

## POWER DISTANCE, UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE AND COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

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This study aims to identify the relationship between power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and commitment to change, using the GLOBE's concepts. There were 328 overall respondents, consisting of private manufacturing company employees and state-owned companies' employees, with every 164 respondents. Research results are based on two studies for which data were collected using three scale inventories, namely Commitment to Change, Power Distance, and Uncertainty Avoidance. Descriptive and correlations techniques were used to analyse the data. Results showed that power distance and uncertainty avoidance were significantly negatively correlated with a commitment to change. In other words, people with moderate to high power distance and moderate to high uncertainty will tend to have a low commitment to change. This study's implications can be used by management to prepare for organizational change, particularly to identify work-related values that exist in their organizations, to anticipate employees' reactions to change.

Keywords: Commitment to Change, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance

### 1. Introduction

To remain competitive, develop, and even endure in today's rapidly changing business environment, change is unavoidable and the norm. Under the pressures of external and internal environments, such as changing business paradigms, economic and legislative changes, globalization, new technologies, consumer preferences, and workforce composition, organizations must modify their business practices (Herold & Fedor, 2008). As a result, change has become one of the most critical challenges for organizations and leaders at all levels, as ineffective change management can reduce the overall efficacy of an organization. Change initiatives cannot be implemented in an organization if employees are averse to supporting and partaking in them. Additionally, with the advent of Industry 4.0, the way organizations operate has changed, and new models have been identified for Industry 4.0's success (Rajput & Singh, 2019).

Meanwhile, people live in differing societies and cultures; their norms and values influence their attitudes and behaviours concerning change. House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman and Gupta (2004) mentioned that resistance to change is one characteristic of high uncertainty avoidance. Those two concepts and studies involved resistance to change, but very few studies have examined work-related values with attitude toward change. Thus, the current research examined the correlation between attitude toward change, especially commitment to change, and the two work-related values of power distance and uncertainty avoidance.

### Literature Review

#### Attitudes and Reactions Toward Change

Walker, Armenakis, & Bernerth (2007) mentioned that people and individuals are essential in the success of organizational change. When implementing any change in an organization, whether it is in the structure, system, or process, individual change plays an important role: organizational change starts with personal change, and unless the majority of individuals change their attitudes or behaviours, organizational change is not possible as stated by Alas, Edwards, & Tuulik (2007). Herold, Fedor, & Caldwell (2007) stated that attitudes and behaviours concerning organizational change are crucial factors determining organizational change's success. In particular, attitudes toward organizational change are defined as the employee's overall evaluation of the organization's implemented change. Bouckenoghe (2009) mentioned that strong positive attitudes (e.g.: readiness



for change, receptivity to change) to strong negative attitudes (e.g.: cynicism about organizational change, resistance to change) characterize employee attitudes toward organizational change.

### **Commitment to Change**

According to Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), implementing a change initiative requires a commitment to change as a force (mindset) that commits an individual to a course of action. This mentality can be observed in three dimensions to varying degrees:

1. Affective commitment is the desire to support a change based on a belief in its inherent benefits.
2. The consciousness of the costs associated with failing to support change is called perseverance and commitment to change.
3. The obligation to support change is known as normative change commitment.

Individuals can feel obligated to support a change initiative because they want to, must, and should. The degree to which a change affects the essence of an employee's position impacts his or her commitment to change. The researcher of the current study used the concept of commitment to change based on Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) because commitment to change is the highest level of personal change acceptance and support, which consists of installation and institutionalization levels.

### **Work-Related Values**

This study used the concept of the work-related value by GLOBE concept as stated by House et al. (2004), with the two work-related values of a) power distance and b) uncertainty avoidance.

#### **Power Distance**

Power distance (PD) describes that less powerful members in the organizations within a country accept that power is unequally distributed as stated by Hofstede & Hofstede (2005). Usually, the categorization of power distance is either small (low) or large (high). Small power distance, according to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), is characterized by the following:

1. Hierarchy in an organization means inequality of roles.
2. Decentralization is widespread.
3. Managers rely on their own experience and the feedback of their direct reports.
4. The expectation of subordinates to be consulted.
5. The perfect leader is a resourceful democratic.
6. Subordinate–superior relations are pragmatic.

