

Indonesia's Future Business Leaders: An Analysis of MBA Student Personality

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INTRODUCTION

What kind of business leaders will Indonesian MBA students become? Are Indonesian MBA students likely to be entrepreneurial leaders or more bureaucratic leaders? Will they be managers who are self-motivated with a strong sense of self efficacy or will they wait for others to take that lead? Will today's students be able to tolerate and even thrive in an increasingly complex and uncertain world, or will they prefer more structured and secure environments. The answer to these questions lies, in part, in the personality characteristics of the MBA students.

Over the past fifty years researchers have developed a number of measures for assessing managers' personalities and studied the impact of these personality dimensions on managerial behavior (Whetten and Cameron, 2002). Most of this work has been done in United States and Europe, a few studies

have been done in Asia, and we could find no studies specific to Indonesia. This article reports on an exploratory study in which we describe the personalities of ITB MBA students with four commonly used personality measures. We compare these students' results with populations from the United States, to understand if Indonesian students are systematically different from the Americans in earlier studies and to identify implications for their future managerial style. Finally, we analyze MBA students' characteristics including, enrollment in the Executive program, gender and age to see if there are significant differences among Indonesian MBA students on these dimensions.

RESEARCH REVIEW

The four personality dimensions we studied were "locus of control", "intolerance for ambiguity", Machiavellianism and "fundamental interpersonal

relations orientation behavior" (FIRO-B). Each of these dimensions is strongly associated with certain managerial behaviors. Here we provide a brief description of the dimension and how they tie to managerial behavior. Then we turn our attention to the Indonesian cultural context.

Locus of Control

Locus of control measures an individual's perceptions and beliefs about why things happen to them. Individuals with a strong internal locus of control believe that they largely can control what happens to them, while those with an external locus of control believe that what happens are due to forces outside them that they can not control. In America a strong internal locus of control is associated with success for managers (Hendricks, 1985). Specifically a strong internal locus of control is associated with playing a leadership role (Blau, 1993), being a manager who is willing to take risks, and a longer term orientation (Miller, Kets de Vries, & Toulouse, 1982). Interestingly, a recent study of Hong Kong MBA students found that an internal locus of control was not significantly associated with a tendency toward entrepreneurship (Koh, 1996). In addition a recent study of Chinese MBA students found that an internal locus of control was positively associated with a willingness to "blow the whistle" on unethical behavior (Chiu, 2002). In general, from the international research we would expect students with a strong internal locus of control to be a better fit for the managerial role.

Intolerance for Ambiguity

"...Intolerance of ambiguity ...refers to the extent to which individuals are threatened by or have difficulty coping with situations that are ambiguous, where change occurs rapidly or unpredictably, where information is inadequate or unclear, or where complexity exists." (Whetten and Cameron, 2002, p. 74). Managers with a higher tolerance for ambiguity (lower intolerance) are more entrepreneurial, are open to more different types of information and cope more

effectively with major organizational change (Timothy *et al.* 1999) A study of Hong Kong MBA students found that tolerance for ambiguity was associated with a tendency towards entrepreneurship (Koh, 1996). A study comparing both managers and MBA students in Hong Kong and the United States found that there were no significant differences between MBA students in the two countries but that, US managers had a higher tolerance for ambiguity than the Hong Kong managers (Ralston *et al.* 1993). This stream of research suggests to us that MBA students who will be good fit for an entrepreneurial work environment will have a low intolerance for ambiguity or put the other way a high tolerance for ambiguity.

Machiavellianism

Machiavellianism (MACH) is a personality dimension that is associated with the notion that ends justify means and a lack of concern with conventional morality and a view of other people as weak and cowardly (Aziz, 2004). Research shows men score higher than women, older people tend to have lower scores, and people with high scores tend to be in certain occupational groups including: managers, lawyers, and behavioral scientists (Shermerhorn, Hunt, and Osborn, 2003). NOTE: Add mach data from hong kong study.

Based on this earlier research we expect Indonesian MBA students will have relatively high MACH scores as they, are relatively young, mostly male and have chosen a future profession where MACH scores tend to be higher.

