

# Leadership for Change and Principles in a Culture of Change

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## ABSTRACT

### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the role of leadership in driving a culture of change in organizations, especially in the Indonesian context. Using a qualitative approach and literature study method, this study explores theories and findings from various scientific sources to understand the relationship between leadership style and principles of culture of change. Data were obtained through a systematic review of books, scientific journals, and research reports in the last 15 years. The results of the study indicate that transformational, participatory, and value-based leadership play a central role in creating an organizational climate that supports change. In addition, cultural principles such as openness, collaboration, and continuous learning are important elements in forming an adaptive organization. The integration of leadership and cultural values not only strengthens the success of structural change but also accelerates the transformation of work behavior and mentality. These findings emphasize the importance of a holistic and contextual change strategy in facing the dynamic challenges of organizations in the modern era.*

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## A. Introduction

Change is inevitable in the dynamic life of modern organizations. In facing the challenges of globalization, digitalization, and uncertainty, organizations are required to transform continuously. In the midst of this change process, leadership has a strategic role in directing, guiding, and motivating all elements of the organization to remain aligned with the transformation vision. According to Kotter (1996), the failure of organizational change is often caused by the weak role of leadership in creating a sense of urgency and a culture that supports change.

Organizational culture, which reflects collective values, beliefs, and habits, plays an important role in determining the success or failure of change. Schein (2010) states that sustainable change can only occur if the organizational culture also undergoes transformation. However, changing culture requires a leadership approach that is not only structural, but also transformative and participatory. In this context, the principles of a culture of change such as openness, collaboration, and continuous learning are the main foundations.

Change leaders are not only required to have a clear vision, but must also be able to internalize the values of change to all members of the organization. Yukl (2013) underlines the importance of effective communication, individual empowerment, and the creation of a work environment that supports innovation as part of a change leadership strategy. This shows that leadership is not only about direction, but also about forming an adaptive culture. In Indonesia, the challenges of organizational change are also colored by local cultural factors that are full of hierarchy and patronage. This condition can be an obstacle to transformation if not anticipated with a contextual leadership style. According to Thoha (2010), effective leadership in Indonesia needs to combine local values with modern principles to create a more organic synergy of change culture.

Various organizations in the public and private sectors show different results in implementing change. Organizations that are able to instill a culture of learning and empowerment tend to be more successful in change than those that only focus on procedures and structures. Robbins and Judge (2015) explain that organizational behavior that supports change is influenced by perceptions of fairness, emotional involvement, and managerial support.

In practice, change often faces resistance both individually and collectively. Therefore, leaders must be driving agents who not only understand the mechanisms of change, but are also able to manage resistance with a humanistic approach. Burnes (2017) stated that the success of change is greatly influenced by the leader's ability to build trust and commitment through a process of dialogue and participation. A crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic is clear evidence of the importance of adaptive leadership and a responsive organizational culture. Many organizations fail to adapt because they rely on rigid structures without adjusting their working principles to new conditions. This shows that transformation requires not only policies, but also profound changes in the values and daily practices of the organization (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009).

Therefore, it is important to further examine how leadership can shape the principles of a culture of change in the context of Indonesian organizations. This understanding will be the foundation for developing a leadership strategy that is not only able to drive structural change, but also sustainable cultural change. Research by Herold et al. (2008) shows that perceptions of leadership effectiveness are directly proportional to the level of success of organizational change. This study emphasizes the importance of employee emotional involvement as a mediator between leadership style and change outcomes. Meanwhile, research by Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) highlighted the need for leaders to build readiness for change as an initial step to create a strong culture of change. In the Indonesian context, a study by Hartini and Ciptomulyono (2015) showed that organizational change in the manufacturing sector is only effective when accompanied by transformational leadership that encourages innovation and employee engagement.

However, these studies still have limitations, especially in viewing the relationship between leadership and organizational culture transformation more comprehensively. The majority of studies tend to emphasize the technical aspects of change and have not explored deeply enough how cultural values are formed and internalized by leaders in the context of change. In addition, there is still little research that examines change leadership in the context of Indonesian organizational culture which is collectivistic and hierarchical. This leaves a research gap regarding how leaders can combine modern approaches with local values in forming a relevant and sustainable culture of change.

This gap provides a space to answer the question of how leadership can be a driving force for a culture of change, not only from a structural aspect but also from a value and practice perspective. By filling this gap, research can provide significant theoretical and practical contributions in developing a leadership model based on a culture of change. The novelty of this research lies in its efforts to combine the perspective of transformational leadership with the principles of local Indonesian culture in forming a culture of change. This research seeks to develop an approach that is not only adaptive to the demands of global change, but also sensitive to the local sociocultural context.

