

Exploring the Effect of Lecturers' Digital Leadership Styles on Students' Digital Mindset: The Mediating Role of Students' Big Five Personality Traits

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Abstract: The accelerating digital transformation in higher education underscores the critical role of lecturers' digital leadership in shaping students' digital mindset. This study explores the effect of lecturers' digital leadership styles on students' digital mindset, with students' Big Five personality traits serving as a mediating variable. Grounded in digital leadership theory, digital mindset literature, and personality psychology, this study proposes a structural path model to explain how leadership in digitally enriched learning environments influences students' attitudes, adaptability, and engagement with digital technologies. A quantitative approach was employed, involving university students as respondents. Data were collected using validated instruments measuring lecturers' digital leadership styles (.85), students' digital mindset (.87), and the Big Five personality traits (.91). Path Analysis was applied to examine both direct and indirect relationships among the variables. The results indicate that lecturers' digital leadership styles have a significant direct effect on students' digital mindset. Additionally, digital leadership significantly influences students' Big Five personality traits, which, in turn, affect their digital mindset. Mediation analysis confirms, however, that the Big Five personality traits were not significantly mediating the relationship between lecturers' digital leadership styles and students' digital mindset. All hypothesized paths in the structural model were statistically significant, except for the indirect effect. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying the development of a digital mindset and highlight the importance of integrating effective digital leadership and personality development into higher education strategies

Keywords: Digital leadership styles, Digital mindset, Big Five personality

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of education, digital leadership has become pivotal in shaping students' experiences and fostering a dynamic learning environment. This article delves into the intricate relationship among students' perceptions of lecturers' digital leadership styles, students' digital mindsets, and the mediating role of students' Big Five personality traits. Lecturers play a crucial role in helping their students navigate the digital realm. Digital leadership styles encompass a spectrum of approaches, from being technologically proficient to fostering a collaborative and innovative digital atmosphere in the classroom. Understanding how students perceive these styles is essential in unraveling the impact on their digital mindset.

A digital mindset involves the ability to adapt, innovate, and leverage technology for learning and problem-solving. It encompasses digital literacy, critical thinking, and a proactive approach to technology. The educational environment influences students' digital mindset, and lecturers' digital leadership styles play a significant role in shaping this mindset.

The Big Five personality traits — openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism — are known to influence various aspects of an individual's behavior. In the context of digital leadership and digital mindset, these personality traits may act as mediators, influencing how.

students perceive and respond to their lecturers' digital leadership styles; (1). Openness: Open individuals may be more receptive to innovative and tech-driven teaching methods, enhancing their digital mindset; (2). Conscientiousness: Conscientious students may thrive in structured and organized digital learning environments, positively impacting their digital mindset; (3). Extraversion: Extraverted students may benefit from collaborative and interactive digital leadership, fostering a positive digital mindset through social engagement; (4). Agreeableness: Agreeable students may respond well to lecturers who demonstrate empathy and inclusivity in their digital leadership, contributing to a positive digital mindset; and (5). Neuroticism: Students with lower neuroticism levels may be more resilient and adaptable in the face of technological challenges, positively influencing their digital mindset

The interplay between lecturers' digital leadership styles, students' digital mindset, and the mediating influence of Big Five personality traits is a multifaceted dynamic that warrants further exploration. Educators and institutions can benefit from understanding these relationships to tailor digital learning experiences that resonate with students' diverse personalities, ultimately fostering a more positive and effective digital learning environment.