FIRO-B

The FIRO-B was developed by Shutz (1958). His theory suggested that interpersonal behavior was driven by three interpersonal needs, inclusion, control and affection. There are two aspects to each of these needs, a need to express towards others, and wanted creating six types of needs described in the figure below (Whetten and Cameron, 2002).

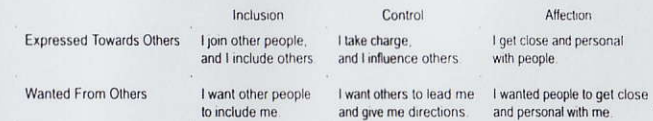


Figure 1: Description of Interpersonal Needs Measured by FIRO-B

In addition to these six measures the FIRO-B instrument provides other measures, a total expressed score and a total wanted score. People with high expressed scores and low wanted scores are called "controllers" and people with high wanted scores and low expressed scores are called passives. Similarly the instrument generates a total need for inclusion, control and affection score. Finally there is a total score called the Social Index Indicator SII, which indicates the amount of interaction with others desired. A primary use of this instrument is to identify the compatibility of people in groups (Whetten and Cameron, 2002).

Recent research on accountants found that men and women had significantly different scores with women reporting a higher overall interpersonal and inclusion needs. While overall accountants reported lower levels of needs than norm groups indicating that working routinely in teams would be more difficult (Siegel *et al.* 2001).

We are interested in seeing if the gender differences found else where would also appear among Indonesian MBA students. We also theorized that given that Indonesia is one of the most collectivist cultures in Hofstede's model (see following section) that needs for inclusion and affections would be substantially higher than in US.

Cultural Context In Indonesia

To better understand the cultural context in which Indonesian MBAs would be working and the differences

Table 1: Ratings of Indonesia and The United States on Four Cultural Dimensions

Country	Power Distance		Individualism		Masculinity		Uncertainty Avoidance	
	Index	Rank ¹	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank
Indonesia	78	8-9	14	47-48	46	30-31	48	41-42
United States	40	38	91	1	62	15	46	43

between Indonesia and the United States we use Hofstede's data to compare the two countries (Hofstede, 1993). The following table

(Table 1) shows the index score and ranking on each of Hofstede's dimensions from the two countries.

As the table indicates Hofstede found substantial differences between the US and Indonesia on these cultural dimensions. While Indonesia is among the highest power distance cultures, the US is among the lower power distance cultures. Similarly Indonesia is one of the most collectivist countries while the US is the most individualistic. Rankings were also different on the masculinity index with the US in the highest third and Indonesia in the lower half of all countries. Both countries had low uncertainty avoidance scores.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This is an exploratory study so we approached our research with a series of broad research questions rather than narrow hypotheses. The research questions posed were:

1. How do the personality characteristics of MBA students in Indonesia compare with United States norm groups on measures related to managerial behavior, specifically locus of control, tolerance for ambiguity, Machiavellianism and FIRO-B?
2. Are there significant difference among different groups of MBA students on these measures, specifically regular and executive MBA students, male and female students and students of different ages?
3. What are the implications of these characteristics for Indonesian MBA programs?

¹⁾ 53 countries were included in the analysis so the lowest possible ranking is 53, the highest 1.

METHODS

Research Setting

The students studied were from the Executive and Regular MBA programs at the Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB), School of Business and Management (SBM). The MBA program has its roots in program called Magister Manajemen Bisnis Administrasi dan Teknologi (MM BAT) (Masters of Business Administration and Technology) which was founded in 1990 and resided in the Industrial Engineering Department. This program was intended for those who had at least three years of work experience and needed management skills.

The teaching methodologies used were professional and practice-oriented. Thus, the materials for the class activities were designed to be case-based, although the theoretical side was still dominant. The program later opened day classes for recent university graduates and an Executive program with Friday Saturday classes to accommodate working managers.

Table 2: Regular and Executive MBA Student Characteristics

Characteristic	Regular MBA (percent)	Executive MBA (percent)
Age		
Under 25	51	2
25-30	42	27
over 30	7	71
Gender		
Male	68	84
Female	32	16
Field of Bachelors		
Industrial Engineering	17	7
Other Engineering	49	51
Economics and Management	17	20
Other	17	22
Time Between BA and MBA Enrollment		
Less than 1 year	23	2
2 years	47	14
More than 2 years	30	84

In December 2003, School of Business and Management (SBM ITB) was founded and MM became part of SBM. Because people were not familiar with the name of MM, SBM ITB changed its name to MBA/ITB.

