

# Construct of Leadership Behavior Across Generations in Indonesia: *An Initial Study*

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## ABSTRACT

This study attempts to identify the determining factors of leadership behavior using the LBDQ XII for the Indonesian sample. The lack of country-specific leadership style was encouraged by cross-cultural scholars to acknowledge how national culture plays an important role in making the leadership theory apply well in specific countries. For this initial study, we run a focus group discussion in the targeted sector using semi-structured interviews and a collaborative study of 30 business people. The LBDQ XII, consisting of 100 instruments was also distributed and coded qualitatively, resulting in a combination of perspectives on how the variance of LBDQ XII is applied to the population of the study. The study results factors that Indonesian prefer to have leaders that represent and emphasize production and most of the respondents disagree that leaders in Indonesia are associated with a superior orientation behavior. This study is part of the long-run quantitative project, therefore limitations of this initial study are also discussed in this paper.

**Keywords:** Behavior, Generation, Leadership, LBDQ

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Foreign investors seem to have generated some interest in recent Indonesian economic movements towards regional integration, improving economic conditions and a better business climate, as well as good corporate governance in all Indonesian business sectors and public sectors. A recent survey by Deloitte in 2020 [1] reported the launch of *Nawa Cita* campaign by the government along with the more business-oriented governance within investment-related government regulations with a specific focus on high-growth in foreign business to foster investors trust. With such attention, investors' faith forebodes good news for the region. Multinational businesses seem to thrive better than most indigenous enterprises enable knowledge transfers within the vital sector for Indonesia's growth.

Despite the increased investment from foreign countries, the advancement of fast technology and information, and cutting-edge business technologies, there appears to be a high level of attrition amongst the transformation of the Indonesian management style within the local business. According to the Indonesian National Bureau of Statistics [2], the ranking of Indonesian global competitiveness index increased from number 41 in 2016 to ranked number 36 in 2018. Among ASEAN countries, Indonesia is stated to have one of the highest business attrition rates. The fundamental situation within the country boundaries is more complicated, as reported by Irawanto [3] that despite enjoying better economic advancement, the culture of management style is still using the old way of thinking which emphasizes more on collectivist thinking. There is nothing wrong with being collectivist, but when it reaches the leadership consensus, it may not be in line with the global needs.

With drastically increased access and use of fast-growing information communication technologies (ICTs) that color the Indonesian management system, more managerial opportunities are available resulting from Indonesia's accession to the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), and evolving business training and changing regulations. What kind of leadership skills and practices will allow more Indonesian businessmen to lead the company to breakthrough now? It has been widely accepted that leadership has diversely been associated with positive organizational outcomes [4][5]. Studies suggest that the existence of different constructs of leadership such as transactional leadership, transformational leadership, leaders-member exchange (LMX), and cultural leaders such as paternalistic leadership have focused primarily on the impact of specific leadership constructs on organizational outcomes such as performance, productivity, organizational citizenship and commitment among others. Leadership scholars agree that leadership studies are primarily concentrated in developed economies mainly from North American, European, and Australian viewpoints. In the context of developing economies such as Indonesia, this study focuses on leadership constructs that characterize successful small and medium enterprises.

Previous leadership research in Indonesia has focused on confirming the western leadership model that was argued to work in Indonesia [6] very few studies indicate that the exploration of that model would work in the Indonesian setting (Irawanto, *et al.*, 2012). As this study was planned in 3 years, this initial study is part of preliminary research before embarking on the nationwide study, this study aims to:

- Uncover the construct of leadership based on LBDQ XII that characterize Indonesian leaders.
- Identify whether or not generational differences impact leadership perception.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***2.1. The Role of Leadership in Indonesia***

Since the early 1900s, leadership is one of the most widely discussed in the organization and management area. Leadership is seen as an influential relationship between leaders and followers that can shape the behavior of one party to the interaction between both parties. Due to this relationship-based view, a leader's behavior may be understood and appreciated in one cultural context, but the same behavior may be misunderstood with a different set of cultural values [4]. Leaders in Asian culture are expected to assert control, give direction to their followers, and build up their power and authority. On the other hand, when Asian employees encounter such leadership behavior, they

need to comply respectfully [7]. This paternalistic nature of leadership in the Asian country allows greater insight into how Western leadership styles need to be adept.

