

Employee's Perceived Influence of Ethnicity on their Manager's Management Style

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of ethnic background on management styles among Latin Americans and European Americans. Specifically, the objective of the present study was to examine employees' perceptions of their managers' cultural orientations, power distance, and management styles. It was predicted that European American managers would be perceived as being individualistic, having a small power distance, and demonstrating a more consultative and participative management style than Latin American managers. In contrast, Latin American managers would be perceived as having a more collectivistic orientation, as having a large power distance, and portraying more autocratic and persuasive management styles than European American managers.

Hofstede's (2001) Individualism Index, Power Distance Index, and Management Styles questionnaire were adapted for the present study. Results revealed partial support for all four hypotheses. According to the results, ethnicity did influence the employees' perceptions of their managers' cultural orientation and management style. Although it was predicted that European American managers would be perceived as having a smaller power distance than Latin American managers, the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant. Implications for these findings and suggestions for future research are provided.

Hofstede's (2001) research has been seminal in our understanding of cross-cultural management theory and practice. Hofstede (1991) was able to make generalizations about the nature of a nation's cultural values across four dimensions: individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity-femininity. The present study focused on the first two dimensions because there were consistent differences in the individualism-collectivism and power distance dimensions among Latin and European cultures, which were our primary interests. Individualism and small power distance characteristics are predominant in individuals from European cultures, and collectivistic and large power distance characteristics strongly influence individuals who come from Latin cultures (Hofstede, 1991).

We argue that these cultural differences manifest themselves in the management styles of Latin Americans and European Americans. The purpose of this research was to investigate whether or not Latin American and European American managers in the United

States were perceived by their employees as having similar cultural orientations, power distance, and management styles that were predominant in Latin and European cultures. Measuring employee perceptions of their managers provided a way for us to assess ethnic differences in management styles as well as the perceptions employees have of their managers (West & Graham, 2004). Further, one's ethnicity influences perceptions of power distance, cultural orientations, and management style.

Cultural Orientations

Individualism-collectivism is often employed to explain ethnic differences in conflict styles (Ting-Toomey, Oetzel, & Yee-Jung, 2001) and may be beneficial to explaining differences in management styles. The constructs of individualism and collectivism concern the relationship between the individual and the group as reflected across many domains of social functioning (Hofstede, 2001). Gudykunst and Lee (2003) pointed out three individual characteristics that mediate the influence of cultural individualism-collectivism on individuals' communication. These characteristics are "their personalities, their individual values, and their self construal" (p. 13).

Collectivism

Hui and Triandis (1986) defined collectivism as a high concern for the other, sharing of material benefits, nonmaterial resources, accommodating in accepting the opinions and views of others, having a high concern for face, and being involved in contributing to the lives of others. Collectivistic societies, in contrast to individualist societies, are characterized as stressing the importance of the individual's loyalty to the group, which, in turn, safeguards the interests and well being of the individual (Hofstede, 2001). The individuals that make up the group whether they are family, friends, or coworkers are strongly influenced and motivated by group norms (Perea & Slater, 1999). Overall, collectivists prioritize their group goals before their own personal goals. Collectivistic societies also include such features as reduced personal privacy, a sense of personal identity based on one's place in the group, a belief in the superiority of the group compared to individual decisions, and emotional dependency on groups.

At the personal level, collectivism is manifested by a concern about interpersonal bonds, greater awareness of and responsiveness to the needs of others, and a sense of interconnectedness and interdependence (Hui & Triandis, 1986). DeVos (1985) pointed out how collectivists like to "sense themselves as working together toward a common objective and that this common purpose satisfies the inner sense of social purpose for the member" (p. 158). In this respect, an individual's identity is located in loyalty to an organization rather than in one's sense of individual contribution.

In an organizational setting, a manager that is excessively concerned about an employee's well being can often be seen as preferential treatment from managers in individualistic societies (Hofstede, 1991). This preferential treatment is most likely perceived as a normal and necessary behavior by those from a collectivistic culture, who would consider it as taking care of those in their in-group. Perea and Slater (1999) stated that a collectivist's in-group extends all the way from family to friends and even co-workers. Based upon Hofstede's (1991) extensive research, Latin cultures were more collectivistic than European cultures.

