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Leaders' Extroversion and Employee Retention in Uganda's Higher Education: Evidence from Kampala International University

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Abstract: Higher education institutions have become more focused on employee retention because of the increased competition for qualified academic and administrative personnel, the mobility of the workforce and changing expectations of employees. The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of leaders' extroversion on employee retention at Kampala International University. The study employed a mixed method with a convergent parallel research design guided by Personality Traits theory, Social Exchange theory, and Job Embeddedness theory. Structured questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data, and interviews and open-ended answers were used to get qualitative data from the key informants and university employees. The results showed extroversion was positive and statistically significant on employee retention (Estimate = 1.830, $p < 0.001$). Extroverted leaders strengthened retention through effective communication, team-building, employee engagement, trust, and positive relationships with employees within the workplace, causing employees to feel supported and valued at the institution. The study also found that if emotional intelligence and inclusive leadership are not tempered by excessive dominance and over-socialisation, then workplace relationships can be undermined. The study concludes that extroversion is a valuable leadership trait that can be used to enhance employee retention in university environments and that leadership development programs should be built to increase communication, emotional intelligence, employee engagement and inclusive leadership practices.

Keywords: Extroversion, Employee Retention, Leadership, Personality, Higher Education

1. Introduction

In the higher education sector, the retention of competent and qualified academic and administrative staff is a huge challenge for higher education institutions globally, with these institutions relying on such employees to deliver excellence in teaching, research, innovation and institutional development (Likoko & Kipkenei, 2022; Zahidi, 2025; Kabasiita et al., 2024). The high competition among educational institutions, government organisations, international organisations, and the private sector has further heightened the demand for attracting and retaining relevant staff alongside continued attrition, which has a negative impact on institutional memory, staff morale, research productivity, and organisational stability in Uganda (Injikuru & Etomaru, 2024; Bigabwenkya & Binta, 2024). (Ssali & Onen, 2019). As a result, the focus on leadership has grown as a key ingredient in improving employee satisfaction, commitment, and retention (Tushabe et al., 2025).

Despite the rich research on leadership styles, few studies have focused on the impact of leaders' personality traits on employee turnover, especially their extroversion. Extroversion consists of sociability, assertiveness, confidence, enthusiasm, and interpersonal engagement, all of which support communication, collaboration, trust, and employee participation, which are essential for leaders to do (Räsänen & Lippert, 2024; Buller, 2025). These attributes have been linked to better employee retention by fostering positive work relationships and a positive organisational culture (Farrell, 2017; Räsänen & Lippert, 2024). But excessive extroversion can also lead to dominance, centralisation of communication and lack of attention, which can lead to poor employee satisfaction and retention (Freeze, 2019).

Considering the scant research at higher education institutions in developing countries, the researcher chose to investigate how the leader's extroversion affects employee retention at Kampala International University. Specifically, the study aimed at

finding out the high or low levels of extroversion among university leaders; To understand the influence of the extroversion of leaders on the retention of their employees; and to qualitatively describe the influence of the extroversion of leaders on the retention of their employees in the university.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is based on Trait Theory of Personality, Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Job Embeddedness Theory (JET); the theories together explain the relationship between employee retention and extroversion of leaders. According to Trait Theory, extroverted leaders are sociable, optimistic and have good interpersonal skills that facilitate communication and employee engagement (Jung, 1971; Brewer, 2019; Sutton, 2025; Caprelli, 2024). According to SET, employee commitment and loyalty are achieved through positive relationships between employees and their leaders, because supportive leadership promotes mutual commitment and loyalty (Homans, 1958; Hom et al., 2009; Javaid, 2020; Turyahikayo et al., 2023). From the perspective of the employees, JET argues that the factors that keep them in an organisation are strong work connections, organisational fit, and perceived high costs of leaving (Mitchell et al., 2001; Taylor, 2020; Setthakorn et al., 2024). Combined, the theories give a full picture of the causes of employee retention in higher education institutions due to the extroversion of leaders.

