

Leading in a VUCA World: Personality Awareness and the Development of Future Leadership

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Abstract In a world increasingly shaped by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), leadership requires more than technical knowledge or formal authority. Individuals must develop the ability to respond flexibly to change, maintain emotional stability under pressure, and build meaningful relationships in uncertain environments. This paper explores how personality awareness can support leadership development in a VUCA context, using reflection on an ENFP-T personality profile as a starting point. Drawing on contemporary leadership and organizational research, the paper examines how traits such as creativity, empathy, enthusiasm, and openness can become leadership strengths, while challenges such as overthinking, inconsistency, and emotional sensitivity may create obstacles. The analysis argues that effective future leadership depends not only on understanding external change but also on understanding one's internal tendencies. In particular, the paper highlights the importance of translating personality awareness into practical growth in adaptability, emotional intelligence, and responsible decision-making. By integrating personal reflection with leadership theory, this paper shows that personality awareness can become a meaningful foundation for leadership learning in fast-changing environments.

Keywords VUCA environment; personality awareness; leadership development; emotional intelligence; adaptability; ENFP

1. Introduction

For young people preparing to enter higher education and future careers, the world no longer appears orderly, linear, or predictable. Instead, it feels fast, unstable, and constantly changing. New technologies quickly reshape industries, digital platforms transform communication patterns, and global events can alter people's lives almost overnight. In this kind of environment, leadership is no longer simply about giving instructions or managing stable systems. It is increasingly about learning how to move forward when certainty is unavailable and when people need guidance in situations that remain unclear.

This reality is often described through the concept of VUCA, which stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. The term was originally used to describe unstable geopolitical environments, but it has since become highly relevant in business, education, and lead-

ership studies. Volatility refers to the speed and intensity of change; uncertainty points to the difficulty of predicting future events; complexity reflects the interconnected nature of modern systems; and ambiguity describes situations in which cause and effect are not easily understood. Together, these features make leadership more demanding and more dependent on flexibility, judgment, and interpersonal intelligence.

In such a world, understanding leadership only as a set of external skills is no longer sufficient. Effective leadership also depends on inner awareness. People need to understand how they respond to pressure, how they make decisions, how they communicate with others, and what kinds of situations help them perform at their best. This is why personality awareness can play an important role in leadership development. Rather than acting as a fixed label, personality understanding can serve as a reflective tool that helps individuals identify both their strengths and

their growth areas.

This paper explores the relationship between personality awareness and leadership development in a VUCA environment. Using reflection on an ENFP-T personality profile, it examines how individual tendencies may shape leadership potential in uncertain and fast-changing contexts. The discussion focuses on how strengths such as creativity, empathy, and enthusiasm may support leadership, while also considering how challenges such as emotional sensitivity, procrastination, and difficulty with focus may need to be managed. By combining personal reflection with leadership theory, the paper argues that effective future leadership begins with understanding oneself and then learning how to grow beyond one's natural tendencies.

2 Literature Review

The concept of VUCA has become a central framework in discussions of modern leadership because it captures the unstable and fast-changing nature of contemporary environments. Researchers have noted that organizations today operate under conditions where rapid technological innovation, global interdependence, and social disruption create constant pressure for adjustment. In such contexts, leadership becomes less about maintaining order and more about helping others respond productively to change. Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018) argue that leadership in dynamic environments must support organizational adaptability rather than relying solely on rigid structures or traditional control mechanisms.

Another important theme in recent leadership research is the role of personality and self-knowledge. Although leadership cannot be reduced to personality alone, awareness of one's tendencies can strongly influence how individuals communicate, make decisions, and respond to stress. Personality traits shape how people interpret new situations, whether they are energized by social interaction, how comfortable they are with uncertainty, and how they regulate their emotions. For emerging leaders, personality awareness can therefore act as a starting point for development by identifying both strengths and likely obstacles. Emotional intelligence is also closely linked to leadership effectiveness. Leaders do not only solve technical problems; they also influence mood, build trust, and manage relationships. In uncertain environments, people often feel

anxious, confused, or discouraged. A leader who can listen carefully, show empathy, and create psychological safety may be far more effective than one who simply gives instructions. Contemporary research has consistently shown that emotional intelligence supports better communication, stronger team cohesion, and more resilient leadership under pressure.

Leadership development research further suggests that successful leaders are not simply born with ideal traits but are shaped through reflection, practice, and adaptation. This means that personality is not destiny. An individual may have a strong natural tendency toward creativity or sociability, but leadership effectiveness depends on how well that person learns to channel those qualities. For this reason, examining personality in relation to leadership is not about deciding who can or cannot lead. Rather, it is about understanding how different individuals can develop into more capable leaders in different ways.

3 Personality Awareness and Leadership Identity

The ENFP-T personality profile offers a useful starting point for reflecting on future leadership identity. ENFP individuals are often described as energetic, imaginative, and strongly oriented toward people and possibilities. They are typically enthusiastic about new ideas, motivated by meaning, and comfortable engaging with others in open and creative ways. In leadership settings, these qualities can become significant strengths. A person who naturally brings energy, optimism, and curiosity into a group may inspire participation and encourage innovative thinking.

For someone interested in future work in creative, digital, or communication-based industries, such traits may be especially valuable. These sectors often reward originality, flexibility, and the ability to connect with diverse audiences. An ENFP-style leader may thrive in environments where communication, innovation, and emotional connection matter. Rather than focusing only on technical procedures, such a leader may pay attention to team morale, motivation, and new possibilities for growth.

