

Influence of personality and psychological capital on managers' trust in their direct-reports



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Purpose: This article investigates the influence of a manager's psychological capital (Psycap) and Personality Traits, based on the Five Factor Model (FFM), on their Propensity to Trust their direct-reports. While most literature focuses on subordinates' trust in managers, this study explores the reverse. It stems from the need to enhance organisational performance by improving trust between managers and subordinates.

Design/methodology/approach: The study uses a quantitative approach with established scales: Nyhan and Marlowe's Trust Measurement Scale, the TIPI Scale for personality, and the Psycap Questionnaire-12. Data were primarily collected from managers in South African manufacturing firms.

Findings/results: Psycap was the strongest driver of trust, showing a significant positive link to managers' trust in direct-reports. Agreeableness and Emotional Stability show significant positive relationships with trust, though at a lower confidence level, while Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Openness do not show significant links.

Practical implications: The findings highlight the need for targeted training to improve managers' interpersonal, emotional regulation, and trust-building skills. Performance evaluations should consider trust-building behaviours and promotion policies could be refined based on the research findings, to ensure that candidates who are suitable for leading successful teams are placed in managerial positions.

Originality/value: The study contributes nuanced insights by challenging traditional perspectives on Personality Traits and Trust, emphasising the vital role of Psycap in trust propensity. The study shows that investing in employee Psycap development is crucial. Employees with higher Psycap levels tend to trust their direct-reports more, which helps build a positive organisational culture that prioritises psychological well-being.

Keywords: direct report; manager; performance; personality; Psycap; relationship; trust; trustworthiness.

Introduction

Background

In a highly competitive organisational landscape shaped by globalisation, technological advancements and integrated cultures, the establishment of a robust trust relationship between managers and their direct-reports is identified as a strategic imperative for gaining a competitive advantage (Alarcon et al., 2018a; Avey et al., 2011; Bitmiş & Ergeneli, 2013; Kim & Beehr, 2019; Udin & Yuniawan, 2020). Trust is likely to contribute to a positive work environment, enhanced employee engagement and improved workplace satisfaction among team members (Bitmiş & Ergeneli, 2013). A strong trust relationship can encourage innovation and risk-taking by fostering a sense of security among direct-reports and their managers. When employees feel trusted, they are less afraid of negative consequences and more willing to share ideas and take creative risks (Alarcon et al., 2018b; Brown et al., 2015). Notably, an organisation's external reputation can also benefit from a culture of trust, which assists in attracting top talent, fostering strong partnerships and building credibility with stakeholders (Brown et al., 2015).

Although a lot of research has been performed on how employees trust their managers, there has been less focus on how managers trust their direct-reports. This gap in understanding the managers' perspective is notable and worth exploring. Exploring managers' trust in their direct-reports is important because it can significantly impact workplace dynamics, team performance and overall organisational culture (Alarcon et al., 2018b). When managers trust their employees,

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it can lead to greater empowerment, open communication and collaboration, ultimately fostering a more innovative and productive environment (Brown et al., 2015). Understanding this dynamic can also help identify ways to build stronger relationships and improve team effectiveness. Frazier et al. (2013) and Straiter (2005) argue that the propensity of a manager to trust their direct-report is a construct that merits more attention, given its significant influence on organisational behaviour and performance. While some studies analyse the relationship between Personality Traits and Trust, there appears to be a dearth of research on the relationship between other personal resources such as psychological capital (Psycap) and the propensity to trust direct-reports (Avey et al., 2011; Berry et al., 2011; Bitmiş & Ergeneli, 2013; Han et al., 2019; Kim & Beehr, 2019).

Psychological Capital refers to a positive psychological state characterised by four key components: Self-efficacy – confidence in one’s abilities – (Bandura, 1977), Optimism – a positive outlook on future outcomes – (Seligman, 1975), Hope – the ability to set and pursue goals – (Snyder et al., 1991), and Resilience – the capacity to bounce back from setbacks – (Masten, 1989). Together, these traits contribute to an individual’s overall well-being and performance (Luthans et al., 2007). Psychological Capital is crucial for understanding trust dynamics because it directly influences how individuals engage with one another in relationships. Higher levels of Psycap can lead to more positive interactions and foster trust. When team members feel confident and optimistic, they are more likely to be open and vulnerable, which enhances trustworthiness and collaboration (Luthans et al., 2007). This connection can ultimately boost team performance and resilience in challenging situations (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2007). Han et al. (2019) therefore propose an additional intervening variable, namely Psycap, in studying the trust relationship between managers and their direct-reports.

This article investigates whether a manager’s Personality Type and level of Psycap influence their Propensity to Trust their direct-reports. It is envisaged that the findings will contribute to the knowledge of trust relationships, and thereby lead to a more engaged and productive workforce by applying recommendations from this study. Applying these recommendations to South African organisations, where the respondents of this study are based, is likely to add significant value, especially given the ongoing challenges with labour productivity (Koekemoer et al., 2018). In South Africa, fostering trust within organisations is crucial because of factors such as economic instability, high unemployment and deep-rooted social inequalities. When trust is strong, employees tend to be more engaged and motivated, which can directly enhance productivity. Considering the country’s diverse background, building trust can also bridge gaps between different groups, creating a more inclusive work environment. This, in turn, improves performance and equips organisations to better navigate local challenges (Koekemoer et al., 2018).