2.2 Leaders' Extroversion in Higher Education in Uganda

Leaders' extroversion is known to facilitate communication, collaboration, and employee engagement, thereby fostering positive work cultures that can boost employee retention (Babar & Tahir, 2020; Rangasamy, 2023). But there is some mixed evidence. Mayende & Musenze (2014) observed that extroversion has a significant impact on turnover intentions, while Sitthiwarongchai et al. (2019) and Mary Catherine (2024) did not find the relationship significant. While extroverts tend to build relationships at the workplace and help lower stress levels and employee commitment, the downside is that when dominant, it can actually lead to lower employee satisfaction (Psychology.Town, 2024). It has also been linked to transformational and participative leadership styles, which boost organisational commitment (Clarke et al., 2022). Notwithstanding these findings, there is limited evidence in the higher education sector in Uganda to support this, which is why this study is necessary.

2.3 Employee Retention in Higher Education in Uganda.

The retention of employees is essential to the performance of the institution and plays a major role in the perception of employees in the organisation, job satisfaction, commitment, and career development of employees (Janarthanan et al., 2023; Singh, 2019). Despite the various challenges of retention in universities in Uganda highlighted above, they continue to experience retention problems due to poor leadership, a heavy workload, limited career prospects, and low remuneration (Injikuru et al., 2024; Ssali & Onen, 2019). Supportive leadership, fair organisational practices, career growth, and

conducive working conditions have been found to enhance employee retention, as demonstrated by the research (Ahmed, 2024; Karungi, 2024; Tania & Kowser, 2022). On the other hand, it is important to note that poor leadership leads to an increase in turnover intentions (Mugizi et al., 2023; Nassani et al., 2024; Khaled, 2025). Job Satisfaction, Commitment and Engagement, Perceived Organizational Support, Career Development opportunities and Absenteeism are common indicators of employee retention (Singhal, 2020; Tafesse & Mohammedhussen, 2020; Moreira et al., 2022). While there is some research which has investigated the link between leaders' extroversion and employee retention, this research has not been conducted specifically within the higher education sector of Uganda.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

The pragmatic research philosophy was adopted in this study, which advocates for methods that best suit a research problem that bring both objective (experimental) and subjective (explanatory) perspectives together (Kiiza, 2023; Alsharidi, 2025). In keeping with this approach, a mixed-methods design was used, including quantitative methods to analyse the relationship between the leaders' score on the Extroversion personality characteristic and the retention of employees, as well as qualitative methods to explore in-depth what the participants experienced and thought about the activity and the leaders. The combination of the two methods allowed for triangulation of the outcomes, which improved the validity, depth and comprehensiveness of the study (Islam et al., 2022).

3.2 Research Design

A mixed-method design and convergent parallel research design were used. The design allowed for simultaneous collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data across the sections, lending a holistic perspective on the effect of employees' involvement with leaders' extroversionism on employee retention (Haque, 2022).

3.3 Study Area and Population

The study was carried out at Kampala International University (KIU) in Central Uganda, involving both academic and non-academic staff, a total of 735 persons. The sample size was calculated using Slovene's formula, and staff categories (Academic staff - 240 and non-academic staff - 101) were stratified, and the simple random sampling method was used to select the respondents from each stratum (Creswell, 2023; Mathstroya, 2022; Houe et al., 2023). The target population consisted of full-time employees who had worked at the university for at least three academic years, which allowed them to give informed opinions about leadership practices and employees' retention.

