How Does Personality Affect Employee Engagement in Change Management? It Depends on Role of Personal Mastery and Network Centrality

Dofa Purnomo[1]*, Rhenald Kasali[1], Budi Widjaja Soetjipto[1,2] and Tengku Ezni Balqiah[1]

[1]*Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Indonesia, Depok Campus, Depok 16424, Indonesia*
[2]*Universitas Pertamina, Jakarta 12220, Indonesia*

ABSTRACT

Successful organisational change begins with employees, in which employees become the core of organisational change, especially in cases of divergent organisational change which could represent a matter of life and death for the organisations. Literature on theory of power had identified personality, personal mastery, and network centrality as central to organisational change. Having this power, however, does not guarantee that people within the organisations have desire to participate actively to facilitate that change. This study examines how personality could increase employees engagement in organisational change through the mediation effect of personal mastery and network centrality. This research was conducted in a state-owned Indonesian energy enterprise, included 155 respondents, and data was analysed using structural equation modelling. The results of this research confirm that personal mastery and network centrality mediate the effect of personality on employee engagement to achieve organisational change. Network centrality in particular, has a greater effect on employee desire to change. The study concludes with a discussion of the findings, managerial implications and limitations.

Keywords: Engagement to change, network centrality, personality, personal mastery

INTRODUCTION

Organisations around the world have undergone significant and extensive changes over the past two decades (Kotter, 2012). The emphasis has been on "bottom-up" action rather than "top-down" control in implementing organisational change

(Bamford & Daniel, 2005). The rationale behind this is that the pace of change is so rapid and complex that once it occurs, it is impossible for the top management to identify, plan, and implement every action required (Bamford & Daniel, 2005). Pettigrew and Whipp (1993) believed there are no universal rules with regard to leading change, and it involves linking action by people at all levels of the business. Schein (2004) supported that statement and said that organisational change is mediated through individual-level change, because people within an organisation have power to make organisational changes (Watkins, 2013). Hammett (2007) defined power as a person's capacity to influence others to behave as desired. Gladwell (2000) argued that change always involves three powers. The first power is salesmen. Gladwell (2000) defined salesmen as people who have the ability to convince others through their persuasive personality. French and Raven (1959) called it "referent power," whereas Watkins (2013), and Hall and Lindzey (1970) termed it "personality."

The second power is mavens. Mavens are people who have the ability to accumulate knowledge (Gladwell, 2000). French and Raven (1959), and Watkins (2013) called it "expert power," while Senge (1990) and Greene (2012) termed it "personal mastery," which is the individual capacity to grow and learn. The third power is connectors. Gladwell (2000) defined connectors as those who have an extensive network and knows many people. Watkins (2013), Krackhardt (1987, 1990), and Battilana and Casciaro (2012) termed it "network centrality". Although the context presented by Gladwell (2000) is informal, Watkins (2013) found that the three kinds of power are also valid in the formal contexts within organisations.

However, although employees have power to initiate and implement change, numerous studies have shown that employees tend instinctively to oppose change, especially to implement radical change (Daft, 2004). D'Aunno, Succi and Alexander (2000) call this divergent organisational change, namely change that diverges from status quo. Regarding the success rate to realise divergent organisational change, Kotter (1995) stated that nearly 70% of large-scale change programmes do not achieve the desired objectives. Battilana and Casciaro (2013) said that only small numbers of employees are enthusiastic to engage in divergent organisational changes. Charan, Barton and Carey (2015) found that only 2% of the people in a business drive 98% of the impact. Therefore, the role of employee engagement is very important, especially in making changes within the organisation, which is referred to as engagement to change (Royal & Agnew, 2012). Research shows that employees who have engagement to change can be a catalyst for change (Boone, 2012). Furthermore, Hewitt (2013) suggested that employees who have engagement to change feel united with change, and even invite others to jointly encourage changes in the organisation.