In addition, this research offers a conceptual framework that emphasizes the role of leaders as facilitators of change values that are organically embedded in organizational culture. Thus, a culture of change is not only a slogan or formal document, but is manifested in real daily behavior and practices in the organization. The reality on the ground shows that many organizations experience stagnation in the process of change because they do not take into account aspects of culture and leadership in an integrated manner. Change is often forced from above without involving a deep

understanding of the values that live in the organization. This causes resistance and a low level of success of change.

This fact reinforces the urgency of the need for leaders who are able to bridge the strategic direction of the organization and the values embraced by its members. In this context, the role of leadership for change and the principles of a culture of change become very important to be studied scientifically and applicatively.

## **B. Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method to examine in depth the relationship between change leadership and principles in a culture of change. A qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to capture the meaning, perspective, and complex social dynamics behind the phenomenon of organizational change (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Through exploration of texts, documents, and previous research results, this study seeks to understand the process of leadership and organizational culture transformation contextually.

The literature study method is used to examine relevant theories, concepts, and research results, both from scientific journals, academic books, and trusted research reports. Literature studies allow researchers to identify patterns, differences, and gaps in previous studies in order to formulate a stronger analytical framework (Boote & Beile, 2005). The literature reviewed includes international and national sources so that an understanding of the global and local contexts can be obtained in a balanced way.

The data collection process was carried out through a systematic search of academic databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. Inclusion criteria were set, such as relevance to the topic of change leadership, focus on organizational culture, and publications in the last 15 years. The data were then coded and analyzed thematically using the Miles and Huberman (2014) approach involving three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

The validity of the study was maintained by conducting theory triangulation, namely comparing and verifying the results of the interpretation with various theories and different data sources. In addition, the analysis was carried out reflectively to ensure that the interpretation of the data was not trapped in the subjective bias of the researcher. Academic honesty was maintained through careful reference recording and the use of direct quotations in the analysis section.

With this approach, the study is expected to be able to provide a strong conceptual understanding of how leadership can drive organizational cultural change. In addition, this method also allows the development of an applicable theoretical framework, which can be used as a basis for designing change leadership strategies in various types of organizations.

## **C. Results and Discussion**

### **1. Result**

#### **a. The Role of Leadership in Driving Organizational Change**

One of the main findings of this study is that the success of organizational change is highly dependent on the leadership style applied. Transformational leaders have a significant influence in moving individuals and groups to step out of their comfort zones and accept change as part of the organizational growth process (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Visionary leadership also encourages the creation of a sense of purpose that unites collective direction and energy.

In addition, the ability of leaders to build two-way communication is key to creating trust amidst the uncertainty of change. Yukl (2013) emphasized that effective leaders must be able to convey a vision of change clearly and consistently, and listen to feedback from members of the organization. Inclusive dialogue strengthens social cohesion and minimizes resistance to change.

This study also found that leaders who show empathy and concern for the psychological needs of employees are more successful in building emotional engagement. Herold et al. (2008) showed that emotional factors have a major influence on acceptance of change. Therefore, humane

leadership is the foundation in the process of cultural transformation. However, in some literature, obstacles are also found that arise when leadership is authoritarian or bureaucratic. This type of leadership style tends to create fear and false obedience which actually strengthens the status quo culture. Therefore, it is important for leaders to combine firmness of direction with openness to the internal dynamics of the organization (Burnes, 2017).

**b. Principles of Change Culture in Organizations**

A culture of change cannot be formed only through documents or vision-mission statements, but must be instilled through consistent daily practices. Principles such as collaboration, continuous learning, openness to innovation, and empowerment are at the heart of a healthy culture of change (Schein, 2010). Leaders are responsible for being the main role models in implementing these principles. These findings indicate that organizations that successfully change are those that are able to foster a culture of trust and psychological safety, which allows their members to convey ideas without fear. Edmondson (1999) states that a psychologically safe work environment encourages involvement and innovation. This is one of the important principles in forming a participatory culture of change.

Another very essential principle is periodic reflection and evaluation. Organizations that continuously evaluate their practices and policies tend to be more adaptive to environmental changes. According to Argyris and Schön (1996), double-loop organizational learning is a characteristic of a culture that continues to evolve and is not stagnant. However, in the context of a collectivistic culture like Indonesia, these principles need to be adapted. The principles of hierarchy and social harmony still need to be maintained, but must be reinterpreted so as not to become obstacles to innovation. A study by Hofstede (2010) shows that adapting change values to local culture is key to the success of organizational culture change.

