A STUDY ON THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCING EMPLOYEES` ATTITUDES TOWARD ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that influencing employees` attitudes toward organizational change in public sector. The study had been carried out in Melaka state government at Kompleks Seri Negeri, Ayer Keroh. This research is written with the objectives to examine the relationship between factor influencing employees` attitudes toward organizational change, to identify the most positive employees` attitude towards organizational change and to provide recommendations regarding organizational change to the public sector. The sample size of this study was 123 employees who come five different departments which are Department of Human Resource Management, Department of Corporate Communication, Department of Management Information System, Department of Library Management and Department of K-economy. Questionnaires were distributed to employee based on the simple random sampling method and proportionate sampling. The findings reveal that all of the factors (internal communications, work-related values, emotional Intelligence and organizational commitment) influence employees` attitude toward organizational change at varying degree.

Keywords: Attitude, Employees and Organizational Change

INTRODUCTION

According to Md Zabid, Murali and Azmawani (2004), due to the "differences in the nature of the business, the work culture and values, management and leadership style as well as the behavior and attitude of the employees"; the change process adopt by an organization is not the same with other organization's change process. Furthermore, even within the organization itself, the change process is unique in each situation.

As stated by Seddon (1991), there are linkages between attitudes and behavior of employees with regard to the organizational change. This is because, changing culture means changing behavior, changing behavior means changing attitudes, while changing attitudes means being prepared to argue things from a different perspective. For successful organizational change to take place, the organization must first address the attitudes of its employees since their attitudes toward something are manifest through their behavior (Robbins, 2000). Thus, when managers make decisions for adapting with change, they must consider on how the organization's performance and employees will be affected (Parish, Cadwallader & Busch, 2008)

Further, Seddon (1991) also contends that successful organizational change can be achieved when employees learned how to adapt themselves to the cultural change and understand why it is necessary. Human factors are a significant resource in change management even though the successes of changes depend on several factors. This is due to the fact that, it is people who plan, implement and affected by the changes (Alas, Vadi & Sun, 2009).

There are many reasons why organizations have to introduce change in their business environment. In these days of globalization and liberalization of markets, change is inevitable. Thus, change acts as an organizations' survival tactic. If the organizations do not keep up with the changing technology, consumer demands, and effective business process, the organizations' would surely loss their competitive advantage (Md Zabid et al, 2004).

Other than that, the current and future trends in the external environment necessitate the organizations to be responsive because the external environments, for example capital markets, are changing much more rapidly than organizations do (Burke, 2008). Change in organization would also take place in response to business and economic events, for example; the identification of new technology as well as more efficient and economical methods to perform the job (Md Zabid et al, 2004).

The general objective of this study then is to investigate the factors influencing employees' attitudes toward organizational change in the public sector. In other words, the paper seeks to understand the factors that would influence employees' positive or negative attitudes toward organizational change once it is introduced within the organization. The researchers outline four factors that would determine the employees' attitudes toward organizational change which are internal communication, work-related values, emotional intelligence (EI) and organizational commitment.

Thus, this study aims to find the factors influencing employees' attitudes that have the most positive attitudes toward organizational change. Apart from that, the paper also seek to understand the reasons why a particular factor influencing employees' attitudes garner the most positive attitudes toward organizational change compared with other factors influencing employees' attitudes. Finally, the study intends to provide suggestions on how the organizations may manipulate on the factors influencing employees' attitudes in order to

facilitate the organizational change process and subsequently ensuring the success of the programs introduced.

The reason why public sector is chosen as the prime subject of this study is because; Malaysian public sector currently undergoes immense administrative reforms in order to improve service delivery to the public. Reforms are dictated by the need to increase efficiency, effectiveness and productivity in order to speed up the implementation of development policies and deliver economic goods to the people (Ahmad Atory, 1995).

Among reforms undertaken by the government include the "Malaysia Incorporated" policy, downsizing the civil service, service process reengineering, IT culture and e-government, client's charter, quality and productivity improvement drives, as well as reforms introduced in the sphere of personnel and financial management (Noore Alam Siddiquee, 2006). In order to introduce these reforms in the public sector, it requires significant organizational change to revamp the traditional way into a flexible, market driven and result oriented one. Hence, the researchers are of the view that, public sector would be a better candidate in order to capture the concept of organizational change.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the factors influencing employees' attitudes toward organizational change in the public sector. The main reason why this study was carried out is because Malaysia has since the past decades until now followed the global trends and introduced major reforms and innovations in various areas of the public sector (Noore Alam Siddiquee, 2008). Among the transformation introduced are in the areas of human resource management, budgetary and financial management. New Public Management (NPM) concept has gained huge influence internationally. Political and administrative elites in Malaysia are fast to adopt many of the principles of NPM model in its administration (Noore Alam Siddiquee, 2010).

