

Testing the Mediating Role of Work Engagement in the Relationship between Resistance to Change and Affective Commitment to Change

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Abstract: The pace of technological development has rapidly changed, so it forces organizations to adapt, and one of the critical things for change organization is to get employee commitment and reduce employee resistance to change. The aims of this paper are to study the relationship between resistance to change and affective commitment to change mediated by work engagement in one of the large companies in Indonesia. This study discusses the issue of the existence of work engagement at resistance to change and affective commitment to change with previous research showing that engagement influences commitment to change. The dimensions of resistance to change are routine seeking, emotional reaction, short-term focus, and cognitive recognition. The dimensions of work engagement are vigorous, dedication and absorption. Both of these variables are associated with affective commitment to change. The result (N = 334) shows that the mediating role of work engagement in resistance to change can improve affective commitment to change. But the absorption dimension does not have a significant relationship with a commitment to change. It shows that working with high concentration and sinking into work does not sufficiently influence the affective commitment to change.

1 INTRODUCTION

Technological development has rapidly grown in all areas including the amount of data and convergence difference technology (Kagermann 2015) especially in Industrial 4.0 in all aspects are challenges and opportunities for organizations. Various new business opportunities not only for new organizations but also business organization restructuring including those that are mature (Heikkilä et al. 2018). According to Kasali (2017) change in an organization does not only occur on the strategy in general but also happens on the fundamental aspect of the business including the structure of the cost, culture, and the ideology of the industry. Change has to be backed by all stakeholders through their commitment and ability to change to ensure that it happens within the organization (Mangundjaya 2014). Many organizations have failed to attempt change, and one of them is due to the lack of support and commitment from the member of the organization who involves in this transformation (Mangundjaya 2016). Herscovitch & Meyer (2002) stated that commitment, is divided into three forms, those are

desire (affective commitment), perceived cost (continuance commitment) and obligation (normative commitment). The research suggests that a higher affective commitment in the process of change has the ability to see the value of transformation and involve further to ensure the success of it and that is to promote change (Morin et al. 2016).

In the context of the employee, employee support is a key factor in implementing change in the organization (Van der Voet et al. 2016). The success of change depends on employees because the organization only announces changes, while changes are made by employees (Shah et al. 2017). Employees are expected to carry out, manage and committed to their work according to the expectations of the organization. Yalabik et al. (2015) stated that work engagement would affect commitment to the organization.

Based on this explanation, we decided to test the role of work engagement in the context of the relationship between resistance to change and employee commitment.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Affective Commitment to Change

Commitment to change is defined as a power to perform an act towards the success of implementation to change namely affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment (Herscovitch & Meyer 2002). During this decade, affective commitment to change has been the main idea among researchers (Choi 2011; Ritz et al. 2012), which has significantly improved in overcoming change and increasing supportive behaviour during organizational change (Jaros 2010). In this regard, affective commitment to change is significant in the context of turbulence that is characterized by the existence of sustainable changes that require ongoing contributions from employees. Thus, employee confidence in change is needed, to increase affective commitment to change (Morin et al. 2016). An affective commitment exists when people choose to stay because of their positive feeling towards the company while normative commitment is described as an obligation that people should commit to the organization. Unlike affective and normative, people with a continuance commitment look for some consideration whether they should stay or not based on something they already had in the organization such as social life or financial stability (Becker 1960). Affective commitment to change refers to situations where employees believe in change initiatives because of the inherent benefits of these changes so that they provide support for those changes voluntarily (Adil 2016). Findings from the study by Morin et al. (2016) show that affective commitment to change is a large part of orthogonal reactions, that more affective commitment to change shaped by beliefs about the need for change and legitimacy. Study that doing by Adil (2016) stated that appropriateness has a significant positive impact on affective commitment to change when controlled for gender, qualification and experience.

Furthermore, commitment is not only possessed by the employee but also on every individual within an organization. As have been suggested by (Abrell-Vogel & Rowold, (2014) that supportive leader within an organization may influence the staff affective commitment towards change. Thus this research applies to all level of management.