Managers with a collectivistic versus individualistic orientation tend to resolve conflict in different ways. Pan and Zhang (2004) stated that collectivistic managers emphasize harmony and personal relationships when dealing with conflict. When collectivistic managers face conflict, they tend to use authority to suppress it, or settle things in private, and prefer to resolve conflict through negotiation and compromise. Collectivistic managers tend to use indirect ways to avoid open conflict and are even encouraged to involve the assistance of a third party when dealing with difficult requests (Bond & Hofstede, 1989). These indirect forms of influence are preferred because loss of face can be avoided (Ting-Toomey, 1999). In contrast to collectivistic managers, individualistic managers are inclined to confront problems directly and bring the issue, concern, or conflict at hand out into the open. When in the process of resolving differences, individualistic managers prefer to use tactics that involve directly confronting others with rational arguments that are supported by factual evidence and then provide their suggested solutions (Ting-Toomey, 1985).

Individualism

Hofstede (2001) proposed that societies characterized by individualism have an emphasis on promoting one's self-interest and that of one's immediate family. The individual's rights, rather than group duties, are stressed as are personal autonomy, self-realization, individual initiative, and decision-making. Personal identity defines individuals' attributes. At the personal level, individualism is characterized by valuing one's independence and showing less concern for other persons' needs and interests (Hui & Triandis, 1986).

In regards to management styles and cultural influences, Katz, Swanson, and Nelson (2001) argued that these factors would strongly affect the nature of the relationship between a person and the organization to which they belong. Collectivistic societies demand stronger and greater emotional dependence from their employees, while organizations in more individualistic societies assume a broad responsibility for their employees (Katz et al., 2001). As for the employees, they value personal time and are sensitive to how their involvement with a company can detract from their quality of life. In contrast, employees in collectivistic cultures would likely exhibit more solidarity and involvement with organizational life. Management in individualistic societies is a management of individuals, in which subordinates can be moved around individually, whereas management in a collectivist society is a management of groups to the extent to which people actually feel emotionally integrated into a work group.

Managers who come from an individualistic society are more likely to offend individuals with a collectivistic orientation because they tend to have a more assertive approach when pursuing individual and task goals (Hofstede, 1991). A manager with a collectivistic background may be more concerned about maintaining harmony in the group (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Managers with an individualistic orientation may have weaknesses in areas such as team building and managers with a collectivistic orientation may have weaknesses with efficiency and time management.

Power Distance

One of Hofstede's (2001) dimensions, power distance, refers to the degree of inequality among people. Power distance indicates the ease with which people from different hierarchies, seniority levels, and formal positions of power, can interact with each other (Lilrank, Shani, & Lindberg, 2001). Hofstede's (2001) study showed that the majority of the

European cultures demonstrated a small power distance, whereas the majority of the Latin cultures demonstrated a large power distance.

Large Power Distance

In contrast to small power distance, the norms of large power distance cultures legitimize differences in decision-making power between those who are in high power positions versus those who are in low power positions (Brockner et al., 2001). Lilrank et al. (2001) extended the idea that in environments with large power distance, authority relations are problematic and require elaborate structures to define communication and decision-making rules. In an organizational context, cultures with a large power distance centralize their power at the upper management level.

Jaeger (1986) pointed out that countries with a large power distance would influence how they traditionally deal with conflict in an organization. They tend to utilize a “pleasing” approach. Latin American individuals usually are “pleasing” one’s opposing viewpoint rather than bringing the conflict to the surface and dealing with it. Collectivistic cultures tend to be indirect in their communication, however, in large power distance positions in an organization, managers assert their power in a very direct and paternalistic manner. The common characteristics of an organization in a large power distance society are hierarchical rights, unequal distributions, asymmetrical communication, and the rewards and punishments that are based on age, rank, status, title, and seniority (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Organizations with a large power distance are characterized by taller organizational pyramids, larger wage differentials and a less-educated, lower social strata, high formality, low disclosure and openness, and centralization (Katz et al., 2001; Pan & Zhang, 2004). Centralization in organizational settings put a concentration of authority at the managerial level (Tayeb, 1988). In these cultures managers show less consideration for people while seeing themselves as benevolent decision makers. Higher-level superiors usually make final decisions without consulting their subordinates, adopting a nonparticipatory approach to decision-making (Pan & Zhang, 2004).