The article aims to investigate how a manager’s Personality Traits and Psycap influence their Propensity to Trust their direct-reports. The exploration of Psycap and Personality’s influence on Trust is important, as it not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge on trust relationships but also holds potential implications for fostering a more engaged and productive workforce. Particularly relevant in the context of South African organisations grappling with challenges in labour productivity, the findings in this research article offer valuable insights on how to promote an increase in labour productivity and better workplace environments in South African organisations. In subsequent sections, the theoretical framework guiding the investigation will be reviewed, a presentation of the hypotheses, details of the methodology employed and a discussion of the findings will be shared. Finally, an analysis of the significance of the results, acknowledgements and the limitations of the study as well as outlining avenues for future research, are discussed.

Theoretical foundations and hypotheses

Trust between a manager and direct-reports

Trust between a manager and their direct reports is recognised as a deliberate choice, wherein an individual places confidence in another or exposes their vulnerability based on the belief that this trust will not be exploited (Bhattacharya et al., 1998).

Scholars generally agree that trust involves a relational dynamic between two parties, characterised by one’s willingness to be vulnerable in the face of uncertainty about others’ intentions, motives or future actions, as noticed by Heyns and Rothmann (2021). Paliszkievicz et al. (2015) support this perspective, describing trust as placing oneself in a vulnerable position and anticipating a positive reaction, irrespective of the trustor’s control over the trustee. However, there is some disagreement among scholars regarding the inclusion of vulnerability in the definition of trust. Some argue that trust is also linked to power dynamics, as trust is placed in those with power, regardless of their outward display of trustworthy behaviour (Baghrmian et al., 2020). Consequently, definitions may vary, with some definitions emphasising competence, benevolence and integrity over vulnerability as cited by Kumar et al. (2020).

It is important to distinguish between trustworthiness and the absolute definition of trust within the context of the trustor-trustee relationship. The distinction between trustworthiness and trust recognises the subjectivity of trust and how it is often adapted to varying contexts (Kumar et al., 2020). Trust involves allowing vulnerability, while trustworthiness refers to qualities such as integrity, honesty, moral character, reliability and dependability that reinforce the trust relationship (Heyns & Rothmann, 2021; Kumar et al., 2020). Trustworthiness, which denotes reliability and competence, provides a rational basis for trust. Trustworthiness, as a foundational aspect, makes individuals deserving of trust and contributes to a manager’s likelihood of placing trust in their direct-reports

(Freitag & Bauer, 2016; Kumar et al., 2020). While trustworthiness pertains to the trustee's characteristics within their control, it is essential to consider trustor characteristics that may be beyond the trustee's control, such as Psycap, or specific Personality Types (Cakir & Adiguzel, 2020; Freitag & Bauer, 2016; Mooradian et al., 2006).

Propensity to trust

The inclination to trust measures the extent to which an individual places trust in another person (Cakir & Adiguzel, 2020; Freitag & Bauer, 2016; Heyns & Rothmann, 2021; Kumar et al., 2020; Mooradian et al., 2006). In other words, an individual's Propensity to Trust can be viewed as their willingness to trust others (Alarcon et al., 2016; Frazier et al., 2013; Freitag & Bauer, 2016; Mooradian et al., 2006).

Individuals with a high Propensity to Trust are inclined to assume the trustworthiness of others and are likely to extend the benefit of the doubt in uncertain situations (Alarcon et al., 2018b; Mooradian et al., 2006). Conversely, those with a lower Propensity to Trust may have elevated standards, necessitating more evidence or time to establish trust in others (Alarcon et al., 2018b; Mooradian et al., 2006).

People's willingness to trust is said to vary widely and is shaped by their Personality Traits as detailed in the Five Factor Personality Model (FFM) (Alarcon et al., 2018a). It is also influenced by factors such as economic conditions, educational access, cultural background and geographic location (Alarcon et al., 2018a; Freitag & Bauer, 2016). In the manager-direct report relationship, the Propensity to Trust can also be shaped by external circumstances, including mutual dependence, emotional safety, history, familiarity, past experiences, cultural norms and perceived risk (Alarcon et al., 2018a; Mooradian et al., 2006).

The Propensity to Trust plays a pivotal role in the development of trust within interpersonal relationships, encompassing both affect-based and cognitive-based trust (Legood et al., 2023). Affect-based trust, rooted in emotional connections, relies on gut feelings and intuition to establish trust. In contrast, cognitive-based trust is more rational, involving an evaluation of another party's reliability and competence (Miao et al., 2014). How individuals lean towards affect-based or cognitive-based trust is influenced by their Propensity to Trust, shaping the dynamics of their trust relationships (Tomlinson et al., 2020). Furthermore, understanding how individuals lean towards affect-based or cognitive-based trust is crucial in discerning the impact of Personality Traits on the dynamics of trust relationships.

The FFM breaks down Personality Traits into five key traits: Openness to Experiences (creativity and willingness to try new things), Conscientiousness (organisation and dependability), Extraversion (sociability and assertiveness), Agreeableness (compassion and cooperativeness) and Neuroticism (emotional instability) (Alarcon et al., 2018a).

Together, these traits provide a broad overview of how people typically think, feel and behave. This model is widely used in psychology to understand personality differences. Personality Traits provide valuable insights into individuals' Propensity to Trust and the dynamics of trust relationships. For instance, individuals high in Extraversion may exhibit a greater inclination towards affect-based trust, given their sociable and outgoing nature, while those high in Conscientiousness may lean towards cognitive-based trust, owing to their tendency for careful evaluation and adherence to rules (Graziano & Tobin, 2002). Additionally, individuals with high levels of Agreeableness may be more predisposed to affect-based trust, as they tend to be empathetic and cooperative, fostering emotional connections with others (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Conversely, those high in Openness to Experiences may exhibit a nuanced approach, integrating both affective and cognitive-based trust elements, based on their receptivity to new ideas and experiences (Costa & McCrae, 1992). A deeper understanding of how individual differences shape the dynamics of trust relationships in interpersonal interactions can be gained by exploring the interplay between Personality Traits and Trust Propensity.