Meanwhile, considerable power distance is characterized by the following:

1. Organizational hierarchy reflects existential disparity between higher and lower levels.
2. Centralization is prevalent.
3. Managers depend on their superiors and formal regulations.
4. Subordinates are permissive and wait for instructions.
5. The ideal leader is either a benevolent autocrat or a loving parent."
6. Relations between subordinates and superiors are visceral.

According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), as the location of this study, Indonesia can be categorized as a high-power distance. Meanwhile, House et al. (2004) in GLOBE studies describe differences between high and low power distance in eleven dimensions or parameters, as follows: 1) social inequities, 2) power bases, 3) role of power, 4) social mobility, 5) information control, 6) governance, 7) indigenous orientation and independence, 8) civil freedom, 9) resources and capabilities, 10) consumption, and 11) technology. From the eleven dimensions, four explain power distance in Indonesia, namely:

1. social inequities, in which high power distance tends to differentiate society into classes by several criteria, while low power distance tends to perceive that the society has a large middle class;
2. power bases, in which high power distance tends to have foundations that are stable and scarce, while low power distance tends to have foundations that are transient and sharable;
3. role of power, high power distance views power as a source of social order, relational harmony, and role stability, whereas low power distance views power as a source of corruption, coercion, and dominance.;

4. Social mobility in high power distance tends to limit upward social mobility, while low power distance tends to increase social mobility upward.

Based on such discussions, it can be said that high power distance is more bureaucratic and rigid when compared to low power distance. According to House et al. (2004) and Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), Indonesia is categorized as high-power distance. PD reflects the degree of hierarchy and centralization as mentioned by Oloko & Ogutu (2017). Ringov & Zollo (2007) mentioned that a large PD culture indicates polarization and minimal employee participation in decision-making, thereby demonstrating an exclusive stakeholder approach. Previous research indicates that bureaucratic organizations are characterized by multiple hierarchies, with the majority of power and executive authority vested in the upper management as mentioned by Daft (2015).

Weaver (2001) mentioned that in a high-power distance culture, subordinates are discouraged from disputing authority. Supervisors typically anticipate subordinates' allegiance and submission, even when questionable actions are being considered as stated by Patel et al. (2002). Thus, when pressure is exerted on a subordinate to disregard or help cover up a supervisor's questionable actions, the subordinate's response may be significantly influenced by cultural beliefs related to the power distance dimension.

### **Uncertainty Avoidance**

Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) and House et al. (2004) list some differences between high and low uncertainty avoidance, including dimensions of a) relationship with others, b) agreement, c) order, d) policies and procedures, e) risk-taking, f) product development, g) resistance to change, h) rules establishment, and i) breaking the rules. These nine dimensions explain uncertainty avoidance concerning attitude toward change, namely:

1. Policies and procedures, where high uncertainty avoidance tends to rely on formalized policies and procedures, to establish and follow the rules, and to verify communications in writing, whereas low uncertainty avoidance tends to rely on informal interactions and informal norms as opposed to formalized policies, procedures, and rules;
2. Risk-taking, wherein high uncertainty avoidance tends to take more moderate calculated risks, while low uncertainty avoidance tends to be less calculating when taking risks;
3. Resistance to change: high uncertainty avoidance tends to show more robust resistance to change, while low uncertainty avoidance tends to show less resistance to change.

Based on these differences, in short, high uncertainty avoidance people tend to be more rigid, like stable conditions and procedures, and tend to be more resistant to change. In contrast, low uncertainty avoidance people tend to be more flexible and less resistant to change. Hofstede (2012) refers to a culture's tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. It reveals how much a culture makes its members feel uneasy or at ease in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are uncertain, unanticipated, and uncommon. Hofstede (2012) stated that by enacting and enforcing strict laws and rules, safety and security measures, and, on a philosophical and religious level, by believing in absolute truth, cultures that avoid uncertainty attempt to minimize the likelihood of such situations.

### **Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, and Commitment to Change**

Change in anything, including organizational change, makes people insecure, feeling uncertainty and ambiguity (Mangundjaya, 2021), as they do not know the future. These conditions make people resist change. In this regard, House et al. (2004), in their study, also showed that one of the characteristics of high uncertainty avoidance is high resistance to change. This correlation was also supported by the study of Harzing and Hofstede (1996) as cited in Francesco & Gold (2004), which showed that Indonesia, as characterized as a medium uncertainty avoidance country, had a strong resistance level. Meanwhile, Mangundjaya & Runi (2018) mentioned that the more uncomfortable a person is with conditions of uncertainty, the more passive the conflict management style employed. In this regard, as resistance to change is the opposite of commitment to change, it can be said that moderate and high uncertainty avoidance harms commitment to change. Based on this discussion, the researcher developed the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1:** High Uncertainty avoidance has a negative correlation with a commitment to change.

