

UNIVERSITY TRANSFORMATION: DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS AMONG UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

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Introduction

“Gh. Asachi” Technical University of Iași initiated an exploratory research of the leaders of Romanian Universities during the transformations due to the Bologna Process that overlapped with the unprecedented crisis of World Economy.

The paper exhibits preliminary results regarding university leaders:

- Identification of the actions made by university management from Romania to transform their institutions
- Employee perceptions on the frequency of such actions towards transformation
- Analysis of the differences in perception among different levels of university management

Introduction

The actions made by university management are grouped and analyzed based on

- “*Climate*” that facilitates the transformation,
- “*Discipline*” within the institution that would enable coherent and incremental improvements and
- “*Communication*” required to improve University “Performances”.

There are considerable *differences among various managerial levels* that must be integrated and harmonized in order to complete a successful transformation.

In most cases, those with no managerial positions reported a greater spread of responses and a slightly more pessimistic view as compared with those with administrative positions.

Transformational leader

Table 1 **Key dimensions of transformational Leadership** Brass and Avolio (1994)

Idealized influence <i>Behaviour that determines</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Followers admiration • Respect • Trust in the leader • Ethical and moral behaviour 	Inspirational motivation <i>Behaviour that determines</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense and challenge in work • Existence of clear expectations • Determination of commitment to organizational goals • Team spirit stimulated through outward enthusiasm and optimism for the future of the organization
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER	
Intellectual stimulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders seek out ideas and creative solutions • Leaders encourage new approaches to for performing tasks 	Individualized consideration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders who listen attentively and pay special attention to the followers' achievements and their specific needs for development • Excellent communication abilities

Methodology

- The questionnaire had been developed based on literature review, interviews with colleagues, members of staff, and personal experience.
- We were particularly interested in this part of the research to identify the actions made by university managers from Romanian Universities towards the transformation of their institutions. Preliminary investigation analysed staff perceptions regarding transformational leaders on key factors that influence University performance.
 - Qualitative analysis of interviews resulted in 17 items that reflected ***Climate, Discipline, Performance*** and ***Communication*** within the university.

Methodology

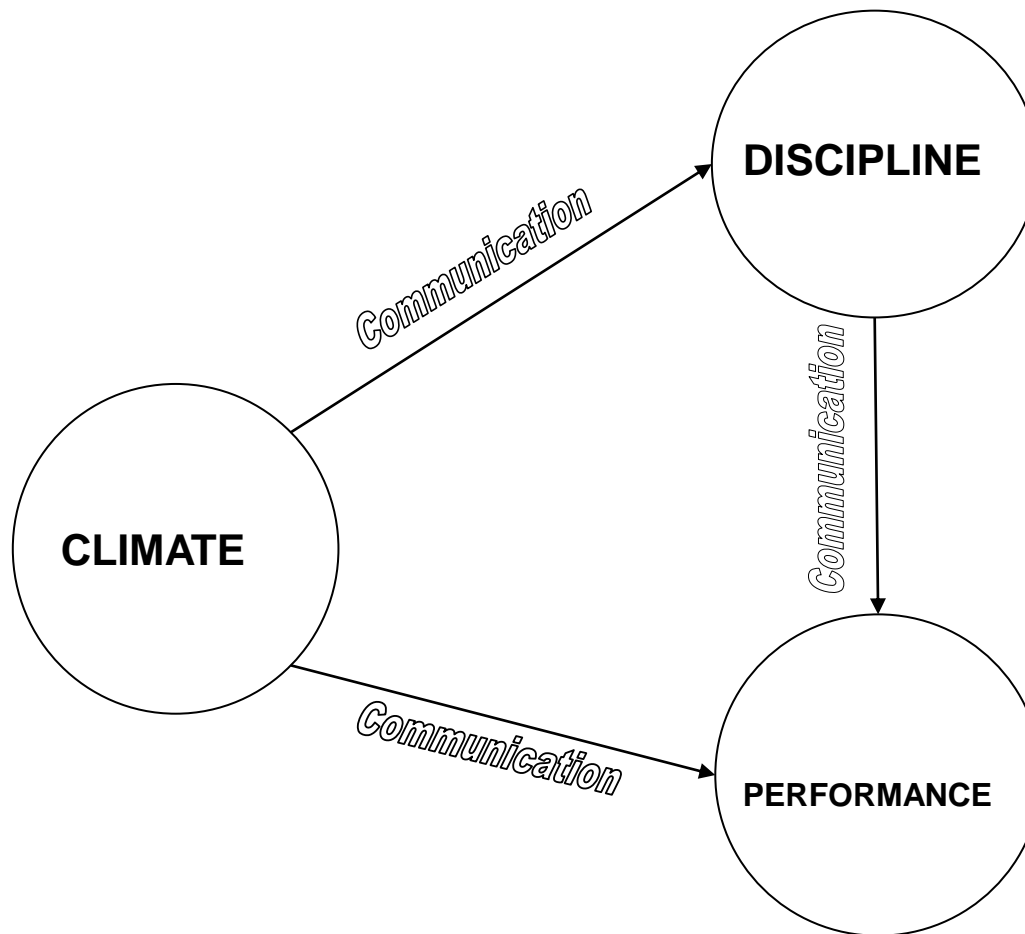


Figure 1. Climate, discipline and communication are key factors influencing university performance

Methodology

- Respondents were invited to appreciate the frequency that university management use the 17 items in order to train / involve / motivate the personnel towards university transformation.
- The questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale where 1 stands for “Very rare” and 5 for “Very frequent”.
- It had been pretested, piloted, and send through e-mail to members of staff and researchers from 22 Romanian Universities.
- Out of 500 questionnaires sent, 209 correctly filled and useful questionnaires had been returned and analysed.
- Data analysis was made using SPSS.