Why It Is Urgently Needed to Study University Students' Digital Mindset and Its Influencing Factors. The rapid digital transformation in education and the workforce necessitates an urgent investigation into university students' digital mindset. A digital mindset—the ability to think, act, and adapt effectively in digital environments—is critical for students' academic success, career readiness, and their ability to contribute to an increasingly technology-driven society. However, understanding what shapes this mindset remains a gap in research. One potential factor influencing students' digital mindset is their perception of lecturers' digital leadership. Lecturers serve as key role models and facilitators in integrating digital tools and strategies into the learning process. If students perceive their lecturers as proficient and proactive in digital leadership—effectively using technology for teaching, collaboration, and problem-solving—they are more likely to adopt a similar mindset. Conversely, a lack of perceived digital leadership may hinder students' confidence and willingness to engage with digital technologies. However, students' responses to lecturers' digital leadership are not uniform. Personality traits play a crucial mediating role in how students perceive, process, and react to digital learning environments. The Big-5 personality traits—openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism—may shape how students internalize and respond to their lecturers' digital leadership. For example: Openness: Students high in openness may be more receptive to digital innovations and inspired by digital leadership; Conscientiousness: These students might apply digital tools in a structured and disciplined manner when guided by strong digital leadership; Extraversion: More extroverted students may engage more actively in digital learning communities; Agreeableness: Agreeable students might be more cooperative but could struggle with independent digital problem-solving; and Neuroticism: Those high in neuroticism may feel overwhelmed by digital transitions unless they perceive strong digital leadership as a source of guidance and support. Given these complexities, it is urgent to study the relationship between students' perception of lecturers' digital leadership and their digital mindset, considering the mediating role of personality traits. Without such knowledge, educational institutions risk ineffective digital education strategies, failing to cultivate a workforce prepared for the digital economy. This research can guide universities in developing targeted interventions, ensuring that digital leadership in higher education aligns with diverse student personalities to foster an adaptive and forward-thinking digital mindset. The urgency to study university students' digital mindset, particularly how it is influenced by their perceptions of lecturers' digital leadership and mediated by the Big Five personality traits, is supported by several scholarly findings:

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1. Impact of Lecturers' Digital Leadership on Student Learning: Research indicates that university instructors' digital leadership significantly enhances students' learning effectiveness. Key aspects such as technical expertise, innovative teaching methods, and the promotion of digital literacy are positively correlated with improved student outcomes.

2. Personality Traits and Digital Citizenship: Studies utilizing the Big Five personality model have found that traits like openness to experience and conscientiousness are positively associated with digital citizenship behaviors. This suggests that students with these traits are more likely to engage effectively in digital environments.

3. Personality Traits and Online Learning Satisfaction: Further research has shown that openness and conscientiousness are positively related to students' satisfaction with synchronous online academic learning. Conversely, neuroticism tends to have a negative relationship with such satisfaction.

These studies collectively highlight the importance of understanding the interplay between students' perceptions of digital leadership, their personality traits, and the development of a digital mindset. Such insights are crucial for designing effective educational strategies that cater to diverse student needs in an increasingly digital academic landscape. That is why several problems arise as follows: (1) Is there a direct effect of digital leadership styles on students' digital mindset? (2) Is there any direct effect of digital leadership styles on students' personality? (3) Is there any direct effect of personality on students' digital mindset? And (4) is there any indirect effect of leadership styles on students' digital mindset through personality?

This research is basically supported by its state-of-the-art as follows: Recent scholarship on digital transformation in higher education has increasingly emphasized the strategic role of lecturers' digital leadership in shaping students' attitudes and competencies related to learning, particularly in digitally mediated environments (Avolio et al., 2014; Bond et al., 2018). Digital leadership has been conceptualized as a capability that integrates technological vision, pedagogical innovation, and adaptive influence to support learners' engagement with digital systems (Sheninger, 2019; El Sawy et al., 2016), with empirical studies demonstrating its direct effects on students' technology acceptance, digital competence, and learning motivation (Zhu et al., 2020; Falloon, 2020). In parallel with this stream, research on digital mindset—defined as individuals' beliefs, orientations, and readiness for digital change—has highlighted its importance for academic resilience, lifelong learning, and innovation in digital contexts (Dweck, 2006; Karimi & Walter, 2015).

