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Exploring managerial leadership in Javanese (Indonesia) organisations: engaging *Asta Brata*, the eight principles of Javanese statesmanship

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates whether the eight ancient principles of Javanese statesmanship (*Asta Brata*), can be employed as the basis for analysing managerial leadership excellence in Javanese organizations. Factor analysis, regression modelling and structural modelling are used to explain what constitutes leadership excellence in Javanese organizations. These findings based on the perceptions of 312 Javanese managers suggest they favour a paternalistic leadership style that is nurturing but not authoritative. This study highlights the importance of understanding Indonesia's *bapak-ism*, or reverence for the leader as a father figure, and its familial orientation of interdependency between management and employees.

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Introduction

There has been a concerted effort, especially in a business context, to learn more about Asia. Rowley and Ulrich (2014, 9) aptly noted, 'The Asian region has become an important area of inquiry' and emphasized the need to study Asian leadership on the basis of differing cultural foundation and 'to move beyond the overly dominant ethnocentric Western leadership.' In the context of cultural foundation, Rowley and Warner (2006, 394) also made reference to the lack of the 'tradition of spiritualism' in cross-cultural management research. In this study, native Javanese managers' perspectives are examined in relation to whether they believe their leadership behaviours are influenced by culture. As recommended by Rowley and Warner (2006), a relational framework has been used that explains managerial behaviours based on Javanese leadership traditions.

In support of manager's critical role of engaging with the external environment, Mumford and Fried (2014) recently critiqued research that applies value-based models to leadership behaviour, questioning the narrow organizational evidence and the assumptions of leadership performance. Their overriding concern was that such models have lost focus on the 'core aspect of leadership roles: Leaders serve as boundary-spanners' (622).

The notion of leaders as 'boundary-spanners', as popularized by Katz and Kahn (1978), is central to understanding the nuance of leadership roles in any environmental context. However, in the context of understanding the complexities of managerial roles, Yukl (2012) questioned the relevance of leader behaviour descriptions by respondents who have little knowledge of leader activities outside of their immediate work situation. Such questioning exemplifies the shifting nature of leadership where organizational life is now with complexities that are personal, managerial and organizational, as well as other external factors (Shrivastava et al. 2014). This study therefore examines the ideological assumptions that have underpinned many recent leadership research studies in a complex and changing environment, and addresses some of Mumford and Fried's (2014) concerns relating specifically to value-based models in leadership.

First, this study has used objective self-reporting (Sturm et al. 2014; Taylor 2010), wherein the manager – rather than their employee/follower evaluates the importance of their leadership role in the organization. Most scholars of leadership studies are aware of the shortcomings of the follower-reported approach; yet as pointed out by Mumford and Fried (2014), many still persist in using such models to measure leadership behaviours. Yukl (2012) reported the growing shift in leadership behaviour taxonomies since the 1960s when 'few leadership studies examined external [boundary-spanning] behaviour' (68), to now include leadership influences on bosses, peers and outsiders, as well as subordinates. This shift emphasizes the importance of seeking objective responses of leader activities from those who are most qualified to respond on all tasks performed by the leader.

Second, the multidimensional context of the external environment is often seen as an influencer of the behavioural values of the leader. Mumford and Fried (2014, 623) viewed the opposing concept of 'narrowing' as a phenomenon of many ideological models, where the multidimensional context of the environment is ignored. Thirdly, the focus on the leader's behaviour is in respect of a single stakeholder group, typically followers of the leader. The narrowing phenomenon has been minimized in this study by exploring value responses of the multidimensional context of the environment and values responses at the different levels of the organization.

The complexities that often confront leadership are also prevalent in Indonesia, the world's third-largest democracy. After 30 years of military-dominated dictatorship, the country has entered the twenty-first century with a desire to provide good governance to its people (Vickers 2013). The *reformasi hukum* or law reform is a key area that change reformers have concentrated on; although there has also been a push for *reformasi total* or total reform to correct or change the structures of power and privileges of the Indonesian bureaucracy (Renoe 2002).

To enable this change of power structures, the nature of leadership performance first needs addressing. There is a need to understand what constitutes an excellent leader in organizations in Indonesia, and what factors affect the performance of leaders. Thus, the main purpose of this study is to further explore the nature of managerial leadership (e.g. Selvarajah, Meyer, and Donovan 2013; Yukl 1989) and what is perceived as excellence in leadership (EIL) in Javanese organizations.

Yukl (1989) utilized the term managerial leadership in order to move past the debate of whether or not leadership and management are separate. The term, as he specified, refers to leadership as applicable to practicing managers – that is managerial leadership includes both leadership and management to accomplish objectives, work tasks, employee

engagement, performance, strategies and vision of the organization. The term managerial leadership is used in this study as it has been in other studies to refer to organizational managers that operate in roles where there is an overlap between management functions and leadership (Kerns and Ko 2014).

The standard definition of the term 'excellence' is surpassing others in accomplishment or achievement (Taormina and Selvarajah 2005). Here, such excellence is examined in terms of the behaviours used by someone in a leadership position, rather than their personal traits or characteristics. This perspective allows both theorists and practitioners to identify behaviours that allow a leader to achieve excellent performance irrespective of whether they possess an excellent character.

Furthermore, this study's aim to understand leadership perceptions among Javanese managers will be of particular interest to greenfields companies considering investing in Java, the commercial hub of Indonesia. Indonesia is the fourth largest country after China, India and the USA based on population, with low labour costs and an abundance of natural resources; yet few studies have reported on this region.

Indonesia is a nation where Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic faiths have each dominated the spiritual values of its people at various times in history. The complexities from these multicultural influences, and the incorporated values of the former Dutch colonial administration provide the backdrop to understanding Indonesia. That is, understanding of these influences is essential when exploring organizational leadership in the context of the Javanese environment. Given this complexity, how should we begin to understand leadership in Indonesia?

To help answer this question, the Selvarajah et al. (1995) EIL framework has been used in this study. This framework is based on the assumption that there are universal leadership factors (etic); although they manifest in different overt behaviours dependent on the cultural (emic) context – thereby sidestepping the etic-emic dilemma (Ashkanasy 2007; Holmberg and Akerblom 2006; Javidan and Carl 2004; de Jong, Steenkamp, and Veldkamp 2009). The concept of EIL is therefore, as suggested by Rowley and Warner (2006), a combination of universal factors that are desirable for good leadership within a more distinctive cultural context. Unlike other ethnocentric leadership frameworks, the EIL enables the factoring in of local idiosyncrasies, which will be further discussed in the section under Leadership in Indonesia and the Javanese Culture.