At the same time, personality awareness becomes most meaningful when it moves beyond strengths and addresses limitations honestly. The ENFP-T profile also suggests

challenges related to inconsistency, distraction, emotional sensitivity, and overthinking. An individual who enjoys exploring possibilities may find it difficult to narrow choices and commit to one path. Someone who is naturally enthusiastic may also become discouraged when feedback is negative or when uncertainty lasts for too long. These tendencies can become especially problematic in a VUCA environment, where rapid change already increases cognitive and emotional pressure.

Therefore, personality awareness contributes to leadership identity by making growth areas visible. It helps transform vague self-knowledge into specific developmental goals. For example, a future leader with ENFP tendencies may need to work deliberately on follow-through, emotional regulation, and decision discipline. In this sense, personality reflection is not simply descriptive. It becomes developmental: it helps individuals recognize what kind of leader they may naturally become, and what additional habits they must build to lead effectively.

4 Discussion

4.1 Leadership in uncertainty requires emotional steadiness, not just enthusiasm

One important insight from this reflection is that enthusiasm alone is not enough to sustain leadership in unstable environments. ENFP personalities often bring energy and optimism into social settings, which can be highly valuable in teams. However, in a VUCA context, people do not only need inspiration; they also need steadiness. When conditions become confusing or stressful, a leader must remain emotionally reliable enough to help others stay focused.

This is particularly relevant for individuals with turbulent tendencies, who may be more sensitive to criticism, disappointment, or uncertainty. In fast-changing contexts, such sensitivity can lead to overthinking or emotional exhaustion. As a result, one of the most important leadership tasks for this personality type is not becoming more expressive, but becoming more emotionally grounded. The development of leadership therefore requires learning how to absorb pressure without becoming overwhelmed by it.

4.2 A people-oriented leadership style can become a major strength in complex environments

A second insight is that a people-centered leadership style

may be especially effective in complex environments where teamwork, communication, and collaboration matter. In uncertain situations, technical knowledge is important, but it is rarely sufficient by itself. People need leaders who can listen, connect ideas across different perspectives, and maintain trust during periods of confusion.

This is an area where ENFP characteristics may offer a real advantage. Strong interpersonal engagement, curiosity about others, and a desire to create positive relationships can help build team cohesion. In group settings, this can encourage participation and create a sense of safety, especially for quieter or less confident members. A leader who values people as much as outcomes may be better able to sustain motivation during difficult periods.

However, this strength becomes most effective when combined with boundaries and accountability. A leader who wants to maintain harmony may sometimes avoid necessary confrontation or delay difficult decisions. For this reason, relationship-based leadership must also include the courage to set standards, make firm choices, and address problems directly.

4.3 Adaptability is not the same as impulsiveness

A third insight concerns the difference between adaptability and lack of direction. In a VUCA environment, adaptability is often described as a key leadership skill. For an ENFP personality, adaptability may seem natural because openness, curiosity, and flexibility are already strong tendencies. Yet true adaptability is not simply moving quickly from one idea to another. It requires intentional learning, reflection, and adjustment.

Without discipline, flexibility can become inconsistency. A leader may constantly generate new ideas but fail to complete them. In this sense, the challenge is not to become less adaptable, but to make adaptability more structured. This means pausing to evaluate what is working, choosing priorities more carefully, and staying committed long enough to produce meaningful results. Leadership in uncertain environments requires experimentation, but it also requires follow-through.

For a future leader with ENFP tendencies, this distinction is especially important. Natural openness to change can become a major strength only when supported by habits of reflection and execution. Otherwise, the same trait that makes someone creative may also make them unreliable. Developing leadership therefore means converting flexi-

bility into disciplined responsiveness.

4.4 Leadership growth begins when personality awareness becomes behavioral change

A final insight is that personality awareness becomes useful only when it leads to intentional behavioral development. Knowing one's personality type may feel interesting or validating, but it does not automatically improve leadership. Growth happens only when self-knowledge is translated into new habits.

For example, if someone knows they procrastinate, they need systems for accountability. If they know they become stressed by uncertainty, they need practical emotional regulation strategies. If they know they enjoy social connection, they should also learn how to use that strength deliberately to support team performance rather than only personal comfort. Leadership development begins at the point where reflection becomes action.

This means the value of personality awareness lies not in classification but in self-management. In a VUCA world, self-management is not a secondary skill. It is central to leadership effectiveness. People who understand themselves are better able to manage uncertainty, respond thoughtfully rather than reactively, and lead others with greater authenticity and responsibility.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, leadership in a VUCA world requires more than confidence, charisma, or technical knowledge. It demands the ability to remain emotionally steady in uncertainty, build strong relationships in complex environments, and adapt without losing direction. Reflection on the ENFP-T personality profile suggests that creativity, empathy, and enthusiasm can become strong leadership assets, particularly in dynamic and people-oriented industries. At the same time, these strengths must be balanced by greater discipline, emotional regulation, and follow-through. This paper has argued that personality awareness can provide a meaningful foundation for leadership development because it helps individuals understand both their potential and their vulnerabilities. Ultimately, future leadership will depend not only on understanding the changing world out-

side, but also on learning how to manage the inner habits, emotions, and choices that shape one's response to that world.

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