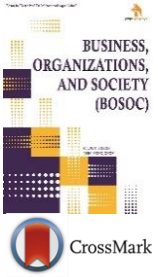
ZIBELINE INTERNATIONAL™ PUBLISHING
e-ISSN: 3009-1470
CODEN: BOSUBO

BUSINESS, ORGANIZATIONS AND SOCIETY (BOSOC)

DOI: http://doi.org/10.26480/bosoc.02.2025.46.49



RESEARCH ARTICLE

AGE AND LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: INSIGHTS FROM THE FIKR (FACET, INSIGHT, KNOWLEDGE, AND RESILIENCE) PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT BEYOND AGE DIFFERENCES

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History:

Received 10 May 2025
Revised 15 June 2025
Accepted 29 July 2025
Available online 03 August 2025

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes how age relates to leadership effectiveness according to the FIKR (Facet, Insight, Knowledge, and Resilience) Personality Assessment, with certain traits such as flexibility, emotional intelligence, and cooperative behaviour. The analysis of leaders of different ages shows that age is not a critical determinant of leadership success. Instead, individual traits revealed on the basis of the FIKR assessment and situational factors appear to play a greater role in the determination of leadership effectiveness. The findings are contrary to the traditional assumptions that tie success in leadership to age or experience and suggest that leadership development should focus on building up primary skills and qualities instead of age. The FIKR Personality Test also provides further understanding of personality traits that result in successful leadership.

KEYWORDS

leadership, age, FIKR Personality Assessment, adaptability, leadership effectiveness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary research debunks the traditional view that leadership performance is significantly influenced by age, with the suggestion that personality factors are more consistent predictors of leadership potential. While older leaders tend to be viewed as more experienced and wise, the literature indicates that social orientation changes occasioned by aging, including agreeableness, can influence follower perceptions of leadership behavior and effectiveness (Gregory et al., 2020). The FIKR (Facet, Insight, Knowledge, and Resilience) model that gauges such attributes as Autonomy, Control, and Emotional Intelligence highlights the multidimensionality of effective leadership, adaptability, and resilience being the defining factors in today's dynamic environments (Ardueser and Lehenbauer, 2020; Rosing and Jungmann, 2019; Yap et al., 2024a, 2024b, 2024c). Furthermore, lifespan perspectives illustrate that cognitive and affective changes during an individual's life can influence leadership styles, and thus age, in combination with personality characteristics, needs to be included in leadership assessment (Zacher et al., 2015). This shifting view accentuates the need for organizations to adopt more multifaceted approaches to leadership assessment, beyond the use of age as a singular predictor (Rosing and Jungmann, 2019).

Leadership has been one of the major areas of interest of organizational studies, classically emphasizing characteristics that render a leader successful. Age has been viewed as a major determinant based on the assumption that older leaders are more experienced, wiser, and better decision-makers (Bendell and Little, 2015). Yet, recent findings indicate that age is perhaps not as strong a predictor of leadership success as once believed (Bonesso et al., 2017; Kramer et al., 2019). With the rapid-paced globalized world of today, organizations are progressively diverting their attention to more stable predictors of leadership potential, including personality factors.

This shift is driven by the understanding that leadership effectiveness is complex and requires adaptability, resilience, and personality traits. The FIKR model offers a new trajectory in leadership assessment by its focus on key personality traits necessary for long-term leadership success (Harms et al., 2011; Roux and Härtel, 2018). The FIKR tool measures traits such as Autonomy, Control, Achievement, Support, Analytical, Emotional, Extrovert, and Intellectual, providing an overall perspective concerning the leadership potential of an individual (Çitaku and Ramadani, 2020; Krüger, 2009).