In the next section, the sociocultural context of Indonesia and Javanese culture, and the subsequent development of this study's hypotheses are explained.

The Indonesian sociocultural context

Indonesia is a Southeast Asian nation located in the Malay Archipelago spanning over 17,000 islands including Sumatra, Java, Timor, Sulawesi, the Moluccas, and parts of Borneo and New Guinea. It has a rich cultural heritage that includes periods of colonization, embracing of religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, and continual migration of its people. History notes that Hinduism and Buddhism formed the basis of Indonesian culture prior to the wide adoption of Islam (Irawanto, Ramsey, and Ryan 2011b). Many of the *adat* (customs on a day-to-day basis) still reflect the practices of the former Hindu systems that were prevalent in Indonesia until the sixteenth century (Koentjaraningrat 1985; Munandar 1990); although Hinduism is now only practised in Bali and its surrounding islands.

Leadership in Indonesia and the Javanese culture

Since Java and its people have been pivotal to the development of Indonesia's political, social and cultural systems (Pruetipibultham 2012; Sarsito 2006), as the main island where the key seats of power – both political and economic – rest including power structures and institutions, this study's data and the supporting literature mainly relate to Java. Therefore, to understand the concept of power and its relationship to leadership in Indonesia, the organizational theory of kingship in the Javanese context is explored here.

Organizational theory of kingship in the Javanese context

In exploring the organizational theory of kingship, it is essential to discuss the social structure in Java while being mindful that Indonesia – like its neighbours – is experiencing rapid development and some of its strict social structures are therefore changing, especially in the cities.

In the Javanese social context, Sarsito (2006) explained that the leader (a personification of 'King') is the 'mediator between people and their God' (450); and that the influence of uniting the physical self to spirituality, *kawulo gusti*, is mediated by the leader as God, teacher and parent. The pivotal authority-based relationship established in the eight principles of statesmanship, *Asta Brata*, signals the importance of leadership and authority in Javanese society. Various researchers (e.g. Inanda Murni 1979; Irawanto, Ramsey, and Ryan 2011a, 2011b; Redding and Casey 1976) have identified the Indonesian manager as authoritative and paternalistic – a characteristic also reported in neighbouring Thai (e.g. Selvarajah, Meyer, and Donovan 2013) and Malay managers (e.g. Selvarajah and Meyer 2008a).

Sarsito (2006) also believed that the source of authority in Indonesia is derived from the ancient past – through 'ancestors', respect and hence obligations or righteous acts owed to 'God, teacher, King and parents' (451). Such obligations are similar to the Vedic doctrine of Dharma (righteous/virtuous acts), where debts to parents, teachers and to God are pivotal responsibilities of all individuals (Mehra and Krishnan 2005; Rama Jois 2003). These obligations or debts re-emphasize authority that is caring- or nurturing- oriented, which Suryani et al. (2012) viewed as entrenched in *Bapak-ism* or father figure leadership that is nurturing rather than authoritarian, where trust is established. Suryani et al. (2012) also viewed such authoritarianism – in the classic sense – as a negative contribution to performance; although as positive when a mutual dependency relationship between leader and subordinate is established. In this scenario, authority is not dysfunctional but a two-way process where trust and obligation are expected of the manager and the managed within a dependency-based relational framework.

The Sufi culture in Java

In the Javanese social context, the Hindu culture that gave rise to *Asta Brata* has since been further influenced by Islamic values. Based on this influence of multiple cultures and religions, various researchers (e.g. Geertz 1960; Irawanto, Ramsey, and Ryan 2011a; Sarsito 2006) have identified three class strata in the rural regions of Java: *abangan* (peasants); *santri* (middle class); and *priyayi* (upper class). The *abangan* often still have an affinity with former pre-Islamic culture, while the *santri* are stricter adherents of Islam. In contrast, the *priyayi* have merged the belief systems of the *abangan* and *santri*. The *priyayi* are perceived as the 'keepers' of culture and philosophy. In this sense of a Javanese class system, Woodward (1989)

viewed the *abangan* and *priyayi* as Sufi mystics, or liberal Muslims, who have incorporated the theory of kingship from the old Mataram Hindu Kingdom that practised *Asta Brata*.

Other historians and sociologists such as Darmaputera (1987), Geertz (1960), Koentjaraningrat (1985) and Woodward (1989) have also provided insights into the Sufi form of Islam in Java. For example, in reviewing Woodward's work, Mitsuo (1990) summed up the current Javanese Sufi position as follows:

Javanese Islam is syncretic in that it contains diverse pre-Islamic elements from animism and Hindu-Buddhism, but all high religions are syncretic. What is really surprising about Islam in Java is the thoroughness in the transformation and integration of these pre-Islamic elements into a set of Islamic principles. This was achieved by the adoption of the Sufi theory of kingship at the early stages of the Mataram kingdom in central Java. (718)

The Sufi traditions in Java have invariably fused both Islamic values and the values of the ancient Indianized kingdoms. Anderson (1972) ascribed four aspects or properties of Javanese power and authority that arises from this fusion: power is concrete; power is homogeneous; power is constant; and power is legitimate.

Asta Brata, the eight virtues in Javanese leadership

In this study, these four properties of Javanese power are operationalized through *Asta Brata*, which ascribes eight principles of statesmanship as a framework for fostering leadership (e.g. Krisnadi 2011; Sastroamidjojo 1997). These eight principles are the embodiment of virtues that a leader should have, and are closely associated with the natural environmental elements and their influence on human beings. This study examined the association of these *Asta Brata* principles with what is perceived as desired EIL traits by Javanese managers, as listed below:

- (1) *Chandra*, the Moon – Ability to be decisive and provide guidance in times of trouble – that is, to bring light to darkness (*Decisiveness*).
- (2) *Surya*, the Sun – Ability to be a just leader and dispense justice without discrimination – as the sun brings sustenance to all (*Authority*).
- (3) *Kartika*, the Star – Ability to know one's place in society, as the star knows it is not the centre of the universe (*External Realities*).
- (4) *Bumi*, the Earth – Ability to have patience, as the earth bears all the good and the bad (*Patience*).
- (5) *Agni*, Fire – Ability to govern wisely so as to eradicate the root of greed, anger and delusion (*Governance*).
- (6) *Tirta*, Water – Ability to destroy wickedness such as the water that cleanses impurities (*Trustworthiness*).
- (7) *Maruto*, the Wind – Ability to be mindful of the situation, discerning, and being selective in decision-making for the benefit of all (*Discerning*).
- (8) *Samudra*, the Ocean – Ability to be creative and to be a provider to all (*Progressiveness*).

