MEASURING EMPLOYEE READINESS TO CHANGE:
A CASE STUDY OF AN ORGANIZATION IN MYANMAR

การวัดความพร้อมของพนักงานที่มีผลต่อการเปลี่ยนแปลง
กรณีศึกษา บริษัท กขค ในประเทศพม่า

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Abstract

The study aims to measure the level of individual readiness to change of the government enterprises in Myanmar, which are going to be independent. The research has been evidence of why the organizations need to have changed. This study is adopted the quantitative analysis so that a structured-survey questionnaire is applied for data collection.

The findings of the results indicate that the core self-evaluation and some demographic factors significantly related to the individual readiness to change. Moreover, the context characteristics and work attitude have a significant relationship to the readiness to change through the perceived impact of change. The result of this study could point to the organization to consider the importance of readiness level in the implementation of the organizational change.

Keywords: Government enterprise, Organizational change, Individual readiness to change

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มุ่งศึกษาระดับความพร้อมต่อการเปลี่ยนแปลงขององค์กรภาครัฐในประเทศพม่าที่กำลังปรับเปลี่ยนแนวทางการบริหารมาสู่ระบบเอกชน โดยมุ่งหาสาเหตุการเปลี่ยนแปลงขององค์กรโดยใช้วิจัยเชิงปริมาณด้วยแบบสอบถามในการสำรวจข้อมูล จากผลการศึกษาพบว่า ตัวแปรการประเมินตนเองและข้อมูลส่วนตัวของกลุ่มตัวอย่างมีความสำคัญทางสถิติอย่างมีนัยสำคัญต่อความพร้อมในการยอมรับความเปลี่ยนแปลง นอกจากนี้ตัวแปรด้านสภาพแวดล้อมและทัศนคติของบุคลากรก็มีความสัมพันธ์ต่อการยอมรับความเปลี่ยนแปลงของบุคลากรด้วยเช่นกัน ผลที่ได้จากการศึกษาปัจจัยดังกล่าวนี้จะช่วยให้องค์กรภาครัฐที่กำลังออกนอกระบบเข้าใจและให้ความสำคัญต่อปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อการเปลี่ยนแปลง เพื่อหามาตรการลดการสูญเสียบุคลากรที่มีคุณภาพจากองค์กรในอีกทางหนึ่งด้วย

คำสำคัญ: รัฐวิสาหกิจ การเปลี่ยนแปลงองค์กร ความพร้อมต่อการยอมรับความเปลี่ยนแปลงระดับบุคคล

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Introduction

Currently, the speed of challenges is rising dramatically, and thus organizational change might not be considered avoidable (Drucker, 1999). Burke (2002), Armenakis & Harris (2002) and Herold et al. (2008) argued that nearly every organization have experiences about change. Organizational change has been continuing to happen at a high rate in modern organizations. McKinsey & Company (2008) assert that the most significant change initiatives do not meet the full expectations even when there are substantial existing works of literature and studies on organizational change management. Moreover, the change literature regularly quotes and cites the failure rate between 60% and 90% (Burnes, 2009). According to these studies, the particular barriers to implementing change in an enterprise are people and corporate culture. The Gartner group argued that the number one reason for why change initiatives failed is the inability of the people to adjust their behavior, skills, and commitment to their new requirements (Holbeche, 2006). The investigation of people readiness to change is the key to facilitate and make the employees ease the learning to cope with organizational change and efficiently implementing change programs (Vakola, 2014).

This study was done in the emerging country, Myanmar where is facing the change and the employee readiness is vital to get the success of the change. Particularly, in the educational enterprises, "according to the national reform policy, the absolute autonomy and management of each institution are urgently needed along with Myanmar economy and political change," argued Win (2015). Therefore, the question of what level of readiness of the academic workers have towards the change was examined in this research. The results of the study will help not only to make the organization change successfully but also will point out the weak point of the employees and the organization.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze the level of employee readiness to the change by mean of individual characteristics.

2. To examine the relationship between the perceived impact of organizational and the two factors–contextual characteristics and work attitudes.

3. To determine the effect of the perceived impact of change on the employee readiness to change.

4. To explore the mediated effect of the perceived impact of change on the relationship between contextual characteristics and work attitude and readiness to change.

Literature Review

Chonko (2004) defined Organizational change is a shift from one stage to another, or it is concerned with breaking down existing structures and creating new ones. One of the most useful change models is Lewin's change model. There are three steps in the change process-unfreezing, moving and refreezing.