This study takes into account whether age plays a factor in leadership capability or if personality traits, as outlined in the FIKR framework, provide a more accurate and reliable measure of leadership performance. By examining key personality traits of Autonomy, Control, Achievement, Support, Analytical, Emotional, Extrovert, and Intellectual, the study attempts to determine the influence of these traits on effective leadership, providing an innovative way forward for organisational leadership selection and development processes.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this study, data was collected on a 200-question binary (yes/no) questionnaire emailed out by Humanology Sdn Bhd, which measured leadership skills in 409 respondents (Humanology, 2024). The questionnaire assessed leadership qualities through definitive yes/no responses, eliminating subjective scaling and giving a binary score to each question. The leadership scores are generated on the basis of the personality scales of Autonomy, Control, Achievement, Support, Analytical, Emotional, Extrovert, and Intellectual.

The relationship between Age and Leadership Score was explored with STATISTICA (Data Analysis Software System), Version 10. http://www.statsoft.com. Leadership Score served as the dependent

Quick Response Code	Access this article online	
	Website: www.bosoc.com.my	**DOI:** 10.26480/bosoc.02.2025.46.49

Cite The Article: Chee Kong Yap, Chee Seng Leow, Wing Sum Vincent Leong (2025). Age and Leadership Effectiveness: Insights from The Fikr (Facet, Insight, Knowledge, And Resilience) Personality Assessment Beyond Age Differences. *Business, Organizations and Society (Bosoc), 3(2): 46-49*.

variable, while Age was used as the independent variable. A linear model was used in ascertaining if age was a significant predictor of leadership abilities. Case wise deletion was used in handling missing data in such a way that analysis was conducted using complete responses alone.

The relationship between the two variables was illustrated graphically using a scatterplot with Age plotted along the X-axis and Leadership Score along the Y-axis. A regression line was added to the scatterplot, and a 95% confidence interval (dashed red lines) was overlaid to outline variability and uncertainty in the estimated relationship. Histograms of both Leadership Score and Age were also plotted to illustrate data distribution.

3. Results

Figure 1 shows the relationship between Age and Leadership Score in a dataset of 409 respondents.

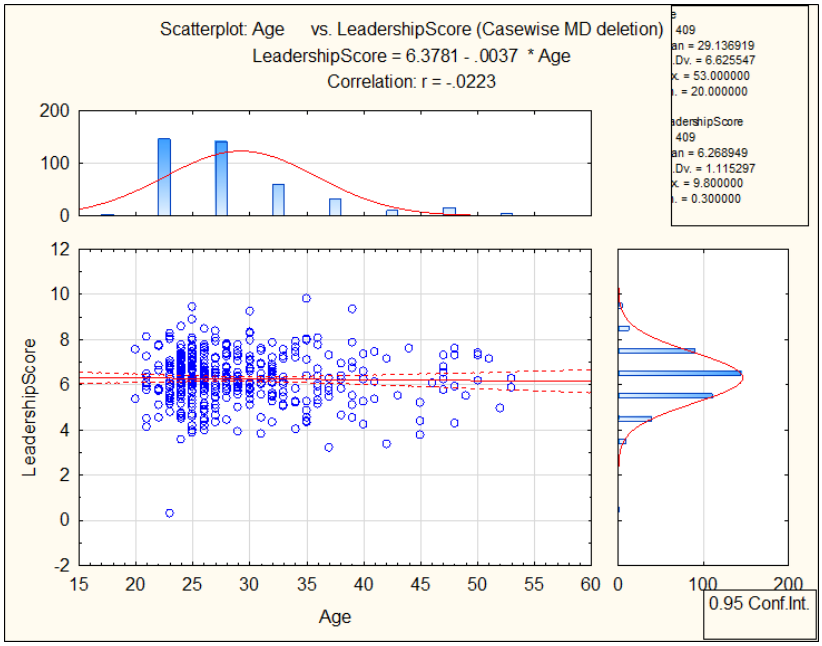

Figure 1: The relationship between Age and Leadership Score in a dataset of 409 respondents.

The model produced the following regression equation:

Leadership Score= 6.3781−0.0037×Age

This equation indicates a very weak negative association between Leadership Score and age. Leadership Score decreases by approximately 0.0037 points for every year increase in age. The extremely small magnitude of this coefficient suggests minimal impact of age on leadership skills.