Based on the above eight guiding principles of EIL traits among Javanese managers, the following complementary hypotheses were forwarded for testing:

Hypothesis: 1a. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader in organisations are positively related to decisiveness.

Hypothesis: 1b. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader in organisations are positively related to authority.

Hypothesis: 1c. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader in organisations are positively related to external realities.

Hypothesis: 1d. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader in organisations are positively related to patience.

Hypothesis: 1e. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader in organisations are positively related to governance.

Hypothesis: 1f. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader in organisations are positively related to trustworthiness.

Hypothesis: 1g. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader in organisations are positively related to discerning behaviour.

Hypothesis: 1h. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader in organisations are positively related to progressiveness.

In the Javanese organizational cultural context, these eight principles or abilities required of a leader are supposedly equal – that is, one does not rank higher than another on importance (Krisnadi 2011; Sastroamidjojo 1997).

Thus, they were also tested in this study to identify whether they all have the same level of importance in manager perceptions of what constitutes EIL.

Hypothesis: 2. The eight principles of statesmanship (*Asta Brata*) contribute equally to the perceptions of leadership excellence in Javanese organisations.

The eight principles encourage a close paternalistic relationship between the leader and the led. The prevailing management style in Javanese organizations is therefore often guided by the established relationships in the organization, where traditional cultural factors, changes in the environment, and organizational changes all impact on leadership behaviour. Thus, as part of this study's testing of whether the statesmanship principles contribute to perceptions of leadership excellence in Javanese organizations, a theoretical framework was formed based on the EIL model previously developed to test leadership excellence in Asia (Selvarajah et al. 1995).

Furthermore, as previous studies have often struggled to identify clear links between etic and emic concepts (Ager and Loughry 2004; Xia 2011), this study has endeavoured to relate the etic constructs of the EIL framework which have provided conceptual schemes and categories to explore emic or insider worldview perspectives of the leadership phenomenon in Javanese organizations.

The EIL framework was also used to help address this study's hypotheses. This included the development of scales to gauge the importance of the five main dimensions: excellent leader (EL), personal qualities (PQ), managerial behaviours (MB), organizational demands (OD), and environmental influences (EI). The earlier work of Selvarajah et al. (1995) provided the basis for these dimensions, which were then amended based on latter studies (e.g. Selvarajah and Meyer 2008a; Selvarajah, Meyer, and Davuth 2012). In particular, to provide discriminant validity between the dimensions, the excellent leader statements are not included in the PQ, MB, OD and EI dimensions.

These EIL dimensions have often shown robustness in allowing individual characteristics of the environment to manifest in the sub-dimensions or constructs. This five-dimension EIL model, including excellent leader, has since been employed to profile leaders in various Asian countries, particularly East and Southeast Asia, including Cambodia (Selvarajah, Meyer,

and Davuth 2012), China (Selvarajah and Meyer 2008b), Malaysia (Selvarajah and Meyer 2006, 2008a), Singapore (Selvarajah, Meyer, Jeyakumar et al. 2013), and Thailand (Selvarajah, Meyer, and Donovan 2013). These five dimensions, which are central to the EIL framework, are further defined below (Selvarajah, Meyer, Jeyakumar, et al. 2013):

Excellent Leader describes the combination of behaviours and attitudes desirable for good leadership within a certain cultural context. *Environmental Influences* are external factors that influence the success of the entire organisation. They emphasise the importance of scanning and evaluating the external environment for opportunities. *Personal Qualities* are the personal values, skills, attitudes, behaviours and qualities of an individual. They emphasise morality, religion, interpersonal relationships and communication. *Organisational Demands* are the ways a manager responds to the goals, objectives, structures and issues in an organisation. They emphasise the importance of organisational prosperity. *Managerial Behaviours* cover a person's nature, values, attitudes, actions and styles when performing managerial duties – these ideals are centralised and team focused (359).

In the following hypothesis, the EIL dimensions are related to the *Asta Brata* principles of leadership.

Hypothesis: 3. There is complementarity between the four EIL behaviour dimensions – Personal Qualities, Managerial Behaviours, Organisational Demands and Environmental Influences – and the eight principles of statesmanship (*Asta Brata*) to study leadership excellence in Javanese organisations.

In addressing this study's final hypotheses, the influences of demographic factors on perceptions of leadership excellence in Javanese organizations are explored. Most studies at a national level (e.g. Hofstede 2001; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 2011) have neglected the influence that sub-cultures, including levels of responsibility, age, gender, ethnicity and locality, have on organizational leadership behaviours. Hasibuan-Sedyono (1998) in a wider Indonesian study and Mia and Winanta (2007) in a Javanese study reported notable leadership differences between managers of different gender in the organizations whilst Irawanto, Ramsey, and Ryan (2011a) found that *hormat* (respect) is given to older leaders as part of the Javanese culture which suggests that gender and age respectively are major factors worth examining. Thus, this study has explored these factors and their influences on the behaviour of Javanese managers by testing the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis: 4a. There is a difference in perceptions as to what constitutes leadership excellence between Javanese managers employed in private/NGO companies and government organisations.

Hypothesis: 4b. There is a difference in perceptions as to what constitutes leadership excellence between male and female managers in Javanese organisations.

Hypothesis: 4c. There is a difference in perceptions as to what constitutes leadership excellence in Javanese organisations between younger and older managers.

Hypothesis: 4d. There is a difference in perceptions as to what constitutes leadership excellence in Javanese organisations between line managers and middle/senior managers.