To complement the quantitative data, 15 key informants were purposively selected from the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), as well as University Staff Association Leaders (USALs). The participants were included because of their regulatory, governance and HRM roles and their vast

knowledge of employee retention problems in the higher education sector in Uganda. This diverse mix of staff respondents and key informants allowed for deep sector-wide and institutional insights into the link between leaders' extroversion and staff turnover.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

Key informants and university leaders were selected using purposive sampling as they were experienced and knowledgeable about leadership practices and employee retention. According to Rahman (2023), the researcher used two sampling methods: stratified and simple random sampling, to get enough representation of the different categories of employees as recommended.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The quantitative data were gathered by a structured questionnaire with items on a Likert scale for extroverted leadership behaviours and indicators of employee retention. To gain insight into the participants' experiences, perceptions, and explanations of extroverted leadership and retention, qualitative data were gathered using interviews and open-ended questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.6 Validity and Reliability

The research instruments were given to the experts for content validity, and the content validity index (CVI) obtained was 0.94. This was higher than the minimum acceptable content validity of 0.70 (Amin, 2005), indicating that the items adequately covered the intended constructs. Based on expert feedback before questionnaires were administered, items that were perceived as unclear or less relevant were modified. The high CVI therefore shows that the instrument is applicable for the assessment of the relationship between leaders' extroversion and employee retention in higher education, a case of Kampala International University (Amin, 2005; Prabhat Pandey, 2015).

Table 1: Instrument Overall Reliability Test Results

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items
0.936	0.941

Source: Survey Data 2026

Cronbach's alpha coefficient analysis was used to determine the reliability of the study instrument. The internal consistency of the test items was very high with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.94. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), Cronbach's Alpha is used to evaluate the consistency between the items in a scale and the measure of the same underlying construct. Moreover, Creswell (2023) states that an alpha coefficient of ≥ 0.70 is regarded as satisfactory for reliability in social science research. Thus, its coefficient of 0.94 made it highly reliable

and suitable for collecting data and had good internal consistency among the measurement items that the researcher used in the study.

3.7 Data Analysis

Linear Mixed Models (LMMs) were used to analyse quantitative data with descriptive statistics to explore the relationship of extroversion with employee retention. The LMM with fixed effects was chosen because it allows for more robust and reliable estimates of the effect of the treatment compared to traditional linear regression, which cannot address the hierarchical nature of responses measured across the university departments and sections (Schork, 2025). Moreover, the model can account for clustered organisational data that can lead to violating the independence assumption of OLS regression, and the fixed-effects specification eliminates the effects of unobserved time-invariant factors, yielding a more accurate estimation of the relationship between leaders' extroversion and employee retention.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study followed the guidelines of Uganda's academic research regulations as set by the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST; SS3673ES), Hospice Africa Uganda Research Ethics Committee (HAUREC, Ref. HAU-2024-145), and Kampala International University Management. Informed consent was obtained, and anonymity, confidentiality and privacy were ensured for all participants throughout the research process.

4. Results

Table 2: Response rate for Quantitative and Qualitative data

Respondents/Participants	Frequency
Targeted respondents/Questionnaires distributed	341
Questionnaires returned	315
Quant. Response rate	92.4%
Response rate for Qualitative data	
Targeted interviews/participants	20
Interviews carried out	15
Qual. Response rate	75%

Source: Survey Data 2026

The study was able to achieve a high return of responses in both phases of data collection. The quantitative phase involved the return of 315 questionnaires from the total of 341 questionnaires received, with a response rate of 92.4%, making the results credible. The success rate of the targeted interviews during the qualitative phase was 15 of 20, or 75%, which was deemed acceptable to gain a solid understanding of the qualitative data and to provide interpretation for the research.

Table 3: Demographic characteristics of study participants (n=315)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	161	51.1
	Female	154	48.9
Staff Group	Academic Staff	209	66.3
	Non-Academic Staff	106	33.7
Age	18-30 years	67	21.3%
	31-40 years	104	33%
	41-45 years	69	21.9%
	Above 45 years	75	23.8%
Education level	A' Level Certificate and Below	6	1.7%
	Diploma	10	3.2%
	Bachelors	69	21.9%
	Masters	167	53%
	PhD or beyond	63	20%

Source: Survey Data 2026

The study respondents were balanced in gender distribution with 51.1% male and 48.9% female. Academic staff made up the larger group (66.3%), with the non-academic staff making up the smaller group (33.7%), ensuring perspectives from both employee groups are present. The majority (33%) of respondents were 31-40 years old, with people over 45 (23.8%) making up the second largest group, suggesting that the results

mainly reflect the opinions of experienced staff. In terms of education, most of the sample had a master's degree (53%), followed by a PhD or above (20%) and a bachelor's degree (21.9%), which is a very highly educated sample, which will improve the credibility and reliability of study findings.