Correlation coefficient (R = -0.0223) confirms the same by displaying weak negative correlation between Age and Leadership Score. This near-zero correlation indicates that age is not a good predictor of leadership ability in this sample. The negative sign documents a reverse relationship, but its magnitude indicates that differences in age have very little, if any, effect on leadership ratings. This weak relationship is also readily observed in the scatterplot, where points are spread with no apparent linear pattern.

With regards to variability, the 95% confidence band about the regression line once more shows that there is no close relationship. The dashed red lines on the scatterplot are the bands of confidence, which are the broad bounds about the fitted regression line, reflecting the high degree of uncertainty in predicting leadership scores based on age. The spread of data points also supports this, with each of different ages having similar leadership scores, implying that leadership ability does not consistently increase or decrease with age.

Apart from the regression analysis, descriptive statistics also provide some insight into the distributions of both variables. The mean age of the respondents was 29.14 years and had a standard deviation of 6.63 years, indicating that the majority of the respondents were young adults with modest age variation. The age varied from 20 to 53 years, indicating a wide representation from early adulthood to middle age.

For the Leadership Score, the standard score was 6.27 with a deviation of 1.12, so most respondents scored in a moderately high leadership category. Scores for leadership ranged from 0.3 to 9.8, showing some difference between respondents' leadership abilities. Still, despite the differences, the points on the scatterplot showed no certain connection between leadership score and age, also illustrating the weak correlation.

The marginal histograms on either side of the scatterplot provide additional information on the two distributions. The Age histogram revealed a slight right skewing, with most respondents falling in the 25–35 age category. It is this concentration of young participants that makes the regression line relatively flat since there is not significant age variation that potentially hides any trend. On the other hand, the histogram of Leadership Score was skewed towards a score of 6, suggesting that most respondents had similar leadership ability.

4. Discussion

4.1 Leadership Scores Based on Personality Traits

Leadership traits research has been a major concern of organizational studies for decades, with researchers trying to establish complete traits that are contributory to effective leadership. The present study examines the correlations between eight personal leadership traits—Autonomy, Control, Achievement, Support, Analytical, Emotional, Extrovert, and Intellectual—and organizational performance (Ganzemiller et al., 2021; Kirkpatick and Locke, 1991). High autonomy scores are creative and can be leaders during uncertainty as they possess the ability to take independent decisions without much reference to others (Denison and Mishra, 1995). High control generally means being decisive with sound managerial capacities, with the organizational goals being met and processes being kept under control effectively. Autonomy-supportive leadership is also known to contribute positively to the job satisfaction and work engagement of the followers by instilling a sense of choice and self-direction in work (Hocine and Zhang, 2014; Slemp et al., 2018).

High-performance leaders demand high standards from themselves and their people, with a spirit of ongoing development and achievement. Support-oriented leaders, who are high in this dimension, are empathetic and team-focused, creating supportive environments where people feel cared for and encouraged. Great leaders also possess strong analytical and intellectual capabilities, which help them analyze problems in a systematic and methodical way and embrace novel solutions. To the contrary, existing research finds no age and leadership correlation according to the principle that leadership skill can be learned at any level of life and not on the basis of age (Judge et al., 2002; Hocine and Zhang, 2014; Subbiah Sukumaran, 2024; Oshagbemi, 2004).

The literature suggests that older leaders tend to have higher emotional intelligence, a key determinant of leadership success (Dartey-Baah et al., 2020). They tend to be more generative, with a stronger inclination toward mentoring and leading the next generation (Zacher et al., 2011). Older managers experience fewer challenges in coping with stress, which is related to more effective leadership (Lundmark et al., 2024). Despite this, there is always a probability that younger leaders will be evaluated with perceptions of low prototypicality that influence their leadership effectiveness (Buengeler et al., 2016). A combination of all eight of these traits produces a multi-dimensional profile that considers the potential of

a leader in various organizational settings. Emphasizing such personality traits, rather than chronological age, is a more accurate and significant test of leadership potential.