Earlier studies on organisational change focused on systems and structural approaches to implement organisational

change effectively, and have neglected the fact that individuals are the ones who make change happen (Nikolaou, Gouras, Vakola, & Bourantas, 2007). The current study attempts to explain how employees can be prompted to use the power they have to increase their engagement to change and to play an active role in initiating and implementing divergent organisational change (Weick, 1995). Collins (2001) argued that good-to-great companies began their transformation by first getting the right people, and in determining "the right people," they place greater weight on personality attributes because they believe that personality is more ingrained. Therefore, in this study, researchers examined how personality of employees can lead to organisational change, through mediation effect of personal mastery and network centrality. The subsections below discuss the meaning of personality, personal mastery and network centrality

Personality

In studying the theory of personality, Hall and Lindzey (1970) concluded that there is no substantive definition of personality that can be applied in general. Thus, the definition of personality is based on particular theoritical preferences. In this study, the definition of personality is associated with a referent power (French & Raven, 1959). People with referent power give meaning to others and provide them a sense of purpose (Rahim, Antonioni, & Psenicka, 2001). They are able to generate trust, openness, and respect by using these

same qualities in their interactions with others (Knapp, 1990). Rahim et al. (2001) showed that the referent power base is more effective than other power bases in influencing others.

Personal Mastery

Senge (1990) defined personal mastery as an individual's capacity to grow and learn. The essence of personal mastery is learning how to generate and sustain creative tension in our lives (Ng, 2004). Judkins (2017) argued that to prosper in economies of the future, people need to realise that the real currency today is not money, but ideas. Ideas can trigger revolutions or nudge society in a particular direction (Judkins, 2017). A person with ideas is never content, and always wants to push towards a new direction (Judkins, 2017). Therefore, Secretan (1997) explained that individuals who strive for mastery are devoted to continuous development, polishing their skills, competencies, and practices, being an expert and respecting knowledge, wisdom, and learning. Those who have mastered their field are often a great source of insight (Twigger, 2017). Greene (2012) revealed that mastery is not a function of genius or talent, rather it is a function of time and intense focus on a particular field of knowledge. Boast and Martin (1997) believe that mastery is inherent in every successful individual.

Network Centrality

To succeed today, people must build networks intensively across the organisations (Geisler, 2012). According to Liu and Ipe (2010), a

person with network centrality will make himself or herself a knot in social networks. Developing and nurturing networks is key to getting anything accomplished (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012). According to Klein (2004), there are two ways to develop personal networks. The first is through a person's formal authority because of his or her career moves (Klein, 2004). Maxwell (2005) opined that a person's formal authority provides an access to connect with many parties, since individuals who move from one functional group to another create diversified networks that afford them to find opportunities that can be followed up to improve organisational performance. The second way to develop networks is through internal interaction with peers in an organisation (Klein, 2004). Both methods are intertwined to create a reinforcing cycle (Battilana & Casciaro, 2013; Klein, 2004).

Engagement to Change

Change can be received with excitement and happiness or anger and fear, and employees' response to it may range from positive intentions to support the change to negative intentions to oppose it (Battilana & Casciaro, 2013). Therefore, the single biggest challenge about change is to have every individual understand that change starts with himself or herself (Coetsee & Flood, 2013). Eby, Adams, Russel and Gaby (2000) showed that positive attitude to change is vital in ensuring successful organisational change. Royal and Agnew (2012) defined employee engagement to change as employee willingness to drive

organisational change through his or her active and effective engagement. Employee engagement to change begins with a sense of urgency for change, and awareness of the importance of change (Boone, 2012). Battilana, Leca and Boxenbaum (2009) pointed out that when an individual commits and engages to achieve change, it will affect his or her view of change as a hope for a better future. Individual who embrace change will welcome and applaud it as being something good (Coetsee & Flood, 2013). Furthermore, individual with engagement to change has the motivation and confidence that change is necessary, thus optimising their capacity for changes (Porras & Robertson, 1992).

In the context of organisational change, Li, Zhong, Chen, Xie and Mao (2014) suggested that there is a relationship between personality and engagement to change, in which personality differences and characteristics, such as the level of self-efficacy and self-esteem, can predict employee attitudes toward change and their motivation to change (Coetsee & Flood, 2013). A number of studies found that self-efficacy and self-esteem are individual differences that may impact on individual engagement to change (Eby et al., 2000).