As of spring 2005 there were 5 regular MBA cohorts with a total of 171 students and 6 executive cohorts with 143 students. Classes are held at four locations.

As the table indicates most students in both the Regular and Executive program have an undergraduate degree in engineering. As you would expect Regular students are younger half are under 25 while over 70% of executive students are over 30.

The MBA program at ITB has the following values and vision:

Values: Moral and Ethics, Integrity, Diversity, High Impact.

Vision: Developing new leaders in business and creating a critical mass of entrepreneurs for Indonesia to become a modern society and highly respected in the world community.

The MBA offers three concentrations:

- Entrepreneurship
- Operation management
- Strategic management.

Instruction is offered in three language settings:

- Indonesian class: All interactions in Indonesian.
- Bi-lingual class: Lectures in Indonesian, discussion in English.
- English class: All interactions in English.

Most class text books and cases are in English.

Measures

This study use four well known measures of personality which have been consistently linked to managerial behavior to assess the personalities of MBA students

Locus of Control: The scale used was a 29 item instrument from Whetten and Cameron (2002). The scale is similar to but not identical to the original locus of control scale developed by Julian Rötter. This scale is designed to measure the same concept

is the same length and has similar mean score (Whetten and Cameron, 2002, p. 48). The instrument was administered in English.

Tolerance for Ambiguity: This scale was a 16 item instrument developed by Budner (1982). The instrument was administered in English.

Machiavellianism: The scale was a 10 item scale taken from Shermerhorn *et al.* (2003) which is based on the original MACH research reported in Christie and Geis (1970). The instrument was administered in English.

FIRO-B: The scale used was 54 item instrument developed by Schutz (1958). The instrument was administered in English.

Data Collection

The instruments were administered in three regular MBA classes as part of a self-assessment unit in a required Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management class. Data for Executive students were collected in two classes, on an accounting class and an operations management class. Students scored their own instruments using directions provided. Bi-lingual research assistant was available to help with questions regarding understanding the instrument.

Sample

As the table below indicates our sample population was similar to the overall population of MBA students, men make up just of 70% of the population, most students are under 30 and two-thirds were Regular MBA students.

Characteristic	Percent and (n) of Sample
Gender	
Male	27.8 (42)
Female	72.2 (109)
Age	
Under 25	37.1 (56)
25-30	35.1 (53)
over 30	27.8 (42)
Program	
Regular	68.9 (104)
Executive	31.1 (47)

Table 3: Sample Population By Gender, Age and Program

Analysis

Data were analyzed in SPSS. Basic descriptive statistics were run on each measure. T-tests were employed to test for differences between subgroups of students.

RESULTS

Indonesian MBA Students Compared to US Benchmark Groups

Indonesian students' scores on the measures studies are reported in the table below. The Indonesian MBA students reported a much stronger internal locus of control than US managers or military officers, as the table below indicates. These results surprised us because Indonesia is a high power distance culture (Hofstede, 1993) and it is also a strongly religious society both characteristics we thought would be associated with strong external locus of control. On the other hand, previous research Ralston *et al.* (1993) found no significant differences between Hong Kong and US MBA students on this measure. Indicating that an internal locus of control maybe a characteristic shared by MBA students in both Asia and the US.

The Machiavellianism score was almost identical to the national US norm reported by Budner (1962). While Budner's (1962) research suggests that managers and younger people tend to score higher on this measure our subjects reflect the US norm. These are different results than Ralston *et al.* (1993) found. That study's results indicate that Hong Kong MBA students had significantly higher MACH scores than US students. We expected relatively high MACH scores among our students because of Ralston *et al.*'s work and because the Indonesia system has historically been riddled with corruption and Machiavellian behavior has been widely rewarded. It may be the MBA program's focus on ethical behavior has changed students' views and lowered their MACH scores.