Research methodology

This study has examined the antecedents of an excellent leader as perceived by Javanese managers. Managers enrolled in Master's programs in business at four Javanese universities were chosen as the sample for this study.¹

The data collection was executed via the assistance of an associate researcher and co-author who is an Indonesian national; and four Javanese universities – Gadjah Mada

University, Islamic University of Indonesia and University of Pembangunan Nasional Veteran in Jogjakarta, and Trisakhti University in Jakarta – participated. Questionnaires were distributed across postgraduate business classes, such as the Master of Business Administration, which consisted of managers employed in organizations that were studying part-time. Questionnaires were distributed and collected centrally via collection boxes, and neither the respondents nor their organizations were identified. A total of 800 EIL questionnaires were distributed, and 342 were returned with 312 useable responses – an effective return rate of 30%. The questionnaire contained the 94 EIL statements developed by Selvarajah et al. (1995), and effort was taken to maintain respondent anonymity. Demographic data were collected as well as perceptions regarding the importance of the 94 leadership criteria on a 1–5 scale, with one indicating ‘no importance’ and five indicating ‘great importance’.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to establish the number of constructs required to measure each of the EIL dimensions, and Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to validate the factor structure of the constructs, as shown in Tables A1–A6 in the Appendix. These analyses were based on the common theory that models that produce a root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) of less than .08, a goodness of fit indice (GFI) of above .90, and a Chi-square statistic (CMIN/DF) of less than three may be assumed to possess internal validity (Arbuckle and Wothke 1999); with a Cronbach’s alpha of above .70 regarded as reasonably reliable, and above .80 regarded as reliable (Hair et al. 2009). In this study, links were found between the resulting EIL scales and the eight principles of statesmanship ascribed in *Asta Brata*.

Regression analysis was then used to test the relative importance of the *Asta Brata* principles as applicable for leadership excellence in Javanese organizations. In addition, structural equation modelling (see Figure 1 below) based on the regression results was used to test for moderation effects, and MANOVA tests were used to test the significance of demographic effects.

SPSS v22 and AMOS v22 were the software packages used for the above analyses.

Analysis

As shown in the Appendix, the EFA confirmed the Excellent Leader, Organizational Demands and Environment Influences dimensions as unidimensional; and based on the variables that loaded into the latter two, Organizational Demands and Environmental Influences were renamed in this study as Governance and External Realities constructs, respectively. Similarly, two constructs (Trustworthiness and Authority) explained the Personal Qualities dimension, while four constructs (Patience, Discerning, Decisiveness and Progressiveness) explained the Managerial Behaviour dimension. CFA confirmed the validity of these constructs as defined in Tables A1–A6 in the Appendix.

Summated scores were constructed for the eight EIL constructs and the Excellent Leader dimension introduced above, which all had reasonable reliability, as measured using Cronbach’s alpha, and good internal validity, as indicated by the CFA. Table 1 below presents descriptive statistics and correlations for each of these scales. All but two of the correlations were significant at the .1% level and mean values are high for all scales, indicating that all constructs are regarded as important in a leader.

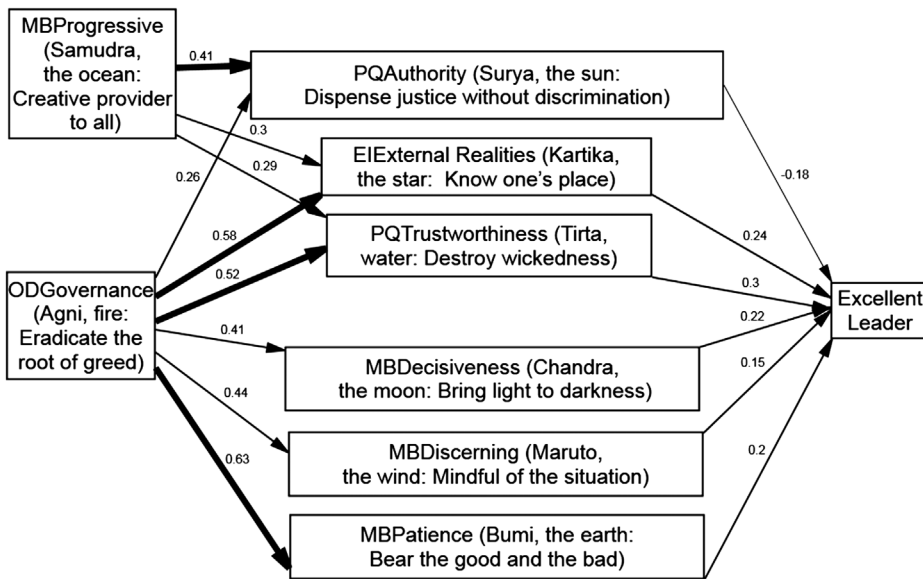


Figure 1. Structural model supporting excellence leadership in Javanese organizations with Beta(β) coefficients. Note: Significant direct paths shown with thicker lines.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations for EIL constructs and the excellent leader dimension.

EIL scales	Cronbach's alpha	Mean	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Excellent leader (1)	.8	4.22	.58	1								
Progressiveness (2)	.687	4.30	.62	.415	1							
Discerning (3)	.637	4.16	.64	.588	.252	1						
Decisiveness (4)	.651	3.65	.71	.663	.223	.429	1					
Patience (5)	.629	4.17	.67	.655	.486	.337	.476	1				
Governance (6)	.69	4.14	.49	.595	.687	.441	.406	.632	1			
Authority (7)	.741	4.22	.63	.115	.607	.046	-.081	.294	.536	1		
External realities (8)	.806	4.16	.51	.562	.700	.513	.392	.625	.79	.545	1	
Trustworthiness (9)	.727	4.27	.5	.739	.646	.551	.484	.676	.72	.378	.77	1

The constructs regarded as important to the leader were initially examined by Hypotheses H1a to H1h as referred to in the section *Asta Brata, the Eight Virtues in Javanese Leadership*, by considering the correlations between the constructs shown in Tables A1–A6 in the Appendix. Table 1 above shows significant correlations between excellent leader and the EIL constructs, which provides support for these hypotheses. Further support for these hypotheses is shown in Figure 1 below, a structural model that clearly defines the relationship between the constructs and the excellent leader (Chi-square = 9.705, df = 5, p = .084, normed Chi-square = 1.94, GFI = .993, CFI = .998, TLI = .983, RMSEA = .055, SRMR = .017).

Table 2 below shows the results of the regression analysis conducted to predict the relevance of leadership excellence across the eight EIL constructs. It indicates 72.1% of variation in the importance of excellent leader across the constructs. These findings provide support for the eight *Asta Brata* principles of statesmanship as valid measures for studying leadership excellence in Javanese organizations.