Personality traits and trust

Personality Type is said to play an important role in shaping an individual's approach to Trust, with distinct Personality Traits such as Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Openness to Experiences influencing how individuals perceive and extend Trust to others (Alarcon et al., 2018a; Berry et al., 2011; Mooradian et al., 2006).

Research on the FFM in manager-employee relationships shows how Personality Traits influence workplace dynamics. For example, Judge and Bono (2000) found that traits such as Emotional Stability in managers are linked to higher job satisfaction and better performance among employees. Barrick and Mount (1991) revealed that conscientious managers tend to lead to more productive teams, showing how effective leadership can drive results. Tubre and Collins (2000) pointed out that Personality Traits play a key role in conflict resolution, with emotionally stable managers creating healthier work environments. Salgado (1997) reinforced this idea, demonstrating that Personality Traits are strong predictors of job performance across various workplace conditions and settings. Lastly, Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) highlighted the importance of compatibility between manager and employee traits, suggesting that a good personality fit leads to better collaboration and satisfaction at work. Together, these studies demonstrate how Personality shapes manager-employee interactions.

The FFM, encompassing Emotional Stability, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Openness to Experiences, is widely used to describe and explain Personality (Alarcon et al., 2018a; Berry et al., 2011; Mooradian et al., 2006). Compared to alternate models such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Myers & Briggs, 1962) and the HEXACO Model (Lee & Ashton, 2004), the

FFM enjoys extensive recognition and support in literature, particularly for its practical applicability to research in clinical settings and organisational psychology (Berry et al., 2011; Romero & Mitchell, 2017). The FFM's comprehensive nature, empirical support, psychometric properties, practical utility and cross-cultural relevance contribute to its status as a valuable tool for understanding individual differences and predicting outcomes (Romero & Mitchell, 2017). Despite its popularity, the FFM has also come under criticism for its trait-based approach that tends to oversimplify Personality and neglects situational factors such as geographic location, upbringing, education and economic opportunity (Fleeson & Gallagher, 2009). Despite these critiques, both proponents and critics of the FFM agree that the FFM measures an individual's Personality, although opinions differ on the depth of the measurement because of its perceived simplistic approach (McCrae & Costa, 2004).

Open-minded, cooperative, emotionally stable, reliable and sociable individuals tend to exhibit higher levels of trust (Alarcon et al., 2016). Additionally, managers who exhibit certain characteristics, such as good communication skills, transparency, integrity, empathy and the ability to inspire and motivate others, may contribute to building trust and empowering their direct-reports more than those who do not exhibit these qualities (Berry et al., 2011; Kim & Beehr, 2019). For instance, transparent communication and empathy create an environment where employees feel understood and valued, thus fostering trust. In addition to transparent communication and empathetic behaviour, the ability to inspire and motivate instils confidence in the manager's leadership, further reinforcing trust among team members (Freitag & Bauer, 2016). Based on the extant literature, this research hypothesises:

H1a: A manager's Propensity to Trust direct-report(s) is statistically significantly related to the personality dimension of Conscientiousness.

H1b: A manager's Propensity to Trust direct-report(s) is statistically significantly related to the personality dimension of Extraversion.

H1c: A manager's Propensity to Trust direct-report(s) is statistically significantly related to the personality dimension of Agreeableness.

H1d: A manager's Propensity to Trust direct-report(s) is statistically significantly related to the personality dimension of Openness.

H1e: A manager's Propensity to Trust direct-report(s) is statistically significantly related to the personality dimension of Emotional Stability.

Null H1: Neither of the Personality Traits – Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness and Emotional Stability have a statistically significant relationship to trust from a manager towards their direct-report(s).

Simultaneously, the concept of *Psychcap*, encompassing an individual's positive psychological state, adds a nuanced layer to trust dynamics in the manager-direct report relationship, connecting *Psychcap* with trust for individual job performance and satisfaction (Avey et al., 2011; Han et al., 2019).

Psychological capital and trust

Psychcap, as defined by Avey et al. (2011), encompasses an individual's positive psychological state. Individuals scoring high in *Psychcap* are characterised by a positive emotional mindset, encompassing four factors, namely Self-efficacy, Optimism, Hope and Resilience (Bitmiş & Ergeneli, 2013; Han et al., 2019).

Self-efficacy, defined as the belief in one's ability to succeed in specific tasks or situations (Kim & Beehr, 2019), involves setting ambitious goals, staying determined despite challenges and showing increased effort and motivation (Bitmiş & Ergeneli, 2013; Han et al., 2019). Employees with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to take on challenging tasks, seek growth opportunities and perform better at their jobs (Bitmiş & Ergeneli, 2013; Han et al., 2019). Optimism involves a positive outlook and the expectation of positive outcomes in the future (Kim & Beehr, 2019). Optimistic individuals are likely to approach challenges with determination, maintain a positive attitude and seek growth opportunities, contributing to increased performance and organisational success (Kuldas & Foody, 2022; Yildiz, 2019). Hope is the belief in one's ability to achieve goals and the expectation of desired outcomes (Kim & Beehr, 2019). Employees with high hope levels set ambitious goals, develop effective strategies and persist during challenging times, positively impacting performance and goal attainment for themselves and the organisation (Bitmiş & Ergeneli, 2013; Han et al., 2019). Resilience can be defined as the ability to bounce back from setbacks, adapt to change and maintain well-being in the face of adversity (Kim & Beehr, 2019). Resilient individuals are therefore able to handle work-related challenges, maintain focus and perform effectively in high-pressure circumstances (Kuldas & Foody, 2022; Yildiz, 2019).