Self-efficacy relates to the belief that one has the ability to perform his or her tasks effectively in various situations (Gardner & Pierce, 1998). Employees with self-efficacy tend to see their work as challenging and enjoyable. Self-efficacy also refers to individual beliefs that he or she possesses the ability to perform tasks

well (Bandura, 1997). Gardner and Pierce (1998) stated that self-efficacy is related to perceptions of competence and ability because of one's personal mastery. In the theory of change, when an individual has self-efficacy as a result of personal mastery, it will encourage him or her to engage in making changes in the organisation (Conley, 2006; Nikolaos, 2014) which Royal and Agnew (2012) referred to as engagement to change. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

Hypothesis 1: Personal mastery mediates the effect of personality on engagement to change.

Self-esteem relates to the extent to which one considers himself or herself valuable and important. One has a self-esteem when he or she feels the affection, attention, and appreciation of others. Thus, the main aspects of self-esteem are acceptance, appreciation, and support by others. Support from the network is important because no one can make changes alone (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012). Peach, Jimmieson and White (2005) found that social support significantly influences how an individual views and supports the change. If a person's self-esteem needs can be met, then they feel a value in their social environment and hence, are fully engaged to achieve the expected goals, and find the meaning of achievement (Liu, Hui, Lee, & Chen, 2013).

Self-esteem is related to feelings of self-worth because of one's network centrality (Gardner & Pierce, 1998). In the theory of change, when an individual has self-esteem because of his or her network centrality, it

will encourage engagement in the individual to make changes in the organisation (Conley, 2006; Nikolaos, 2014). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Network centrality mediates the effect of personality on engagement to change.

METHODS

The object of this study is PT Pertamina (Persero), a state-owned, Indonesian energy enterprise.

Population and Unit of Analysis

The population in this study is Pertamina's employees in various positions, ranging from managers to senior vice presidents, for those who work in corporate; and managers to directors for those who work in subsidiaries/joint ventures company. The unit of analysis in this study is Pertamina's employees in various positions, ranging from managers to senior vice presidents, for those who work in corporate; and managers to directors for those who work in subsidiaries/joint ventures company, who have attended an executive education programme called "Program Pengembangan Eksekutif Pertamina" (PPEP), which is organised by the company. As part of the programme, employees are required to initiate and implement change projects. The total number of units of analysis is 410 persons. This is similar to what has been done by Battilana (2006) in her study of institutional entrepreneurship conducted at the National Health Service (NHS) in the

United Kingdom. Battilana (2006) examined NHS's employees at the managerial level who have attended an executive education programme, called the "Executive Strategic Leadership Education Program," organised by the NHS. As part of the program, the employees were are required to initiate and implement change projects.

Measurement

The research instrument used in this study is a questionnaire that used six Likert scales to measure attitudes ranging from "strongly disagree to strongly agree." Questions were developed from the operationalisation of indicators in respective research variables. The questionnaire consisted of four research variables: (1) personality (Gladwell, 2000); (2) personal mastery (Gladwell, 2000); (3) network centrality (Gladwell, 2000); and (4) engagement to change (Boone, 2012; Kahn, 1990; Royal & Agnew, 2012; Saks, 2006).