Sample description

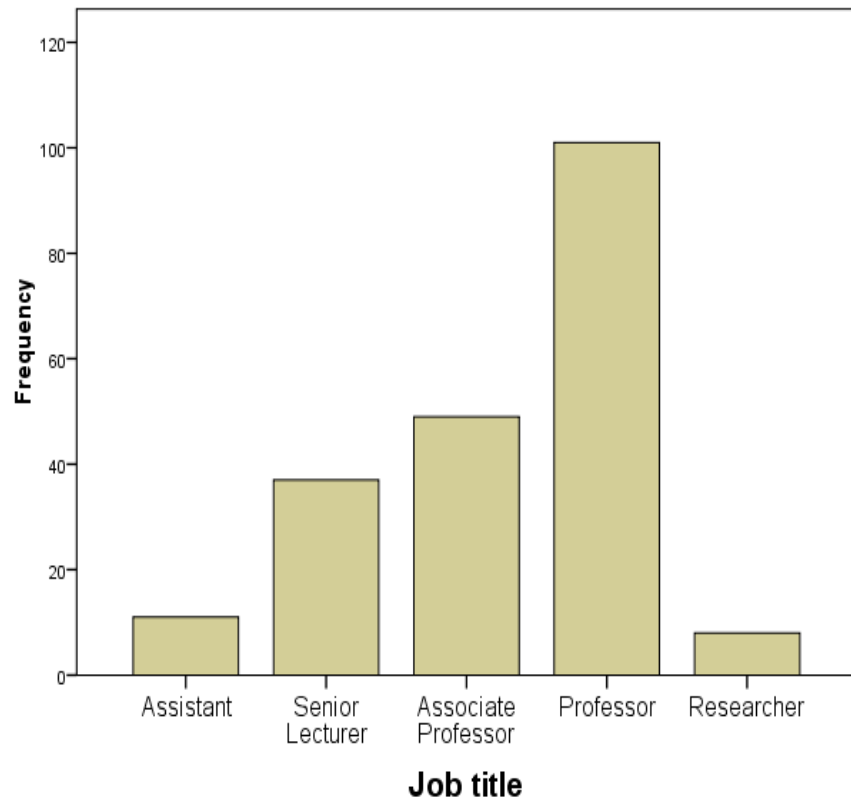


Figure 2. Respondent distribution according to job title

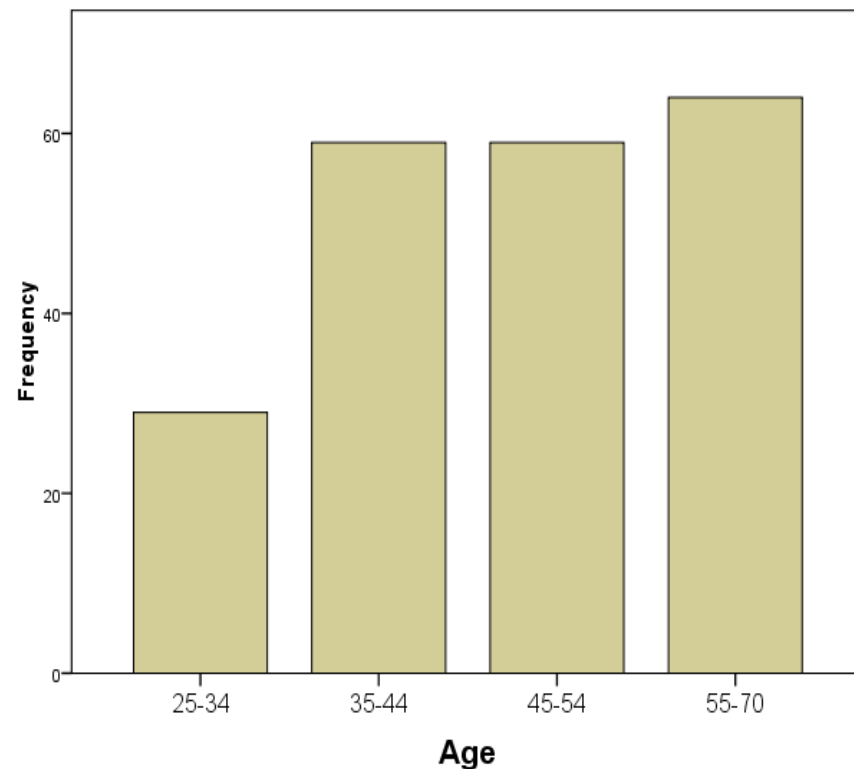


Figure 3. Respondent distribution according to age

Sample description

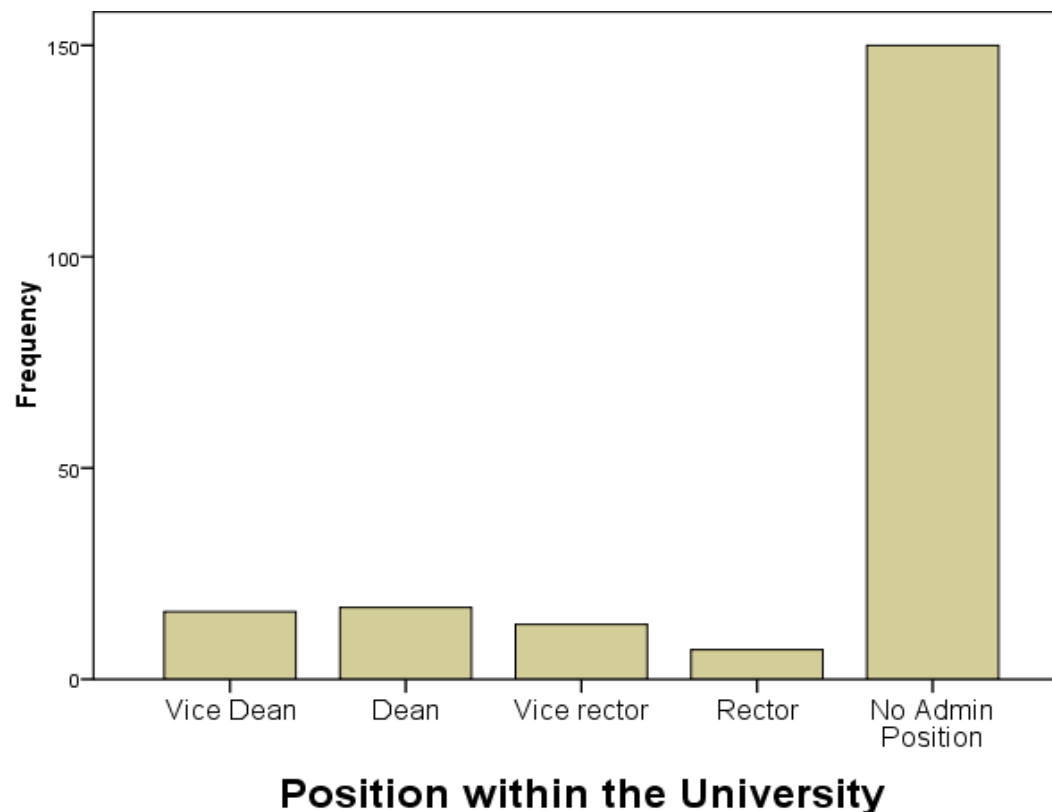