Perhaps our most dramatic finding is the high intolerance for ambiguity score found among the

students. This score indicates that these MBA students are less comfortable dealing with complex or insoluble problems, and confronting novel situations than people in US norm groups. These findings are different from Ralston et al.'s findings which found that there were no significant differences between Hong Kong MBA students and US MBA students. We did not expect this finding in that Hofstede's data show that Indonesian "uncertainty avoidance", a similar construct to intolerance for ambiguity is our view, is very similar to the US. One explanation for this finding may be that students seek an MBA degree not embrace risk but to

avoid risk. Interviews reveal that despite the programs focus on entrepreneurship, most students plan to seek jobs in larger organizations that offer security, and physically and psychologically comfortable work environment. Some students report that they enrolled in the MBA program to avoid the risk of unemployment. Further many students came from undergraduate programs, often in engineering where they were taught with very traditional pedagogy, where every problem had a correct answer, and hence may not be well prepared to deal with ambiguity.

Table 4: Indonesian MBA Students Compared to US Benchmark Groups

Measure	SBM MBA Students Avg. Score, SD, Range and n	Whetten & Cameron (2005) US Populations	Siegel, et al. (2001) US ² Accountants	Budner (1962) US Adults
Internal Locus of Control (lower score indicates more internal locus of control)	3.99 SD = 2.68 Range = 0 - 14 N = 120	Executives 8.39 (SD=3.57) Military Officers 8.29 (SD=3.86)		
Machiavellianism	26.14 SD=4.05 Range= 13 - 40 N= 81			25
Intolerance for Ambiguity	59.76 SD= 8.84 Range= 37 - 89 N = 110	44-48		
FIRO-B				
Inclusion Expressed	5.34 SD=1.88 Range=1 - 9 N=102	5.4		
Control Expressed	4.72 SD=2.42 Range=0 - 9 N=102	3.9		
Affection Expressed	4.91 SD=2.23 Range=0 - 9 N=102	4.1		
Inclusion Wanted	3.88 SD=2.79 Range=0 - 9 ² N=102	6.5		
Control Wanted	3.80 SD=2.31 Range=0 - 9	4.6		

² SII score is for 22 female and 49 male, US accountants, this represents a statically significant difference. All other FIRO-B Scores in Siegel et. al. are for females only. SII mean score for Canadian undergraduate business majors was 23.8 (McRae and Young, 1990)

Table 4: Indonesian MBA Students Compared to US Benchmark Groups (continued)

Measure	SBM MBA Students Avg. Score, SD, Range and n	Whetten & Cameron (2005) US Populations	Siegel, et al. (2001) US ² Accountants	Budner (1962) US Adults
Affection Wanted	N = 102 4.60 SD=2.70 Range=0 - 9	4.6		
Inclusion Total	N=102 9.23 SD=4.12 Range=1 - 18	11.9	11.1	
Control Total	N=102 8.51 SD=3.08 Range=2 - 16	8.5	8.0	
Affection Total	N=102 9.51 SD=4.22 Range=1 - 18	8.9	9.1	
Expressed Total	N=102 15.24 SD=5.03 Range=4 - 37	13.4	13.5	
Wanted Total	N=102 13.24 SD=5.15 Range=1 - 27	15.5	14.7	
Social Interaction Index (SII)	N=102 28.21 SD=9.14 Range=8 - 54	29.3	Female 28.2 Male 23.8	

The interpersonal needs revealed by the FIRO-B measure offer a complex profile of these students. Indonesia is among the most collectivist (least individualistic) cultures measured by Hofstede (1993). Thus we expected students to report a high level of total interpersonal need on the SII, yet the scores recorded were similar to the US norms and although above the norm for male accountants in the US.

Similarly, because of the collectivist culture of Indonesia, we expected students would have both high expressed and wanted needs for inclusion. Yet, we found the opposite. Indonesian MBA reported a lower need for inclusion than the US norm group, or a group of US accountants. It may be that MBA students who largely come from the most educated and affluent sector of the Indonesian society have a lower need for

inclusion. We also speculate that as urban dwellers these students may be more autonomous.

Similarly given the high power distance characteristic of Indonesian society (Hofstede, 1993) we expected to find high wanted control scores. Instead we found that these Indonesian MBA students had higher expressed control needs and lower wanted control needs than US norm group. We might expect this of US MBA students but we were surprised to find it in this cultural context.

