

## **Culture and Managerial Styles: A Study of Potential Managers in Malaysia**

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**Abstract:** Multimedia University, (MMU) is the oldest and largest private university in Malaysia (a multiracial country). Its main campus in Cyberjaya, Selangor has four Faculties: Creative Multimedia (FCM), Information Technology (FIT), Engineering (FOE) and Management (FOM). English is the language of instruction. A questionnaire based on Basse (1982) was used and 931 usable responses obtained (about a quarter of the population). The independent variables were age, race (Malay, Chinese, Indian, 'Others'), year of study and the Faculty. The dependent variables were the five managerial styles (Factual, Intuitive, Analytical, Normative and European) as measured by the questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha >0.9). Using One-way ANOVA etc. It was found that there were significant differences (at  $p < 0.05$ ) in managerial styles between races and academic years. FCM students were unique in that they preferred the Factual style, those from other Faculties preferred the Analytical style. Malay and Chinese students preferred the Analytical style, Indian students preferred the Factual style. Undergraduate courses at MMU are designed, inter alia, to produce managers for the students' chosen profession. The implication of this and the results obtained are discussed in terms of national and individual needs and the possible desirable changes in the courses at MMU and other institutions of higher learning.

**Key words:** Managerial styles, factual, intuitive, analytical, normative, European, races

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### **INTRODUCTION**

**Managerial styles in an organization:** Organizations look for managers who can manage effectively and efficiently. But each manager is unique with his or her style, or styles, depending on the situation. Managerial style is the patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving that a manager uses to deal with people and situations. A manager has several managerial styles such as analytical, intuitive, factual, normative and European, according to<sup>[1]</sup>. There are managers with only one managerial style. However, most managers have a combination of these five managerial styles, although they can be classified in various ways<sup>[2,3, 4]</sup>. Managerial styles have a great impact on the organization's operation. Effective managerial styles can increase productivity, increase empowerment, boost up employees' morale, motivation and contribution to the organization and so on. Thus, managerial styles are important and need to be identified carefully and polished in order to improve the productivity of the organization and enhance the well-being of its members.

**The nature of the problem:** Many organizations spend considerable capital on solving the managerial issues every year<sup>[5]</sup>. Much of it is spent on the study of managerial behavior. Our assumption is there are

specific appropriate behaviors required for managers to be successful in their relationships with subordinates. Generally, the managerial styles of a manager in an organization will influence the performance of his subordinates: This is axiomatic.

**The aim:** The aim of the study reported was to investigate the managerial styles of students from the four different faculties namely Faculty of Engineering (FOE), Faculty of Information Technology (FIT), Faculty of Management (FOM) and the Faculty of Creative Multimedia (FCM) in Cyberjaya Campus, Multimedia University (MMU).

**Background:** Students of a university are potential managers. Their preferred managerial styles will certainly influence the operation and function of an organization. Implementing an appropriate managerial style may help the organization to enjoy internal and external benefits. Internal benefits include better communication and trust between superiors and subordinates, encouraging more participation and increased morale and loyalty among employees. These internal strengths will lead to external benefits such as the reputation of and good will for the organization.

**The managerial styles:** Using the theory of<sup>[1]</sup> there were five managerial styles studied, namely 'analytical', 'intuitive', 'factual', 'normative' and 'European'. Managers who practice the analytical style are impersonal and objective in their dealings. The manager is a force of law and order in their organization and progress through the management hierarchy is along conventional promotional lines. Factual managers use available data and information to make decisions based on facts. Normative managers are idealistic. They are concerned with how things should be done. Managers who practice the European managerial style like to use political power and informal influences. They spend most of their time on management and communication activities and relatively less in human resource activities<sup>[6]</sup>.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Methodology:** A pilot test with 30 questionnaires was carried out. Furthermore, a reliability test was done by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 10.0.

A random sampling was used in this study. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents (students from first year to final year) on the Cyberjaya Campus. The respondents were undergraduate students from the Faculty of Engineering (FOE), Faculty of Information Technology (FIT), Faculty of Management (FOM) and the Faculty of Creative Multimedia FCM). In order to ensure a high response rate, the questionnaires were handed out personally to the respondents and collected immediately once they were completed by the respondents. In addition, some lecturers helped to collect the completed questions from their students during lecture and tutorial sessions.