4.2 Importance of Present Findings in Leadership Recruitment

This study has very important ramifications for organizational leadership decision-making. The finding that leadership performance is not very closely correlated with age suggests that age does not have to be very prominently prioritized in leadership selection. Previously, age or length of service had been very highly valued within organizations as it was assumed that the more experienced or wiser (or more managerially competent) of the candidates were in fact the older ones (Gilbert et al., 1990; Rogers and Smith, 2004). This study disaffirms such a belief, establishing the fact that age does not determine leadership ability. Companies that prioritize age as a criterion in hiring might lose talented employees who are younger but possess the necessary attributes to be successful leaders (Gilbert et al., 1990; Larsson and Björklund, 2020).

Besides, research has highlighted that although older leaders are higher in emotional intelligence and stress management, younger leaders would not be any less effective, particularly where the environment is adaptive and innovation-centric (Buengeler et al., 2016; Dartey-Baah et al., 2020; Lundmark et al., 2024). The effectiveness of leadership behavior is based on factors such as external managerial discretion and team diversity, including age diversity (Hoch et al., 2010; Peng et al., 2024).

Instead of age being a measure, companies can focus on the most applicable personality traits that are associated with good leadership, for instance, Achievement, Control, and Support. Individuals with high Achievement orientation are extremely ambitious and have the ability to drive teams towards high aims, hence perfectly suited for action-oriented and fast-paced working cultures (Archer and Jansson, 2015). Similarly, Support and Emotional Intelligence-abundant leaders are better equipped to handle complex team dynamics (Zacher et al., 2011; Dartey-Baah et al., 2020). Intellectual and Analytical dimensions, as evidenced in this research, are increasingly precious in the current data-rich and knowledge-oriented settings (Archer and Arnten, 2016; Day, 2012).

Interest in organizational executive profile has grown as scholars attempt to isolate differences between effective and ineffective executives (Adeyemi-Bello, 2001). Older candidates for the executive leadership position can bring experience and a focus on team-building, but age alone is not sufficient for decision-making without considering individual traits (Young and Dulewicz, 2007; Fernández, 2004).

4.3 Age and Leadership – A Non-Linear Relationship

The findings of the present study suggest that age is weakly related to leadership performance, although the common belief is that older leaders are more suitable as they possess experience (Gilbert et al., 1990). Instead, there is evidence to suggest that decision-making, emotional intelligence, and being adaptable are more critical to effective leadership than age (Scheuer and Loughlin, 2020; Vaughan-Johnston et al., 2021; Dartey-Baah et al., 2020).

A reason why age fails to correlate well with effective leadership is the dynamic nature of demands of leadership roles in the current times. Younger leaders, being better suited to handle technology and innovation, can also be as effective as elderly leaders in dynamic conditions (Gilbert et al., 1990; Adeyemi-Bello, 2001; Buengeler et al., 2016). Both leadership and age are also moderated by team dynamics and managerial discretion (Peng et al., 2024; Hoch et al., 2010).

Also, older leaders can favour agentic behaviours while the younger ones adopt more communal styles of leadership in line with the new vision of inclusive leadership (Trish et al., 2019). Lifespan theories bring forth the possibility that the youth and older leaders have their own distinctive but valuable strengths (Scheuer and Loughlin, 2020; Tresh et al., 2019). Older leaders can be characterized by generativity and stress management, with flexibility and innovation driving the youth (Zacher et al., 2011; Lundmark et al., 2024).

Thus, leadership effectiveness can never be an age consideration. It is based on a combination of skills, personality, and situational variables that cut across age, and it offers a more subtle strategy in the development of leadership.

5. Conclusion

The study finds that age does not serve as an effective predictor of leadership effectiveness. Instead, as operationalized by the FIKR tool, personality traits provide a more precise and comprehensive indicator of leadership potential. Dimensions such as Autonomy, Control, Emotional Intelligence, and Support are of vital significance in determining leadership behavior and effectiveness across ages. The results are in contrast to stereotypical assumptions equating leadership potential and age as well as experience, necessitating organizational awareness of regarding personality aspects and situational adaptability while identifying and developing leaders. Through the incorporation of the FIKR framework into leadership evaluation processes, organizations can gain a better understanding of the most important traits motivating sound leadership and thereby become better positioned to recognize and cultivate effective leaders at all stages of life.

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