Many researchers in the leadership field have admitted that national culture influences leadership effectiveness, especially for Indonesia. Indonesia is a multicultural country that has more than hundreds of cultures, due to this condition, the leadership orientation of each culture is different. To understand the Indonesian leadership context, it is important to identify the difference between subcultures and hundreds of ethnic groups [8]. In a recent view of the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) project, a world leadership study, Indonesian leadership was characterized by a unique style that differed from leadership commonly practiced in the West [9] or even other Asian styles. The GLOBE finding result was that Indonesian employees expect their leaders to pay attention to personal members and express this orientation in a highly charismatic manner. Transformational-charismatic leadership is the most effective model for the Indonesian society [10]. Visionary, inspirational, performance-oriented, and collaborative leaders are highly valued, thus co-workers need to be directed by their leader.

Javanese values cannot be separated from the leadership in the Indonesian context. Javanese culture is the largest and most influential culture affecting Indonesian society as a whole that expresses the value of "bapakism" translated as father-ism [11]. Bapakism is associated with autocratic patronage by leaders and the willingness of followers to comply [12]. Bapakism represents strong respect for the father or elders and extends beyond family boundaries. Bapakism reflected the patronage between father and child that enabled a high level of authority that needs to be respected with the blend of moral values. This Bapakism value of Javanese culture comes to the organizational setting where leaders are expected to reflect their role visibly to employees and others. Javanese culture is also synonymous with religious value, with Islam being the dominant religion. Appropriate behavior, dress, individual calmness, and respect to elders are seen as values for Javanese who appreciate the feeling of others. This people-centered leadership behavior plays an important role in Indonesian people, this means the dominant role of cultural values for leadership in the Indonesian context.

### ***2.2 Generalizability of LBDQ Across Cultures***

An increasing number of studies resulted in the importance of understanding cultural influence on leadership behavior preferences [13, 14]. The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) is an instrument that is widely used in

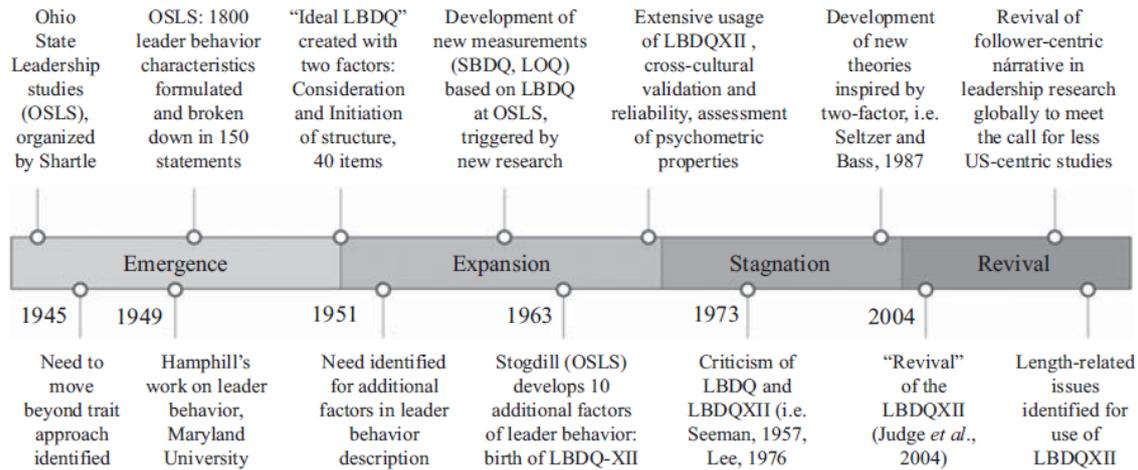


Figure 1. The Evolution of LBDQ

leadership behavior literature. This instrument has evolved since its first appearance in 1945 by Ohio State Leadership Studies(OSLS) to four different periods shown in Figure 1 [15]. The last version of this instrument was the LBDQ-XII based on follower-centric measures and systematic research to define relevant aspects of the desired leader across cultures with 12 dimensions provided in Table 1.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study participants were drawn from business people working in the Indonesian formal sector. For this first stage of the initial study, we targeted business people working in the hotel and restaurant industries, selected state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and the finance sector in three cities, namely Denpasar, Surakarta, and Surabaya due to ease of access to the sample. The study participants were identified through professional