Figure 4. Respondent distribution according to the position within University

Data analysis

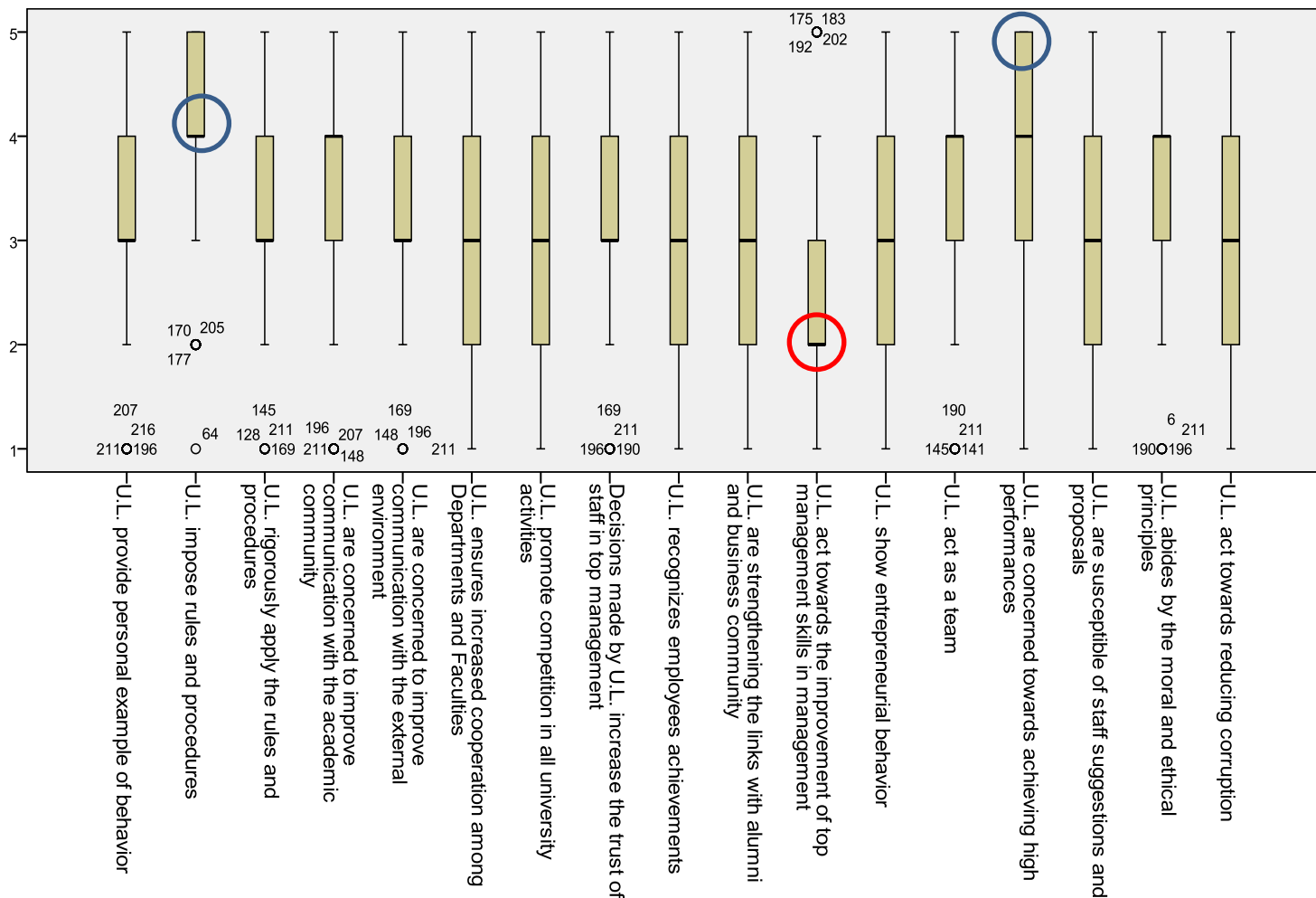


Figure 5. Respondent answers regarding the frequency of actions and transformation abilities of university managers

