

Gender Differences in Management Style: A Malaysian Perspective

Roziyah Mohd.Rasdi and Maimunah Ismail
Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

The study aims to examine as to whether there exists gender differences in management style among a group of 124 men and 63 women managers of public organizations in Malaysia. Using Ministry Style Matrix of Berkley (1995), results indicate that men managers are most likely to practice commander style of management, followed by maintenance, shepherd and entrepreneur. On the other hand, women managers tend to portray the style of shepherd, entrepreneur, commander and maintenance. The study concludes that the managerial workforce is strongly gender constructed. The study implies that management should capitalize on gender variations in management style to the advantage of the organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Malaysian statistics indicate that there are an increasing number of women pursuing managerial and professional careers, two types of employment that used to be very male-dominated. In the year 2000 the percentage of women in administrative and managerial positions was 2.2, increased from 0.6 and 1.8 in 1990 and 1995, respectively (Malaysia, 1996; Malaysia 2001). Though the statistics show an improved employment rate, relatively it is still poor when compared to their male counterparts. The corresponding percentage of men in the same profession was 4.7 in the 2000, increased from 2.8 and 3.9 in 1990 and 1995, respectively.

Based on the numerical presence of men that is exceeding women managers in many employment sectors, it is commonly said that the administrative and managerial positions are intensely segregated by gender. With intensification of research in management, this gender-segregated scenario triggers other research directions such as "Do men and women managers show different management styles?" If they do, what causes the differences? Is the difference due to women's attributes and behaviors that in certain aspects are different from men? Or is the difference due to gender relations aspects in the organization? This paper attempts to answer such research questions. Specifically, the objectives of this paper are i) to determine whether there is any significant difference in the management style of men and women managers? and, ii) to determine the relationship between professional profile (previous and current position, numbers of years in current position, years of work experience and monthly income) of men and women managers and their management styles.

This study is significant because it compares and contrasts the attributes of both genders for a clear understanding of managerial similarities and differences. By comparing men and women in the same type of profession, this study helps to solve conflicting understanding between male-female similarity-difference debates that are often associated with single sex studies. The study will provide better understanding particularly regarding men v. women advancement in the managerial tasks, with the hope to suggest ways to overcome obstacles that hinder women from being at the top position of job hierarchy as a result of their management style. The study is also significant to provide insight into how men and women managers view themselves. Certainly, this study will enhance theoretical explanation pertaining to the claim that management is a form of gendered construction based on a Malaysian context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed in this paper are mainly on two aspects, namely i) Management as a gendered construction; and ii) The Berkley Theory that forms the basis of the research framework of the study.

Management as a Gendered Construction

Bateman and Snell (1999) define management as the process of working with people and resources to accomplish organizational goals. When management is said as a gendered construction means the explanation of any aspect of management is based on a male or female peculiarity, for instance, the progressively decline of women's proportion in the higher hierarchy of managerial positions in organization. Due to concentration of women at the lower job hierarchy, the economic status of women in the workplace becomes lower than that of men. Davidson and Burke (1994) and Powell and Graves (2003) further confirm that as a result of management as a gendered construction is that women are paid less than men in the same occupation.

According to Enomoto (2000), white males have dominated the theory in management in terms of assumptions, perceptions, beliefs, and values, and these have become the underpinning of leadership organization. Maier (1999) and Stivers (1993) criticize that formal organizations promote a gendered work environment by embodying characteristics that are traditionally associated with being male. Organizations tend to expect employees to exhibit behavior that is rational, autonomous, competitive, action oriented and hierarchical. Due to these expectations, women members in organizations have problems to manage their femaleness. It is because these expectations (widely shared by both women and men) about how managers will behave conform to expectations of male but not of female behavior, and women must make deliberate efforts to balance conflicting roles.

Smith (1987) explains that a gendered construction of management becomes particularly problematic when the perspectives, concerns, interests of only one gender and one class are represented as general, and a one-sided standpoint comes to be seen as natural and obvious. Any conspicuous departure from those perspectives is viewed as deviant. Since historically men have dominated management and administrative positions in the various sectors and women are the entrants in the positions, women certainly face constraints in adapting themselves in the new working environments that have been built based on men's standards.