Table 2. Regression model for excellent leader (EL).

EIL dimensions	EIL constructs	Beta (β) coefficients	<i>t</i> (303)	<i>p</i> -value
Organizational demands	Governance	.026	.458	.647
Environmental influences	External realities	.255	4.098	<.001
Managerial behaviours	Progressiveness	-.063	-1.265	.207
	Patience	.196	4.361	<.001
	Discerning	.135	3.368	.001
	Decisiveness	.220	5.569	<.001
Personal qualities	Trustworthiness	.313	5.409	<.001
	Authority	-.164	-3.700	<.001

Table 3. Demographic distribution of respondents (*n* = 312).

Gender	Religion	Size of organization (No. of employees)
Male 69%	Islam 75%	500+ 24%
Female 31%	Christian 22%	101–500 25%
	Other 3%	51–100 25%
		Below 51 26%
Industry	Age	Managerial levels
Government 40%	Under 40 years 73%	Senior managers 12%
Private 56%	40–50 years 23%	Middle managers 32%
NGO 4%	Over 50 years 4%	Line managers 56%
Ethnicity	Studying at	
Javanese 64%	Gadjah Mada University 56%	
Sumatran 12%	Trisakhti University 33%	
Chinese 13%	Islamic University of Indonesia 6.7%	
Sudanese 8%	University of Pembangunan Nasional Veteran 3.8%	
Other 3%		

Results

In this section, the result outcomes from the data analysis are discussed. To provide context to the results discussed, the demographic distribution of the respondents are provided in Table 3.

Table 4 summarizes the results of the hypotheses in this study, with 90% Bootstrapped confidence intervals (CI) provided for the total standardized effect sizes. In these results, Trustworthiness is seen as the most important aspect of what constitute an excellent leader, just as water is vital to life. Of particular interest is the negative loading for Authority, indicating that this construct has a negative relationship with excellent leader when other *Asta Brata* factors are taken into consideration – just as the sun can become an enemy in times of drought. Furthermore, the non-significant results for Governance and Progressiveness, despite the initial significance of the correlations with excellent leader, indicate that other *Asta Brata* principles mediate the effects of these constructs. That is, Progressive leaders tend to show other good qualities, which directly impacts on what constitutes excellent leadership in Javanese organizations, just as the effects of the oceans are seen in rainfall and wind and the response of the earth. Similarly, the effect of Governance is shown in other good leadership characteristics, just as rainfall and winds and the vegetation on the ground determine the effect of fire.

The above results clearly show that the principles of the *Asta Brata* do not contribute equally to excellent leader; thus Hypothesis 2 is rejected. In particular, Trustworthiness is notably more important than the other components, especially Governance and Progressiveness. However, there is strong support for Hypothesis 3 where the structural

Table 4. Level of support for this study's hypotheses.

Hypothesis	Value statements which support the hypothesis	Total standardized effect size (90% CI)	Support
H1f. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader are positively related to trustworthiness	PQ Be dependable and trustworthy PQ Accept responsibility for mistakes PQ Listen to the advice of others PQ Return favours PQ Behave in accordance with his or her religious beliefs PQ Write clearly and concisely PQ Accept that others will make mistakes PQ Be formal when dealing with employees at work PQ Follow the heart – not the head – in compassionate matters PQ Work long hours, even at home PQ Be an initiator – not a follower PQ Treat most people as if they were trustworthy and honest MB Use initiatives and take risks MB Trust those to whom work is delegated MB Think about the specific details of any particular problem MB Make decisions without depending too much on others MB Make decisions earlier rather than later MB Organize work time efficiently MB Keep to work deadlines MB Keep up-to-date on management literature MB Persuade others to do things MB Focus in the task-in-hand MB Be objective when dealing with work conflicts MB Select work wisely to avoid overload MB Be logical in solving problems OD Sell the professional or corporate image to the public OD Support decisions made jointly by others OD Share power OD Adjust organizational structures and rules to the realities of practice OD Act as a member of the team OD Give priority to long-term goals OD Focus on maximizing productivity OD Adapt to changing working conditions	.196 (–.013; .416)	Weak to moderate support
H1b. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader are positively related to authority		–.061 (–.205; .077)	No support
H1h. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader are positively related to progressiveness		.089 (.016; .187)	Weak support
H1a. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader are positively related to decisiveness		.296 (.175; .408)	Moderate support
H1d. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader are positively related to patience		.231 (.075; .380)	Moderate support
H1g. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader are positively related to discerning behaviour		.138 (.010; .252)	Weak support
H1e. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader are positively related to governance		.502 (.387; .600)	Strong support

(Continued)



Table 4. (Continued)

Hypothesis	Value statements which support the hypothesis	Total standardized effect size (90% CI)	Support
H1c. In Java, perceptions of what constitutes an excellent leader are positively related to external realities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EI Identify social trends which may have an impact on work EI Use economic indicators for planning purposes EI Constantly evaluate emerging technologies EI Check consistently for problems and opportunities EI Foster an international perspective in the organization EI Study laws and regulations which may have an impact on work EI Be responsive to political realities in the environment EI Have a multicultural orientation and approach EI Be socially and environmentally responsible 	.189 (-.016; .427)	Weak to moderate support
H2. The eight principles of statesmanship (<i>Asta Brata</i>) contribute equally to the perceptions of leadership excellence in Javanese organizations		Above confidence intervals do not all overlap	No support
H3. There is complementarity between the four EIL Behaviour dimensions – Personal Qualities, Managerial Behaviours, Organizational Demands and Environmental Influences – and the eight principles of statesmanship (<i>Asta Brata</i>) to study leadership excellence in Javanese organizations		The structural model describes the data well (Chi-square = 9.705, df = 5, $p = .084$, normed Chi-square = 1.94, GFI = .993, CFI = .998, TLI = .983, RMSEA = .055, SRMR = .017)	Strong support
H4a. There is a difference in perceptions as to what constitutes leadership excellence between Javanese managers employed in private/NGO companies and government organizations	Chi-square = 9.077, df = 8, $p = .336$		No support
H4b. There is a difference in perceptions as to what constitutes leadership excellence between male and female managers in Javanese organisations	Chi-square = 3.965, df = 8, $p = .860$		No support
H4c. There is a difference in perceptions as to what constitutes leadership excellence in Javanese organizations between younger and older managers	Chi-square = 22.570, df = 8, $p = .004$		Support
H4d. There is a difference in perceptions as to what constitutes leadership excellence in Javanese organizations between line managers and middle/senior managers	Chi-square = 26.805, df = 8, $p = .001$		Support

model shown in Figure 1 highlights the complementarity between the four EIL dimensions of Personal Qualities, Managerial Behaviours, Organizational Demands and Environmental Influences and the eight *Asta Brata* principles of statesmanship to study leadership excellence in Javanese organizations.