Data analysis: Transforming Climate

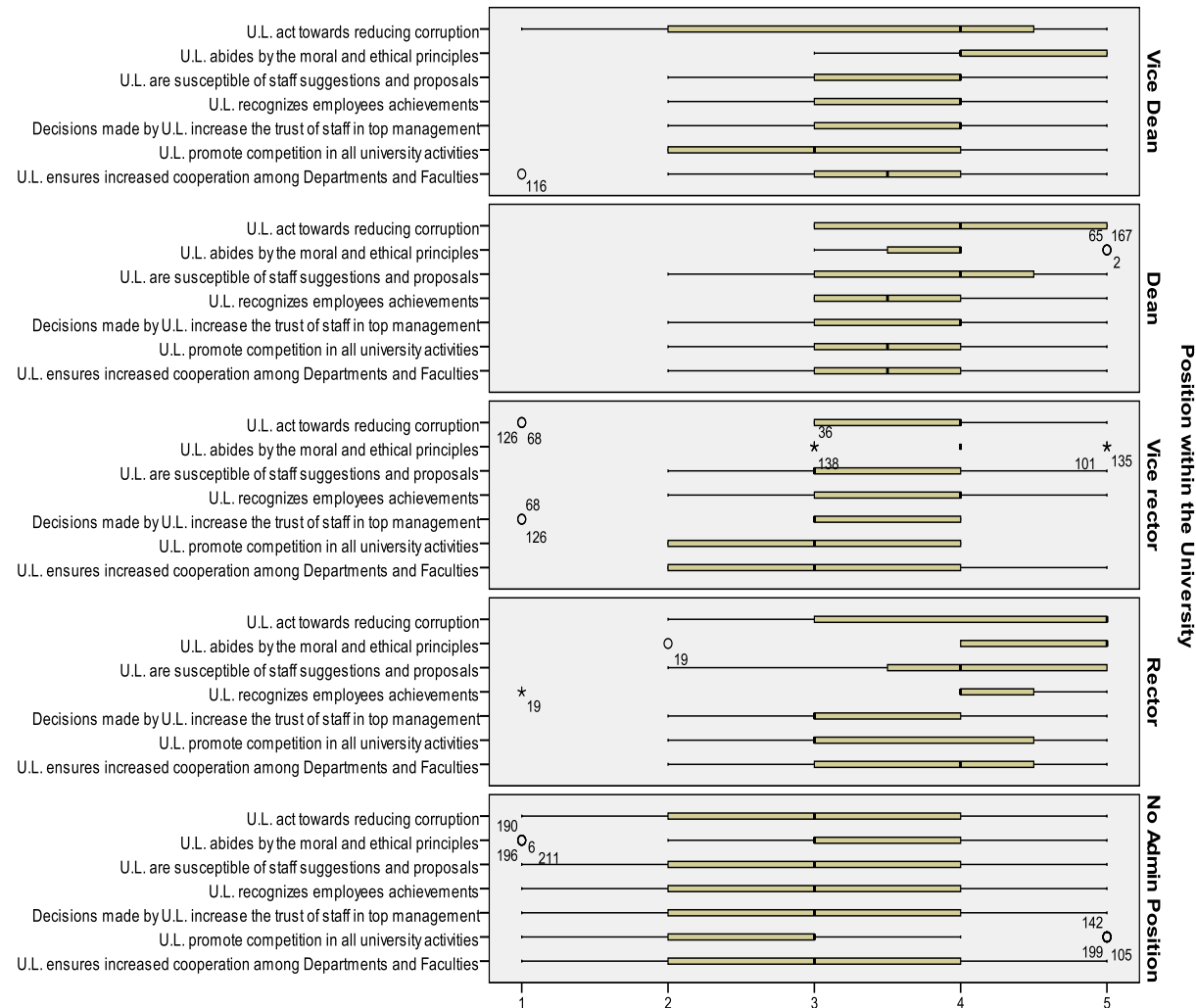


Figure 6. Distribution of responses among different hierarchical positions regarding the actions transforming the university climate