In this research, a quantitative approach was used and there were 39 items in the questionnaire: six questions about personality; 12 questions about personal mastery; 11 questions about network centrality; and 10 questions about engagement to change. The questionnaire was distributed online to the 410 employees, and 155 respondents completed the questionnaire during the survey period (June 20, 2015 to July 29, 2015). It achieved a response rate of 37.8%. The data in this study was processed by using structural equation modeling (SEM), in which Lisrel 8.8 was used to measure the structural models. The researchers used a two-step approach (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The first stage of the two-step approach was to re-specify a hybrid model as a CFA model (Confirmatory Factor Analysis). The CFA model was then analysed to determine its suitability to the data (goodness of fit). The second stage of the two-step approach was to add the original structural model to the first stage CFA model, to produce a hybrid model. The hybrid model is then estimated and analysed to see the overall fit of the model, and to evaluate its structural model.
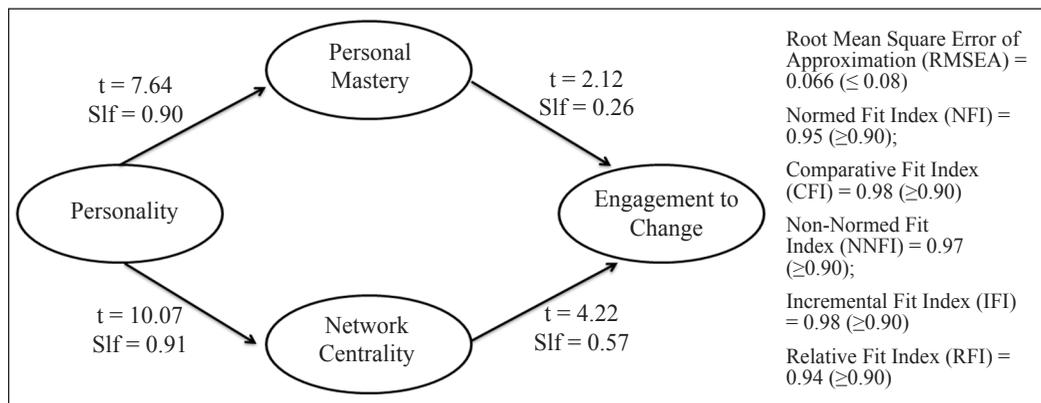

Figure 1. The results of significance test of structural research model

RESULTS

In this study, the significance level (α) is 5%, and the degree of freedom (df) is 154, and therefore the critical value is 1.984. Based on that information, the t-value will be significant if t ≥ 1.984, or t ≤ -1.984. Since the t-value is above 1.984; then all trajectories are significant. Hence, it can be concluded that personality influences personal mastery and network centrality, and engagement to change is influenced by personal mastery and network centrality. Furthermore, it is known that personality influences personal mastery, and personal mastery influences engagement to change. It can be concluded that personal mastery mediates the relationship between personality and engagement to change. Similarly with network centrality, it is known that personality influences network centrality, and network centrality influences engagement to change. It can be concluded that network centrality mediates the relationship between personality and engagement to change. Therefore, both hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 are supported by data. In terms of influence, the total effect of network centrality's mediation is 0.5187 (0.91x0.57), and the total effect of personal mastery's mediation is 0.234 (0.90x0.26). Based on this result, it is clear that network centrality more strongly mediates the effect of personality on engagement to change. Based on a combination of different model fit sizes, it can be concluded that in general, the overall fit of the model is good.

DISCUSSION

The results of the current study are in line with previous researches conducted by Collins and his team (2001) who conducted a five-year study to determine what made companies move from being good to great. One of their key findings is that good-to-great companies have the right employees. Tjan (2017) agreed that people of good character and who are rooted to a set of core values that explain who they are and what they stand for are an asset to the company. This type of people have growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). According to Bass (1990), effective organisational change is a result of two types of behaviour: task-orientated and person-related. Task-orientated skills are related to personal mastery (Bass, 1990; Greene, 2012; Senge, 1990), and person-related skills refer to network centrality (Bass, 1990; Battilana & Casciaro, 2013). Therefore, Dweck (2006) found that people with growth mindset are always engaged in improving their personal mastery (self-efficacy), and constantly foster their relationships with many people, and surround themselves with the right and influential people to strengthen their network centrality (self-esteem). Thus, they can move forward with confidence to engage in divergent organisational change and lead the company from good to great. This kind of people have energy, passion, commitment to the organisation, and add high value to the organisation (Collins, 2001). Research findings also showed that network centrality more strongly mediates

the effect of personality on engagement to change. This is in accordance with the findings of Battilana and Casciaro (2013) who reported that formal structures and informal networks co-exist, and each influences how people get their jobs done. When it comes to encouraging employees' engagement to change, Battilana and Casciaro (2013) showed that network centrality is critical. Therefore it is important for employees to build relationships with many people at multiple levels in the organisation, including with a handful of key influencers, treat some of them like mentors, and the rest as project sponsors (Azzarello, 2017).