The following section discusses some management theories relating to differences in management styles by gender. The first is Managerial Grid Theory developed by Blake and Mouton in 1964 (Management Learning, 2001). The theory comprises four quadrants based on two axes of being concern for people and being concern for productivity. Therefore, it assumes that managers can be high on both, low on both or high on one, and low on the other. Maier's (1999) analysis on global cultures, says that concern for production is more closely associated with masculinity, whereas concern for people is more closely aligned with femininity. Ogilvie and Tanian (1998), however argue that the Managerial Grid Theory appears to be relatively gender free as it claims to best suit an androgynous management style that may not necessarily relate to the specific gender of a person.

The second is the Situational Leadership Theory by Hersey and Blanchard (Arnold, Ivan and Cooper, 1991). The theory also depends on two dimensions, namely, relationship behavior between manager and follower, and the task or readiness of follower. In relation to gender perspective, it is said that men managers are aligned with task behavior whereas women managers are aligned with relationship behavior.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Berkley's (1995) Ministry Style Matrix in which management style is categorized into four separate styles, namely, commanders, shepherds, maintenance and entrepreneurs. Comparison is made between Berkley's management styles with the two management theories of Managerial Grid and Situational Leadership as mentioned earlier. First, the entrepreneur style is equivalent to impoverished and delegating of Managerial Grid Theory and Situational Leadership Theory respectively. In this style, the manager assumes workers are mature and have reached high levels of ability to accomplish a specific task. The manager provides minimal support and direction. Among characteristics that fit this style are change-oriented, innovative, visionary and experimental.

Next is the maintenance style of management, which is comparable to authority compliance, and telling of the other two models, respectively. The manager stresses more on production behavior rather than relationship behavior. The manager characteristics of this style are organized, efficient, concern for routine, information-focused and detail-intensive.

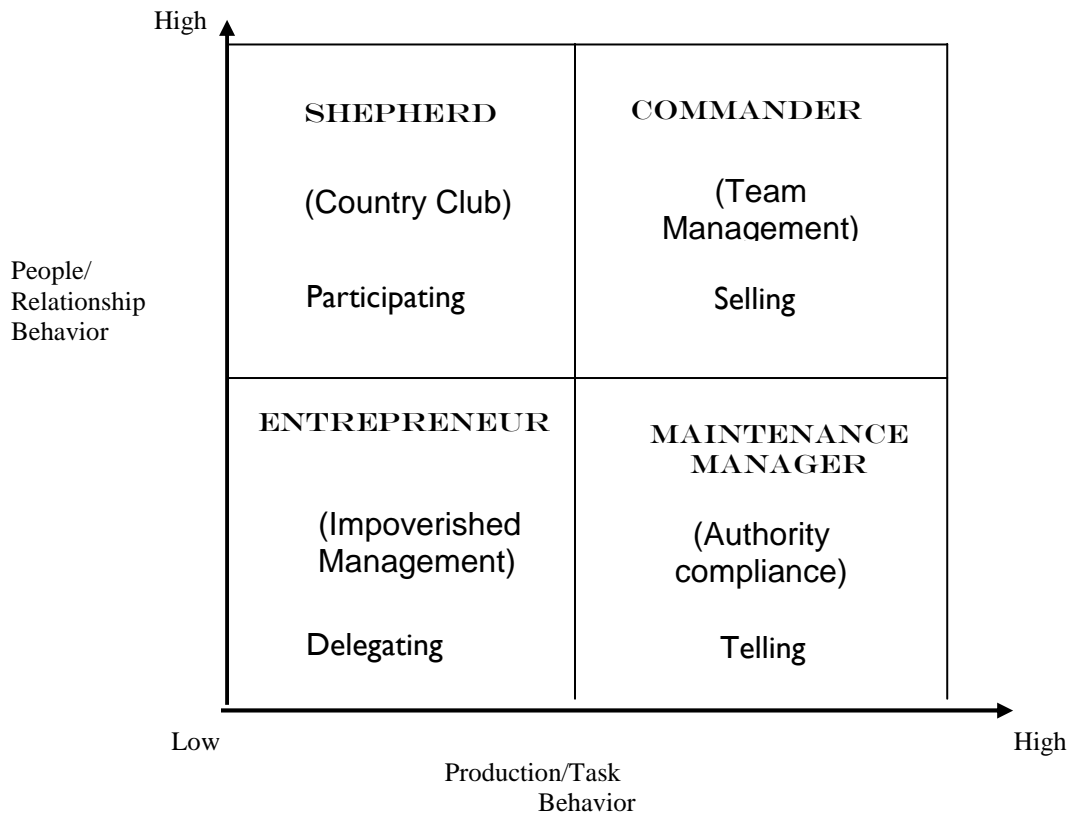
The third style is shepherd manager, which is similar to country club and participating of Managerial Grid and Situational Leadership theories, respectively. The manager of this style gives more priority on people relationship behavior than production behavior. This is shown through the facilitating role of a manager. Shepherd manager minimizes the use of directive style and legitimate power to achieve organizational vision. The traits that symbolize a shepherd manager are public pleasing, informality, sensitive, accommodating, procrastinating, emotional and contemplative.