Total affection needs were slightly above the US norm group, which fits with our expectations but is not a dramatic difference.

Overall these results raise more questions than they answer. For example, we wonder if the Indonesian respondents interpret and respond to the specific questions on the FIRO-B as Americans do. It is an open

question whether or not these interpersonal needs translate to the highly collectivist Indonesian culture. In our own reasoning we made assumptions about links between Hofstede's (1993) dimensions and the FIRO-B but these links have not been measured empirically and may not exist.

Comparison of Male and Female Indonesian MBA Students

Surprisingly we found few statistically significant differences between male and female MBA students on these measures. Specifically we found no significant difference between the groups on the Internal Locus of Control measure, the Intolerance for Ambiguity measure, or on the Machiavellianism. Indicating that on these measures the male and female MBA students are similar.

The results of the FIRO-B measures were more complex. Male MBAs had a significantly higher score on the Social Interaction Index (SII) than their female counterparts, indicating a higher overall interpersonal need than the female students. Interestingly, Siegel *et al.* (2001) found the opposite among the accountants they studied in the United States. Female accountants reported a significantly higher SII than male accountants. Siegel *et al.* (2001) also note that earlier FIRO-B studies found no gender differences on the SII. This indicates that Indonesian MBAs do not follow the stereotype of the women being more social and relationship oriented while men are less socially oriented. In fact, it appears to be quite the opposite. Indonesian culture may offer some explanation for these findings. Traditionally women in Indonesia have been socialized to hide their feeling and not initiate

action but to wait for others, some of these traditions may be reflected in the lower female SII score.

Male students reported a significantly higher need for expressed control, than female students, but there was no difference in wanted control. Similarly male students reported a significantly higher total control score. In the study of US accountants, Siegel *et al.* (2001), found no difference between the genders on these measures.

Similarly, Indonesian male MBA students reported a significantly higher total expressed need and total wanted need score than female MBAs, again contradicting Siegel *et al.* (2001) who found no difference between the genders on total expressed need and that women reported a significantly higher total wanted need. Again there may be a cultural explanation for this. Traditionally within the family unit the male has the power and seeks to control decision

making. The similar scores on wanted control may indicate that while these female MBA students had a lesser need to take control, they did not need to be controlled any more than their male counterparts, and may in fact wish to avoid situations where they are controlled.

Comparison of Executive and Regular MBA Students

As reported earlier Executive MBA students are different from the "regular" students. They tend to be older and more experienced and attend class during the evenings and weekends while retaining their jobs. Day students tend to be younger often right out of undergraduate programs, many with little or no work experience. Because of these differences we expected that there may be differences on these measures. Again we found few differences indicating that

Table 5: Comparison of Female and Male Indonesian MBA Students

Measure	Mean Female (n)	Mean Male (n)	t-value	Significance* of t (two tail test)
Internal Locus of Control (higher score more internal locus of control)	3.96 (37)	4.05 (83)	.170	.866
Machiavellianism	25.90 (21)	26.16 (55)	-1.01	.920
Intolerance for Ambiguity (higher score less tolerance for ambiguity)	59.30 (33)	59.96 (77)	-356	.722
FIRO-B				
Inclusion Expressed	5.31 (29)	5.36 (73)	-.110	.912
Control Expressed	3.48 (23)	5.21 (73)	-3.40	.001
Affection Expressed	4.34 (29)	5.14 (73)	-1.64	.105
Inclusion Wanted	3.59 (29)	4.00 (73)	-.675	.502
Control Wanted	3.72 (29)	3.84 (73)	-.219	.827
Affection Wanted	4.34 (29)	4.70 (73)	-.596	.553
Inclusion Total	8.89 (29)	9.36 (73)	-.506	.614
Control Total	7.21 (29)	9.03 (73)	-2.79	.006
Affection Total	8.69 (29)	9.84 (73)	-1.24	.218
Expressed Total	13.14 (29)	16.07 (73)	-2.74	.007
Wanted Total	11.62 (29)	13.88 (73)	-2.03	.046
Social Interaction Index (SII)	24.76 (29)	29.58 (73)	-2.46	.016

* Differences significant at p=.05 or less in bold.