In terms of this research setting, Pertamina's evolution as Indonesian energy state-owned enterprise (SOE) was not very business-oriented historically (Kasali, 2008). Moreover, Indonesian legislators ended Pertamina's monopoly with a new law: Law No. 22/2001. One of the foremost challenges Pertamina is facing because of this new regulation is to change employee mindset (Kasali, 2008). This research was conducted when the oil and gas industry was experiencing pressure due to sharply declining world oil prices. Crude oil prices ended 2015 below US$40 per barrel, the lowest level since early 2009 (Pertamina, 2016).

This situation leads Pertamina and energy companies around the world into the discomfort zone (Reynolds, 2014). The turbulent situation has encouraged Pertamina to increase the engagement to change of its employees. The executive education program, called "Program Pengembangan Eksekutif Pertamina" (PPEP) is held for selected employees who are at the managerial level and above, thus providing the necessary skills and knowledge for employees to perform organisational change, including seminars and talks to employees about the importance of organisational change. As part of the programme, employees are also required to initiate and implement change. This has increased employees' awareness that they have the ability to make change. Based on the results of the study, it is shown that personal mastery mediates the effect of personality on engagement to change. Furthermore, employees who participated in this programme came from various functions, directorates, subsidiaries, and joint ventures. Employees' career experience in various positions and locations also increases their network centrality. Based on the results of the study, it is also shown that network centrality mediates the effect of personality on engagement to change. The results of this study support Maxwell's assertion (2017) that awareness changes everything. As soon as people become aware that some of their "limitations" are artificial, they can begin to overcome many of them. People can reject these restraints, which opens the way for growth (Maxwell, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The results of this research show that personal mastery mediates the effect of personality on engagement to change, and network centrality also mediates the

effect of personality on engagement to change. However, network centrality has a stronger mediating effect. This study has some managerial implications. First, based on these findings, it is important for organisations to conduct periodic surveys of employees' engagement to change. Survey results should be reviewed as part of continuous efforts to improve this. Second, organisations are advised to select individuals based on their personality as the most important criteria (Collins, 2001; Tjan, 2017). Third, specific strategies, such as coaching and the manner in which the change message is structured and communicated can be employed to increase individual engagement to change, with the emphasis that change is not a block, but an evolution (Coetsee & Flood, 2013).

Fourth, with regard to personal mastery, it is important for the organisation to remain a learning organisation whereby it facilitates individuals within the organisation to improve their personal mastery over time, through high-impact trainings that will contribute to effective performance to strengthen their specific, task-based self-efficacy, and also encourage individuals to share their knowledge with others (Gardner & Pierce, 1998). Fifth, in terms of network centrality, it is important to provide equal opportunities to all employees to increase their exposure, including involving employees in breakthrough projects that are results-oriented priority projects whose members consist of cross-functional and even cross-directorate, and the involvement of employees in the projects can be known by many people in the organisation, including top management.

Sixth, it is important to put employees on rotational assignments throughout the organisation. Some even include assignments outside the organisation. By assigning employees to different posts within and outside the organisation, it will not only expand employees' network centrality, but also deepen their understanding of the business, and competitive dynamics of the industry (Carucci & Hansen, 2014). Employees will be far more open-minded to different views if they themselves have served on the other side of the table (Carucci & Hansen, 2014). Seventh, it is important to create a culture in the company that embraces change, provides employees with cues in terms of which behaviours are regarded as important (Coetsee & Flood, 2013).

This study is conducted in PT Pertamina (Persero), a state-owned Indonesian energy enterprise, which does not reflect the industry as a whole. Future research can be done on other state-owned enterprises in different industries, or in companies in the same industry that are not state-owned, which conduct divergent organisational change. Furthermore, the findings in this study are based on data collected using self-report questionnaires. For future research, a 360-degree appraisal is recommended as suggested by Antonioni (1996), and Pollack and Pollack (1996), in which respondents will be assessed by their leaders, peers, and subordinates.

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