Finally, the commander manager is equivalent to team management and selling of the other two managerial models. This type of manager is seen as high-task and high relationship individual. The manager prefers to use the directive interpersonal style to achieve the organization's target. This manager also has strong relationship orientation in order to gain the workers confidence. The characteristics that best describe the commander's style are decisive, controlling, competitive, demanding, perfectionist, confrontational, result-focused, power-conscious and dominating.

In this study, the attributes of commander manager are aligned with masculine characteristics, and the attributes of shepherd manager are closely related with feminine characteristics. However, this study reviewed the categorizations of masculine and feminine characteristics, as these stereotypes were developed 30 years ago. In management, the masculine characteristics are more valued compared to the feminine traits. Nevertheless

nowadays, when referring to women managers, they do possess some of the masculine characteristics such as independent, active, competitive and ambitious.

This study therefore, adopts the Berkley's conceptualization of management styles (Berkley, 1995) as its operational definition. It is depicted in Figure 1.



Legend to the management styles as indicated in the quadrants:

MINISTRY STYLE MATRIX
 (Managerial Grid Theory)
 Situational Leadership Theory

Figure 1: The Quadrants of Management Style showing the Integration of Ministry Style Matrix, Managerial Grid Theory and Situational Leadership Theory.
 Sources: Berkley (1995); Management Learning (2001); Arnold et al. (1991)

METHODOLOGY

The respondents of this survey were 187 managers of whom 124 were men and 63 were women. They were sampled randomly from the training participants of Leadership Course series of National Institute of Public Administration (or Institut Tadbiran Awam Negara with acronym INTAN) for the duration from March 2003 until June 2003. The group of participants made up of low, middle and top management levels of personnel from various public organizations in Malaysia. They were 17 training courses scheduled for the duration, and each course accommodated from 15 to 40 participants. The total population for this study was 319 managers. Overall, the representation of women managers in each training course was relatively low, at about 15% to 20% due to smaller number of women managers compared to men. An amount of 5 was used as the cut-off point for women managers in order to get an adequate number of them. The research had to include all women managers in each training course that was with five or less number of women managers. If the number was more than five, 80% of them were selected randomly. For men managers, about 50% to 60% of them in each training courses were randomly selected. Randomization was done using the Table of Random Numbers in selecting the study

sample. Data were collected in each training session using instrument based on Ministry Style Assessment by Berkley (1995). The instrument consists of 40 items describing the attributes of one's personal management style. Adjustment to the original version of the instrument was done by adding some elaborations on the attributes that otherwise were stated conceptually. The instrument used both English and Malay Language versions.

A 10-point scale was used to measure the instrument and the items ranging from 1 means 'very uncharacteristic of me' and 10 means 'very characteristics of me'. In the analysis, the 40 attributes were regrouped into the four types of management styles, namely, commander, shepherd, maintenance and entrepreneur managers. In order to choose the dominant style and to make comparison possible, the composite score for the four styles was transformed into z-scores. The type with the highest score signals the dominant or preferred management style. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS. Simple statistics of Chi-square test for homogeneity was used to identify whether there is difference in management style, and Chi-square test of independence was used to measure the relationship between professional profiles and management styles of men and women managers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Profile of Respondents.

