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# **SYARAHAN PERDANA**

## **PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CREATIVE MALAYSIAN**

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**PROFESOR  
DR. LEONARD YONG MEE SENG**

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BIODATA

**PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS  
OF THE CREATIVE MALAYSIAN**

PERPUSTAKAAN  
PERINCATAN ZA'BA

**Profesor Dr. Leonard Yong Mee Seng**  
**Jabatan Padagogi & Psikologi Pendidikan**  
**Fakulti Pendidikan**

Perpustakaan Universiti Malaya



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## BIODATA

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Professor Dr. Leonard Yong is presently Professor, Department of Educational Psychology & Pedagogy, University of Malaya as well as Deputy Director of Universiti Malaya Consultancy Unit. His field of specialisation is Educational Psychology with emphasis in Creativity. Professor Yong has gained international recognition for his work on the creativity of Malaysians.

He was awarded the 1992 Fulbright-ACLS/MACEE Award to undertake research on the creativity of Americans. He was also awarded the 1993 Japan Foundation Research Fellowship Award to conduct research on Japanese creativity. He has consulted for a number of projects on Innovation and Creative Thinking in Malaysia and other countries such as Papua New Guinea, Singapore and Indonesia. The University of South Australia has also awarded him the honorary title of Adjunct Professor to the university. Professor Yong has addressed groups in many countries such as the United States of America, Britain, Australia, Russia, Japan, China, India, Korea, Indonesia, Burma, Cambodia, Singapore, and Papua New Guinea.

He has served as External Examiner (PhD dissertation) for the National University of Singapore. Professor Yong's books include *Creativity: A Study of Malaysian Students*, *Studies in Creativity* and *Pemikiran Kreatif*. His articles have appeared in journals such as *Perceptual & Motor Skills*, *The Journal of Creative Behaviour* and *Education Quarterly*. He is a member of the American Psychological Association and the Malaysian Psychological Association.



## PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CREATIVE MALAYSIAN

In recent years there has been a surge of interest in the field of creativity. Generally research interest in creativity has focussed on four main areas. There has been considerable research directed at understanding the creative product as something novel and useful. Other researchers have attempted to understand the creative process from which the creative product results. This has resulted in thinking of the creative process as comprising four stages, namely preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. A third approach has been to understand the effect of the environment to enhance creativity in organizations or individuals. This approach has been named as understanding the "press" of the environment to produce creativity or to hinder it. Fourthly there has been considerable effort to understand the creative person, in which attention has been given to study the characteristics of the creative individual.

My own research interest has been directed on understanding the creative person. Research in the last two decades have indicated that creative people exhibit distinct behavioural patterns that set them apart from other not so creative people. For example, creative people have been observed to demonstrate a high level of energy when engrossed in a creative endeavour. They are extremely self-reliant and independent. Other people tend to perceive creative people as rather self-centred and lacking in empathy towards others. In my research, I had attempted to obtain a systematic understanding the creative person. Most of the research was conducted with the co-operation of managers and executives who were attending workshops on creativity training. These participants were asked to fill up a psychometric inventory which attempts to profile their behavioural styles through identification of their emotional orientations.

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## The Emotional Orientations Profiles

At the workshops, the participants' emotional orientations were obtained based on four tendencies. These four tendencies are: Neutral (N), Analytical (A), Relational (r) and Decisive (D) based on the LEONARD Model of Emotional Orientations. The LEONARD Model essentially attempts to Locate the Emotional Orientations based on the above four emotional orientations, namely Neutral, Analytical, Relational and Decisive. These four tendencies are seen as motivational goals that a person directs his behaviour to achieve.

These four tendencies have been based on numerous research studies world-wide and have a history that dates back to the days of Aristotle, the Greek philosopher who first named these tendencies as Phlegmatic, Melancholy, Sanguine and Choleric Tendencies. Since then personality theorists such as Carl Jung and others have named these tendencies under a variety of names. The LEONARD Inventory comprises a 40 item inventory. Each item consists of four behaviours corresponding to the four dimensions in theoretical model. Respondents were asked to choose one behaviour which reflect their current most preferred behaviour and one other behaviour which reflects their least preferred behaviour.

The following description of the characteristics of the NARD Emotional Orientations can serve as a guide to understand the LEONARD Model.

### High Neutral Person

- \* A person who has a high Neutral tendency finds satisfaction in performing an accepted work pattern in a routine manner.
- \* A High Neutral Person tends to value co-operation with others to carry out the task.
- \* He is most comfortable when he knows what others expect of him, including how to perform the task. The emphasis is on "HOW?".



- \* Also, he is generally a patient and good listener who is perceived as having a calming effect on those around him/her.
- \* A High Neutral person can concentrate on a task by staying at a place for a longer time than other people.
- \* Loyalty to and acceptance by those around him/her is considered as very important to the High Neutral person.
- \* In social interactions as well as in problem solving situations, he is generally more comfortable as a passive listener and participator in a group rather than the active talker or director.