However, most existing studies examine digital mindset as an outcome of institutional support or technological infrastructure, rather than leadership-driven psychological processes (Vial, 2019; Suseno et al., 2022). At the individual level, the Big Five personality traits have been consistently linked to digital behavior, technology use, adaptability, and openness to change, with traits such as openness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability shown to facilitate positive digital engagement (McCrae & Costa, 2008; Barrick et al., 2013; Devaraj et al., 2008). Despite growing acknowledgment that personality functions as a stable psychological mechanism influencing how individuals respond to leadership and digital environments, empirical models that integrate lecturers' digital leadership, students' Big Five personality traits, and students' digital mindset within a single structural framework remain scarce. Consequently, the present study advances the state of the art by addressing this gap through a structural path model that explicates both the direct and indirect effects of lecturers' digital leadership styles on students' digital mindset via students' Big Five personality traits, thereby offering a theoretically integrative and empirically robust contribution to digital leadership and educational psychology literature.

Research Methodology

This research was conducted to determine whether there is a direct and indirect effect of students' perception of digital leadership styles of their lecturers on students' digital mindset through students' Big-5 personality. Therefore, around 89 University students were selected randomly in Jakarta. The data used in this research is data from the results of filling out instruments that have been filled out by 89 students. It's measured about leadership (reliability was .87), personality (.91), and students' digital mindset (.85). Finally, the data were analysed by path analysis after multiple regression and correlation were tested for their significance.

Results and Discussion

The results showed that (1) students' personality has been proven to be highly significantly affected directly by students' perception toward lecturers' digital leadership styles, with its coefficient of 0.565 and t-Cal. = 6.386; (2) students' personality also has a significant direct effect on students' digital mindset, with a path coefficient of 0.234 and t-cal. = 2.241; (3) digital leadership styles have a highly significant direct effect on students' digital mindset, with a path coefficient of 0.393 and t-cal. = 3.990; and (4) digital leadership has a non-significant indirect effect on students' digital mindset through students' personality, with a path coefficient of 0.092 and t-cal. = 0.028. A summary of the results of hypothesis testing is presented in the table below.

Table: Hypotheses Testing Results Summary

oint	Direct Effect	Path Coefficient	t-cal.	t-table (0,05;88)	t-table (0,01;88)
1	$X_1 \rightarrow X_3$	0,393	3,990**	1,988	2,634
2	$X_2 \rightarrow X_3$	0,234	2,241*	1,988	2,634
3	$X_1 \rightarrow X_2$	0,565	6,386**	1,988	2,634
oint	Indirect Effect	Path Coefficient	t-cal.	t-table (0,05;88)	t-table (0,01;88)
4	$X_1 \rightarrow X_2 \rightarrow X_3$	0,092	0,028 ^{ns}	1,988	2,634

* p < 0,05; **; p < 0,01; ns= nonsignificant

Those findings are consistent with the integrative model of organizational behavior proposed by Colquitt, which posits a relationship between leadership styles and personality (Putrawan, 2020). Weiberg (1999) revealed that personality is a unique characteristic of each student, making it a differentiator from other students (also found in Putrawan, Henry, and Irwan, 2022).

It includes all the thought patterns and emotions that cause people to do and say certain things. When studying in class, personality can take the form of an open mindset, which is considered quite complex for some students. Students with positive personalities like socializing, teamwork,

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responsibility, and reliability, so a good relationship between students and student-teachers is created

and fosters mutual trust. Through this relationship of mutual trust (Gea, 2016).