Reforms and transformations require changes especially on the part of employees who have to execute the task under said reforms. However, most researches who conducted study on the implementation aspect (Aini & Hasmiah, 2011) of the administrative reforms in Malaysia only focused at the process and the system management as well as the public as the public sector's customers (Ramlah, Norshidah, Abd Rahman, & Murni, 2011). Hence, the researchers would like to study about the human aspect in the public service with regards to change introduced as a result of administrative reforms. This research gap is an opportunity for the researchers to bridge the gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Attitudes of Employees toward Change

According to Robbins (2000), attitudes are defined as assessing statements, either positive or negative concerning peoples, objects or events. Hence, they are a sign of how

one sense and experience about something. It is also defined by Vecchio (1988) as a thought charged with feeling that predispose a set of actions to an exact group of stimuli.

Referring to Griffin and Moorhead (2010), attitudes defined a person's complexes of feelings and viewpoint about specific ideas, condition or other people Schermerhorn et al (2008) defined attitude as a predisposition to responds in a positive or negative way to someone or something in one's environment. On the other hand, Kreitner & Kinicki (2004) defined attitudes as a learned predisposition toward a given object.

Luthans (1989) identified that attitudes are a multifaceted cognitive process but can be classify in three ways. Firstly, attitudes tend to persevere unless something is done to modify them. Secondly, attitudes can fall anywhere along a continuum from very positive to very negative. Thirdly, attitudes are bound toward some object about which a person has beliefs and feelings.

Robbins (2000) highlighted that there are three components of attitudes which are cognitive, affective and behavioral. Cognitive component of an attitude deals with the opinion or belief segment of an attitude. Besides, an affective component of an attitude concerns with the emotional or feeling section of an attitude. Whereby, the behavioral component of an attitude refers to the intention to behave in a certain way toward someone or something.

In spite of that, Luthans (1989) views attitudes as comprises of three basic components which are emotional, informational and behavioral. Notwithstanding the dissimilar terms uses by Luthans (1989) and Robbins (2000), nonetheless they carry the same meaning. The model of attitudes as proposed by the two authors is the same.

However, according to Griffin & Moorhead (2010) they viewed attitudes components as consisting of affect, cognition and intention. This view is also supported by Schermerhorn et al (2008); Kreitner & Kinicki (2004) who contend that the link between attitudes and behavior is tentative whereby attitudes result in intended behavior. That means, this intention may or may not be carried out in a given circumstance. Fishbein (1966) as cited in Nepumuceno& Porto, 2010, has a different label to the third component although the meaning is the same. He refers to the third component as "conative". Luthans (1989) contends that, the affective part is actually the attitudes itself.

With regard to the three components of attitudes as discussed above, only the behavioral component can be directly observed, whereas one cannot see the emotional as well as the cognitive components. Rather, these two components can only be inferred (Luthans, 1989).

Definitions of Organizational Change

According to Daft (2010), organizations are made of people and their relationships with one another. People and their relationships with one another are influenced by change in products, technologies, structure and strategy. For that reason, in a team-based structure, employees must learn how to use new technologies or promote novel products or work effectively.

Change is defined as a combination of external and internal forces acting in the organization. These actions will influence the environment within which it operates (Dillard, 2011). Sometimes, a change may produce what appears to be only a minimal reaction at the time it is begins. However, resistance will surfaces weeks, months, or even years later.

Reactions to change will increase and they go off in some response that seems totally out of proportion to the change action (Robbins, 2002).

In the context of organization behavior, 'organizational change' refers to organization-broad modification rather than to small alteration such as making adjustment to a process or adding a new person. Examples of organization-broad modification might include a change in mission, the adoption of major new technologies, mergers and restructuring operations. Several experts refer organizational transformation as to designate an essential and major reorientation in the way the organization functions (Zeffane & Fitzgerld, 2006).

Moreover, organizational change is referring to a planned modification of organization components to inject the level of efficiency and the effectiveness of the organization (Cawsey & Deszca, 2007). As for example, it has been reported that company secretaries, directors and auditors will need to be ready to face the changes that will take place in the corporate landscape, with the implementation of the new Malaysian Code on Corporate Governance early next year (bernama.com, 2011).

Soparnot (1981) stated that organizational change is a solutions package from various parties within an organization, which responds to various interconnected parties within the environment. Therefore, it shows the importance of the contents of the change which is the solution itself.