The hierarchical arrangements allow the power holders such as the managers to simply assume they are entitled to privileges according to rank and status, which differentiates them from subordinates (Katz et al., 2001). Collectivistic employees readily accept decisions handed down by their supervisors, and even resist participation in decision-making because of their unquestioning attitudes toward their supervisors (Graf, Hemmasi, Lust, & Liang, 1990). In contrast, managers from small power distance cultures value personal equality, decentralization, and empowered subordinates.

Small Power Distance

The desire for power is said to lead to a tendency to reduce the difference in power between oneself and a more powerful other (Bruins et al., 1993). The norms of small power distance cultures reduce power differences among people in positions of varying levels of formal decision-making power (Brockner et al., 2001). Lilrank et al. (2001) stated that small power distance correlates with a low level of formalities in communication, and superiors democratically make decisions. For example, a boss with an open door policy and who has immediate contact with their staff, whether it is in the coffee room or cafeteria, tends to be admired by their employees.

Managers in small power distance cultures may not be completely on the same playing field as their subordinates. A small power distance organization stresses employee

equality and “legitimate power” based expertise (Katz et al., 2001). In fact, the managers may have some benefits not given to subordinates, but according to Hofstede (1991), the gaps in income are not as great as in high power distance countries. Typically, these organizations may have more of a flat structure, rather than hierarchical.

In an organizational setting, cultures that have a small power distance orientation distribute power evenly among the employees. Ting-Toomey (1999) noted that in a small power distance workplace subordinates expect to be consulted before decisions or actions are made; the ideal boss is a resourceful democrat. Small power distance organizations consider it necessary for persons at differing hierarchical levels to interact openly in order to resolve a problem (Jaeger, 1986). People in small power distance cultures tend to value equality, whether it is equality of power distributions, rights, relationships, or on merit, they favor equitable rewards and punishments based on performance.

Management Styles

Management styles have been widely researched (Deery & Jago, 2001). Management means getting tasks done through their employees. Moran and Harris (1982) indicated that different cultural values can affect management styles and objectives. If these objectives systematically differ from culture to culture, then knowledge of them is useful in understanding managerial behavior according to one’s culture and possibly to one’s ethnicity (Ronen, 1978). Understanding people entails understanding their background and cultural values. Hofstede’s (2001) management style typology was used as a basis for the current study: autocratic, persuasive, consultative, and participative.

Deery and Jago (2001) defined the autocratic management style as usually making decisions promptly, communicating decisions clearly and firmly, and depending on the staff members to carry out their decisions loyally and without difficulty. This management style will let subordinates know what they are expected to do, having specific guidance, asking subordinates to follow these specific rules and procedures (Yukl, 1981). Thiagarajan and Deep (1970) described authoritarian supervisors as individuals who utilize their power of office to impose their decisions on subordinates. Stevens and Ash (2001) indicated that the exploitative authoritative system as issuing orders without discussion or consideration of feedback when it comes to discussing the characteristics of “goal-setting or ordering.” Klauss and Bass (1982) referred to the autocratic management style as directive. They defined these types of managers as telling their subordinates what is expected of them and what they should do as well as how to do it. These managers would also specify definite standards of performance expected from their subordinates while maintaining uniform ways of doing things.

Managers with a persuasive management style usually make decisions promptly, but before proceeding, explain them further to their members, giving reasons for their decisions and are willing to answer any questions (Bass, 1990). Klauss and Bass (1982) stated that this type of manager would change their behavior to fit the occasion. Managers typically would “sell” their decisions to their subordinates. They elaborated that managers with this style would do personal favors for those who work for them, making political alliances with their subordinates by promising rewards if subordinates follow their opinions. Klauss and Bass (1982) stated that persuasive managers would also maintain social distance by being detached, and uninvolved with subordinates.

Managers with a consultative management style usually listen and consider staff members' advice when making decisions (Bass, 1990). Thiagarajan and Deep (1970) defined consultative managers or supervisors as being willing to share power with their subordinates equally when making decisions. Stevens and Ash (2001) indicated that goals are set or orders are issued after discussion with subordinates concerning problems and planned actions. Klaus and Bass (1982) stated that the decisions the consultative managers make would reflect the fact that they discussed these matters with their subordinates first. Before these managers would make up their mind, they would explain the problem to their subordinates to get their opinions. After hearing their subordinates' ideas, they would make final decisions on what action to take.