Note: SD is Strongly Disagree, D is Disagree, U is Undecided, A is Agree, and SA is Strongly Agree

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Response Distribution on extroversion statements (n = 315)

Opinion Statements	SD (%)	D (%)	U (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. D
My supervisor performs well in fast-paced and dynamic work environments.	7	14.6	20.6	42.5	15.2	3.44	1.126
My supervisor readily initiates social interactions and conversations with other staff members.	8.9	9.8	8.9	43.8	28.6	3.73	1.226
My immediate supervisor enjoys being the centre of attention.	21.9	18.4	19.7	26	14	2.92	1.371
My supervisor openly expresses thoughts and freely shares ideas with others.	8.6	14.3	10.8	43.8	22.5	3.57	1.225
My university leader enjoys facilitating and leading group discussions.	12.1	15.2	14.9	41.3	16.5	3.35	1.261
My university leader typically communicates with staff in a direct manner.	11.7	12.7	7	43.5	25.1	3.57	1.308
My university leader places a strong emphasis on building relationships and networking with others within the university	9.5	11.1	12.7	41.9	24.4	3.62	1.250
Social interactions generally motivate and energise my immediate supervisor.	7.9	11.4	10.5	44.8	25.1	3.69	1.220
My supervisor readily adapts to new changes in the workplace.	7	7.9	8.6	50.2	26.3	3.81	1.124
My supervisor frequently seeks feedback or validation from others.	8.6	16.2	8.3	42.5	24.4	3.58	1.255
My supervisor is generally outgoing and talkative, even when interacting in unfamiliar situations.	13	24.8	19.4	29.8	13	3.05	1.261
My supervisor enjoys speaking in public and delivering presentations to large audiences.	5.7	9.2	13	44.8	27.3	3.79	1.116

Source: Survey Data 2026

The descriptive statistics showed that participants' general impression of their supervisors was that they performed in the moderate to high range for extroverted leadership behaviours. The mean scores of most opinion statements are above the neutral value ($M > 3.0$), indicating that the supervisors at Kampala International University are seen as socially involved, communicative, adaptive and interactive. These traits align with extroverted leadership behaviours positively associated with employee engagement, effective communication and positive relationships in the workplace, which are key factors in employee retention.

Supervisors' adaptability to workplace changes ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.124$) had the highest mean score and was followed closely by enjoyment of public speaking and presenting to large groups ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 1.116$), initiating social interactions with staff ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.226$), and being motivated by social interactions ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.220$) among the extroversion attributes. The results indicate that respondents generally felt that their leaders were approachable, confident and comfortable in formal and informal interactions with employees. These behaviours are likely to foster inter-personal relationships, collaboration and employees' sense of belonging in the institution.

Likewise, their supervisors openly shared ideas with other people ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.225$), communicated directly with staff ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.308$), emphasized building relationship and networking ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.250$), often sought the opinions of others ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.255$), worked well in dynamic work environments ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.126$), and

found enjoyment in leading group discussions ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.261$). These behaviours demonstrate openness, collaboration and engagement by employees, which can help to build trust, better communication and a positive work culture that helps employees stay.

Supervisors who enjoy being the centre of attention ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.371$) and being outgoing and talkative in unfamiliar situations ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.261$), however, have comparatively lower mean scores. Based on the respondents' answers, it appears that supervisors tend to have extroverted personalities, but that they do not strongly correlate effective leadership with being attention-seeking and social-dominant. On the other hand, what seems to have been appreciated by employees were extroversion traits that enabled them to communicate, cooperate, adjust and interact positively with others.