For men managers, generally it was found that majority of them are Malays (88.7%) and in the mid-forties ($\bar{x} = 47.41$, $s = 6.458$) having 3.62 children of which mostly in their school-going age ($\bar{x} = 2.69$). Likewise, majority of women managers are Malays (84.1%) and their age mean is lower than men ($\bar{x} = 43.27$, $s = 8.766$). Women respondents have smaller family size than men respondents ($\bar{x} = 2.29$ person). Chi-Square test of homogeneity reveals that there is a significant difference in percentage distribution for men and women managers in terms of number of children ($\chi^2 = 16.550$, $p = 0.001$) and number of school-going age children ($\chi^2 = 18.198$, $p = 0.0001$).

Further results show that majority of men managers (91.1%) as well as women managers (92.1%) have tertiary education. Subsequently, Chi-Square test of homogeneity shows that there is a significant difference in marital status distribution between men and women managers. The percentages of men managers (92.7%) who are married are higher in comparison to their women counterparts (81.0%). The mean difference between income of men managers ($\bar{x} = \text{RM } 5883.53$) and that of women manager ($\bar{x} = \text{RM } 4683.88$) is high i.e. RM 1199.647. This figure is surprising compared to the 9.5% of women managers versus 15.3% of men managers who occupy the highest managerial level. Chi-Square test of homogeneity shows that the proportion of current position and monthly income is heterogeneous for male and female managers at 0.05 level of significance. This result is congruent with the findings in other research, which implies to gender disaggregated data. Men managers seem to dominate the higher management position (Rigg and Sparrow, 1994; Powell, 1999; 1988; Davidson and Burke, 1994; Enomoto, 2000) and earn more income compared to their counterparts (Davidson and Burke, 1994; Powell, 1999; Simpson, 2000; Powell and Graves, 2003).

2. Gender Differences and Management Style.

Table 1 shows that there is a marked difference between male and female management style. The result implies that men managers tend to practice commander (37.9%) style of management, followed by maintenance (24.2%), shepherd (23.4%) and entrepreneur (14.5%). On the other hand, women managers is more likely to exhibit shepherd (36.5%) style of management, followed by entrepreneur (23.8%), commander (20.6%) and maintenance (19.0%) style of management. These findings are consistent with other studies abroad, which reported that men tend to display their masculine traits and women tend to portray their feminine characteristics (Park, 1996; Freeman and Varey, 1997; Rigg and Sparrow, 1994).

One of the major differences between male and female managers is women seem to prefer democratic style (shepherd) of management, while men prefer authoritarian styles (commander). Women managers seem to emphasize open and flexible atmosphere with their employees, flexible systems and the establishment of good

interpersonal relationship. On the other hand, male managers perceive power over their subordinate using legitimate power and prefer to demonstrate the directive interpersonal style.

3. Professional Profile and Management Style.

Results from Table 2 indicate that there is a significant relationship between monthly income ($\chi^2= 14.742$, $p = 0.022$) and number of years in current position ($\chi^2= 13.581$, $p = 0.035$) with the men manager's management style. This concludes that the men manager's management style is dependent on their number of years in current position and monthly income. The values of Cramer's V indicated that there is low correlation between number of years in current position and monthly income with the men manager's management style. However the women manager's management style is independent with these two professional characteristics.

Table 1: Chi-Square Test of Homogeneity for Gender by Management Style Category

Gender	Management Style Category				Total
	Commander	Shepherd	Maintenance	Entrepreneur	
Men	47(37.9)	29(23.4)	30(24.2)	18(14.5)	124(66.3)
Women	13(20.6)	23(36.5)	12(19.0)	15(23.8)	63(33.7)
Total	60(32.1)	52(27.8)	42(22.5)	33(17.6)	187(100.0)

Chi-square value = 9.006, Df = 3, Observed Significance = 0.029.

0 cells (0%) have expected count less than 5 and the minimum expected count is 11.12.