Data analysis: Transforming Climate

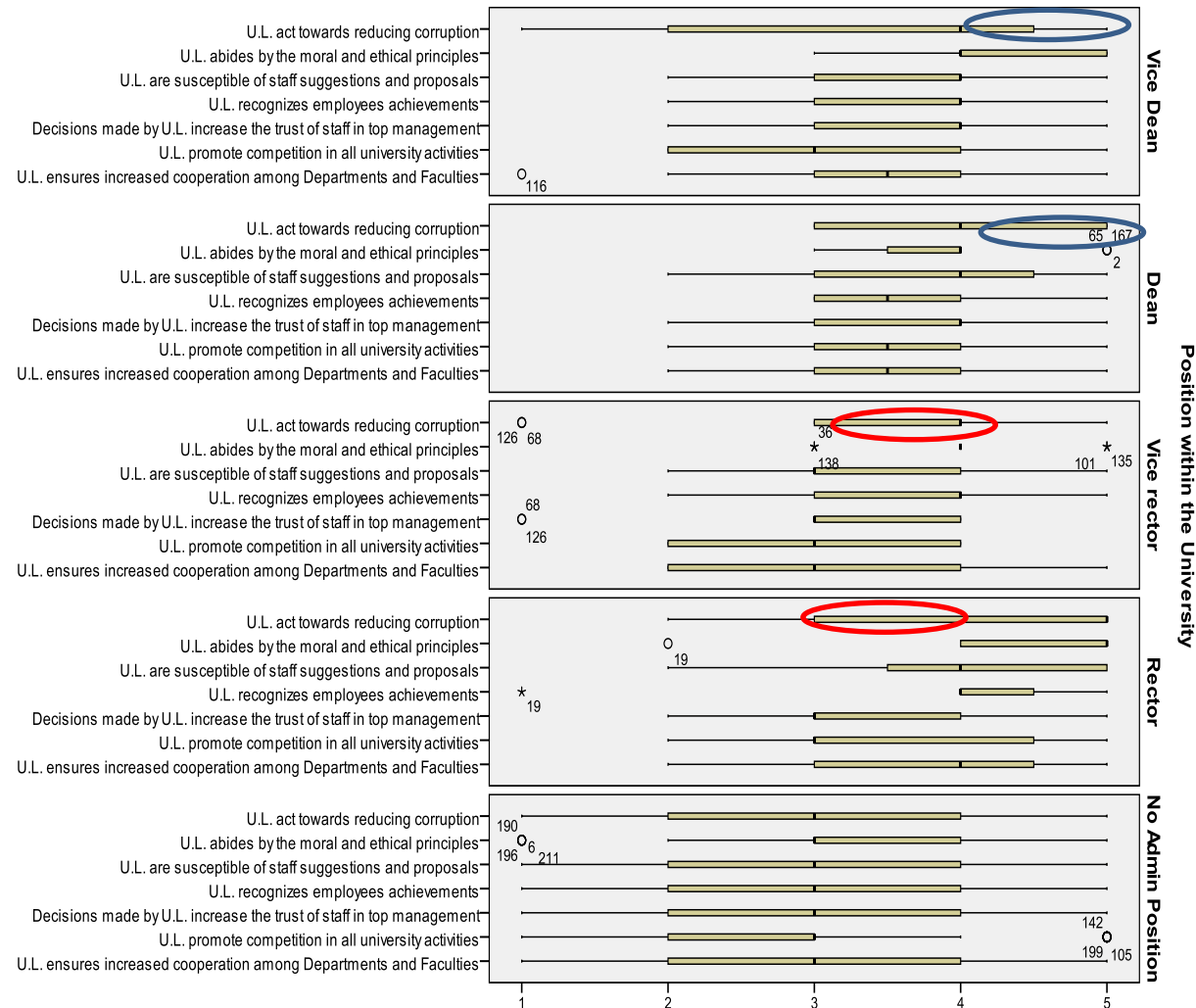


Figure 6. Distribution of responses among different hierarchical positions regarding the actions transforming the university climate

Data analysis: Transforming Climate

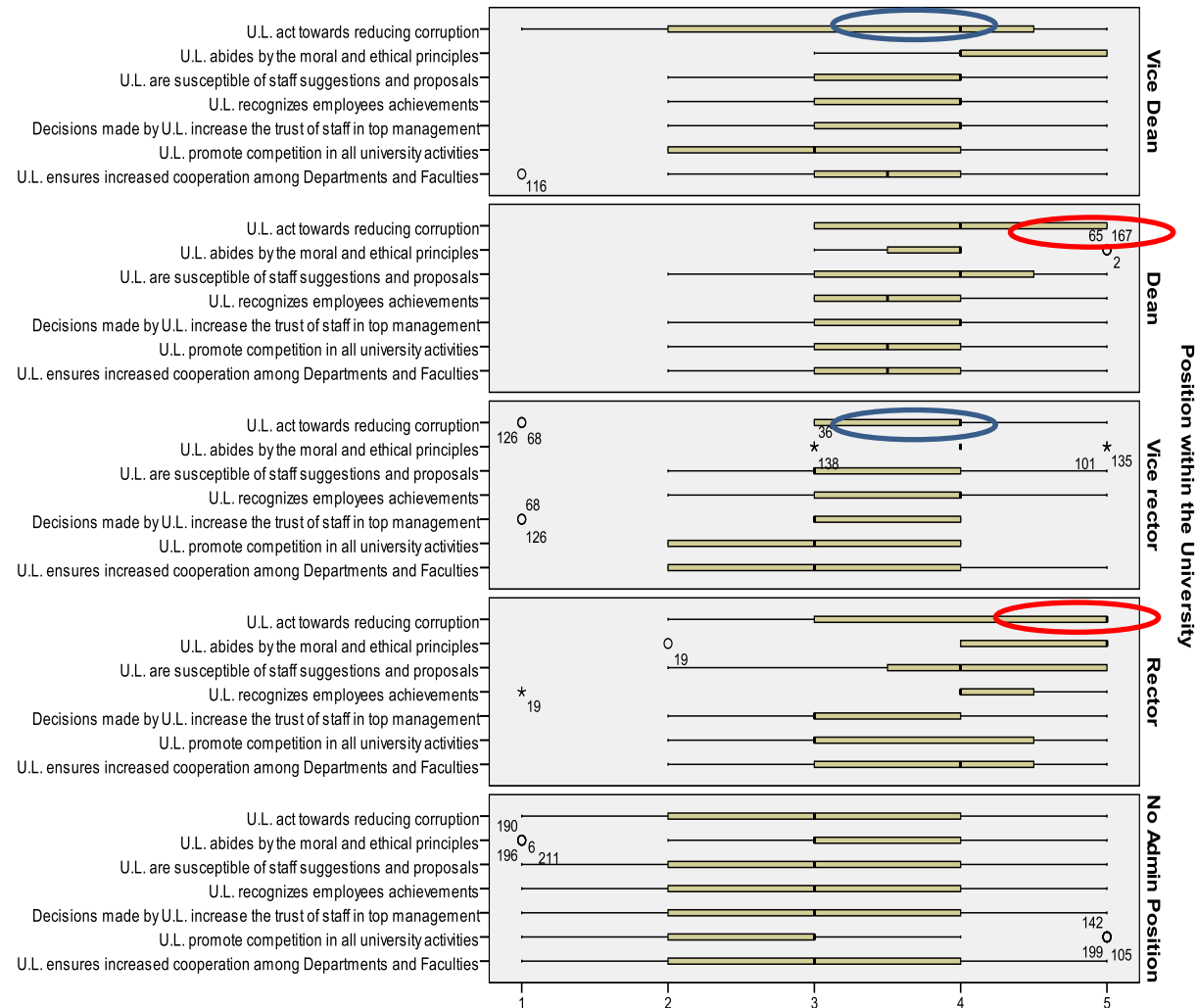


Figure 6. Distribution of responses among different hierarchical positions regarding the actions transforming the university climate

