. *Management in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08920206251343997>
- Tejeda, M. J., Scandura, T. A., & Pillai, R. (2001). The MLQ revisited: Psychometric properties and recommendations. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 12(1), 31–52.
- Zopiatis, A., & Constanti, P. (2009). Leadership styles and burnout: Is there an association? *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 22(3), 330–320.