The significance level of  $p < 0.05$  was used in this study.

### Problem statements:

- There is a significant difference in management styles among students from the four faculties
- There is a significant difference in management styles between races (i.e., Malay, Chinese, Indian and 'Others')
- There is a significant difference in management styles among students from different academic years

**Data analysis:** A total number of 931 fully completed questionnaire was used. The reliability test showed the value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.9058, i.e.,  $> 0.7$ . Thus, the questionnaire was reliable for this study.

Table 1 shows that slightly more than 50% of the respondents were aged between 20 to 21.

Table 1: Number of respondents according to age

Age	Group number of respondents
18-19	98
20-21	482
22-23	287
24- and above	64
Total	931

Table 2: Number of respondents according to race

Race	Number of respondents
Malay	217
Chinese	549
Indian	129
Others	36
Total	931

Table 3: Number of Respondents According to Year of Study

Years of study	Number of respondents
First year	357
Second year	275
Third year	299
Total	931

Table 4: Number of Respondents According to Faculty

Faculty	Number of respondents
Faculty of creative multimedia	265
Faculty of information technology	172
Faculty of engineering	197
Faculty of management	297
Total	931

Table 5 shows the ranking of managerial styles preferred by the respondents from different faculties. Factual style was ranked the highest by FCM students with a mean score of 24.1245. Students from FIT, FOE and FOM ranked analytical style the highest.

Table 6 shows the ranking of managerial styles according to different races. Malay, Chinese and other races ranked analytical style the highest. Indians preferred factual style.

Table 7 shows that first year students preferred factual style. Second year students and third year students ranked intuitive style and analytical style as their first preference respectively.

Table 8 shows that managerial styles are associated with races and years of study. The significance values are 0.009 and 0.012 respectively.

Table 9 shows that factual style and European style are significantly different between faculties, at  $p < 0.05$ .

Table 5: Ranking of Managerial Styles According to Faculties

Year	FCM		FIT		FOE		FOM	
	Factual	24.1245	Analytical	23.5058	Analytical	23.7005	Analytical	24.0067
Style	Intuitive	23.8830	Factual	23.4709	Intuitive	23.5482	Intuitive	23.6397
	Analytical	23.7660	Intuitive	23.3140	Factual	23.5178	Factual	23.2963
	European	23.6642	Normative	22.9070	European	23.0558	normative	23.0438
	Normative	22.8491	European	22.5988	Normative	22.9848	European	22.7172

Table 6: Ranking of managerial styles according to races

Races	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Others
Managerial	Analytical 23.8111	Analytical 23.7596	Factual 24.8372	Analytical 24.0833
Style	Intuitive 23.7465	Intuitive 23.5774	Analytical 23.7364	Intuitive 24.0822
	Factual 23.5253	Factual 23.3552	Intuitive 23.5271	Factual 23.6389
	European 23.0553	Normative 23.0128	European 23.3798	European 23.5556
	Normative 22.7281	European 22.9144	Normative 23.2868	normative 22.1389

Table 7: Ranking of managerial styles according to years

Year	First	Second	Third
Managerial	Factual 23.8599	Intuitive 23.7527	Analytical 24.0100
Style	Analytical 23.6387	Factual 23.7345	Intuitive 23.5184
	Intuitive 23.6275	Analytical 23.7164	Factual 23.2007
	European 23.0924	European 23.0618	normative 23.0903
	Normative 22.8039	Normative 22.9891	European 22.9465

Table 8: Correlation between managerial styles and faculties, races and years

Spearman's rho	Managerial styles	Correlation coefficient	Faculties	Races	Years
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0052	-0.096	0.092
			0.16	0.009	0.012

Table 9: ANOVA analysis for managerial styles and faculties

	F	Sig.
Factual	7.162	0.000
Intuitive	1.223	0.300
Analytical	0.916	0.433
Normative	0.076	0.973
European	6.474	0.000