Research conducted by Avey et al. (2010), Bitmiş and Ergeneli (2013), Luthans et al. (2007) and Walumbwa et al. (2011) suggests that heightened levels of *Psychcap* may positively influence the trust that direct-reports have in their managers; however, the impact of a manager's *Psychcap* on their trust towards direct-reports remains uncertain.

The research conducted by Avey et al. (2010), Bitmiş and Ergeneli (2013), Luthans et al. (2007) and Walumbwa et al. (2011) highlights the potential positive impact of heightened levels of *Psychcap* on the trust relationship among direct-reports towards their managers. Extant literature also indicates that managers with high Self-efficacy levels tend to foster trust among their direct-reports, through their demonstrated confidence, decision-making abilities and willingness to share knowledge without apprehensions; these managers establish a foundation of trust within their teams (Kuldas & Foody, 2022; Yildiz, 2019). Their authenticity is characterised by transparency, honesty and fairness, further facilitating trust-building interactions with direct-reports (Kuldas & Foody, 2022; Udin & Yuniawan, 2020).

Literature suggests that managers who exhibit high levels of self-efficacy are likely to inspire trust among direct-reports through the demonstration of confidence in their management abilities and decision-making skills (Kuldas & Foody, 2022; Yildiz, 2019). Managers with elevated levels of Self-efficacy are more likely to share knowledge without concerns about job insecurity, contributing to the establishment of trust within the team (Avey et al., 2008; Kuldas & Foody, 2022). Individuals who rank high on Self-efficacy are also considered to be authentic, which contributes to facilitating trust-building interactions with direct-reports (Kuldas & Foody, 2022; Udin & Yuniawan, 2020). Authentic leaders, who demonstrate transparency, honesty and fairness, are expected to trust their direct-reports while effectively holding their direct-reports accountable for performance (Avey et al., 2008; Udin & Yuniawan, 2020).

Optimistic managers, who maintain a positive outlook and expect favourable outcomes, also create an environment conducive to trust (Avey et al., 2008; Kuldas & Foody, 2022; Udin & Yuniawan, 2020). An optimistic manager instils confidence in direct-reports' abilities to handle challenges and take calculated risks, fostering a climate of trust and mutual support (Kuldas & Foody, 2022). Managers' levels of optimism are expected to translate into recognisable behaviours, which may be observed by their direct-reports, potentially enhancing the trust relationship in both directions (Avey et al., 2008). Resilient managers are better equipped to handle setbacks and maintain composure during challenging situations (Bitmiş & Ergeneli, 2013). Resilient managers avoid blaming direct-reports for difficult circumstances, navigate obstacles effectively and are likely to reinforce the trust and confidence of direct-reports in their management style.

Managers embodying Hope, inspire and motivate their direct-reports by effectively communicating a sense of possibility and belief in achieving goals, which fosters trust in their management style (Kuldas & Foody, 2022). Managers who exhibit high levels of Hope tend to trust that direct-reports align with the organisation's vision and mission, placing confidence in their determination to drive organisational success (Bitmiş & Ergeneli, 2013; Udin & Yuniawan, 2020).

Psycap traits are expected to positively influence the trust relationship between managers and their direct-reports by enhancing perceptions of competence, confidence and reliability (Avey et al., 2008). Managers with high Psycap are more likely to trust the judgement of their direct-reports, empowering them to exercise autonomy and provide them with the necessary support for success (Avey et al., 2008; Udin & Yuniawan, 2020). Psycap is therefore likely to positively impact the trust relationship between a manager and their direct-reports (Udin & Yuniawan, 2020).

In contrast to elevated levels of Psycap, when a manager has lower levels of Psycap, it can significantly impact the manager-employee relationship and overall workplace

dynamics. Managers lacking in Self-efficacy, Optimism, Hope and Resilience may struggle to inspire their teams, leading to decreased employee morale and engagement. For instance, employees may feel unsupported or uncertain about their roles when managers exhibit low Self-efficacy, as these managers may be less likely to provide guidance or constructive feedback (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). This lack of support can create an environment of distrust, where employees are reluctant to share ideas or concerns, fearing that their contributions will be undervalued or ignored.

Moreover, low Psycap in managers can hinder effective communication and conflict resolution. When managers are pessimistic or unable to cope with challenges, they may avoid difficult conversations or fail to address team issues, resulting in unresolved conflicts and a toxic work environment (Avey et al., 2010). Research shows that low Psycap levels not only impact managerial effectiveness but also contribute to higher turnover intentions among employees, as they seek more supportive and positive work environments (Dawkins et al., 2013). Ultimately, the negative outcomes of low Psycap in managers can lead to decreased organisational performance and a culture that stifles innovation and collaboration:

H2: A manager's level of Psycap has a statistically significant relationship with their Propensity to Trust their direct-report(s).

Null H2: A manager's Propensity to Trust direct-reports is not statistically significantly related to their level of Psycap.