Next, Hypotheses 4a–4d were tested by determining whether the regression weights reflected in the structural equation model differ among the various types of Javanese organizations, gender, age and categories of Javanese managers. This was done by fitting a structural model and performing an invariance test across the various types of Javanese organizations to test whether the same regression coefficients could be used for government and private/NGOs. No significant difference was found (Chi-square = 9.077, $df = 8$, $p = .336$); thus disproving Hypothesis 4a and suggesting managers employed in private/NGO and government organizations have similar perceptions of what constitutes leadership excellence. However, while this regression model explains 83% of the variation in leadership excellence for government organizations, it only explains 71% for private/NGO organizations, suggesting slightly more agreement on what defines an excellent within government organizations.

Similar to the comparisons between Javanese organization types, there were no significant differences between genders in relation to what defines an excellent leader (Chi-square = 3.965, $df = 8$, $p = .860$). However, as shown in Table 5 below, there were significant differences between the age groups (Chi-square = 22.570, $df = 8$, $p = .004$), with Trustworthiness more important and Authority less important among younger managers. Eighty percentage of the variation in the importance of the dimensions that contribute to excellent leadership is explained for younger managers, and only 72% for older managers. These findings therefore support Hypothesis 4c but not Hypothesis 4b.

In support of Hypothesis 4d, there were significant differences between the perceptions of line managers and middle/senior managers (Chi-square = 26.805, $df = 8$, $p = .001$), with line managers perceiving Environmental Influences (i.e. knowing one's place) and Patience as more important than middle/senior managers. The model for line managers explains 84% of the variation in the importance of the dimensions that contribute to excellent leadership, while the lower 63% for middle/senior managers indicates less concordance among this management level. Therefore, while organization type and gender do not greatly influence leadership excellence perceptions, both age and managerial levels significantly affect the relative importance of the dimensions of excellent leadership.

In addition to the above regression and factor analysis, MANOVA testing was used to quantify support for hypotheses 4a–4d which stated that demographic variances would influence leadership excellence perceptions. As shown in Table 6 below, no statistically significant mean differences were identified for gender, but there were significant mean differences across organization type, managerial levels and age groups, with a significant interaction effect between managerial level and age group suggesting that the effect of managerial level depends on age group. The effect sizes (partial eta squared) indicate moderate to large effect sizes in all cases with the main effect for managerial levels showing the greatest importance.

Follow-up ANOVA tests showed significant differences for only a few of the EIL constructs considered in this study. Table 7 below indicates that in the case of line management, older managers attach far greater importance on what constitutes excellent leader and discerning leadership behaviours than younger managers. In contrast, among middle/senior managers, it is the younger age group that attach more importance.

Table 5. Standardized regression coefficients (β) for perceptions of leadership excellence by age and managerial levels.

EIL dimensions	Under 35 years	35 and over years	Line managers	Middle/senior managers
External realities	.135	.186	.269	.006
Progressiveness	-.065	-.085	-.113	-.050
Governance	.064	-.014	-.040	.148
Decisiveness	.179	.265	.181	.341
Discerning	.054	.264	.070	.218
Trustworthiness	.380	.261	.309	.305
Patience	.228	.125	.282	.018
Authority	-.222	.005	-.140	-.105
	79.5%	71.8%	83.8%	63.0%

In addition, Table 8 below shows that managers working for government organizations attach less importance to what constitutes excellent leader and leadership behaviours involving patience, and decisiveness than NGO or private organizations. Sutyiono's (2007) research on state-owned enterprises in Indonesia echoed these findings when it identified that minimal resources are spent promoting the government's ideological standards and correspondingly less attention is paid to inculcating ideals and skills essential to the market-oriented business success that is, nominally at least, the government organization's primary goal. In contrast, NGO/private organizations are completely profit dependent, and their sustainability is therefore dependent on their management. Unlike in the NGO/private organization context where good leadership is essential, the expectations of government establishments are often unperturbed and cushioned by tenured positions, bureaucratic process, hierarchies, and a Javanese culture that accepts fate and preserves hierarchy (Mia and Winanta 2007). Thus, in private organizations, poor leadership could lead to lower profits, resulting in sacking or demotion of their top management or even business collapsing.

The results highlighted in Tables A1–A6 suggest some support for the fourth set of hypotheses. It would appear that demographic variables (age and managerial levels) and organization type do impact on perceptions of the importance of leadership excellence and the importance of some of the behaviours associated with excellent leadership in Java.

Discussion

In this study, a distinctive cultural model with eight EIL constructs that describe excellent leadership in Javanese organizations was developed. The data were gathered from different regions of Java, across both public and private organizations, with a sample exhibiting variation in terms of gender, ethnicity, age and organizational managerial levels. In testing demographic influence on perceptions of leadership excellence, only age and managerial levels had a significant impact. Further, the importance attached to leadership excellence and some of the behaviours associated with it were significantly lower in the case of government versus other managers.

A number of significant findings support this study. First, this study supports other researches conducted in Indonesia on management practices (e.g. Inanda Murni 1979; Irawanto, Ramsey, and Ryan 2011a, 2011b; Irawanto, Ramsey, and Tweed 2012a, 2012b; Redding and Casey 1976; Sarsito 2006; Suryani et al. 2012), where characteristics related to paternalism such as authoritarian benevolence and moral values were also evident. However,

Table 6. MANOVA test results for perceptions of leadership excellence by demographics.

Demographics	F-value	p-value	Partial η^2
Government or private/NGO	$F(9241) = 2.935$	<.001	.122
Gender	$F(9241) = 1.755$.079	.061
Age	$F(9241) = 4.280$	<.001	.128
Managerial levels	$F(9241) = 5.312$	<.001	.150
Age*managerial levels interaction	$F(9241) = 4.221$	<.001	.127

*Effect of managerial levels depends on age group.

Table 7. Significant interaction effects between age and managerial levels measured by marginal means.