Data analysis Transforming Communication

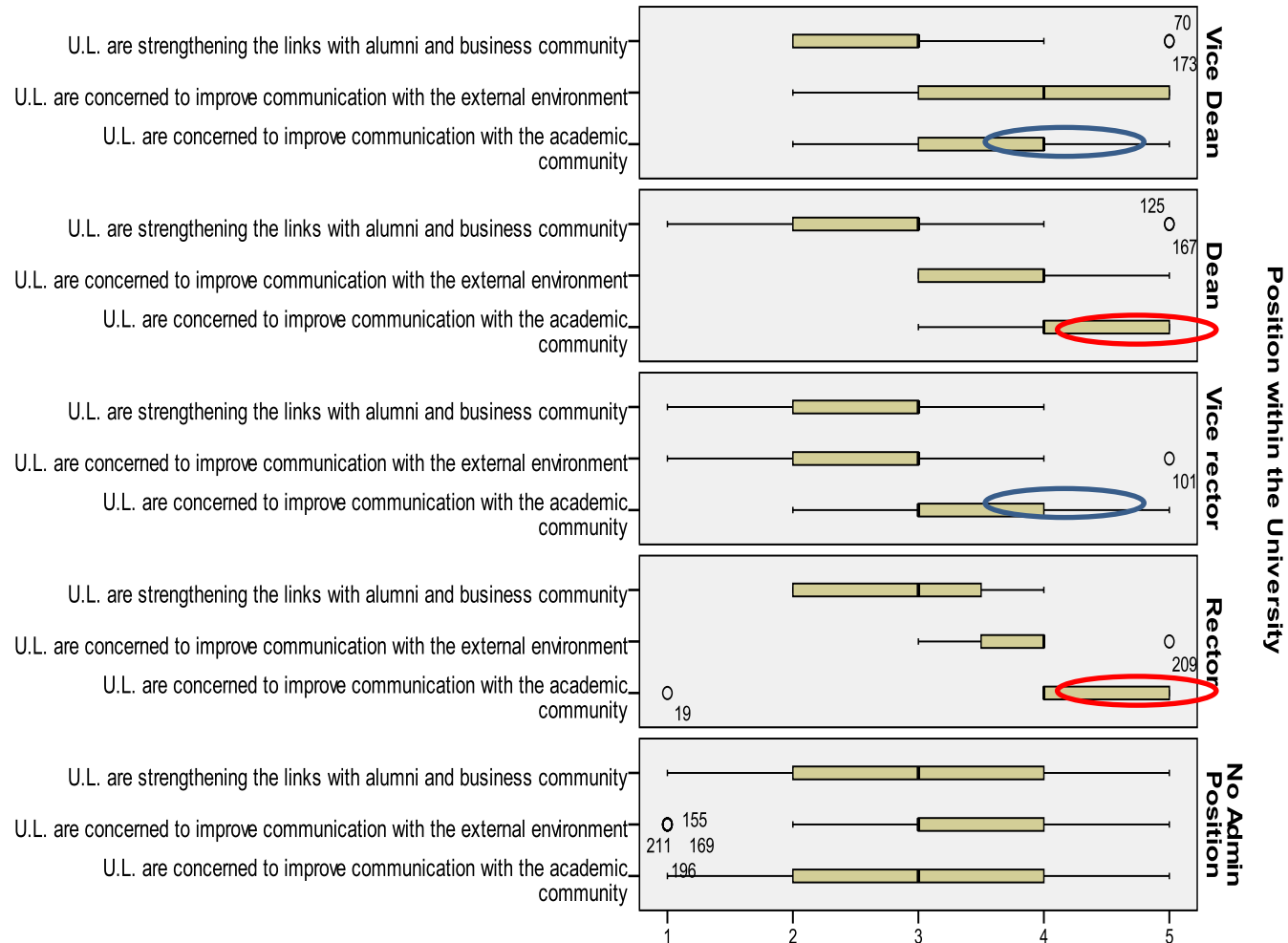


Figure 7. Distribution of responses among different hierarchical positions regarding the actions transforming Communication within the university