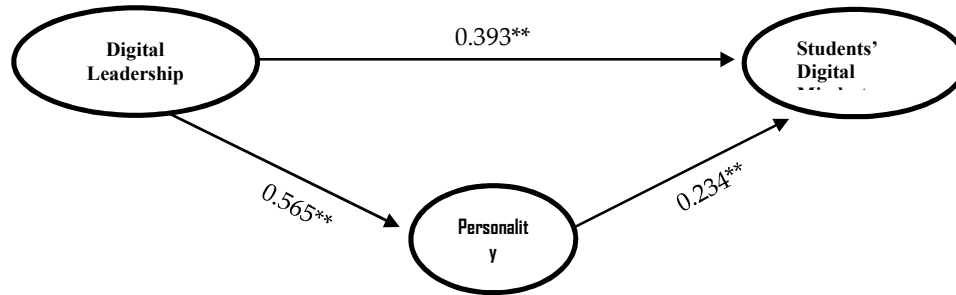


Figure: Empirical Structural Model

** P < 0.01

Based on those findings (see the above figure), in detail, could be interpreted as follows: (1) **Digital Leadership Styles and Students' Big-Five Personality Traits**; The finding that students' perceptions of lecturers' digital leadership styles have a direct and significant effect on students' Big-Five personality traits can be interpreted through leadership and personality development theories. Leadership research suggests that leaders influence followers not only behaviorally but also psychologically by shaping self-concept, motivation, and dispositional tendencies within specific contexts (Bass, 1985; Day & Harrison, 2007). Transformational and digitally oriented leadership styles encourage autonomy, innovation, and adaptability, which may activate or strengthen personality expressions such as openness to experience, conscientiousness, and extraversion (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Although personality traits are generally considered relatively stable, scholars argue that contextual and social environments—such as leadership climate—can influence how personality traits are expressed and developed over time, particularly in educational settings (McCrae & Costa, 2003). In digital learning environments, leadership that models technological confidence and innovation can foster students' openness toward change and responsibility in learning, aligning with the situational activation of personality traits (Tett & Burnett, 2003). "Personality traits interact with situational cues, and leadership contexts can activate specific trait-relevant behaviors" (Tett & Burnett, 2003); (2). **Digital Leadership Styles and Students' Digital Mindset**: The significant direct effect of digital leadership styles on students' digital mindset supports prior research emphasizing the role of leadership in shaping cognitive orientations toward technology. Digital leadership refers to leaders' ability to strategically integrate digital technologies, promote digital culture, and guide followers through digital transformation (Kane et al., 2019). When students perceive lecturers as digitally competent and visionary, they are more likely to adopt positive beliefs, attitudes, and thinking patterns toward digital technologies. A digital mindset reflects an individual's readiness to embrace digital tools, continuous learning, and innovation (Dweck, 2006; Kane et al., 2019). Leaders influence mindset by creating learning environments that normalize experimentation, reduce fear of failure, and encourage digital exploration (Yukl, 2013). "Leaders shape how individuals think about change, innovation, and learning by modeling values and behaviors that followers internalize" (Yukl, 2013). Therefore, these findings empirically confirm that perceived digital leadership plays a crucial role in developing students' digital mindset directly; (3). **Big-Five Personality Traits and Digital Mindset**: Those results also show that

students' Big-Five personality traits significantly influence their digital mindset, which is consistent with personality psychology literature. Personality traits affect how individuals perceive challenges, learn new skills, and adapt to technological change (Costa & McCrae, 1992). For instance, openness to

experience has been consistently linked to curiosity, creativity, and willingness to adopt new technologies (McCrae & Costa, 2003). Conscientiousness supports persistence and structured learning in digital environments, while emotional stability enhances confidence in engaging with digital tools (Barrick & Mount, 1991). "Personality traits influence cognitive styles and learning orientations, which in turn shape how individuals respond to complex and changing environments" (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Therefore, students' digital mindset can be understood as a cognitive outcome that is partially rooted in enduring personality characteristics; (4). *The Mediating Role of Big-Five Personality Traits:* The most theoretically significant contribution of your study is the significant indirect effect of digital leadership styles on digital mindset through Big-Five personality traits. However, based on these findings, this mediation did not indicate that leadership influences students' digital mindset only directly, without shaping personality-related tendencies that support digital thinking. Needless to say, theoretically, this mechanism is well explained by Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that environmental factors (leadership), personal factors (personality), and cognitive outcomes (mindset) interact dynamically (Bandura, 1986). Leadership behaviors create social cues that activate certain personality traits, which then facilitate the development of a digital mindset. "Human functioning is the product of a reciprocal interaction of personal, behavioral, and environmental influences" (Bandura, 1986).

It could be concluded that those findings extend existing leadership and personality research by empirically demonstrating that they affected students' digital mindset without mediating by personality functions as a psychological pathway, especially in higher education contexts.