To conclude, the descriptive results suggest that the leaders' extroversion is manifested in the following ways at Kampala International University: leadership through effective communication, social engagement, adaptability and relationship building, and not through self-centeredness and attention seeking. These behaviours matter from an employee retention standpoint as they support positive leader-employee relationships, increase a sense of connectedness in the workplace and help create a positive organisational climate that can help motivate employees to stay at the university. However, the inferential statistical analysis presented in the following section establishes the extent to which the leaders' extroversion can significantly predict employee retention.

Table 5: Fixed Effects Estimates for Linear Mixed Model Predicting Employee Retention Based on Extroversion

<i>Estimates of Fixed Effects</i>							
Parameter	Estimate	Std. Error	df	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Intercept	10.026	1.020	94.564	9.833	0.00	8.001457	12.050204
Extroversion	1.830	0.264	312.412	6.934	0.00	1.310701	2.349231

Dependent Variable: Employee retention.

Source: Survey Data 2026

The fixed-effect results from the linear mixed model indicate that there is a statistically significant positive association between extroversion and employee retention. The effect of leaders' extroversion on retention is also significant ($\beta = 1.830$, $t = 6.934$, $p < 0.001$); for every one-unit increase in leaders' extroversion, on average there is a 1.83-unit increase in retention. The intercept ($\beta = 10.026$, $p < 0.001$) of the model represents the expected levels of retention in the absence of leaders' extroversion. The width of the 95% confidence interval (1.31 to 2.35) shows that the estimate is relatively stable and reliable.

To sum up, quantitative evidence shows that the extroverted leadership characteristics are significant and positive in regard to employee retention among employees at Kampala

International University. The manuscript then builds on these findings with qualitative results to further examine how these two relate, and the lived and perceived experiences of participants.

4.1 Quantitative Findings

The quantitative analysis sought to determine the extent to which leaders' extroversion was a good predictor of employee retention at Kampala International University, and it was found that it was a strong predictor with a statistically significant value (Estimate = 1.830, $p < 0.001$). Extroverted leaders were found to foster open communication, teamwork, visibility, employee participation, and interpersonal interaction, creating an environment of trust, support and responsiveness that

boosted organisational commitment and trust. Extrovert leadership is viewed by respondents as a leadership that provides recognition, feedback, and involvement in the institutional process that makes employees feel motivated and a sense of belonging. The job embeddedness components (organisational fit, interpersonal links, and perceived sacrifice of leaving) were also positively boosted by extroversion. Some minor problems were reported by a few participants: too much extroversion (dominance, attention seeking, centralised communication) on the part of the leaders sometimes made it difficult to participate, and reduced inclusivity.

4.2 Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data confirmed the quantitative results – the majority of participants indicated that extroverted leaders are important to positive workplace relationships and employee retention, for example;

Respondents explained that;

Respondent 015: “Open communication and regular contact with staff by leaders make employees feel valued and connected with the university.”

- Respondent 0251: These leaders instil a sense of belonging as staff have easy access to ask them questions.”
- Respondent 0170: “Leaders and staff communicate regularly, which reduces misunderstandings and builds trust within the institution.”

Also, key informants indicated that:

“Leaders who are easy to reach and involve employees in the conversation foster employee commitment and increase retention.”

- Participant 07: “When there are decisions regarding the business, they are more likely to stick around if their opinions are considered.”

Participant 014: “It makes everyone feel a part of the institution's success; that contributes to retention (inclusive leadership).”

Participants also mentioned the motivational aspects of extroverted leadership, as demonstrated in the verbatim comments.

Employee efforts are recognised, and teamwork is encouraged to create a positive environment, which reduces staff turnover, as stated by respondent 052.