Conceptual model

The conceptual model depicted in Figure 1 proposes that an individual's Personality Traits, as per the FFM, are expected to play a role in influencing their Propensity to Trust another person, specifically in the context of a manager trusting their direct reports. Furthermore, the proposed model also suggests that individuals with elevated levels of Psycap are more inclined to trust others, as shown by the positive relationship between Psycap and trust. This inclination arises from their positive psychological resources – Hope, Optimism, Resilience and Self-efficacy – which contributes to a heightened belief in the reliability and goodwill of others (Avey et al., 2010; Bitmiş & Ergeneli, 2013; Luthans et al., 2007; Walumbwa et al., 2011).

The expected outcome of having managers in an organisation with elevated Psycap levels and positive Personality Traits, is a heightened state of psychological well-being throughout the organisation. This heightened state of psychological well-being facilitates the cultivation of heightened levels of trust in interpersonal relationships (Avey et al., 2010; Bitmiş & Ergeneli, 2013). For instance, individuals characterised by high levels of Agreeableness and Extraversion may be more predisposed to trust others because of their warm and sociable nature. Similarly, those exhibiting high Conscientiousness, marked by disciplined and reliable characteristics, may also demonstrate increased levels of trust

in others (Alarcon et al., 2018a; Berry, 2011; Mooradian et al., 2006). Individuals who exhibit high scores in Emotional Stability often display characteristics such as calmness, composure and resilience to stress, and these attributes are likely to enhance the trust relationship from a manager's perspective towards their direct-reports (Alarcon et al., 2018b).

Research method

Research approach

The research approach adopted in this study was quantitative, aligning with the investigation of established constructs such as Trust, Personality Traits and Pyscap (Appelbaum et al., 2018). The use of primary data was considered essential because of the absence of contemporary data specific to South African contexts as well as from a manager's perspective towards their direct-reports, necessitating first-hand investigation to accurately understand the dynamics of the trust relationship between managers and their direct-reports, specifically pertaining to the influence of a manager's Personality and Pyscap on the trust relationship (Hox & Boeije, 2005). The research approach employed established scales including Nyhan and Marlowe's Trust Measurement Scale (1997), the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) Scale (Gosling, 2003) based on FFM and the Pyscap Questionnaire (PCQ-12) Scale for Pyscap (Luthans et al., 2007). Primary data were collected from a sample of managers in South African manufacturing organisations. Participants completed questionnaires measuring their personality Traits, Pyscap and their Propensity to Trust their direct-reports.

Table 1 summarises the key descriptive statistics, reliability and distribution characteristics for the constructs measured in the study, including Trust, Personality Traits (Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Extraversion and Openness to Experiences), and Pyscap. The mean values reflect the average scores for each variable, with trust having a mean of 3.8, and the other constructs ranging between 3.5 and 4.1. Standard deviations (SD), which indicate the variability of responses, range from 0.5 to 0.8, showing moderate dispersion in the data. Cronbach's alpha values, used to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales, are all above the acceptable threshold of 0.7, ranging from 0.79 to 0.92, indicating high reliability for all constructs.

Skewness and kurtosis values provide information about the distribution of the data. Most variables display relatively low skewness, with values between -0.4 and 0.5, indicating that the data are fairly symmetric. The kurtosis values, ranging from -0.3 to 1.2, suggest that the distributions are close to normal, with no significant deviations. Lastly, the range for all variables is between 1 and 5, except for Agreeableness and Openness to Experiences, where responses ranged from 2 to 5. Overall, Table 1 confirms that the measures used in the study were reliable and the distributions of responses were appropriate for analysis.

Measurement scales

Trust

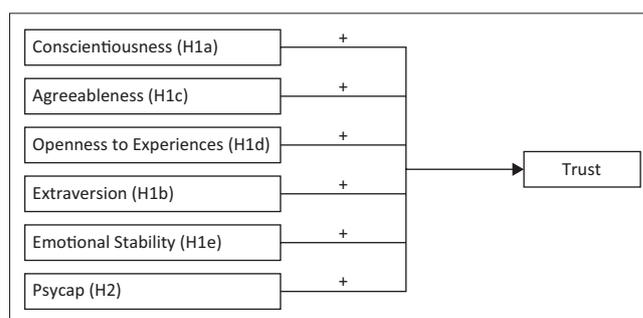
The Trust in Supervisor Scale, developed by Nyhan and Marlowe (1997) was selected to measure trust. This scale was originally designed for use in public organisations, specifically to assess the relationship between public sector managers and their direct-reports. However, it was adapted by Straiter (2005) to measure a manager's trust in their direct-reports and has been similarly adapted for the present study. The questionnaire was reduced from its original 16 questions to 12 questions owing to the irrelevance of four questions. Prior research indicates that a reduction in the number of questions did not have an adverse effect on reliability, thereby providing further support for the suitability of the Trust in Supervisor Scale (Nyhan & Marlowe, 1997).

Personality

The TIPI, first developed by Gosling et al. (2003), was used to measure Personality Traits. The TIPI is a concise version based on the FFM, consisting of 10 items with two items per personality trait dimension. This scale was chosen for its simplicity and ability to be completed quickly while still having scholarly support, particularly in situations where time constraints are a consideration (Gosling et al., 2003).

Pyscap

The PCQ-12, proposed by Luthans et al., (2007), which assesses Self-efficacy, Optimism, Hope and Resilience, was used to measure Pyscap. The PCQ-12 was chosen for its ease of use, reliability and support in extant literature (Luthans et al., 2007).



Pyscap, psychological capital.

FIGURE 1: Expected influencers of trust: A conceptual model of Hypotheses 1 and Hypothesis 2.

TABLE 1: Summary of descriptive statistics, reliability, skewness, kurtosis, and range for trust, personality traits and Pyscap.