2.2 Resistance to Change

In various literature, resistance to organizational changes is very much related to the respond of human characteristics (Burnes 2015) and resistance also has many definitions based on one's theoretical framework (Yilmaz & Kiliçoğlu 2013). Resistance to change is defined by Armenakis & Harris (2009) as any different action that slows, opposes, or impedes efforts to change management. Other definition, resistance to change is described by Zander (1950) as an effort to keep away from the impact of real or expected change while Lewis in 2018 stated that resistant to change is built upon the employee's negative attitude and cognitive, disobedience for instance, towards the initiatives to change. Oreg (2003) has analyses dimension of resistance to change: routine seeking, emotional reaction to imposed change, cognitive rigidity, and short-term focus. Hence, human has the key role in giving an impact in the process of change. Although change is applied on the basis of positive reasons such as adaptation to an unstable environment and reasons for staying competitive, organizational members may react negatively and reject changes to change efforts (Yilmaz & Kiliçoğlu 2013). Ewenstein et al. (2016) have also pointed out that the program of change which happens in 70% of organizations in the world failed to achieve their goals, around 30% of them was not successful due to the employee resistance to change and others due to lack of management support. based on this statistic, it argued that resistant to change is one of the reasons why some companies have failed to implement change to their employees (Harich 2010).

Some of the research on resistance to change refers to the individual level which includes three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavior (Erwin & Garman 2010). In the cognitive dimension, employees think about changes that occur, including the ability to feel effective changes in new work roles (Giangreco & Peccei 2005). The affective dimension points to the concerns of employees' failures in a worsening situation, fear of possible losses and an uncertain future (Pakdel 2016). The behavioral dimension refers to the response of employee actions to changes that are actual manifestations of observable resistance, actions, and events (Fiedler 2010).

In general, resistance to change is generally seen as a negative force, although it is possible to provide positive goals, for example to rethink or evaluate expected changes and encourage more effective methods of change (Coetsee 1999). Previous

research has shown that employee resistance is a barrier to changing implementation (Mabin & Zealand 2009). Perren et al. (2005) stated that resistance to change is perceived as a negative act. However, many researchers believe that it is somewhat a positive thing which is seen as a natural defense mechanism in the organization to alter the decision or change which perceived can give a negative impact to the working environment. Every people has a unique defense mechanism to change and it may make every people adapt with change (Syahmi et al. 2017).

Hypothesis 1: Resistance to change is negatively related to affective commitment to change

2.3 Work Engagement

Work engagement is an excellent predictor for individuals, teams, and organizations (Bakker & Albrecht 2018) related to the quality of work results. Because of their dedication and focus on the work they do, workers who have work engagement show better job performance in their roles (Christian et al. 2011). Work engagement is defined as a condition of positive, motivational-affective fulfillment characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004). Employees who have high energy levels will be enthusiastic and truly immersed in their work (Bakker & Albrecht 2018). According to Bell & Barkhuizen (2011) characteristic from vigor are the level of energy and tenacity of work, the will to expend extra effort to work, and the persistence of encountering distress. Whereas dedication includes the feeling of importance, enthusiasm, inspiration, proud, and challenge. Last, absorption characteristics are "do the totality work happily and it's hard to get away from work".

Employees who engage with their work are valuable employees because they determine the productivity and functionality of the Company (Strom et al. 2014). For organizations, employee engagement is a key business driver in the success of organizations where high levels of engagement improve organizational performance (Lockwood 2007). Vogelgesang et al. (2013) stated that employee engagement is an asset for the company because it causes employees to work with better performance, on the contrary, disengaged employees will become a barrier for the company. For employees, engagement usually makes them enthusiastic about their organization and chooses to remain in the organization (Lockwood 2007).

Hypothesis 2: Resistance to change has a negative impact on work engagement

Hypothesis 3: Work engagement has a positive impact on affective commitment to change

2.4 The Relationship between Resistance to Change, Work Engagement and Commitment to Change

Oreg (2003) found that the tendency of resistance to change with a four-dimensional model of resistance was strongly associated with affective reactions to change so that it could indicate a relationship with affective commitment to change. Meyer et al. (1993) found that affective commitment positively related to willingness to suggest improvements and are (2003) found that resistance to change showed individuals who conducted routine searches would immediately maintain current conditions and individuals who show cognitive rigidity tend not to change their mindset.