	F(1249)	p-value	Partial η^2	Line managers		Middle/senior managers	
				<35 years (n = 103)	35 & over years (n = 47)	<35 years (n = 32)	>35 & over years (n = 88)
Excellent leader	15.382	.000	.058	4.066	4.501	4.282	4.128
Discerning	23.388	.000	.086	4.214	4.497	4.347	3.822
Decisive	8.624	.004	.033	3.582	3.902	3.635	3.404

Table 8. Significant organization type effects measured by marginal means.

	F(1249)	p-value	Partial η^2	Private/NGO (n = 175)	Government organization (n = 116)
Patience	9.145	.003	.035	4.32	4.06
Excellent leader	22.693	<.001	.084	4.42	4.07
Decisiveness	20.714	<.001	.077	3.83	3.43

this study has revealed a negative relationship between perceptions of authority and excellent leader, especially among younger managers, indicating there are aspects of authoritarianism that may not be supported in Java.

Sarsito (2006) also highlighted this Java-specific difference, acknowledging *bapak-ism* as a typical Javanese behaviour where leaders are treated as a father and, equally, moral standing is expected from leaders. According to Sarsito, this negates the authoritarianism aspect of control for control sake. This negative relationship therefore needs to be explored further, as studies in India on management practices (e.g. Cappelli et al. 2010) have observed a similar scenario where paternalism – a well-defined behavioural value in India – has transformed with the ‘new India’. This change has been attributed to the transformation of Indian management via modernization and global imperatives as it merges into the globalizing world. A similar influence was observed in Singapore where the Confucian values of a patriarchal society, based on familial hierarchical decision-making system, have been challenged by a progressive and evolutionary egalitarian system underpinned by individualism (Selvarajah, Meyer, Jeyakumar et al. 2013).

Second, this study has highlighted that trustworthiness is the most important characteristic of an excellent leader in Java. The importance of trustworthiness is common among both young and old, and line as well as middle and senior managers. What this suggests is that in Java, the paternalistic authority structure is transformed based on mutual trust-based relationships between the manager and the employees.

Third, this study suggests that progressiveness and organizational demands do not significantly contribute to what constitutes an excellent leader in the Javanese managerial context.

It is only when these behaviours are tempered by other factors that leadership excellence is acknowledged; particularly when they translate into trustworthy, dependable and discerning behaviours, patience, decisive action, and acknowledgement of environmental influence. This also occurs among both young and older managers irrespective of their managerial levels.

Fourth, this study has uncovered a polarizing interaction between age and managerial levels, in that many young middle/senior managers perceiving leadership excellence and discerning behaviours as more important than older managers, which is the reverse among line managers.

Rowley and Warner (2006, 394) in addition made reference to the lack of 'tradition of spiritualism', this study has also examined the spiritual traditions that influence perceptions of leadership excellence in Javanese organizations by relating the eight cultural dimensions of *Asta Brata* to EIL.

Implications for organizational behavioural practice

As noted in the introduction to this study, there are various potential economic benefits for greenfields companies that engage with Indonesia, as the fourth most populated country that is endowed with many natural resources.

However, foreign organizations seeking to invest in Java need to first understand the behavioural values that determine EIL. Second, foreigners need to ascertain a clear understanding of the extent of deference to authority that exists in Java, the main commercial and political centre of Indonesia. Even though this behavioural quality is evident in many Southeast Asian countries (e.g. Selvarajah, Meyer, and Davuth 2012; Selvarajah, Meyer, and Donovan 2013), in Indonesia, the deference for authority is uniquely underpinned by *bapakism* (i.e. reverence for the leader as a father figure) and a familial orientation of interdependency between management and employees is also more evident. Such familial orientation is often alien to Western-management-based organizations.

Third, familiarity in an open management style where emphasis is on quick and independent decision-making and patient, discerning behaviours should not be misconstrued as a lack of power distance. While compassion is a benevolent trait of a good leader, 'being formal with employees at work' provides the formality of working relationships observed in Java in this study.

Fourth, the interdependency that is common in Java entrusts the managers to lead, in a father-like role, in a dependable and trustworthy manner in the Javanese work culture. The role of manager as a leader is therefore an entrusted position and binds the employee and the employer in an interconnected familial relationship of mutual respect in a hierarchical organizational structure.

Fifth, another feature of this mutual interdependency model is the manager's support for the long-term viability of the organization by promoting the 'corporate image to the public' and working as a team as opposed to purely focusing on profit maximization. This suggests that organizational functioning in an interdependency-based structure founded on trust and mutual respect provides the basis for a sustainable foundation for organizational prosperity in Java. This is somewhat different from the US corporate emphasis on productivity maximization as the top ranked priority of managers (e.g. Cappelli et al. 2010).

Sixth, Indonesia is facing the pressures of globalization, and its managers have a duty to keep their organization competitive in a changing environment. From an international

business perspective, the Javanese manager's support for identifying social trends that have an impact on work was nominated in this study as the most important environmental factor supporting good leadership. Again, the emphasis on creating a good work place that recognizes the social environment is seen as crucial to a successful and sustainable organization.

Lastly, multinational organizations should avoid imposing ethnocentric assumptions in different cultural-socio-historical contexts such as in Java. Understanding traditional spiritualism, such as the influence of *Asta Brata* principles on leadership excellence, will provide a much deeper understanding of the Javanese worldview of what constitutes an excellent leader. The negative effects of the narrow-minded ethnocentric approach have been noted in previous literature (e.g. Mathew and Jones 2012, 2013; Vijay Kumar 2013).

Theoretical implications of the study

This research challenges the notion of paternalism as has often been reflected in earlier works (e.g. Sinha 1980). This study on Javanese organizations has established a cultural model of leadership excellence based on paternalistic culture – often perceived as an authoritative feature – which signals an emerging interdependency-based familial relationship structure. This finding has implications for future theory.

First, it has highlighted the importance of providing context to paternalistic leadership behaviours common in Javanese organizations – an area that has previously been neglected. Second, it has provided cultural explanations to the eight dimensions supporting excellent leadership in Java; thus highlighting the importance of reflecting on cultural theory to explain observed phenomenon. Third, this study emphasizes the importance of exploring the behavioural values of the Javanese workforce and the mediating roles that some of these values have on the established relationship structures. More specifically, the factors that mediate the paternalistic notion of leadership in Java have been examined. Fourth, the paternalistic notion of leadership in Java and the mediating nature of the EIL dimensions provide a valuable addition to theory building in future cross-cultural studies.