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha	Skewness	Kurtosis	Range
Trust	3.8	0.7	0.92	-0.3	1.2	1–5
Agreeableness	4.1	0.5	0.81	-0.2	0.9	2–5
Conscientiousness	3.9	0.6	0.85	0.1	0.7	1–5
Emotional stability	3.6	0.8	0.83	0.5	-0.3	1–5
Extraversion	3.5	0.7	0.79	-0.1	1.1	1–5
Openness to experiences	4.0	0.5	0.82	-0.4	1.0	2–5
Pyscap (PCQ-12)	3.9	0.6	0.89	0	0.8	2–5

SD, standard deviation; Pyscap, psychological capital.

Sampling process

The population of interest for this study comprised of managers in South African organisations with supervisory roles over direct-reports. Non-probability purposive sampling was employed to ensure the inclusion of managers who actively manage at least one individual. Such individuals were purposefully selected from known networks, utilising platforms such as LinkedIn and personal professional networks. The sampling process aimed to collect a minimum of 150 completed surveys, providing sufficient data for robust statistical analysis and meaningful insights into the trust relationship (Hox & Boeije, 2005).

Data collection

Data collection involved a multi-pronged approach, utilising professional networking platforms such as LinkedIn, company management teams and personal professional networks. A voucher for an online retailer for one randomly drawn respondent was included as an incentive to improve participation

Data analysis

Correlation and regression analyses were employed to examine the relationships between Psycap, Personality and Trust. Pearson’s correlation coefficient measured the strength and direction of these correlations, and statistical tests, including *t*-tests, were conducted with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$. Data management involved secure storage, organisation and adherence to ethical guidelines.

Ethical considerations

The study received approval from the University’s Ethics Screening Committee (DESC) under project number 28732. Participants were fully informed about the study’s purpose, procedures, and potential risks involved, and their informed consent was duly obtained. Throughout the research, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, providing participants the right to withdraw at any point without any repercussions.

Classified as low to negligible risk, the study strictly adhered to ethical guidelines, legal requirements, and the *Protection of Personal Information (POPI)* Act of South Africa. The participants’ well-being was a priority, ensuring that their rights and dignity were upheld. Transparent reporting of the findings was a key focus, further reinforcing the ethical standards adhered to throughout the research.

Results

The survey was accessed by 327 individuals, 172 respondents completed the survey, forming a statistically representative sample for inferential statistical analysis.

Concerning the relationships between Personality, Psycap and trust, Table 2 presents path coefficients indicating statistical significance. At a 95% confidence level, Psycap

displays a significant positive relationship with trust (p -value = 0.002, path coefficient = 0.43). Upon adjusting the confidence level to 90%, Agreeableness (path coefficient = 0.17) and Emotional Stability (path coefficient = 0.16) also exhibit statistically significant relationships with Trust.

The conceptual model in Figure 2 depicts the findings of the study. Hypotheses 1a–1e proposed that Personality Types influence Trust. The model indicates a non-significant relationship (N/A) between Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Openness to Experiences with Trust, while Agreeableness and Emotional Stability show significance at the 90% confidence level.

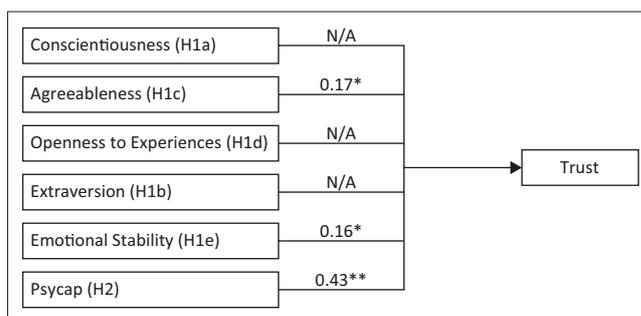
In terms of goodness of fit, R^2 and adjusted R^2 values for Trust are 0.46 and 0.44, respectively. The R^2 value of 0.46 suggests that 46% of the data potentially influences Trust, leaving 54% unexplained, with the simplicity of the measurement scales possibly contributing to the lower value for the R^2 and adjusted R^2 values. The adjusted R^2 value, at 0.44, accounts for predictor complexity, reinforcing the model’s goodness of fit.

Multicollinearity can complicate model interpretation, lead to incorrect coefficient estimates and reduce predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2020). An assessment of multicollinearity, analysed using Variance Inflation Factors (VIF), revealed no multicollinearity between independent variables, mitigating the risk associated with skewed or misleading results (Alin, 2010). Table 3 indicates VIF values below the threshold of 5, confirming the absence of multicollinearity and ensuring the validity of the regression results.

TABLE 2: Path coefficients for constructs as influencers of trust at the 95% confidence interval.

From	To	Path coefficient	95% Lower	95% Upper	t. stat	p
Agreeableness	Trust	0.17	-0.02	0.34	1.78	0.076
Conscientiousness	Trust	0.12	-0.08	0.33	1.12	0.261
Emotional stability	Trust	0.16	-0.04	0.33	1.71	0.087
Extraversion	Trust	0.10	-0.01	0.22	1.55	0.122
Openness to experiences	Trust	-0.03	-0.22	0.18	-0.34	0.732
Psycap	Trust	0.43	0.15	0.69	3.03	0.002

Psycap, psychological capital.



Psycap, psychological capital; N/A, not applicable.

*, Refers to significance at the 90% confidence level.

**, Refers to statistical significance at the 95% confidence level.

FIGURE 2: Conceptual model of trust influencers with path coefficients.