Table 2: Chi-Square Test of Independence for Professional Profile by Management Styles

Professional Profile	Chi-Square value	Df	p-value	Cramer's V
Monthly Income				
Men	14.742	6	0.022	0.244
Women	6.797	6	0.340	0.232
Numbers of years in Current Position				
Men	13.581	6	0.035	0.234
Women	2.117	6	0.909	0.130
Current Position				
Men	9.197	6	0.163	0.193
Women	8.538	6	0.201	0.260
Previous managerial job				
Men	0.017	3	0.999	0.012
Women	1.561	3	0.668	0.157
Years of previous Managerial job				
Men	14.918	9	0.093	0.20
Women	19.499	9	0.21	0.321

Significant at 0.5 level

Further analysis on an independent sample t-test shows that there are significant differences between men managers and women managers in terms of their previous experiences and monthly income. This also implies that years of managerial experiences will determine the amount of monthly income. The mean for women managers in number of years in current position is slightly higher (6.0) than men managers (5.06). The mean difference value was -0.94. However, this difference is not significant ($t = -1.247$, $p = 0.214$). This indicates that the number of years in current position for women managers is not different from that of the men managers.

The pattern of practiced management style can be seen from the men and women managers work tenure. Younger men managers are more conservative and bound by masculine traits inherited from one's culture. This is shown by 41.7% of them who prefer to demonstrate commander style. However, when they become more experienced, they tend to portray shepherd (38.1%) or maintenance (38.1%) style of management. Thus experience in terms of knowledge and socialization shapes the men's style of management.

On the other hand, irrespective of their managerial experiences, women managers prefer to preserve their feminine characteristics throughout their managerial career. However, women managers with 10 to 27 years of managerial experiences (46.2%) are most likely to portray shepherd style when compared to younger women managers (34.0%).

Table 3: Independent Sample t-test for Professional Profile of Respondents According to Gender (N=187)

Professional Profile	Managers				
	Mean		Mean difference	t	p-value
	m	w			
Monthly income	5883.53	4683.88	1199.647	3.130*	0.002
Years of previous managerial job	14.61	11.86	2.76	2.016*	0.045
No. of years in current position	5.06	6.0	-0.94	-1.247*	0.214

* Equal variance assumed because the F-ratios for Levene's test are small and the corresponding p-values are large (larger than 0.05). Therefore the variances are equal.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test of Independence for Work Tenure by Management Style Category

Work Tenure	Management Style Category				
	Commander	Shepherd	Maintenance	Entrepreneur	Total
Men managers					
1 – 9 years	43 (41.7)	21 (20.4)	22 (21.4)	17 (16.5)	103 (83.1)
10 – 27 years	4 (19.0)	8 (38.1)	8 (38.1)	1 (4.8)	21 (16.9)
Women managers					
1 – 9 years	11 (22.0)	17 (34.0)	10 (20.0)	12 (24.0)	50 (79.4)
10 – 27 years	2	6	2	3	13

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study statistically support the argument that there are differences in men and women managers' management style. There is no universally effective style due to the complexity and variety of organizational settings. Rather it depends on the situation and people being managed. Traditionally and stereotypically, a people-centered approach is aligned with feminine and a task-oriented approach with masculine styles. Similarly, this study has shown that men managers tend to portray masculine characteristics and women managers tend to demonstrate feminine traits. The study also reveals the significant relationship between monthly income and work tenure with men manager's management styles. However, women manager's management styles are independent with their professional profile.

Evidence suggests that Malaysian managerial workforce is intensely segregated by gender. Though women have made up a considerable number in managerial positions, men managers sustain their dominance in management position and especially in exhibiting the commander style of management, which aligned with masculine characteristics. On the other hand, women managers tend to portray shepherd management style, which is associated with feminine characteristics.

The soft skills, which are always associated with women and devalued in the past, have been acknowledged and recognized in managing the 21st century diverse workforce. This is shown by the fact that men managers are more inclined to adopt an androgynous or a complementary management style, which blend masculine and feminine attributes. Men managers are following a certain pattern of management style, which is commander. However, women managers seem not to follow any pattern of management style, suggesting that they tend to show commander, shepherd, maintenance and entrepreneur management styles almost equally in performing their managerial functions. Though numerically, women managers are more inclined to shepherd management style, they are more homogenous in style.