Limitations of the study

This study is based on ratings of importance for 94 items in terms of leadership excellence, which were collected via a single questionnaire. Although common variance bias may have affected the results, as previously identified by Meade, Watson, and Kroustalis (2007) on the basis of CFA models applied to 24 multitrait-multimethod correlation matrices, such bias is often minor in magnitude. Also, the work of Siemsen, Roth, and Oliveira (2010) on multivariate linear relationships showed that common method bias decreases when additional independent variables are included in the regression equation. In this study, the EIL dimensions were tested simultaneously, suggesting that common method variance has been addressed. In addition, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff (2012) proposed research designs that reduce the effect of common method variance, and it is suggested here that future research consider some of these procedural remedies. Furthermore, it should also be noted that in a study focused on the importance of leadership, it is impossible to remove common method variance without removing the central theme of the research.

Retrospectively, a research design that enabled an objective measure of leadership excellence as the dependent variable would have been preferable. However, this is not easily achieved, as

recognized in previous well-known research such as House's GLOBE study (e.g. Chhokar, Brodbeck, and House 2008; House et al. 2004). In particular, several demographic differences, such as age and managerial levels have been identified in this study as influencing perceptions of leadership excellence in Java, and this needs to be investigated further. In addition, the ways in which these demographic differences affect work behaviour and the consequences of ignoring these differences in an organizational setting needs further investigation.

It should also be acknowledged that the sample used in this study does not fully represent the population of Java in terms of ethnicity and religion – Indonesians of Chinese ethnicity have been over-represented. This study is based on Javanese culture, which has historically played a major role in defining Indonesian leadership. Future studies should also consider the cultural effects of some of the other main islands in Indonesia, such as Sumatra and Celebes.

Conclusion

In exploring leadership behaviours among Javanese managers, this study has provided an organizational leadership framework for Java based on spiritual traditions, as recommended by Rowley and Warner (2006). This spiritual focus has been absent in many leadership studies.

Furthermore, this study is based on the premise that Java has a combination of distinct cultural features that determine the leadership context. Thus, this study has identified eight EIL constructs that determine what constitutes an excellent leader in Javanese organizations. Cultural interpretations of the leadership phenomenon were also developed as a backdrop, to provide a deeper understanding of leadership excellence in Java. For example, this research suggests that deference to authority, although an important contributor to leadership behaviour, has been moderated by personal and managerial behavioural values.

Critical external realities that may be influencing a transformation in Javanese managerial behaviour are likely due to the modernization influences and challenges Indonesia faces as part of a globalizing world. This study therefore infers that these factors have influenced changing leadership behavioural values, and suggests that more research should be done in this area. In addition, it appears that negative behaviours that can affect mutual relationships are no longer tolerated in Java, at least not in a leadership context. Above all else, leaders are expected to be trustworthy and dependable.

Note

1. MBA and Master's business program students also employed in organizations have often been used as proxy for managers in research, including Heuer, Cummings, and Hutabarat (1999) in their study of managers in Indonesia.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix

Table A1. Excellent Leader scale (CMIN/DF = 2.512, GFI = .968, AGFI = .937, TLI = .943, CFI = .962, RMSEA = .070).

	Beta estimate
Continue to learn how to improve performance	.703
Create a sense of purpose and enthusiasm in the workplace	.681
Motivate employees	.675
Give recognition for good work	.651
Have confidence when dealing with work and with people	.649
Be honest	.521
Develop strategies to gain competitive edge in the industry	.359

Table A2. Environmental influences – external realities scale (CMIN/DF = 2.063, GFI = .964, AGFI = .940, TLI = .945, CFI = .959, RMSEA = .058).

	Beta estimate
Identify social trends which may have an impact on work	.715
Use economic indicators for planning purposes	.710
Constantly evaluate emerging technologies	.689
Check consistently for problems and opportunities	.684
Foster an international perspective in the organization	.619
Study laws and regulations which may have an impact on work	.545
Be responsive to political realities in the environment	.496
Have a multicultural orientation and approach	.348
Be socially and environmentally responsible	.340

Table A3. Organizational demands – governance scale (CMIN/DF = 1.849, GFI = .970, AGFI = .946, TLI = .924, CFI = .946, RMSEA = .052).

	Beta estimate
Sell the professional or corporate image to the public	.703
Support decisions made jointly by others	.620
Share power	.537
Adjust organizational structures and rules to the realities of practice	.461
Act as a member of the team	.436
Give priority to long-term goals	.432
Focus on maximizing productivity	.339
Adapt to changing working conditions	.236

Table A4. Personal qualities – trustworthiness & authority scales (CMIN/DF = 1.909, GFI = .951, AGFI = .927, TLI = .920, CFI = .935, RMSEA = .054).

	Beta estimate	
	Trustworthiness	Authority
Be dependable and trustworthy	.625	
Accept responsibility for mistakes	.614	
Listen to the advice of others	.592	
Return favours	.566	
Behave in accordance with his or her religious beliefs	.511	
Write clearly and concisely	.495	
Accept that others will make mistakes	.371	
Be formal when dealing with employees at work		.706
Follow the heart – not the head – in compassionate matters		.701
Work long hours, even at home		.690
Be an initiator – not a follower		.536
Treat most people as if they were trustworthy and honest		.419

Table A5. Managerial behaviours – progressiveness, patience and discerning scales (CMIN/DF = 2.646, GFI = .930, AGFI = .893, TLI = .843, CFI = .881, RMSEA = .073).

	Beta estimates		
	Progressiveness	Patience	Discerning
Use initiatives and take risks	.727		
Trust those to whom work is delegated	.629		
Think about the specific details of any particular problem	.621		
Keep up-to-date on management literature		.692	
Persuade others to do things		.609	
Focus in the task-in-hand		.525	
Be objective when dealing with work conflicts			.800
Select work wisely to avoid overload			.545
Be logical in solving problems			.498

Table A6. Managerial behaviours – decisiveness scale (CMIN/DF = 3.126, GFI = .991, TLI = .919, CFI = .973, RMSEA = .083).

	Beta estimates
	Make decisions without depending too much on others
Make decisions earlier rather than later	.597
Organize work time efficiently	.619
Keep to work deadlines	.570