Data analysis Transforming Discipline

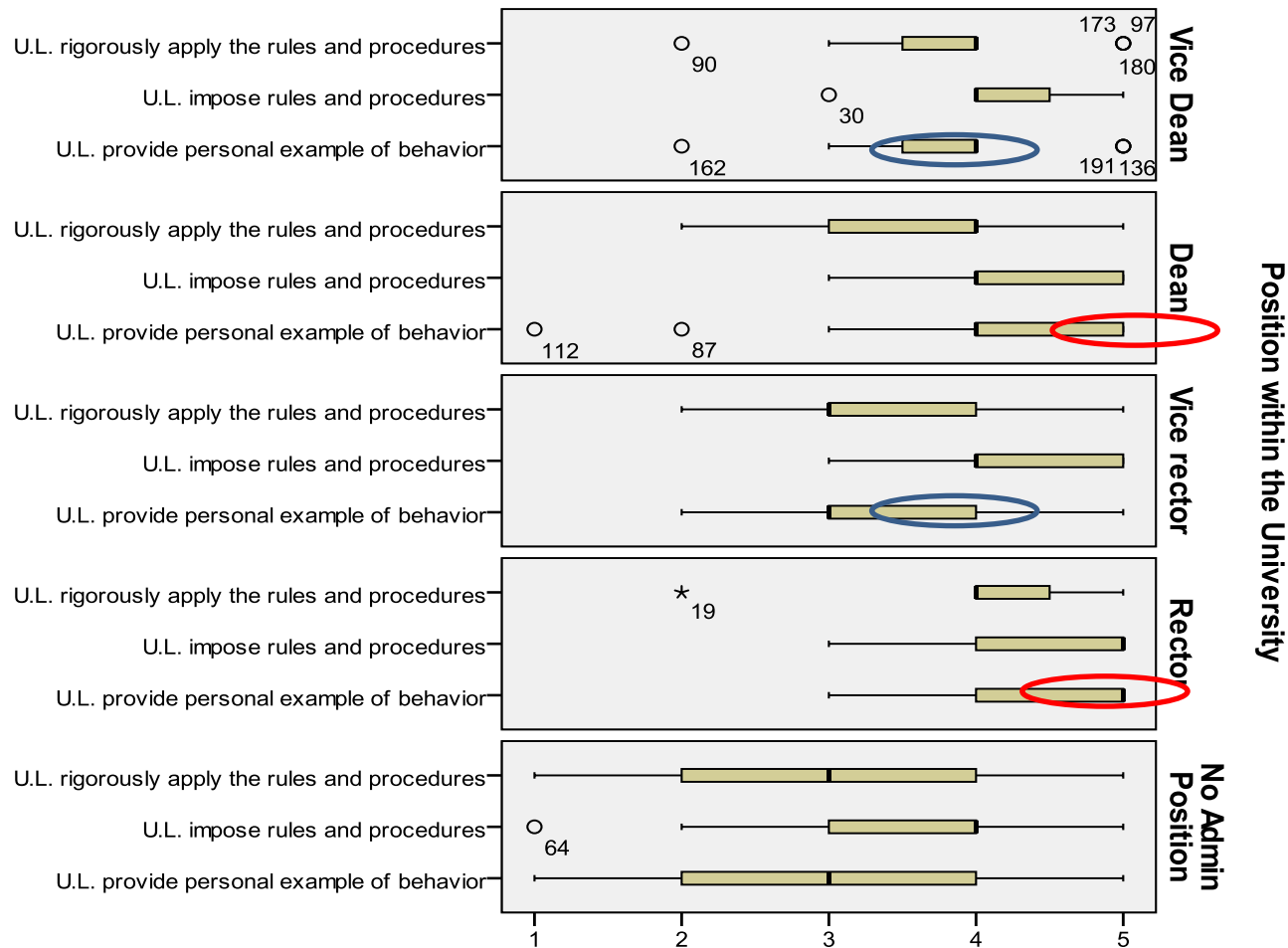


Figure 8. Distribution of responses among different hierarchical positions regarding the actions transforming the discipline within the university

Data analysis Transforming Discipline

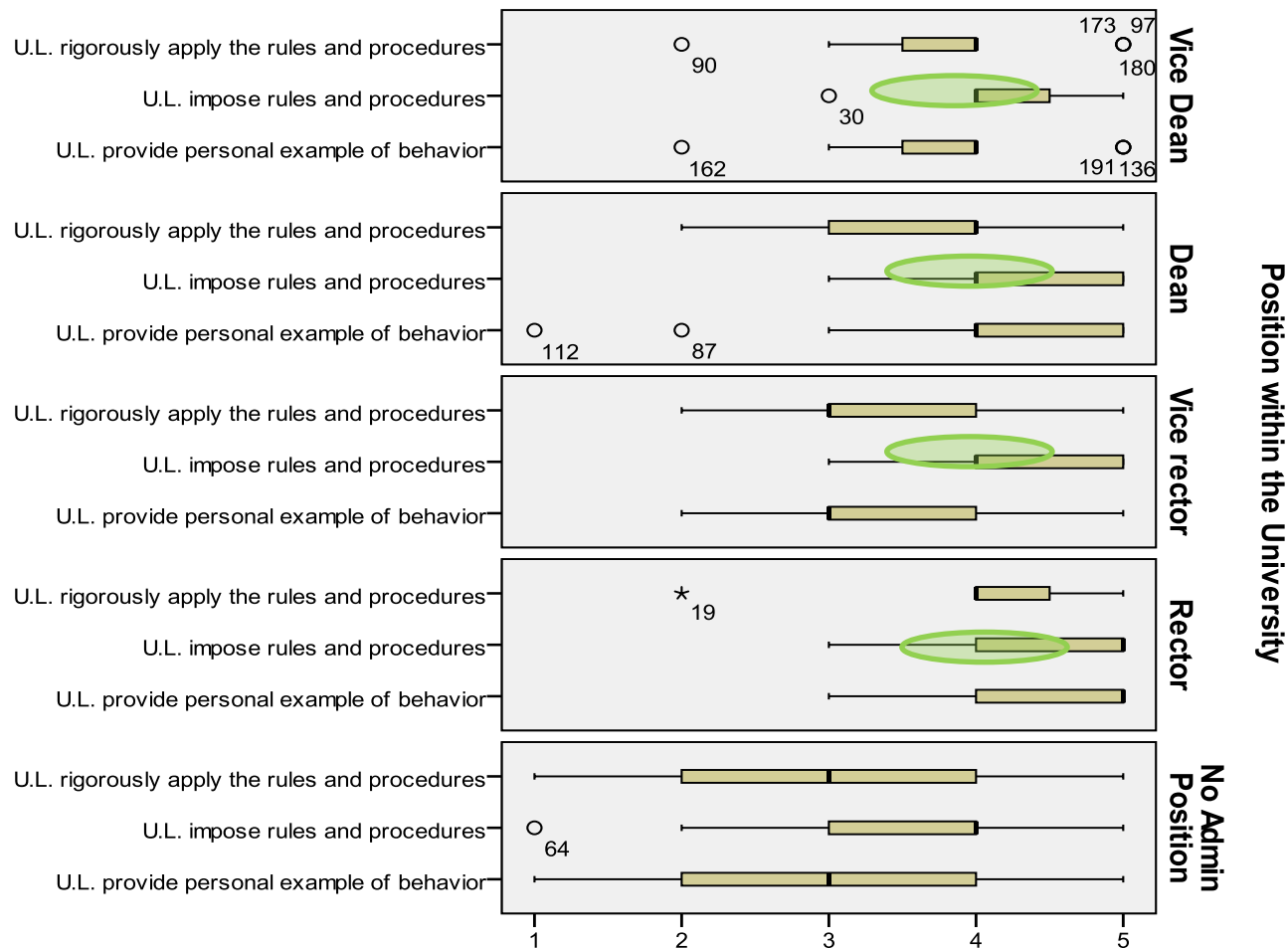


Figure 8. Distribution of responses among different hierarchical positions regarding the actions transforming the discipline within the university