A manager with a participative management style calls a meeting of other staff members when there are important decisions, discusses the problems, and are very likely to accept the majority viewpoint as the decision. Stevens and Ash (2001) pointed out that the participative group system establishes goals through participation of the group. Klaus and Bass (1982) described this type of manager as one who would analyze problems with subordinates to reach a consensual decision, participating as equals in the decision-making process. Decisions that affect the work group are made in joint decision-making conferences between managers and their subordinates. Subordinates that have a manager that uses this management style would have as much responsibility for final decisions as their manager.

Managers with a large power distance and a collectivistic orientation do not pursue a consultative relationship with subordinates, but feel that it is their duty to watch over their subordinates, mentoring and supporting them, but ultimately making the decisions themselves. In this environment subordinates expect tasks to be delegated, and the ideal manager would be autocratic (Ting-Toomey, 1999) or persuasive (Hofstede, 2001). Subordinates expect to be told what to do by their manager. Managers in collectivistic societies with a large power distance do not manage individuals; they manage groups. Ideally the boss, in the subordinates' eyes, is a benevolent autocrat, or 'good father' (Hofstede, 1991). This is consistent with collectivistic values in large power distance cultures. It is collectivistic in the sense that they are identifying their boss as an in-group member like their family. Families in collectivistic cultures also have a hierarchy like an organization, with the father being at the top. The father and boss both have the final word. People in cultures that are dependent on in-groups are also typically dependent on power figures, specifically autocratic and persuasive managers.

In contrast, subordinates in a low power distance individualistic society expect to be empowered, self-efficient, and would prefer a consultative or participative manager (Jaeger, 1986). The hierarchical system is just an inequality of roles, simply established for convenience. These roles are tentative and may be changed for promotion or demotion. Subordinates can be moved around individually: if incentives, appraisals, recognition, or bonuses are given, these should be linked to the individuals' performance. That is why managers in individualistic societies with a small power distance manage individuals instead of groups. It is crucial in these cultures that they are able to identify the uniqueness of each of their employees. Thiagarajan and Deep's (1970) study concluded that subordinates in the European countries of Belgium, Italy, and the United Kingdom were more satisfied with their jobs when they had a consultative manager, and least satisfied when they had an authoritative manager. Subordinates expect to be consulted before a decision is made that affects their work. Subordinates prefer superiors to be accessible, and the ideal boss is consultative and

participative because subordinates feel that they are empowered when their unique voice is heard and validated by their manager.

There is a wealth of cross-cultural studies on management styles (Deery & Jago, 2001; Hofstede, 1986, 1991, 2001; Jaeger, 1986; Lilrank et al., 2001; Moran & Harris, 1982; Poppe, 2003; Ronen, 1978; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Ting-Toomey et al., 2001). The previously mentioned research and studies should be expanded from cross-cultural studies to examining cultural influences in one's ethnicity. According to Tayeb (1988), the major strength of the cultural perspective as a whole is its recognition that culture plays an influential role in shaping work-related values, attitudes, and behaviors of individual members of various societies because of their underlying cultural values and attitudes. It would be interesting to see if those cultural influences in managing style would hold true with ethnicity as well. For example, according to Hofstede (2001), Mexican managers were reported as having a more autocratic managing style.

The foregoing discussion leads to the following hypotheses:

- H1: Latin American managers are more likely to be perceived by their employees as having a collectivistic orientation, large power distance, and autocratic management style than European managers.
- H2: Latin American managers are more likely to be perceived by their employees as having a collectivistic orientation, large power distance, and persuasive management style than European American managers.
- H3: European American managers are more likely to be perceived by their employees as having an individualistic orientation, small power distance, and consultative management style than Latin American managers.
- H4: European American managers are more likely to be perceived by their employees as having an individualistic orientation, small power distance, and participative management style than European American managers.