Meanwhile, people live in societies and work in organizations. House et al. (2004) and Hofstede and Hofstede (2010) stated that the two interact so that people's culture and norms affect how they behave. People who live in a high-power distance society tend to be more bureaucratic, value seniority, view power bases as stable and scarce, do not ensure equal opportunities, and view power as providing social order and role stability. This condition impacts how people perceive things and behave, including how they perceive organizational change. People who have high power distance tend to be more obedient and respectful toward their seniors, resulting in a tendency to follow what their leader says, regardless of whether they like it or not. Consequently, they will obey their leader. These conditions are assumed to positively impact their attitude toward change and commitment to change, as long as they have a good change leader that is respected and followed by people.

Low power distance people are more relaxed with superior-subordinate relationships, self-confidence, and autonomy. This condition will also have an impact on a commitment to change, as with a sense of equity, people will be more rational and aware of the importance of the organizational change and belief that those changes are essential for the organization or usually called as affective commitment to change as stated by Herscovitch and Meyer (2002). Grenberg (2005) and Owens et al. (2013) mentioned that since humility discloses personal vulnerabilities relative to moral laws, consequently humble leaders have a realistic view of themselves and others, allowing them to acknowledge their limitations and learn from the strengths of others. This finding suggests that humble leaders can identify the strengths and contributions of their followers, are open to learning, are receptive to the ideas and feedback of others, and have an accurate self-perception as stated by Owens and Hekman (2012, 2016) and Owens et al. (2013).

It has been argued that leader humility is a positive use of power (Owens & Hekman, 2012) and can assist leaders in overcoming deficiencies, such as poor performance due to a lack of general mental ability (Owens et al., 2013). We argue that meek leaders enable employees to surmount their "psychological hurdles" and inspire them to speak up by imparting a sense of power. We believe that humble leaders enable employees to overcome their "psychological hurdles" and motivate them to speak up, given that many employees do not voice their opinions (e.g., about resolving ethical issues) in the workplace due to anticipated neglect and improper actions by leaders after hearing their opinions (Morrison, 2011). Given the interpersonal nature of leader humility, we anticipate that a plausible mechanism for the effect of leader humility on employees' propensity to speak up will be based on the power dynamics between supervisors and subordinates. Based on these discussions, it developed the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2:** High Power distance negatively correlates with a commitment to change.

## 2. Method

This study used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional approach, as the data was collected in one shot only. Data were collected using three inventory scales, namely: a) Power Distance (House et al., 2004); b) Uncertainty Avoidance (House et al., 2004) and commitment to change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). These scales were translated into Bahasa Indonesia by Mangundjaya (2013) and were modified from 1 to 5 scale to 1 to 6 scale to avoid a central number. The scales were also checked for their validity and reliability. Data were collected at two different types of organizations.

Data were analysed using descriptive and regression analyses. The descriptive analysis identified the profile of work-related values, and regression analysis tested the impact of power distance and uncertainty avoidance on a commitment to change. The present research consists of two studies, with 328 overall respondents. The first study was conducted with 164 respondents at a private manufacturing company, and the second study was conducted at state-owned companies with 164 respondents. Data was collected through convenience sampling, with respondents possessing the following characteristics: Permanent employees, Had been working at least two years in the company, At least graduated from senior high school. Awareness of some changes occurring in their organizations (as checked through data in the questionnaire).



**Table 1. Profile of Respondents**

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Study 1</i> ( <i>N = 164</i> )		<i>Study 2</i> ( <i>N = 164</i> )	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	118	72.0	118	72.0
Female	46	28.0	46	28.0
<b>Age</b>				
<25 years old	17	10.4	17	10.4
>25 – 44 years old	124	75.6	124	75.6
>44 – 56 years old	23	14.0	23	14.0
<b>Education</b>				
Master's degree	5	3.1	45	27.4
Bachelor's degree	85	51.8	29	17.7
Diploma	29	17.7	85	51.8
Senior High School	45	27.4	5	3.1
<b>Position</b>				
Division Head	4	2.4	4	2.4
Department Head	9	5.5	9	5.5
Section Head	18	11.0	16	9.8
Staff	133	81.1	135	82.3
<b>Tenure</b>				
>2-10 years	106	64.6	106	64.6
>10-20 years	51	31.1	51	31.1
>20 years	7	4.3	7	4.3

The majority of respondents in all the two studies are male (72.0%), aged 25-44 years-old (75.6%), hold diploma/bachelor's degrees (51.8%), staff position (81.1-82.3%), and had been working in the organization for 2-10 years (64.6%).