**c. Integration of Leadership and Culture in Change Practices**

The integration of leadership and change culture is a central theme raised from the literature. Leaders who succeed in creating long-term change are those who are able to align the formal structure of the organization with the informal values that live in the organizational culture (Kotter, 1996). Organizational transformation cannot be separated from the process of forming a new culture that supports strategic direction.

In practice, leaders play the role of "cultural architects" who design, instill, and monitor change values on an ongoing basis. This requires symbolic approaches, such as the use of change narratives, rewards for innovative behavior, and organizational rituals that support new values (Deal & Kennedy, 2000). These symbolic actions strengthen cohesion and accelerate the internalization of culture. Other findings suggest that leaders need to actively involve all levels of the organization in the process of cultural change. Not only top management, but also informal leaders and work communities must be part of the process. According to Cameron & Quinn (2011), cultural change is more effective if it is carried out in a participatory manner and is based on open dialogue.

However, this integration requires consistency between words and deeds. When leaders fail to show consistency, the credibility and legitimacy of the change will be weakened. Therefore, alignment between policies, incentive systems, leadership styles, and the desired culture is a key factor in success change (Robbins & Judge, 2015).

**2. Discussion**

**a. The Role of Leadership in Driving Organizational Change**

Research findings show that leadership has a central contribution to the success of organizational change. This is in line with the Transformational Leadership theory developed by Bass and Avolio (1994), where leaders not only organize, but also inspire and motivate members to

go beyond personal interests in order to achieve collective goals. Visionary leadership plays a role in forming positive perceptions of the direction of change.

In addition, effective communication and empowerment are important aspects in fostering organizational member involvement. Yukl (2013) stated that leaders who distribute authority and create a dialogic environment tend to succeed in reducing resistance. Open communication strengthens trust as the basis for healthy working relationships during the change process. Furthermore, the value-based leadership approach is also relevant in this context. Burns (1978) explained that leaders who integrate ethical values in decision making will find it easier to build legitimacy and loyalty. Therefore, leadership effectiveness is not only seen from the final results, but also from the process of transforming values and behavior of organizational members.

#### b. Principles of Change Culture in Organizations

The principles of change culture that have been successfully identified include openness, collaboration, continuous learning, and innovation. These principles refer to the adaptive culture approach explained by Schein (2010), where organizational culture must be able to adapt to external dynamics without losing its internal identity. These values need to be used as a reference in policy making and managerial practices.

Edmondson (1999) emphasized the importance of psychological safety as a key element in building a culture of change. When individuals feel psychologically safe, they are more willing to take risks, provide input, and innovate. Therefore, leaders must create an inclusive workspace so that these cultural principles can be internalized effectively.

A healthy culture of change also requires a reflective and evaluative system. Argyris and Schön (1996) emphasized that deep organizational learning (double-loop learning) can only occur if a culture of reflection is embedded in daily work. This emphasizes that transformation is not only structural, but also cognitive and affective.

#### c. Integration of Leadership and Culture in Change Practices

The findings show that integration between leadership and culture is the key to successful sustainable change. The Theory of 8 Stages of Change by Kotter (1996) emphasizes that change does not only depend on structure, but also the formation of a new culture. The final stage of change is strengthening the culture that supports the new strategic direction of the organization.

Deal and Kennedy (2000) emphasize the importance of symbolism in cultural change. Leaders must use symbols, narratives, and rituals to convey messages of change and reinforce new values. When these values are translated into real actions, the new culture will be more quickly internalized by members of the organization.

Cameron and Quinn (2011) state that successful cultural change requires the involvement of all levels of the organization. Therefore, leaders need to design a collaborative strategy that allows for the distribution of informal leadership. This collaboration is not only about technical involvement, but also strengthening a sense of ownership of the change process.

### D. Conclusion

This study concludes that leadership has a strategic role in creating and growing a culture of change. Visionary, communicative, and inclusive leaders are able to move members of the organization to accept and undergo the transformation process positively. Change is not merely structural, but demands a transformation of collective values and behaviors that can only be achieved through culture-oriented leadership. In addition, the principles of a culture of change such as openness, learning, and collaboration are important foundations in creating an adaptive and innovative organization. The integration of leadership style and cultural values must be strategically designed so



that change becomes part of the organization's identity. These findings reinforce the importance of a contextual approach in designing organizational change policies in Indonesia.

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