METHODS

Participants

A convenience sample was utilized to obtain the survey data. The surveys were distributed to 12 Introductory Human Communication courses. Of the 229 surveys that were administered 169 surveys were suitable for analysis. Out of the 169 responding subordinates, 95 were male (56 %), and 74 were female (44 %). A total of 56 were Caucasian (33 %), 68 were Hispanic (40 %), 33 were Asia (20%), 7 were African-American (4 %), and 5 were Middle Eastern (3 %). All respondents indicated their ethnicity. The age of the respondents ranged from 17 to 29 years.

Measure

Four variables were operationalized in this study and reflected in the questionnaire: the manager's ethnicity, cultural orientation, power distance, and management style. Instructions indicated that the researcher was interested in examining the employee's perception of their manager's cultural orientation, power distance, and management style. More specifically, the study was designed to examine whether or not ethnicity is perceived as having a certain cultural orientation, power distance, and management style. For example, Latin American managers are more likely to be perceived by their employees as having a collectivistic orientation, large power distance, and persuasive management style than European American managers.

Three instruments were utilized: Hofstede's (2001) Individualism Index (IDV), Power Distance Index (PDI), and four other questions provided unique information about the employees' perception of their managers' management style. A description was given of four types of management styles (1) autocratic, (2) persuasive, (3) consultative, and (4) participative. The descriptions of the four types were originally taken from Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958). All survey items were measured on a Likert scale ranging from one to five. Construct validity was attested by Hofstede for all of these scales. Although the scales used were slightly modified to suit this particular study. Each scale was tested for reliability. Cronbach's Alpha on the Individualism Index (IDV) was (.86). Alpha on the Power Distance Index (PDI) was (.69).

RESULTS

All four hypotheses predicted that European American managers will be perceived by their employees as individualistic and, in contrast, Latin American managers will be perceived as collectivistic by their employees. In terms of perceived individualist, the mean for European American managers was 2.17 ($SD = .59$), and the mean for Latin American managers was 2.00 ($SD = .489$) with a t -value for the difference being 1.9 ($df = 167$, $p < .03$, one-tailed). Thus, support was found for the hypothesis that European American managers would be perceived as more individualistic than Latin American managers.

It was predicted that European American managers will be perceived by their employees as having a small power distance and in contrast, Latin American managers will be perceived as having a larger power distance by their employees. In terms of perceived power distance, the mean for European American managers was 3.17 ($SD = .87$), and the mean for Latin American managers was 3.37 ($SD = .80$) with a t -value of -1.5 ($df = 167$, $p < .07$, one-tailed). Although the difference in the mean is in the predicted direction of the hypothesis—European American managers being perceived as having less power distance than Latin American managers—the difference was not statistically significant.

Hypothesis 1 and 2 stated that Latin American managers are more likely to be perceived by their employees as having a more autocratic and persuasive management style than European managers. Hypothesis 3 and 4 proposed that European American managers are more likely to be perceived by their employees as having a more consultative and participative management style than Latin American managers.

Table 1 indicates the means for the four types of management styles that employees perceived their European American or Latin American manager as having. As shown in Table 1 the mean for autocratic management style was 3.14 ($SD = 1.27$) for European American managers, and the mean for Latin American managers was 2.41 ($SD = 1.17$) with a t -value of 3.8 ($df = 167$, $p < .03$, one-tailed). This result indicates a significant difference regarding their managers' perceived management styles. More specifically, the results reveal that employees perceive Latin American managers as having a more autocratic management style than European American managers.

Table 1: European American and Latin American Management Styles

	Group Means (SD)		One-tailed t value (df)	p
	EA	LA		
Autocratic	3.14 (1.27)	2.41 (1.17)	3.8 (167)	.01
Persuasive	2.88 (.92)	2.35 (.97)	3.6 (167)	.00
Participative	2.81 (1.08)	2.87 (.98)	-3 (167)	.37

Consultative	2.95 (1.25)	3.41 (.94)	-2.6 (167)	.01
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Table 1 reveals the mean for the persuasive management style at 2.88 ($SD = .92$) for European American managers, and the mean for Latin American managers was 2.35 ($SD = .97$) with a t -value of 3.6 ($df = 167, p < .01$, one-tailed). This result indicates a significant difference regarding managers perceived management styles. More specifically, the results reveal that employees perceive Latin American managers as having a more persuasive management style than European American managers.