### 3. Results and Discussion

House et al.(2004) mentioned that a descriptive analysis was conducted to discover the profile of work-related values in terms of power distance and uncertainty avoidance. Results of both studies show that uncertainty avoidance and power distance were both at moderate levels. Further, as results showed that in both the first and second study, the score of power distance was categorized as moderate; therefore, the distance between superior and subordinate was still tolerable. Meanwhile, the scores of uncertainty avoidance also moderate, implying that people perceived uncertainty, ambiguity, and insecurity with relatively neutral feelings, not really feeling anxious, and stress when facing uncertainty and changes in the environment.

**Table 2. Descriptive Analysis**

<i>Work-Related Values</i>	<i>Study 1</i>				<i>Study 2</i>			
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standar Deviation</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standar Deviation</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Category</i>
Power Distance	3.13	0.77	52	Moderate	3.47	0.83	58	Moderate



Uncertainty Avoidance	3.49	1.02	58	Moderate	3.49	1.02	58	Moderate
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Note: Score was converted from Mean (1 to 6 scale) to the point of scale 100.

### The Relationship of Power Distance (PD) and Uncertainty Avoidance (UA) with Commitment to Change (C2C)

The results of the relationship between power distance, uncertainty avoidance and commitment to change is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Correlation of Work-Related Values with C2C

Study		r	R2	Sign.	Category
1	PD and C2C	-0.651	0.423	0.00**	Moderate PD
	UA and C2C	-0.729	0.531	0.00**	Moderate UA
2	PD and C2C	-0.242	0.059	0.02*	Moderate PD
	UA and C2C	-0.729	0.531	0.00**	Moderate UA

\*\*1.o.s. p<001; \*1.o.s. p<005

Study 1 and Study 2 showed similar results, demonstrating significant negative correlation between power distance and commitment to change. These results imply that moderate power distance negatively correlated with commitment to change. Meanwhile, moderate uncertainty avoidance has negative correlation with commitment to change. Therefore, it can be concluded that the higher power distance makes people less committed to change, and the higher uncertainty avoidance also make people having less commitment to change.

These studies were conducted in two different organizations and having the similar results, which showed that the score was moderate in both power distance and uncertainty avoidance. However, since this research was conducted at two different organizations, the role of organizational culture might have affected the results.

In this study, the score of power distance lower than Hofstede and Hofstede's finding (2005), which showed that people of Indonesia have high power distance. Differences between the current research results and those of the previous study could be due to differences in the samples. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) used only IBM employees, while this study and that of Mangundjaya (2013) used different respondents from different types of organizations. Based on current results, it can be said that Indonesian employees have different profiles of uncertainty avoidance and power distance compares to the previous study conducted by Hofstede et al. (2010). It is assumed that Indonesia people's profile is different than the Indonesian employees who worked at IBM, in which are the respondents of Hofstede et al. (2010). Based on this study, the score of Power Distance is Moderate not High, which means that people respect seniority and elderly, but not in a strict hierarchical position, as they are still able to express their opinions, and feel very much relax in the relationship between superior and subordinates or between seniority and elderly with their junior.

Current results also showed that uncertainty avoidance is in moderate levels in both studies, which supported previous study by Mangundjaya (2013), who found that the profile of Indonesian people is moderate in uncertainty avoidance. Results also showed that both studies were not in line with the characteristics of uncertainty avoidance described by Hofstede and Hofstede (2005). Different results were likely due to the different characteristics of respondents in Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), as they only used IBM employees as respondents.

Based on this study, it can also be concluded that Indonesian employees displayed mixed feelings and attitudes toward uncertain conditions, such as organizational change. On the one hand, they may have felt anxious about their future, while on the other, they were looking forward to new conditions. These findings are also supported the previous study of Mangundjaya (2019), who showed that psychological empowerment positively impacted commitment to change. Which means that confident people who are able to make their own decisions and able to influence the environment tend

to have more commitment to organizational change. The previous findings also show that higher perception of uncertainty will lead to a more passive conflict management style being used as stated by Mangundjaya & Runi (2018), which means that when people feel uncertainty then they tend to be more passive when dealing with conflict.