Table 6: Comparison of Executive and Regular Indonesian MBA Students

Measure	Mean Female (n)	Mean Male (n)	t-value	Significance* of t (two tail test)
Internal Locus of Control (higher score more internal locus of control)	3.73 (26)	4.06 (94)	.560	.577
Machiavellianism	26.09 (22)	26.16 (58)	-1.08	.285
Intolerance for Ambiguity (higher score less tolerance for ambiguity)	59.46 (24)	59.85 (86)	-.190	.849
FIRO-B				
Inclusion Expressed	4.52 (23)	5.58 (79)	-2.43	.017
Control Expressed	6.09 (23)	4.32 (79)	3.23	.002
Affection Expressed	4.61 (23)	5.00 (79)	-.74	.461
Inclusion Wanted	3.13 (23)	4.10 (79)	-1.48	.142
Control Wanted	3.35 (23)	3.94 (79)	-1.08	.284
Affection Wanted	3.87 (23)	4.81 (79)	-1.48	.142
Inclusion Total	7.65 (23)	9.68 (79)	-2.12	.037
Control Total	9.39 (23)	8.25 (79)	1.57	.119
Affection Total	8.48 (23)	9.81 (79)	-1.34	.184
Expressed Total	16.39 (23)	14.90 (79)	1.26	.212
Wanted Total	10.35 (23)	14.08 (79)	-3.18	.002
Social Interaction Index (SII)	25.57 (23)	28.97 (79)	-1.59	.116

* Differences significant at p=.05 or less in bold.

Executive and regular MBA students share many of the same characteristics. This may be because both groups are dominated by engineers who may share similar personality attributes. We found no significant differences between the groups on the Internal Locus of Control measure, the Intolerance for Ambiguity Measure or the Machiavellianism measure.

On the FIRO-B instrument we found several significant differences. Executive MBA students had significantly lower scores on inclusion expressed, inclusion total and wanted total indicating a lesser interpersonal need to be included and in general a lower need for wanted behavior. On the other hand, Executive students reported a significantly higher need for expressed control. These differences seem easily explained by the differences in age and experience. The younger regular MBA students feel a stronger need to be included and want more behavior from others than the more mature executive students. On the other hand the experienced Executive students have a significantly higher need for control reflecting the greater autonomy they are used to as professional workers.

Relationship Between Age and Personality Measures

We correlated each of the measures studied with age measured in years and found no significant relationships. Indicating the personality characteristics of MBAs do not vary systematically with age.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This study may be the first published research on these psychological measures in Indonesia, and is thus an exploratory study that raises many more questions than it answers. The results raise some interesting questions for MBA programs in Indonesia and they can help set an agenda for further research.

The first insight we gained is that on a number of dimensions Indonesian MBA students, despite the dramatic cultural differences found by Hofstede (1993) are similar in many ways to the US norm groups,

particularly their strong internal locus of control, MACH score, and many of the FIRO-B dimensions.

The most dramatic difference we found from US norms the MBA's high intolerance for ambiguity. The first issue raised by this finding is the degree to which students will be able to respond to modern pedagogical approaches that involve experiential learning, case analysis and field projects. These types of learning activities have a high degree of ambiguity build into them in that they do have a single right answer the outcome of any particular activity is uncertain. A high tolerance for ambiguity is a key characteristic of entrepreneurs raising the larger questions of whether or not these students will become entrepreneurial managers in the future. It also raises the issue of whether MBA program can instill an entrepreneurial attitude into students or if that entrepreneurial spark is rooted in deeper personality attributes.

The limited number of gender differences we found suggest that women who seek an MBA share many of the personality characteristics of their male counterparts. Whether this is a product of the admission process, self-selection or a change in social norm is unclear. But it does suggest that when this generation of women MBAs enter the market they will manage in much the same way as male MBAs.

Finally, this research suggests that is much more work to be done in understanding how these commonly used personality instruments can be used in an Indonesian context. Studies need to be done to determine if the relationships found between these measures and managerial behavior, in other cultures are valid in Indonesia. The reliable and validity of these measures for Indonesian populations also needs to be established. A clear understanding of these personality dimensions and their links to managerial performance will provide a valuable platform for selecting and training Indonesian managers in the future. We hope that this study will contribute a first step to that process.

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