networks, such as through the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurants Association (PHRI) and the regional association of bankers. The participants have a minimum 3 years of work tenure and are supervising at least three subordinates. To break down the barriers of mistrust, this strategy was considered acceptable, which may have hindered the ability of the respondent to engage in conversation to define and gain insight about leadership factors and style in Indonesian values that needed to be considered to implement in Indonesia. In total, 30 business individuals agreed to be interviewed and engage in the focus group discussions.

Focus group discussions and face-to-face interviews were used to generate information regarding the critical leadership factors that were perceived by the respondents. The focus group discussions were held in a seminar-like session by inviting respondents and encourages them to participate actively in the seminar.

Table 1. The LBDQ Behavioral Patterns

| The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire XII   |  |
|---|--|
| Factor 1 : measures of representation to which degree leader talks as the community representatives   | Factor 7 : Role assumption tests to what degree the leader deliberately exercises the role of leadership instead of providing leadership to others   |
| Factor 2 : Reconciliation of demand illustrated how well the leader reconciles contradictory conditions and eliminates system disorder                  | Factor 8 : Consideration demonstrates how the leader regards the comfort, well being, status and contributions of followers  |
| Factor 3 : Uncertainty tolerance shows the extent to which leader can tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or getting angry            | Factor 9 : Production emphasis measures to what degree the leader applies pressure for productive output   |
| Factor 4: Tests of persuasiveness to degree that leaders successfully use persuasion and logic, display strong beliefs                                  | Factor 10 : Predictive tests of accuracy to the degree to which the leader shows foresight and ability to predict outcomes accurately  |
| Factor 5 : Initiation of institutional steps to the extent to which leaders clearly define their own position, and lets followers know what is expected | Factor 11 : integration represents the degree to which the leader maintains a closely-knit organization and solve inter-member conflicts   |
| Factor 6 : Freedom tolerance represents the degree to which the leader allows initiative, judgment, and action scope for followers                      | Factor 12 : indicators of superior orientation to the degree to which the leader maintains a cordial relationship with superiors, has an impact on them; and is striving for the higher status |

**Table 2.** Emergent Themes from Focus Group Discussion

| No. | Styles                   | FGD 1* | FGD 2* | Emergent themes                 |
|-----|--------------------------|--------|--------|---------------------------------|
| 1.  | Representation           | 8      | 8      | Figurehead                      |
| 2.  | Demand Reconciliation    | 8      | 8      | Resolve conflict                |
| 3.  | Tolerance                | 7      | 6      | n/a                             |
| 4.  | Persuasiveness           | 7      | 6      | Using positive narration        |
| 5.  | Initiation for Structure | 8      | 7      | Work standard                   |
| 6.  | Tolerance of Freedom     | 7      | 6      | Be flexible                     |
| 7.  | Role Assumption          | 7      | 7      | Be ready                        |
| 8.  | Consideration            | 7      | 6      | Work target                     |
| 9.  | Production Emphasizes    | 9      | 8      | Set the highest target possible |
| 10. | Predictive Accuracy      | 7      | 6      | n/a                             |
| 11. | Integration              | 7      | 6      | Maintain cohesiveness           |
| 12. | Superior Orientation     | 6      | 5      | High motivation, Im the boss    |

\*each FGD consist of 30 people, but for the purpose of this study only 10 willing to participate on the continuous discussion during the sessions. The numbers appear on the Table 2 is read out of 10.