The findings on power distance also showed that power distance had negative correlation with commitment to change. To put it another way, short distance between senior and junior or between leader and follower made employees less commit for organizational change. These particular findings supported prior findings that showed power distance positively impacted resistance to change (Harzing & Hofstede 1996, as cited in Francesco & Gold 2004); or high-power distance positively impacted commitment to change. To put it yet another way, high distance between leader and follower made employees less ready to change and have low commitment to change. These varied findings are presumably due to the Indonesian culture, which shows relatively more respect for seniority (high power distance) and thus results in people obeying orders, such as those pertaining to organizational changes, regardless of whether or not they agree with them.

Meanwhile, this study supported Harzing and Hofstede's findings (1996, as cited in Francesco & Gold, 2004) in terms of the contribution of low uncertainty avoidance to individual readiness for change. The study showed that low and moderate uncertainty avoidance had negative impact on commitment to change, implying that to get employees committed to organizational change, uncertainty avoidance should be low, as moderate uncertainty avoidance was not enough to develop commitment to change.

This study conducted in two types of organizations, the state-owned organization and the private organization. Although the results are very much alike, but it is well understood that every organization has its own customs, and behaviour as it called as organizational culture. This organizational culture might influence the attitudes and behaviour of their employees. Consequently, further studies are recommended to be conducted in various types of organizations, with various types of Indonesian ethnicities.

Some limitations of this study are as follows: First, the data was collected through self-reports, which might create the potential for common-method bias and social desirability effects (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Furthermore, this study was based on cross-sectional data; thus, no causal relationship should be inferred, and, consequently more longitudinal studies across organizations are needed. Another limitation is that the study 1 and 2 were conducted only in two different types of organizations (private and in public state-owned companies, respectively), but not in many types of organizations, consequently its results cannot be generalized.

#### 4. Conclusion

The present studies show that the work-related values of power distance and uncertainty avoidance significantly correlated with a commitment to change. The research showed that moderate power distance negatively correlated with a commitment to change. The meaning of this correlation is as follows: the higher the social distance between a leader and their subordinate, the lower the commitment to change the employees to the organization. Thus, the more equity the relationship between leader and member, the more the commitment to change of the employees. Further, this study also showed that low uncertainty avoidance negatively correlates with a commitment to change employees to the organization. As a result, the lower the uncertainty avoidance, the higher the commitment to change will result. This condition suggests that the fewer people feel uncertain about a condition, the more they commit to the organizational change. This study is in line with Mangundjaya (2021), who mentioned that if people feel insecure and uncertain about the future, they will usually resist organizational change. In other words, the more people feel relaxed and confident about an uncertain condition in the future, the more they are open and ready to face change and challenges, and the more they will commit to the planned organizational change. Company management can use the implications to effectively handle organizational change by identifying their employees' work-related value profiles, especially power distance and uncertainty avoidance. These two variables are essential for the development of commitment to change. Further, a commitment to change may lead to higher

organizational performance and expedite the change process as stated by Parish, Cadwallader, and Busch (2008). Management should find ways to develop lower power distance and lower uncertainty avoidance in their organizations by establishing a conducive psychological climate, coaching, training, mentoring, and offering a wide variety of development programs. Meanwhile, Morrison (2014, 2011) has given that the motivation to speak up may be substantially influenced by the extent to which followers can influence leaders, the increased propensity to speak up under the supervision of meek leaders can be viewed as a follower-centered influencing process. When investigating the effect of leader humility, it is essential to consider the individual's value of power distance in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of leader behaviors. Low power distance promotes communication between subordinates and supervisors about standards. In contrast, Loi et al. (2012) mentioned that employees with a high-power distance view leaders as autocratic authority figures and are less likely to interpret ethical codes from leaders. In particular, their research indicates that employees with a low power distance value are likelier to speak up under modest leaders. Thus, a knowledge of Indonesian culture and its influence on change readiness may assist managers in comprehending how to deal with subordinates' work attitudes and conduct. It may also assist them in developing and implementing communication and control systems that enhance organizational change performance. Okpara (2012) stated that understanding the influence of culture on individual readiness for change could benefit organizations undergoing organizational change, and individual readiness for change will result in commitment to change.

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