Table 10: Post Hoc analysis for managerial styles and faculties

Dependent Variable	Faculty (1)	Faculty (J)	Significance level	Mean difference (I-J)
Factual	FCM	FIT	0.012	0.8434
		FOE	0.013	0.8008
		FOM	0.000	1.0058
European	FCM	FIT	0.002	1.0499
		FOM	0.001	0.9286

Table 11: ANOVA analysis for managerial styles and races

	F	Sig.
Factual	10.245	0.000
Intuitive	0.342	0.795
Analytical	0.284	0.837
Normative	1.366	0.252
European	1.24	0.294

Table 12: Post Hoc analysis for managerial styles and races

Dependent Variable	Race (I)	Race (J)	Significance level	Mean difference (I-J)
Factual	Indian	Malay	0.000	1.3709
		Chinese	0.000	1.4925
		Others	0.148	1.1056

Table 13: ANOVA analysis for managerial styles and years

	F	Sig.
Factual	6.886	0.000
Intuitive	0.345	0.793
Analytical	0.767	0.513
Normative	0.511	0.675
European	0.268	0.848

Table 10 shows that 'factual' style is significantly different between students from FCM and students from FIT, FOE and FOM, at  $p < 0.05$ . European managerial style is significantly different between students from FCM and students from FIT and FOM.

Table 11 shows that 'factual style' is significantly different between races and none others. Table 12 shows that 'factual style' is significantly different between the Indian and the Malay and Chinese.

Table 14: Post Hoc analysis for managerial styles and years

Dependent Variable	Years (I)	Years (J)	Significance level	Mean difference (I-J)
Factual	First	Second	0.951	0.1254
		Third	0.022	0.6593

Table 13 shows that only 'factual style' is significantly different between years of study.

Table 14 shows that 'factual style' is significantly different between the first year students and the third year students.

### DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that students from the FCM have a stronger tendency to use data and information available to make decisions compared to students from other faculties, see Table 10. Besides, FCM students also prefer to use informal influences compared to students from FIT and FOM. The ranking of Factual and European managerial styles by FCM students was higher than the ranking given by students from other faculties. Another result is that the ranking of Normative and European managerial styles is consistently low across the faculties.

Managerial style was correlated with races for the subjects in this study. Factual style was significantly different for the Indians, Malays and Chinese. The positive values of mean difference in Table 12 reveals that the Indian students have a higher preference for the Factual style than either of the other two races.

Table 13 and 14 show that the more senior students are less concerned with the Factual style than their juniors. This suggest that maturity does not change the student preferences regarding managerial style, assuming that each first year cohort is the same as the previous first year cohort in this regard. More importantly Table 7 shows that the Factual style for students overall becomes decreasing important across the three years of their study whilst the European and Normative style remain roughly constant with the Analytical style becoming paramount in their final year. If this is due to their MMU education then many would say the university is achieving the most desirable changes in attitudes among their students.

Many observers would expect that FCM students should become increasingly intuitive during their degree course. This is only partly borne out by the results of this study, so further investigation on this issue is needed.

This research reinforces the view that the assumption that Malaysia is culturally homogeneous<sup>[7]</sup> was unjustified<sup>[8]</sup>.

### CONCLUSION

For the sample investigated it may be concluded that:

- FCM students' preferred managerial style is different from students from other Faculties, who preferred the Factual style. Students from other faculties preferred the Analytical style
- Indian students favor the Factual style. Malay, Chinese and 'Others' favor the Analytical style
- The importance of Factual style decreased from first year students to third year students. Analytical style became most important among the final year students. Thus, MMU produces future managers with the Analytical style
- Normative and European styles were ranked fairly low in this study, thus MMU students do not favor these two managerial styles. The reasons for this are not clear and require further research
- FOM and FOE students have an almost identical ranking of preferences for managerial styles. This is surprising
- Malay and Chinese students appear to have almost similar preferences for managerial styles

To what extend these conclusions can be generalized to all universities in Malaysia is problematic, however, this study serves as a pilot study for further research.

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