

Exploring the management style of Brazilians project managers



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Abstract

This research aims to identify the management style adopted by project managers. We conducted factor analysis to refine the data and to identify the management style most commonly used by project managers. Lastly, we ran Levene's test, one-way ANOVA analysis, and Kruskal–Wallis test to make assumptions considering gender and organizational sector in a sample of 129 project management practitioners. We notice that most project managers state a reactive and determined management style and give importance to interaction between parties. Brazilians project managers may desire to minimize their loss in the time of financial instability. The results present that there is no significant change for gender and organizational sector. This finding proves that regardless of gender or organizational sector, they have similar judgment about how they manage people and projects. The relevance of studies regarding management style remains, particularly for the Brazilian scenario where the literature on this subject is embryonic, and where the current economic situation is passing through. The results of this study produce insights for project managers interested in developing management abilities.

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1. Introduction

Projects are challenged by dynamic environmental conditions and technological advances. Interest in project management is growing significantly, and, as a consequence, different disciplines, competences, and skills are now required from project management practitioners (Thomas and Mengel, 2008; Garel, 2013). People who make up organizations have a key role in ensuring that organizational objectives are achieved. Therefore, successful project managers must have personal flexibility and the skills to vary their behavior according to the individual needs and motives of their staff.

Project managers must provide ways to achieve a project's objectives. According to Anantatmula (2010) 'a project manager's role is more challenging than that of a typical functional manager. And management and leadership style can affect project success (Muller and Turner, 2009; Anantatmula, 2010; Bejestani, 2011).

Management style and organizational culture are aligned, and a company's management style is a reflection of its identity (Olmedo-Cifuentes and Martínez-Léon, 2014).

The new requirements to change the management style are based in five fundamental changes: develop a customer-oriented culture; create business strategies that emphasize differentiation; redesign business processes; manage knowledge and information; and develop new leadership styles (McCarthy et al., 2005). In this study, we are interested in a group of competences reflecting managerial attitudes of project managers.

This article presents an exploratory study of current management styles adopted by project management practitioners, based on four dimensions of management style. This research aims to understand the behavior of project managers regarding different management styles and to find out if there is an adoption of, or preference for, a particular style. Additionally, we explore this behavior/these attitudes according to several determining factors. This paper also claims that professional project managers can improve their competences and achieve better results by knowing and understanding different management styles, even if they are not aware of or faithful to a particular style.

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The profession of project management is growing in several industries and organizations, as are its new challenges, so we cannot design a unique effective way to conduct projects. In addition to technical and operational performance, human factors are imperative in order to understand what provides a better outcome for future projects.

According to [Klijn et al. \(2008\)](#), the conceptual relevance and the potential knowledge of applying the management style construct to project managers can be established through attention to how the project manager approaches the issue, for example, the degree of flexibility in operating the management process and relationships with other actors.

This paper is structured as follows. Following this introduction, the second topic is a brief review of the literature regarding management style in project management. Third topic, material and methods, shows how the sample was chosen, the type of survey that was used, the questionnaire scales, the validation process, and statistical tools used. The fourth topic is about results and is divided into two parts for better understanding. In part 1, factor analysis was applied to evaluate the data regarding the four dimensions of management style ([Klijn et al., 2008](#)), and in part 2 questionnaires were analyzed and related to two factors: gender and organizational sector in order to know if there are changes in how the respondents manage people and projects. The fifth topic concerns discussions about achievements, followed by sixth topic with the main conclusions and limitations.

2. Management style in project management

In this section, we describe some models of management style. [Subsection 2.1](#) describes five models of management styles, explaining how they classify each style. [Subsection 2.2](#) presents the choice, critique, and justification of the model of management style applied in this research.

2.1. Models of management style

Project managers have many roles and responsibilities, inherent and learned skills, and their behavior is affected by personal, social, and economical bias. Academia and practitioners are still exploring what makes a good manager and a good leader. Theorists and practitioners agree that management influences human performance, but the specific dimensions have not been pinpointed precisely. ‘A management style is a way of life operating throughout the enterprise and permits an executive to rely on the initiative of the personnel of an entity’ ([Nwadukwe & Court, 2012, p. 199](#)).

The literature on project management has taken an increasing interest in the behavior and competencies of project managers regarding the success of projects ([Thite, 2000](#); [Muller and Turner, 2007](#)). According to [Harvey and Turnbull \(2006\)](#), a management style can be developed to support a low-cost strategy, combining a low-cost operating system and higher quality service.

On the other hand, few works have been dedicated to understanding the relationship between management style and its impact on the success of the project. For example, [Kocher et al. \(2013\)](#) say that management style and the relation between

managers and subordinates affect team success. [Shenhar \(1998\)](#) states that a carefully selected management style may increase the chance of project success. However, none of these studies relate management styles with factors as gender or organizational sector. We must find which management style is appropriate and if the project managers change their behaviors in front of the differences.

Hereafter, five models of management styles have been proposed. These studies give us support to raise our research question regarding if it is possible to design a management style for project managers.

According to [Driver et al. \(1990\)](#), the information and the number of alternatives are the main factors to be considered when defining the appropriate management style. One can adopt five styles with regard to the decision-making process. They are

- Decisive style—This uses little information to make decisions. Conversations and actions are relatively straightforward, and there is mitigation planning. There is no respect for hierarchy; there is a preference for organizations with well-defined tasks; problems are solved one at a time and the style is driven by results.
- Flexible style—This is similar to the previous style in that it uses little information. However, it tries to analyze different aspects, termed as adaptive, flexible, and creative; it prefers an organization with little structure and rules; few jobs are defined, and decisions are usually based on group discussions.
- Hierarchical style—This makes plans at the right time, making maximum use of information to achieve the single best solution. It is classified as a detail-oriented and centralized controller and is concerned with the methods to be used and the expected results.
- Integrative style—This is the kind of style where there is excessive use of information. Individuals in this group are concerned with generating a greater number of possible alternatives for the decisions; the decisions are very open to modifications, leading to a delay in decision making. There is a preference for less rigid organizations, and projects are usually long and well-developed, and accepting facts and opinions as information.
- Systemic style—Since this kind of style is characterized by being complex and difficult to understand, there is a combination of the qualities of integrative style with hierarchical style. Individuals do not delegate, exercising influence or controlling information. The manager emphasizes priorities and detailed strategies to address the problems, and there is short-term planning with specific and measurable goals.

There is also a theoretical perspective explained by axes of graphs that correspond to the individual’s preferred choice in two areas and with four permutations ([Slabey and Austrom, 1998](#)). The two areas are (1) acting or thinking and (2) using proven methods or using new methods (in example, patterned and unpatented methods) and the four permutations are Reactive Stimulator, Logical Processor, Hypothetical Analyzer, and Relational Innovator.

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