Table 4 showcases average variance extracted (AVE) values for each construct. Scholars commonly target AVE values of 0.5 or more, as indicators of a robust measurement model (Cheung et al., 2023; Hair et al., 2020). However, the acceptable range can vary based on the research context, model complexity and underlying theory (Hair et al., 2020). The flexibility in determining the acceptability of variance extracted (VE) values is acknowledged in psychological studies. Values in the range of 0.4 to 0.5 are often considered acceptable, especially for simpler models or constructs with inherent measurement complexities (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

In this study, all items except for Extraversion (0.49) and Pyscap (0.47) are explained by more than 0.5 of the variances. The VE values slightly below 0.5 for Extraversion (0.49) and Pyscap (0.47) may be attributed to factors such as the use of a basic model for the personality questionnaire (TIPI scale) and PCQ-12 scale. The decision to use the PCQ-12 scale. Despite reduced reliability of the PCQ-12 Scale compared to the PCQ-24 Scale, the PCQ-12 Scale is supported by extant literature and was motivated by time considerations on behalf of the respondents. Similarly, the TIPI scale was chosen for ease of use and speed, despite its simplicity, potentially introducing some accuracy limitations.

Measurement errors, inaccuracies in assessing Personality Traits, and limitations in the instruments used could contribute to the lower variance explained (Brocklebank et al., 2015). Additionally, sample characteristics, cultural factors, and social desirability bias may influence the variance explained and observed variability in traits such as Extraversion across different contexts and response ranges of assessment instruments (Murphy et al., 2021).

The composite reliability values exceed the established benchmark of 0.7, validated at the 95% confidence level.

TABLE 3: Variance inflation factors for independent variables, a non-multicollinearity verification.

Dimension	Trust
Agreeableness	1.57
Conscientiousness	1.76
Emotional stability	1.52
Extraversion	1.06
Openness to experiences	1.88
Pyscap	2.99

Pyscap, psychological capital.

TABLE 4: The average variance extracted for each construct at the 95% confidence level.

Dimension	AVE	95% Lower	95% Upper
Agreeableness	0.59	0.53	0.65
Conscientiousness	0.63	0.57	0.69
Emotional stability	0.58	0.51	0.64
Extraversion	0.49	0.41	0.56
Openness to experiences	0.56	0.50	0.62
Pyscap	0.47	0.41	0.52
Trust	0.51	0.45	0.56

AVE, average variance extracted; Pyscap, psychological capital.

These results indicate a statistically acceptable level of internal consistency and measurement reliability for the examined constructs, which are aligned with findings from prior research studies (Cheung et al., 2023). With composite reliability values spanning from 0.79 (lowest) for Extraversion to 0.92 (highest) for Trust, the results highlight the robustness of the measurement instruments utilised. The elevated levels of composite reliability ensure confidence in the precision and accuracy of the collected data, thereby strengthening the credibility of the findings.

Table 5 presents an extract of the full table of results exhibiting heterotrait-monotrait ratios. All values are below a threshold of 1, which affirms the distinctiveness of each item. The results also support internal consistency within constructs, and signify discriminant validity (Cheung et al., 2023). Some authors propose heterotrait-monotrait ratios of no greater than 0.85 (Cheung et al., 2023). Even if this stricter criterion was to be applied in this study, all items would continue to be classified as discriminant.

The outer loadings for each variable were calculated, with all *p*-values below 0.001, indicating statistical significance at the 95% confidence level. Outer loadings above 0.7 generally signify robust contributions of items to constructs; all outer loadings in this study were found to be above 0.7 except for two items related to Agreeableness and one item related to Trust, as indicated in Table 6.

According to Reise et al. (2013), it is not uncommon to observe a few items with loadings below 0.7. While higher loadings are favourable, the presence of some variation in loadings is expected, and lower loadings for certain items may not necessarily signal issues with the measurement model (Reise et al., 2013; Schuberth, 2021). Context and content are important considerations for these items

TABLE 5: Heterotrait-monotrait ratios to determine whether items are discriminant or not.

Latent variable 1	Latent variable 2	Ratio	95% Lower	95% Upper	Discriminate
Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	0.58	0.41	0.81	Yes
Agreeableness	Emotional stability	0.62	0.45	0.84	Yes
Agreeableness	Extraversion	0.48	0.32	0.74	Yes
Agreeableness	Openness to experiences	0.75	0.55	0.96	Yes
Agreeableness	Pyscap	0.64	0.49	0.86	Yes
Agreeableness	Trust	0.62	0.42	0.83	Yes
Conscientiousness	Emotional stability	0.36	0.21	0.58	Yes
Conscientiousness	Extraversion	0.30	0.20	0.52	Yes
Conscientiousness	Openness to experiences	0.45	0.28	0.67	Yes

TABLE 6: Outer loading figures less than the 0.6 recommended threshold in descending order.

Manifest variable	Latent variable	Loading
Agreeableness2	Agreeableness	0.58
Trust11	Trust	0.58
Agreeableness1	Agreeableness	0.49

Note: Each digit represents the ID of a survey question related to a specific latent variable (personality trait). The survey consisted of 4 questions per trait, and items with outer loadings below the 0.6 threshold are listed in the table.

(Hair et al., 2020; Reise et al., 2013; Schuberth, 2021). If items that fall below the 0.7 threshold align conceptually with the construct and possess theoretical relevance, they can still be valuable contributors to the overall measurement model, even with slightly lower loadings (Reise et al., 2013; Schuberth, 2021). In essence, if these items are contextually relevant and have a clear theoretical foundation for inclusion, they can meaningfully contribute to the overall measurement model, notwithstanding their less pronounced statistical relationships with the underlying construct.