One of the company's successes factors in change is to maintain engagement because engagement in organizational as organization change will have a positive result in increasing improving performance. Uddin et al. (2018) finding that better employee engagement could enhance team performance in organizational contexts. Employees with sufficient resources will be able to overcome the challenges encountered in the workplace and can achieve personal and corporate goals that can encourage work engagement and increase performance (Gawke et al. 2017). For organizational context, Choi et al. (2015) have examined that affective organizational commitment is related positively to employee work engagement. Bell & Barkhuizen (2011) state that barriers to change and work engagement have a significant relationship, with a substantial effect.

Hypothesis 4: Work engagement mediate the relationship between resistance to change and affective commitment to change.

3 METHODS

3.1 Data Collection

Data was collected through a questionnaire of Affective Commitment to change from Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), resistance to change from Oreg (2003) and work engagement using Utrecht Work

Engagement Scale (UWES)-9 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The details of these questionnaires were shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of the instruments.

Name of Scale	Total Item	Reliability
Affective commitment to change (ACTC)	6	$\alpha = .71$
Resistance to change (RTC)	20	$\alpha = .92$
Work engagement (WE)	15	$\alpha = .94$

3.2 Measurement

Affective commitment to change was measured using Commitment to Change Inventory from Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) that was translated to the Indonesia language consisting of 6 items. The measurement of this variable using a Likert scale of 1-5 (1 = Very unlikely, 6 = Very likely) with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.71. An example of a statement at Commitment to Change Inventory is "This change is a good strategy for this organization". A high score indicates a high level of affective commitment to change.

Resistance to change was measured using resistance to change the scale from Oreg (2013) that was modified and translated to the Indonesia language consisting of 6 items. The measurement of this variable using a Likert scale of 1-5 (1 = Very unlikely, 6 = Very likely) with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.92. An example of the statement at resistance to change scale is "When I am informed of a change of plans, I tense up a bit". A high score indicates a high level of resistance to change.

Work Engagement. Work engagement was measured using Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)-9 that was modified and translate to indonesia languages (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004 consisted of 15 items using a Likert-type scale ranging from 0-6 (0 = Never, 6 = Always) with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.94. An example of a statement at UWES is, "I feel strong and energized at work". High score of items indicates a high level of work engagement

3.3 Participants and Procedures

Participants were employees who work in subsidiaries company of Airport operator in Indonesia. Questionnaires distribute and access by online with all participants were 432 participants, but only 334 respondents who fill the questionnaires (response rate =77,3%). Samples were taken from all the population of the organization by online

questionnaires. Characteristics of respondents are as follows, permanent/contract staff, worked at least six months in the company, at least graduated from high school and has to experience organizational change. Present profile of participants consisted of 66.8% male and 33.2% female, age within range 18 – 53 years old, majority educational attainment levels are senior high school (72.5%), tenure less then 2 years (79.4%) and position as staff (67.1%). The resume profile of the participants can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Demographic Profile.

Characteristics	N	%
Gender		
Male	223	66.8%
Female	111	33.2%
Age		
<25 tahun	124	37.2%
25 – 44 tahun	195	58.5%
>44 tahun	15	4.5%
Education		
Senior High School	242	72.5%
Bachelor Degree	87	26.0%
Master Degree	5	1.5%
Position		
Staff	224	67.1%
Supevisor	66	19.8%
Middle Management	27	8.1%
Top Management	27	5.1%
Tenure		
<2 years	265	79.4%
2 - 10 years	56	16.8%
> 10 years	13	3.9%

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Pearson’s Correlation, and Hayes Process Macro v.3.0.

4 RESULT

The result of this study will be discussed in 4 parts, 1) correlation between resistance to change and affective commitment to change, 2) correlation between resistance to change and work engagement, 3) correlation between work engagement and affective commitment to change, and 4) role of work engagement as mediator for resistance to change and affective commitment to change.

From table 2, it shows that resistance to change, affective commitment to change and work engagement have Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items of .92, .71 and .94 for all items.

