Case Study – Cultural Bias in Performance Appraisal

# “Western Manager, Eastern Team”

Sophie, a manager from France, has recently been assigned to lead a project team in Malaysia. The team consists of local employees from Malaysia and Indonesia. The company has introduced a Western-style performance appraisal system based on individual goal setting, open feedback, and regular evaluation meetings.

After the first appraisal cycle, Sophie notices several challenges:

* Team members are reluctant to give open feedback to peers or themselves.
* Many employees give themselves very low self-ratings and appear overly modest.
* Sophie feels a lack of initiative, but employees explain they are showing respect for hierarchy and don’t want to stand out.
* When Sophie gives direct critical feedback, some employees react with visible discomfort or silence.

**Analyze the case and answer the following:**

# 1. Identify Cultural Differences

What specific misunderstandings occurred between Sophie and the team due to cultural differences?

# 2. Apply Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Choose 2–3 dimensions and explain how they influenced communication and the appraisal process.

# 3. Recommendations for Sophie

What changes should Sophie make to her management and appraisal style to better fit the team’s cultural context?

# 4. Suggestions for a Culturally Sensitive Appraisal System

What should a fair and culturally inclusive appraisal system include to respect different cultural expectations?

# 5. Manager Training Recommendations

How should international managers be trained to work effectively across cultures?