Both interviews and focus group discussions have been captured digitally. However, the recording was only done after approval from the participants which had been announced by the master of ceremony (MC) before the sessions began. After promising that the information revealed would be for research purposes only, all participants agreed to be registered. Focus group discussions were held before conducting the interviews, in which the research teams listened and recorded views and discussions of groups of business people as they perceived their manager and debated on what had made their leaders succeed whereas others had failed. The focus group discussions lasted approximately two (2) hours.

#### 4. RESULTS

Data analysis began with the reading during observations and chosen interviews of the field notes taken. The activity of reading and analyzing field notes started after the first and second focus group discussion was held and continued to match with the coding of questionnaires filled by the respondents and the analysis could be processed. Data analysis of the transcripts, which involved breaking down the data through an open coding procedure, was conducted by the principal researcher using narratives analysis. The open codes were grouped into different categories and subcategories that possibly occurred confirming the manual of LBDQ XII which consists of 12 factors. The (possible) categories and subcategories were examined further to identify the emergent concepts. With the techniques of reading the narratives multiple times and referring back to literature, the researchers drew contrasts and comparisons to emerging concepts and labeled them in table 2.

For reliability and validity, the two principal researchers coded the data independently. Data validation and reliability using internal validity that began with the utilization of member-checking to make sure that the data captured and represented their ideas accurately and consistently (reliability). The extent of agreement in the coding was measured using the Meyrick [16] where the inter-code interpretation was conducted transparently. Our analysis of data resulted in twelve constructs, most of which were classified to be leadership constructs, confirming the twelve factors of LBDQ XII. It was also found that from the two FGD, three amongst twelve critical LBDQ XII factors were closely linked to the effective leadership within the population of the study. Table 2 provides an overview of the resulting construct, many encoded sources, and the number of open codes associated with each construct, while the discussion section provides explanations of the constructs. The study results are discussed in more depth in the section below. Additionally, proof collected from the examined data source are also presented.

#### 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

##### 5.1. Representation

One of the findings from this initial study was that leaders within the scope of the population of the study play the managerial role effectively, deliberately, and continuously seek to inspire their employees to higher levels of trust in the organization he/she represents. A figurehead type role is common from the eye of Indonesians so that the representation of the organization can be viewed positively by outsiders. Eighty percent of the two focus group discussion (FGD)

participants indicated they perceived positively to have leaders in a way act as a figurehead [17].

### **5.2 Production Emphasizes**

Within the population of this initial study, to empower their employees, the respondents believe that the leaders need to have production emphasis. Moreover, some of these (FGD in location one/PHRI) believed that the behavior of setting standards at the highest level is an inspiring act that the employees want to see from their leader. The leaders should challenge their employees to do more, give them room to work freely and make decisions, and even rotate some in different roles to identify their strengths [18].

### **5.3 Superior Orientation**

One of the least preferred leaders behavior that least in the perspective of the respondents is superior orientation. This may be related to the cultural values of Indonesians, wherefrom the FGD location two (in Central Java region) where the practice of nonassertive behavior is still visible, the respondent views that they do not like leaders that act like "I'm the boss". The idea of partnership leadership may work in this setting such as maintaining a friendly but mutually respectful relationship, creating an atmosphere of "kekeluargaan" literary meaning "family-like", demonstrating trust towards them, and also ensuring that they were adequately and promptly compensated for their efforts [19].

Additionally, this study found that leadership as perceived in the LBDQ XII version is to have human resources pay attention to its needs with particular emphasis on the ability to represent the organization and emphasizing the production. As the participants are mostly of the millennial generation, the initial discussion did not confirm whether there will be differences across generations in the perception of these two important factors and one least preferred factor. This finding might be the representation picture of current Indonesian leaders, where the campaign led by the president are emphasizing the motto of "kerja, kerja dan kerja" literary means "work, work and more work" [20].

Finally, our focus on this initial study may be full of limitations, which rather than becoming problems and failures, gave better and deeper insights into capturing and confirming the leadership factors as it is highlighted by the LBDQ version XII. Moreover, the lessons picked from these initial studies are the beginning to portray the real-life experiences of people who came, saw and above all conquered.

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