### **High Analytical Person**

- \* A High Analytical person is characterised by tendencies to be critical of the quality of performance of others as well as his/her own performance.
- \* A High Analytical Person has the tendency to work with existing circumstances to promote quality in products or service.
- \* It is as if the High Analytical person has an internal plumbline, not unlike the physical plumbline used by bricklayers to ensure that a wall is built vertically, by which they gauge and evaluate the quality of a task.
- \* Another key characteristic of such a person is paying attention to key directives and standards.
- \* Since he is motivated to be thorough and accurate, the High Analytical person often demonstrate caution and may be perceived by others as being suspicious of them.
- \* The emphasis for a High Analytical Person is on "WHY?"

- \* May tend to procrastinate and delay decisions in problem solving

### **High Relational Characteristics**

- \* A High Relational person tends to be people-oriented in his/her behaviour.
- \* He/she enjoys interacting with people and is generally good in participating in a group environment.
- \* A High Relational Person tends to influence others through shaping the environment by bringing others into alliance to accomplish results.
- \* The High Relational person is characterised by a habit of creating a motivational environment by generating enthusiasm in those around him/her.
- \* The emphasis for a High Relational Person is on "WHO?"
- \* Will shine in collaborative creativity by solving problems in teams
- \* Needs to be more focused in approaching issues

### **High Decisive Person**

- \* A Decisive Person emphasises on shaping the environment by overcoming opposition to accomplish results.
- \* A person who is high on the Decisive dimension will tend to accept challenges and cause action.
- \* Such a person has a tendency to make quick decisions and would prefer to get immediate results.

- \* A high Decisive person is characterised by a willingness to question the status quo and hence may often be perceived by peers and superiors as rather "rebellious".
- \* The emphasis for a High Decisive Person is on "WHAT?"
- \* Tends to be individualistic in problem solving, thus alienating others.
- \* Needs to learn to work as a peer in group problem solving.

### **The Creative Profile : Analytical + Decisive**

Results based on research using the LEONARD Model indicates that Creative people (Creatives) would exhibit a combination of two behavioural dimensions, namely Analytical tendencies and Decisive tendencies. This combination could be best explained if one conceptualises that people who prefer to exhibit Analytical behaviours tend to critically evaluate any given situations and become dissatisfied with the existing status quo because of their need for exactness. I name this tendency as an internally built mental plumbline by which the Analytical person tends to evaluate a situation with their own internal standards. The creative person then utilises his/her Decisive tendencies to push for a change thus resulting in innovative approaches and changes to the existing situation. Creatives tend to evaluate the present situation based on internal criteria that they have established within themselves.

Malaysian Creatives tend to demonstrate the following characteristics:

- \* *High intense involvement in the project they were involved in*
- \* *They possess high energy level*
- \* *Worked with intense commitment to their present task*



- \* *Demonstrated single-mindedness and were not easily thrown off-track*
- \* *Not easily satisfied with solutions which in their opinions could be further refined*
- \* *Tend to spend more time in the initial steps of problem identification*
- \* *When faced with assignments they tend to perform in a non-conforming manner*
- \* *They consider it a compliment to be considered outlandish or odd*
- \* *When making decisions, they tend to depend more on their instincts and insights*
- \* *Perceived by colleagues as aloof and even arrogant*
- \* *Tend to be blunt in their communication*

### **Conclusion & Recommendations**

Interactions of these four behavioural dimensions of Neutral, Analytical, Relational and Decisive tendencies give a good indication of the type of behaviour a person tends to exhibit. Of course human behaviour is much too complex for any single psychological theory to explain it comprehensively. Nevertheless based on the empirical research of these profiles on hundreds of participants in workshops that I have conducted in Malaysia, there is evidence to indicate potential in the use of the LEONARD Model to facilitate understanding of the creative person as well as in assisting other individuals to attempt to be more creative in their endeavours.

Creatives can play a greater role in their workplace when their creative potentials are harnessed and directed in the right direction. Creative subordinates need to recognize that sanctions do exist in a work environment. They can help themselves greatly if they take the initiative to check out the terms of reference of the assignment they are given. It is definitely important to be very clear when dealing with creative subordinates by stressing the parameters that they should work within. This can be done without stifling their creative potential if the existing limits are clarified at the beginning of the project. Creative leaders should consciously avoid being perceived as abrupt and blunt in their interactions with subordinates and peers. They should attempt to develop more warmth and diplomacy in their communication with others. They need to be aware of their tendency to appear to be condescending in their interactions with peers and subordinates.

Other individuals who prefer to exhibit less of the Analytical and Decisive tendencies can enhance their creative potential when they have greater self-awareness of their preferred behavioural styles. I have observed that individuals who have been given feedback of their behavioural styles have been most desirous to change themselves when the situation merits it. Many individuals with low Decisiveness tendencies have reported greater willingness to display some degree of risk-taking that they have previously not been confident to do so.

In the final analysis, it is imperative that creative activity be encouraged in organizational life as well as within the individual. Organizations that neglect to nurture and cultivate creativity in their workplace do so to their detriment. Those organizations which have already implemented some form of program to encourage creativity in the workplace have already begun to reap benefits. In the decades ahead Malaysians will find that encouraging creativity in the workplace contribute greatly towards equipping us for the challenge of global competition in the twenty first century.

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