Table 3: Statistics Summary and correlations among variables.

No	Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1	ACTC	4.73	0.86	1		
2	RTC	3.44	1.09	-.65**	1	
3	WE	5.00	0.74	.15**	.21**	1
4	Routine seeking	3.27	1.36	-.66**	.88**	.13*
5	Emotional reaction	3.03	1.40	-.62**	.91**	.09
6	Short-term focus	2.89	1.48	-.63**	.92**	.14**
7	Cognitive Rigidity	4.58	0.99	-.14*	.54**	.47**
8	Vigorous	5.17	0.76	.21**	.14**	.92**
9	Dedication	5.24	0.76	.23**	.14*	.92**
10	Absorption	4.58	0.95	0.01	.30**	.87**

Table 3 shows the correlation between resistance to change and affective commitment to change is negative and significant ($r = -.65, p < 0.01$). The correlation for affective commitment to change towards each dimension of resistance to change is negatively and significant ($p < 0.01$ except cognitive rigidity which has $p < 0.05$). Correlation between resistance to change and work engagement is positively and significant ($r = .21, p < 0.01$). Correlation between work engagement and affective commitment to change is positively and significant ($r = .15, p < 0.01$). Correlation for affective commitment to change towards each dimension of work engagement is positively and significant ($p < 0.01$) except absorption which not significant.

Table 4: Statistics Summary and correlations among variables and demographic.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
ACTC	4.73	5.14	1			
RTC	3.44	17.46	-.65**	1		
WE	5.00	11.14	.15**	.22**	1	
Age	28.53	7.76	.25**	-.24**	.22**	1
Gender	1.33	0.47	-0.06	0.03	-0.08	-0.04
Education	1.57	0.93	.27**	-.31**	-.16**	.24**
Position	1.51	0.85	.17**	-.12*	0.10	.34**
Tenure	1.81	3.13	.20**	-.24**	0.09	.34**

Table 4 showed that three correlations of 3 variables in this study with demographic variable affective commitment to change has significant and positive correlation with age, education, position and tenure, but not significant with gender. Resistance to change has significant and negatively correlation with age, education, position and tenure, but not significant with gender. Thus, work engagement has

significantly correlated with age and negatively correlation with education.

The implication from the results are as follows: In terms of affective commitment to change, there is significant between group's base on gender, age, education, position, and tenure. In terms of resistance to change, there is a significant mean difference between the group's base on age, education, position, and tenure. There is no differences based on gender. In term of work engagement, there is a mean difference between the group's base on age, education, position, and tenure. There are no differences based on gender.

To test the role of work engagement (hypothesis 4), we examined using Hayes Process Macro v.3.0 on SPSS 24 software. The result shows that work engagement mediated the relationship between resistance to change and affective commitment to change (indirect effect = 0.02, SE = 0.006, 95% CI [.01, .03]) supporting the hypothesis. The direct effect between resistance to change and affective commitment to change was still significant after controlling for work engagement (direct effect = -.21, SE = .01, $p < 0.01$)

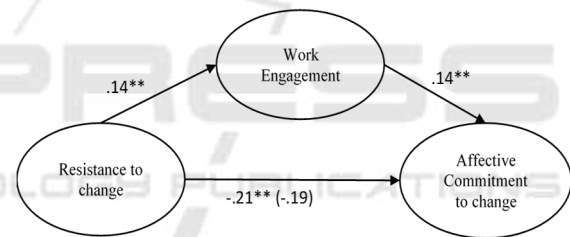


Figure 1: Effect of resistance to change on affective commitment to change through work engagement.

5 DISCUSSION

The study examines the impact of work engagement as a mediator in the relationship between resistance to change and affective commitment to change. Resistance to change has a positive connection with work engagement. This finding supported the previous study conducted by Bell, E., & Barkhuizen, N. (2011) which showed that barrier to change and work engagement has positively and significant relationship especially for the people-related barrier. People-related barriers in this regard refer to resistance from both staff and managers. The barriers caused by satisfaction with the status quo, resistance to change itself, change fatigue, inadequate leadership or management, uncertainty, fear, competitive commitments, etc.