The same research also emphasizes the idea of a contextual stance, which comprise of content, context and process (Pettigrew, 1985). The organizational change will influence the person who works in the organization. When the organization enhance their effectiveness in term of organization components (organizational mission and vision, strategy, goals, structure, process or system, technology, and people), they eventually increase their ability to generate value for those designed to serve (Cawsey & Deszca, 2007).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study embarked on the following objectives:
1. To examine the relationship between factors influencing employees' attitudes and organizational change in public sector
2. To identify the factor influencing employees' attitudes that garner the most positive attitudes towards organizational change

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researcher was using descriptive research (quantitative research method) to acquire the information need for the study. For this research, the researchers used primary and secondary data. For the primary data, the researchers use questionnaires as a data collection method. Whereas for the secondary data, the researchers used the data from books, journals, online articles from the internet, newspaper articles et cetera in order to collect information.

Unit of Analysis

Unit of analysis refers to the respondents who were the focus in this study. In this research, the respondents were the employees of Melaka state government. The public sector was our prime focus in order to elicit information regarding the factors that influence the attitude of employees in the organization towards the organizational change. The researchers distributed the questionnaires to employees from five different departments in the Malacca state government. The reason why five different departments were chose because the researches would like to ensure the generalizability of the findings.

Sample Size

The researchers were not using the whole population of employees at Malacca state government in order to distribute questionnaires. Rather, sampling the population would be more appropriate considering the limited time given for conducting this research. Hence, the researchers would be able to draw the conclusions of this research based on the sampling.

In this research, the sample size of respondents was 123 employees which came from 5 different departments in Malacca state government which are Department of Human Resource Management, Department of Corporate Communication, Department of Management Information System, Department of Library Management and Department of K-economy. The sample size was chosen after the researchers had referred to the Krejcie & Morgan table in order to determine a suitable sample size.

Sampling Technique

The researchers were using stratified random sampling technique in this study. Stratified random sampling is done by dividing a population into smaller groups known as strata. Since the employees are already been divided based on departments, then the departments were the strata. After that, a simple random sampling is done within the respective stratum, whereby it was done in a number proportional to the stratum's size.

In order to sample the population of employees by using simple random sampling method, firstly the researchers need to get hold of the employees' name lists. The name lists were downloaded from Malacca state government website. Since, only five departments were required for the purpose of this research, hence only name lists of employees from those five afore-mentioned departments were downloaded. After that, pieces of paper with the name of employees on them per se were folded and put into a container based on departments.

Every time the researcher picked one piece of paper, the name of employee's was highlighted on the name lists corresponding to the name drew. To re-draw, the piece of papers which have been drawn were put back into the container in order to maintain the same probability of equal chance to be selected for all employees. The simple random sampling method was done not based on the whole sample size, rather based on departments. This is so that to ensure each department has representatives that coincide with the population of the departments.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Questions 1: What are the relationship between factors influencing employees' attitudes and organizational change in public sector?

Table 1: Correlations

	Internal Communications	Work-related Values	Emotional Intelligence	Organizational Commitment
Spearman Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	.788 .000 123	.641 .000 123	.586 .000 123	.611 .000 123

The Spearman's rank-order Correlation coefficient, 1-tailed was calculated for each variable to examine the relationship between factors influencing employees' attitudes and organizational change. Based on the table above, it indicates that all the factors has significant and positive relationship with organizational change in public sector in which (r= .788, p<0.05) (r= .641, p<0.05) (r=.611, p<0.05) and (r=.586, p<0.05) respectively.

Research Questions 2: what are the factor influencing employees' attitudes that garner the most positive attitudes towards organizational change?

Table 2: Coefficients

	Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)		3.205	.002
	Internal Communications	.992	6.342	.000
	Work-related Values	-.216	-1.405	.163
	Emotional Intelligence	.184	1.872	.064
	Organizational Commitment	-.254	-2.641	.009

From the table, it shows that the highest mean is internal communications which is 0.992. This is followed by emotional intelligence which is 0.184. In addition, work-related values contributed by -0.216 and organizational commitment contributed by -0.254.Therefore, it indicate that internal communications is the most influential factor that garner the positive attitudes towards organizational change by indicated that r=.000, p<0.05.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research it can be concluded that the factor influencing employees' attitude that garners the most positive relationship towards organizational change is internal communication. Meanwhile, factor which has the least influence on employees' attitude towards organizational change is work-related values of employees. All of the factors have been verified to be correlated with the organizational change. Even though internal communications is found out to exhibit the strongest relationship towards organizational change and the factor which most influence organizational change, it doesn't mean the role of the other factors (work-related values, emotional intelligence and organizational commitment) should be downplayed when instituting organizational change. Rather, the organizations should strive to improve the factors involve in their organizations, though emphasis should be on the internal communications in order to influence employees' attitude toward organizational change.

For the recommendations, managers should improve internal communications by inserting some emotional in them, managers should have work-related values congruent to employees, organizations should send employees to training in order to improve their emotional intelligence and organizations should ignite employees' engagement towards the organization.

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