Discussion

Contrary to previous research, this study found weak or non-significant relationships between certain Personality Traits and Propensity to Trust. Only Agreeableness and Emotional Stability exhibited significance at the 90% confidence level with a weak positive influence on trust. Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Openness to Experiences were found to have a non-significant relationship with a manager's Propensity to Trust. The main finding, however, is the substantial influence of Psycap on the Propensity to Trust, supported by a path coefficient of 0.43 at the 95% confidence level.

Hypotheses 1a to 1e, which posit that each personality dimension significantly influences trust, are partially supported, as only Agreeableness and Emotional Stability exhibit significance. Hypothesis 2, which posits that Psycap significantly influences trust, is strongly supported, with Psycap showing a robust positive relationship with Propensity to Trust.

The findings highlight the significance of examining both Personality Traits, notably Agreeableness and Emotional Stability, alongside Psycap, to comprehend a manager's Propensity to Trust their direct-reports. Psycap, encompassing Resilience, Self-efficacy, Optimism and Hope, emerges as a critical factor influencing trust dynamics within the manager-direct report relationship.

Furthermore, while Agreeableness and Emotional Stability exhibited statistically significant positive correlations with Trust, their influence was found to be less impactful on trust propensity relative to the impact of Psycap. The finding that only certain Personality Traits, like Agreeableness and Emotional Stability, significantly influence the trust relationship between managers and their direct-reports reveal the complexity of Trust. The results highlight the importance of both inherent traits and psychological resources, such as Psycap, in fostering that Trust.

In contrast, Personality Traits such as Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Openness to Experiences did not exhibit statistically significant relationships with trust in the South African managerial context and emphasised the need for organisations to tailor their leadership development initiatives and selection criteria with greater focus on Psycap, Agreeableness and Emotional Stability.

These findings that relate Personality Traits and Psycap to Trust from a manager towards a direct report hold significant implications for managerial practice. Firstly, organisations are encouraged to invest in initiatives aimed at enhancing the Psycap of their managers, recognising it as a key determinant of trust-building within teams. Such initiatives include realistic goal setting, training and development, mentorship and coaching, positive feedback, mindfulness and stress management, as well as leadership development. Secondly, in managerial selection and promotion processes, greater emphasis should be placed on assessing Agreeableness and Emotional Stability, as these Personality Traits contribute to fostering trusting relationships with direct-reports.

By integrating these Personality Traits, Psycap and Trust dynamics insights into organisational strategies, South African businesses can cultivate environments conducive to trust, collaboration, and ultimately, enhanced performance and employee well-being. Additionally, future research endeavours may benefit from exploring the mechanisms through which Psycap influences trust dynamics in diverse cultural and organisational contexts, thereby advancing our understanding of effective leadership practices.

Future research could focus on how trust within management teams directly impacts employees, especially in the context of hierarchical structures where leadership plays a significant role in shaping workplace culture. This study does not fully take into account the organisational environment, which is crucial in understanding how factors such as economic pressures, company size or industry-specific challenges affect the relationship between leadership, trust and employee engagement. Future studies could use qualitative or mixed methods to explore how these contextual factors influence the development of Psycap and trust within teams, providing a richer, more detailed understanding of these dynamics.

Conclusion

This study provides insights into the personal resources, particularly Personality Traits and Psycap, that influence a manager's Propensity to Trust their direct-reports. The findings underscore the significance of Psycap as a robust predictor of trust in managerial relationships. Managers who exhibit higher levels of Hope, Self-efficacy, Optimism and Resilience are more inclined to trust their subordinates, ultimately fostering constructive working relationships. This finding emphasises the importance of strategic investments in employee Psycap development, suggesting that organisations can gain a competitive edge by prioritising initiatives aimed at enhancing positive psychological attributes.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the role of targeted training programmes and interventions in improving managers' interpersonal skills, emotional regulation and trust-building capabilities. Organisations are encouraged to

implement such programmes, particularly for managers with lower Agreeableness and Emotional Stability scores, as these two factors were found to impact trust dynamics positively at higher levels.

This research aligns with its objectives by revealing the nuanced interplay between Personality Traits, Psycap, and Trust. It provides actionable recommendations for organisations aiming to cultivate a positive organisational culture centred around trust and psychological well-being, thereby contributing to improved employee morale, job satisfaction and overall organisational performance.

While existing research has provided valuable insights into the factors that influence Trust, this study overcomes two pervasive limitations. Firstly, much of the extant research has focussed on the trust that direct-reports have in their managers or supervisors, rather than the trust that managers have in their direct-reports (Straiter, 2005). Secondly, some studies have relied on self-reported measures of Trust, which may be susceptible to biases.

Despite addressing limitations in extant research, limitations within the present study do exist. In particular, the article focussed on South African managers only. Future research is encouraged to explore the influence of demographic variables such as gender, geographic location and socio-economic status on trust dynamics. With the rise of remote and hybrid work environments, future research could assess how virtual communication affects trust between managers and employees. Furthermore, exploring how Trust, Personality Traits and Psycap interact in high-stress industries like healthcare could reveal the factors that influence Trust in challenging settings. Studies focussing on how team-building activities and Psycap-enhancing interventions influence team performance over time would also be valuable. Moreover, shortened scales were used to respect respondents' time. It is recommended that more in-depth measurement scales for Personality and Psycap be used in the future.

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Data availability

The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author, C.H.Z., upon reasonable request.

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