Table 5: Descriptive analysis of commitment to change, resistance to change and work engagement.

Demographics Variables	Affective commitment to change			Resistance to change			Work engagement		
	Mean	SD	Sign.	Mean	SD	Sign.	Mean	SD	Sign.
Gender			0.17*			0.54			0.64
Male	4.77	0.84		3.42	1.08		5.04	0.75	
Female	4.66	0.89		3.49	1.11		4.91	0.73	
Age			0.00**			0.00**			0.00**
<25 tahun	4.52	0.81		3.76	1.04		4.83	0.85	
25 – 44 tahun	4.84	0.85		3.29	1.07		5.08	0.66	
>44 tahun	4.73	0.97		2.85	1.08		5.33	0.53	
Education			0.00**			0.00**			0.02*
Senior High School	4.60	0.87		3.65	1.16		5.07	0.77	
Bachelor Degree	5.07	0.71		2.90	0.62		4.81	0.63	
Master Degree	5.60	0.71		2.81	0.24		4.75	0.46	
Position			0.00**			0.00**			0.00**
Staff	4.60	0.85		3.59	1.12		4.93	0.76	
Supevisor	4.92	0.77		3.13	0.87		5.09	0.65	
Middle Management	5.48	0.56		2.69	0.79		5.44	0.51	
Top Management	4.52	0.89		3.91	1.11		4.80	0.94	
Tenure			0.00**			0.00**			0.16*
<2 years	4.66	0.84		3.57	1.11		4.98	0.77	
2-10 years	4.91	0.91		3.02	0.91		5.02	0.64	
> 10 years	4.73	0.58		2.52	0.51		5.41	0.59	

Based on that research, People-related barrier also had a significant relationship with the dimension of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption in common effect. A second finding of this research is relationship work engagement has a significant relationship to affective commitment to change. This finding also supported the research conducted by Mangundjaya (2014) that employee engagement has a significant and positive relationship to a commitment to change. This study also shows that resistance to change and commitment to change have a significant and negative relationship. This is supported by research conducted by Coetzee and Stanz in Bell, E., & Barkhuizen, N. (2011) that someone who has resistance to change can develop a resistance to change. Thus, it can be said that employee resistance can be a significant obstacle to effective organizational change because it can lead to skepticism and resistance to employees. The last, finding on this study shows work engagement mediates the relationship between resistance to change and affective commitment to change measure using Hayes Process Macro v.3.0 on SPSS 24 software. In this study, demography consist of age, education, position and tenure, has a significant effect for affective commitment to change, resistance to change and work engagement. Gender

factor only significant at affective commitment to change, but not at resistance to change and work engagement.

5.1 Research Limitation

This research has some limitations as follows: first, this research collected the data only through self-reports/questionnaires which might create some potential bias/subjective and did not support through other methods (Tehseen 2017) such as FGDs or interviews. Second, this study did not define the specific change in the organization so that the respondent can assume many different changes in the same organization such as policy changes, system changes or other changes at the organizational level. The next limitation is the type of organization studied in this research only in one organization so that other studies might produce findings that are different from other types of organizations.

5.2 Concluding Remark

The implication of this study is essential to manage work engagement to increase affective commitment to change as an effort to achieve successful change.

This is support by Geldenhuys et al (2014) that work engagement has positive correlates organisational commitment. Some possible direct effects from the process of increasing engagement to commitment to change, such as 1) improve employee vigorous that defined as energy and high mental resilience when working and, investing and overcoming difficulties, 2) increasing employee dedication to work that defined as strong involvement through a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenges in work (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004). The findings also show that organizations need to improve work engagement to increase affective commitment to change, it will have implications for decreasing employee resistance. This is support by Stanley et al. (2005) that resistance to change as an indicator of change-specific cynicism, eliminated when employee involvement in the organization grow (Grama & Todericiu 2016). In other words, employees tend to associate work engagement with company changes based on the benefits that will be obtained. If the organization succeeds in communicating the benefits of the desired change to the employee, then the employees will be more receptive to the change. Further studies are needed regarding variables that will have an impact on affective commitment to change in broader organizations to further identify other influential factors.

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