The means for the participative management style are shown in Table 1. The mean for European American managers was 2.81 ($SD = 1.08$) and for Latin American managers was 2.87 ($SD = .98$) with a t -value of $-.4$ ($df = 167, p < .36$, one-tailed). Although the difference in the means is in the hypothesized direction—European American managers were perceived as having a more participative management style than Latin American managers—results from this study indicated that the difference was not statistically significant.

As shown in Table 1 the mean for consultative management style was 2.95 ($SD = 1.25$) for European American managers, and the mean for Latin American managers was 3.41 ($SD = .94$) with a t -value of -2.6 ($df = 167, p < .02$, one-tailed). These results indicate a significant difference in the means regarding their managers' perceived management styles. More specifically, the results reveal that employees perceive European American managers as having a more consultative management style than Latin American managers.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the present study was to examine employees' perceptions of their managers' cultural orientations, power distance, and management styles. Additionally, this study examined the different responses employees had about how they perceived their managers according to ethnicity; specifically, European American managers and Latin American managers. The primary assumption was that European American managers would be individualistic, have a small power distance, and a consultative and participative management styles. In contrast, Latin American managers would be collectivistic, have a large power distance, and portray autocratic and persuasive management styles.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that Latin American managers are more likely to be perceived by their employees as having a collectivistic orientation, large power distance, and autocratic management style than European managers. Hypothesis 2 predicted that Latin American managers are more likely to be perceived by their employees as having a collectivistic orientation, large power distance, and persuasive management style than European American managers. Hypothesis 3 predicted that European American managers are more likely to be perceived by their employees as having an individualistic orientation, small power distance, and consultative management style than Latin American managers. Hypothesis 4 claimed that European American managers are more likely to be perceived by their employees as having an individualistic orientation, small power distance, and participative management style than European American managers. All four hypotheses were partially supported by the data.

All four hypotheses predicted that European American managers would be perceived as being more individualistic than Latin American managers. The results were significant. This may be due to the fact that it is a matter of how individuals may identify themselves. If a manager is eighth generation Mexican American and is raised in an environment that nurtures

certain cultural values from Mexico he or she may embrace these learned values and attitudes. Although, someone who may be second generation from Mexico may have acculturated or assimilated into the culture of the United States. These second generation individuals may no longer identify with their grandparents' cultural orientation (collectivistic) and they may no longer identify or associate themselves as a Mexican American, but may solely identify themselves with individualistic values as an American.

Power distance was in the direction as hypothesized, European American managers were perceived as having a small power distance and Latin American managers were perceived as having a large power distance by their employees. However, the differences did not reach statistical significance. This may be due to the fact that these managers are working in American organizations that are likely to have a small power distance environment that does not embrace inequality of employees and does not have hierarchical structure. This may make it difficult for the employee to be able to identify the managers' power distance if the organization itself embraces a small power distance.

Partial significance was found for management styles in Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. Hypotheses 1 and 2 predicted that Latin American managers would be perceived as having a more autocratic and persuasive management style than European American managers. These findings are consistent with Hofstede's (2001) nationality findings, a majority of the managers from Latin countries were found to have an autocratic and persuasive management style. Therefore, it can be assumed that the national preferences in management styles are still prominent when the manager ethnically identifies with their nation's cultural orientation and preferences in management styles. If they embrace certain cultural values and attitudes it will be emulated in their choice of management style. This argument can be extended for Hypothesis 4 as well. This could be the same reason as to why European Americans were found to be significantly perceived as portraying a more participative management style than Latin Americans. Hypothesis 3 predicted that European Americans would be perceived as also having a consultative management style but data did not support this prediction, although it was in the direction of the hypothesis prediction. This may be due to the similarities between how the consultative and participative manager were described in the survey. People may have not given too much thought about the unique differences between these descriptions and were quick to identify with participative management style.

In conclusion, this study has reinforced the importance of ethnicity and management styles. A manager's ethnicity influences their employees' perceptions of their manager's management style. Further understanding of the role of ethnicity should assist managers and employees in becoming more aware of the cultural influences on one's ethnicity. This would also contribute to a better understanding of why their managers have a particular management style. Meanwhile, the manager will become more aware of how their employees perceive them and if their choice of management style positively or negatively affects the organizational environment.

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