Data analysis Transforming Performance

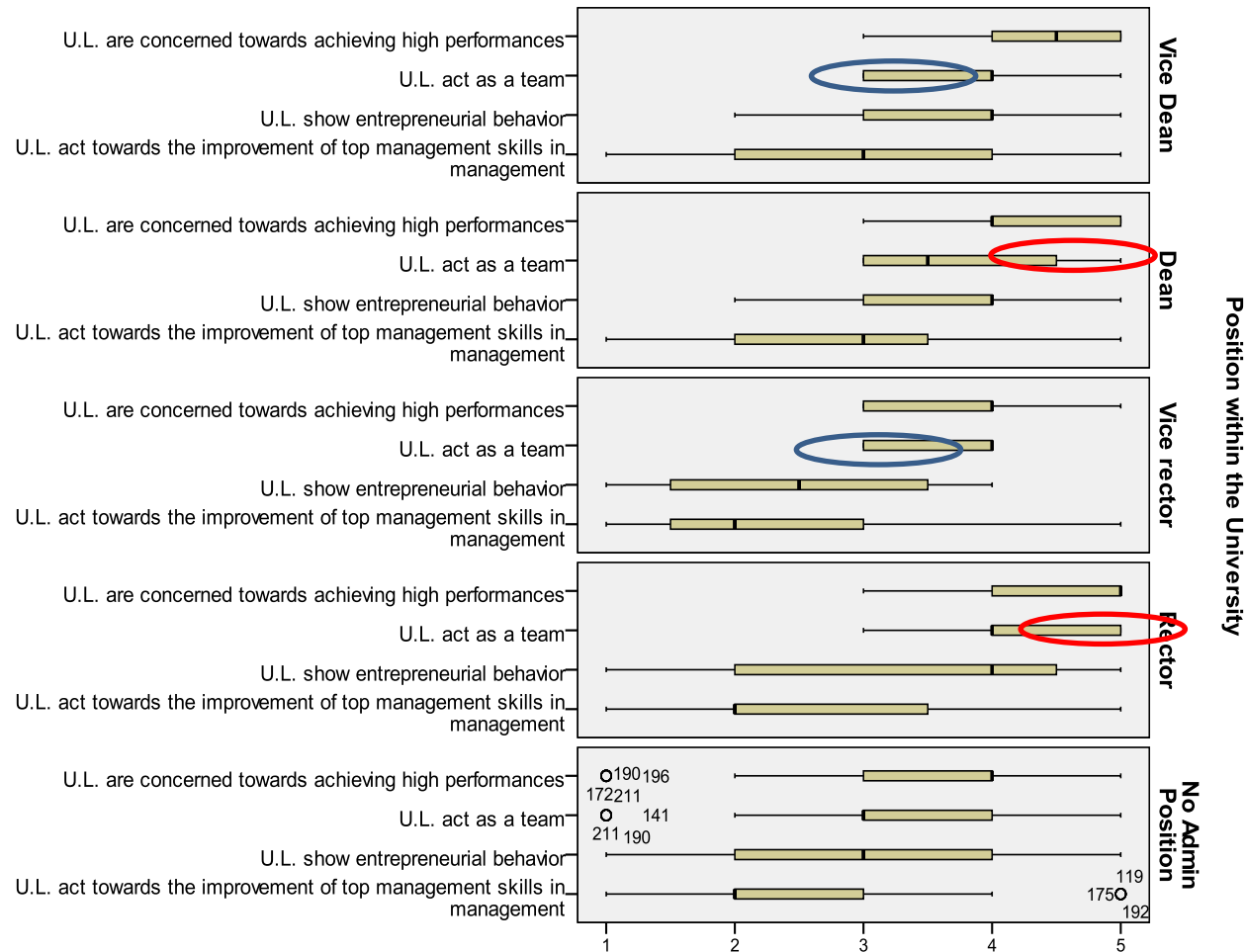


Figure 9. Distribution of responses among different hierarchical positions regarding the actions transforming University's performances

Results and conclusions

- The results of the paper exhibit the main actions initiated by university management towards the transformation of the institution. These are grouped and analysed based on “Climate” that facilitates the transformation, the “Discipline” within the institution that would enable coherent and incremental improvements and the “Communication” required improving University “Performances”.
- Whilst most of the respondents reported an “Average frequency” it is interesting to highlight some important differences among the perceptions expressed by respondents on different hierarchical levels (including those with no managerial position)

Results and conclusions

Those with no managerial positions reported a greater spread of responses and a slightly more pessimistic view as compared with those with administrative positions.

Possible explanations:

- “Public position” of the Rectors and Deans that have to exhibit a more positive image of the University as compared with the rest of respondents.
 - Prime concern of Rectors and Vice-rectors is development of University image (academic activities + response to external changes).
 - Prime focus of Deans and Vice Deans is to develop their Faculty (visibility and prestige) that in turn would attract better students which will become better graduates perceived by the employers which in turn will generate a reinforcing positive loop.
- Those with no administrative function will have a tendency to express a more critical view (corresponding or not to the reality) taking into account the natural tendency of man to grumble.

Results and conclusions

The top management must further investigate such differences and could use the results to assess and initiate specific actions to harmonise and support the transformation process of the university. Successful change should receive the support of all members of staff, including those with no administrative positions that must share the University's vision and fully support university management in the transformational journey, especially during the unprecedented crisis that we pass through.

- All these actions must base on effective and efficient communication that performance must be improved based on disciplined and sustained effort made by all staff.