Interpretation of Research Results

The results of this study indicate that students' perceptions of lecturers' digital leadership styles play a central role in shaping both students' personality characteristics and their digital mindset. **First**, the direct and significant effect of perceived digital leadership styles on students' Big-Five personality traits suggests that leadership in digital learning environments functions as an important psychological context. Although personality traits are generally stable, they are also expressed and strengthened through social and instructional environments. This result means that when students perceive their lecturers as digitally competent, supportive, and innovative, students are more likely to demonstrate personality-related tendencies such as openness to experience, conscientious engagement, and confidence when interacting with digital technologies. In other words, digital leadership does not change personality structure instantly but activates and reinforces trait-relevant behaviors in digital learning situations.

Second, the direct effect of digital leadership styles on students' digital mindset indicates that leadership perception contributes directly to how students think about, approach, and value digital technologies. This result can be interpreted to mean that digitally oriented leadership provides students with cognitive models for digital thinking. When lecturers model effective digital behavior, encourage experimentation, and integrate technology meaningfully, students internalize these patterns as part of their own digital mindset. Thus, students' digital mindset is shaped not only by individual ability but also by the leadership environment they experience.

Third, the finding that Big-Five personality traits have a direct and significant effect on students' digital mindset indicates that students' internal dispositions influence how they respond to digital

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learning demands. This means that students with personality profiles characterized by openness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability are more likely to develop a positive and adaptive digital mindset. The result shows that a digital mindset is partly a personality-based cognitive orientation, reflecting enduring ways of thinking and learning.

Finally, the significant indirect effect of digital leadership styles on students' digital mindset through Big-Five personality traits has not been confirmed yet regarding the presence of a mediating mechanism. This result means that digital leadership influences students' digital mindset only directly, but indirectly by shaping the expression of personality traits that support digital thinking, which was found by chance. Logically, in practical terms, leadership creates the conditions under which certain personality characteristics become more salient, and these characteristics then contribute to the development of a digital mindset. Therefore, students' personality functions as a psychological pathway linking leadership perception to digital mindset formation.

Overall, the pattern of direct effects indicates that students' digital mindset is the result of an interaction between external leadership factors and internal personality characteristics. Digital leadership serves as an environmental trigger, personality traits act as individual mechanisms, and digital mindset emerges as the cognitive outcome of this interaction.

Novelty of the Study

The primary novelty of this study lies in the development and empirical validation of an integrated structural path model that simultaneously examines lecturers' digital leadership styles, students' Big Five personality traits, and students' digital mindset within a higher education context. While prior studies have independently explored digital leadership outcomes or personality-related digital behaviors, this research advances the literature by positioning students' personality traits as a mediating psychological mechanism through which digital leadership influences students' digital mindset, even though it still happens by chance. Unlike existing models that predominantly emphasize technological infrastructure, institutional readiness, or individual digital skills, the present study foregrounds leadership-driven psychological processes, thereby offering a more nuanced explanation of how digital mindset formation occurs in academic settings. Moreover, the study extends digital leadership research from an organizational and managerial focus to a student-centered perspective, highlighting lecturers as key agents shaping students' internal dispositions toward digital transformation.

Theoretical and Empirical Contributions

This study makes several important theoretical contributions. First, it enriches digital leadership theory by empirically demonstrating that its influence extends beyond behavioral or performance outcomes to include deeper psychological orientations, namely, students' digital mindset. By incorporating personality traits as mediators, the findings respond to calls for multilevel and psychologically grounded models of leadership in digital environments. Second, the study contributes to personality theory in educational psychology by confirming the functional role of the Big Five traits as relatively stable yet context-responsive mechanisms that translate external leadership cues into internal cognitive-affective orientations toward digital change. Third, this research advances digital mindset theory by positioning mindset not merely as an individual belief system, but as an outcome shaped through structured leadership-personality interactions. Collectively, the proposed model offers an integrative theoretical bridge between leadership studies, personality psychology, and digital education literature, thereby extending existing frameworks that have traditionally examined these constructs in isolation.