Unlike men managers, women managers did not focus on certain style in order to accomplish the organizational mission. Women managers have tendency to analyze situations and make decisions regarding the most appropriate way to manage. This may imply that women's style are more situational compared to men. Hence, women managers have a lot to offer in terms of their various management styles. There are no variations between demographic profile, professional profile and organizational location with the management styles of men and women managers. This seems to imply that men and women managers have more similarities in terms of their profiles.

For policy recommendation, the management should consider many factors in visualizing an effective and competent manager; one of which is the difference in management style according to gender. Traditionally, men are seen as more able and competent in order to manage organizations and women are the opposite. However, it is noted that the changing patterns of socialization and educational attainment have changed the perception of men alone as an effective manager. Though this study have found that men are high in relationship and task behaviors, as in commander style, this style alone is not effective to be used in every situation. This argument leads to women managers who are more situational in style. Thus, this may imply that women managers are more adaptable in dealing with situational changes in organizational environments. Therefore, management of any organization should be gender sensitive in determining effective managers among men and women.

Among the possibilities for further research would be to investigate management style of men and women managers in corporate sector including the multinational corporations due to the mushrooming of such organizations as a result of economic liberalization and globalization, and the increased number of women in the executive positions that used to be male-dominated.

REFERENCES

- Arnold, J. R., Ivan, T. and Cooper, C. L. (1991). *Work Psychology: Understanding Human Behaviour In The Workplace*. London: Pitman.
- Bateman, T. S. and Snell, S. A. (1999). *Management: Building Competitive Advantage (4th ed.)*. Boston: Irwin McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Berkley, J. D. (1995). *Finding a Personal Management Style. Leadership Handbooks of Practical Technology*. USA: Baker Books.
- Burke, S. and Collins, K. M. (2001). Gender differences in leadership styles and management skills. *Women in Management Review*, 16(5), 244 - 257.
- Davidson, M. J. and Burke. R. J. (1994). *Women in Management (Eds.)*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.
- Enomoto, E. K. (2000). Probing educational management as gendered: An examination through model and metaphor. *Teachers College Record*, 102(2), 375-398.
- Freeman, S. and Varey, R. (1997). Women communicators in the workplace: Natural born marketers? *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 15(7), 318-324.
- Maier, M. (1999). On the gendered substructure of organization: Dimensions and dilemmas of corporate masculinity. In G. N. Powell (Ed.), *Handbook of Gender and Work*. (pp. 69-93). USA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Malaysia. (2001). *Eight Malaysia Plan 1996-2000*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia.
- Malaysia. (1996). *Seventh Malaysia Plan 1996-2000*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia.
- Management Learning, 2001. *Management Style*. <http://managementlearning.com/topi/mngtstyl.html>.
- Ogilvie, M. and Tanian, S. (1998). Communication channels in organizations are not always designed for women: a case study. In A. Kinnear & L. Green (Eds.), *Commemorative Issue and Selected Conference Papers: Women in Leadership* (pp. 218-226). Perth: Edith Cowan University.
- Park, D. (1996). Gender role, decision style and leadership style. *Women in Management Review*, 11(8), 13-17.
- Powell, G. N. (1988). *Women and Men in Management*. USA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Powell, G. N. (1999). *Handbook of Gender and Work (Ed.)*. USA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Powell, G. N. and Graves, L. M. (2003). *Women and Men in Management (3rd ed.)*. USA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Rigg, C. and Sparrow, J. (1994). Gender, diversity and working styles. *Women in Management Review*, 9(1), 9-16.
- Simpson, R. (2000). Gender mix and organizational fit: how gender imbalance at different levels of the organization impacts on women managers. *Women in Management Review*, 15 (1), 5-18.
- Smith, D. E. (1987). *The Everyday World as Problematic*. Boston: North Eastern University Press.
- Stivers, C. (1993). *Gender Images in Public Administration: Legitimacy and the Administrative State*. USA: Sage Publications.