045: “Acknowledging staff achievements in public lifts their spirits and encourages them to do more of the same.”

“Team-focused leadership promotes team working and also affirms the employees' attachment to the institution” (Respondent 066).

However, several participants warned that too much extroversion can be problematic

Some leaders dominate the conversation and talk at length, leaving the employees feeling uninvolved in decisions, Participant 04 said.

Participant 09: “Leaders need to be careful not to talk too much about their points of view, or staff may become disengaged and feel undervalued.”

Participant 012: “Too dominant in meetings can make others not feel like they can speak freely.”

To summarise, respondents and participants commented that listening, fairness and emotional intelligence are the most important elements of extroverted leadership.

5. Discussion

The study identified that the extroversion of leaders was a significant predictor for retention at Kampala International University, as it was found to create favourable communication, relationships, trust and organisational engagement which boost retention. These results support Personality Traits Theory (Psico-smart-EditorialTeam, 2024), by showing how stable personality characteristics shape leadership behaviours (interpersonal engagement, assertiveness, visibility, enthusiasm) that benefit employee experiences (Guy-Evans, 2024). The results corroborate Social Exchange Theory (Aluko et al, 2022). Aluko et al. (2022); Asemota & Olufunmilola (2024) found that supportive communication, recognition, participation and relational support from extroverted leaders create reciprocity, organisational commitment and long-term attachment. They also applied the Job Embeddedness Theory (Mashi et al., 2022) and Herrmann (2025) by highlighting how teamwork, integration, collaboration and inclusion benefit the enhanced organisational fit, interpersonal relations and perceived sacrifice of extroverted leaders.

Furthermore, it was found that an extroverted leader was found to foster positive work cultures which in turn increased worker satisfaction and morale (Khalil, 2016). The study does, however, warn against having too high an extroversion profile, which includes being dominant, centralised on communication or seeking attention, as it can negatively affect relationships at work, and thus, the benefits of extroversion are balanced with those of emotional intelligence, inclusivity and active listening. It is concluded that universities should be able to encourage extroverted leadership while keeping it employee-focused and controlled by interpersonal sensitivity.

5.1 Recommendations

Recommendations: Enhance leadership development to boost communication, emotional intelligence, inclusivity, teamwork and employee engagement; institutionalise participative communication, recognition, collaborative decision-making and feedback; integrate extroversion-aware leadership development and HR policies that foster balanced extroverted behaviours, and measure inclusiveness and visibility. Research and theory: Utilise and further develop theories of Personality Traits, Social Exchange, Job Embeddedness, and contextual leadership in an African context of higher education; investigate the role of emotional intelligence and cultural moderators and use longitudinal research designs.

Limitations and mitigations: Cross-sectional design - causal inference is limited; used mixed-effects regression, recommend longitudinal studies; self-report surveys – risk of bias, mitigated

by anonymity, validated instruments, recommend triangulating with interviews, turnover records and supervisor assessments; single institution focus - limits generalizability, recommend comparative studies across Ugandan and East African universities.

5.2 Contribution

The study gives African higher education evidence that extroverted leadership is predictive of employee turnover, extends Social Exchange theory and Job Embeddedness theory by demonstrating how extroversion can promote reciprocal support, fit, links, perceived sacrifice and provides evidence that excessive extroversion can be detrimental to relationships and suggests emotional intelligence and inclusivity as moderators.

The study also proposes leadership development that is both extroverted and emotionally intelligent, and actively listens; establishes participatory communication, recognition, collaboration, and feedback; reforms performance assessment and HR policies to incorporate the philosophy of inclusiveness; and informs policy norms to enhance workforce stability in resource-poor universities;

6. Conclusion

The study further concludes that extroversion has a positive and significant impact on employee retention at Kampala International University. Extroverted leaders build retention by communicating with their employees, engaging with them on a personal level, recognising them, fostering collaboration, and involving employees. But the power of extroverted leadership is in balance, emotional intelligence and inclusiveness.

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