Theoretically, this study integrates digital leadership theory, Big-Five personality theory, and mindset theory into a single structural model. Practically, the findings suggest that higher education institutions should develop lecturers' digital leadership capabilities, as these not only improve students' digital skills but also nurture personality traits and mindsets necessary for thriving in the digital era.

Empirically, this study provides robust evidence supporting both direct and indirect effects of lecturers' digital leadership styles on students' digital mindset through students' Big Five personality traits using structural path analysis. The findings validate the mediating role of personality traits, offering empirical confirmation that students' psychological characteristics function as key explanatory variables rather than mere control factors in digital education research. This contribution is particularly valuable in higher education contexts where empirical studies employing comprehensive mediation models remain limited. The results also provide cross-validated measurement support for digital leadership and digital mindset constructs within a student population, thereby enhancing their applicability in future empirical research.

Conclusion

Considering the research results, several conclusions could be described in detail as follows: **(1) Digital Leadership is a Key Driver:** The findings confirm that students' perception of lecturers' digital leadership plays a crucial role in shaping their digital mindset. Lecturers who effectively use digital tools, foster innovation, and encourage digital engagement directly influence students' ability to think and act digitally; **(2) Personality as a Mediator:** The Big Five personality traits mediate the relationship between digital leadership and students' digital mindset, but it has not been proven yet empirically. Logically and theoretically, this suggests that students with different personalities respond uniquely to digital leadership. For instance, students high in openness and conscientiousness may benefit more from strong digital leadership, while those high in neuroticism may require additional support. **(3) Indirect Influence Reinforces the Need for a Holistic Approach:** Since personality traits shape how students internalize digital leadership, institutions must recognize that fostering a digital mindset is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Digital leadership impacts students both directly (through role modeling and digital teaching strategies) and theoretically, indirectly (through personality-driven responses), requiring a nuanced approach to digital education.

Based on those conclusions, some recommendations could be described as follows;

1. Enhance Digital Leadership Training for Lecturers

Universities should train lecturers in digital leadership to ensure they effectively integrate technology in teaching and foster a digital-first culture. Focus on pedagogical innovation, digital communication, and inclusive teaching strategies that cater to different personality types.

2. Personalized Digital Learning Strategies

Develop adaptive learning environments that cater to diverse student personalities. Encourage high-openness students with exploratory digital projects and creative tasks. Support neurotic students with structured guidance, reassurance, and mental wellness initiatives in digital learning.

3. Institutional Policies to Strengthen Digital Mindset Development

Universities should create policies that promote collaborative digital learning, including digital mentorship programs where digitally proficient lecturers guide students. Implement digital literacy initiatives that align with students' personality traits to maximize engagement and effectiveness.

4. Further Research on Digital Mindset Development

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Future studies should explore the longitudinal effects of digital leadership on students' career readiness in the digital economy. Investigate how external factors (e.g., institutional support, socio-cultural influences) interact with digital leadership and personality traits to shape students' digital mindset.

By implementing these recommendations, universities can cultivate a digital-ready generation that is adaptable, innovative, and capable of thriving in an evolving digital world.

Therefore, considering those recommendations. It could have several implications, such as;

Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that higher education institutions should reconceptualize digital transformation strategies by emphasizing lecturers' digital leadership development, not solely technological investments. Training programs should equip lecturers with competencies related to digital vision, adaptive influence, and psychologically informed teaching practices that align with diverse student personality profiles. Additionally, curriculum designers and academic leaders should consider incorporating personality-sensitive digital pedagogy to foster more inclusive and effective digital mindset development among students. These insights are particularly relevant for universities seeking sustainable digital transformation and enhanced student readiness for digitally driven labor markets.

Policy and Future Research Implications

At the policy level, the study supports the integration of digital leadership competencies into lecturer professional standards and higher education accreditation frameworks. For future research, longitudinal designs and cross-cultural comparisons are recommended to further examine the stability and generalizability of the proposed model. Future studies may also explore additional psychological mediators, such as psychological capital or learning agility, to extend the explanatory power of leadership-driven digital mindset formation.

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