Lewin's model provides a general framework for understanding organizational change. In any organizational change or renewal, a critical first step is "unfreezing" (Smith, 2005). Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder (1993) claimed that Lewin's concept of unfreezing is similar to readiness. Lewin's theories were based on the assumption that planned change, through learning may make individuals understand and reframe their views to solve social conflicts.

Change, being small or large, affects employee attitudes and behaviors due to shifting from the used to everything to another, sometimes, a new one (Shah & Shah, 2010). Potentially change in an organization is bewildered and dramatic (Gleick, 1987; Abrahamson, 2000) because altering from a condition that is familiar to a new one can generate significant uncertainties, anxiety, and ambiguities. In this situation, the employee can evolve different thoughts, feelings, and behaviors towards the condition, which might include painful learning, and relearn and create an impression of uneasiness and stress. Thus, researchers and practitioners need to know the maximum level of employee readiness predictors so that management can endeavor to understand individuals' beliefs, intentions, and perceptions during the implementation of change programs.

Shah & Shah (2010) argued that demography play a significant role in the domain of organizational behavior, and this demographic factor is to be assumed as imperative for developing individuals' cognition to grow up the employee readiness. It includes different variables such as age, gender, marital status, income statement, tenure in organization, tenure in the position, job status, spouse, number of independents, and education level. Shah & Shah (2010) asserted that there was a relationship between employees' number of dependents and readiness for organizational change. That study also proved that employees who had more dependent family members felt welcome and ready for organizational change, and also argued that present employment status is correlated to readiness for change. Therefore, the first hypothesis was proposed: H_1- demographic has the direct influence on the employee readiness to change.

Many authors have concluded that individuals are indoctrinated to react in specific ways when they experience organizational change (Vakola, Oreg & Armenakis, 2013; Oreg, Vakola & Armenakis, 2011; Herold et al., 2008). The higher internal locus of control over the impact of change, the more it improves reaction to the change, consisting higher approval on change (Martin, Jones & Callan, 2006). Wanberg & Banas (2000), Cunningham et al. (2002) argued that the higher levels of employee self-efficiency be directly and positively concerned with the improved acceptance of change, and the higher levels of readiness to change. Individuals' dispositional affectivity is one of the individual characteristics of change and is linked with the reactions positively and negatively. Therefore, the second hypothesis was proposed: H_2- Individual Characteristics directly influence the employee readiness to change.

The context consists of the conditions and environment within which employees function. As an example, a learning enterprise is one in which employees are more likely to accept continuous change (Holt et al., 2007). There are internal and external conditions and characteristics. This research emphasizes on the internal characteristics-trust in management and communication climate. Change recipients who observe their leader as being able to code with change effectively, accept that their management was trustworthy and supportive and feel respected, were more ready to perceive and endorse the change (Wanberg & Banas, 2000; Eby et al., 2000). Regarding communication climate, prior research has illustrated that change recipients who receive adequate information, are more likely to accept changes (Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Vakola (2014) proved that perceiving management as trustworthy, being confident in management's abilities and having faith in its intentions, and receiving all the necessary information influence the way employees examine the pros and cons of change, leading to a higher level of individual readiness to change. Therefore, the third and fourth hypothesizes were proposed:

H_3-The trust in management has the direct influence on the perceived impact of change.

H_4-The communication climate has the direct influence on the perceived impact of change.

Oreg, Vakola & Armenakis (2011) assert the existence of a problematic relationship between job satisfaction and attitudes toward change. Some employees who are not satisfied with their job view change as an opportunity for improvement, whereas other employees who are euphoric with their jobs may resist change because they wish to preserve the state of a situation. Vakola (2014) argued that satisfied employees have the higher level of change readiness because they view the change as the positive consequences of altering, and then they decide to welcome and accept change. Therefore, the next hypothesis is proposed:

H_5-Job satisfaction has the direct influence on the perceived impact of change.

According to Holt et al. (2007) and Vakola (2014), when employees accept their organization's high priorities as being aligned with goals of the change, they accept that the organization can implement change successfully. Readiness is influenced by the extent to which employees believe in their organization's management to change, trust those who lead the way and set the example and receive all the necessary information regarding the change. These variables were selected by empirical and review work, which identifies them as central themes of readiness to organizational change. Eby et al. (2000) argued, "Perceptions of the organization's readiness for change are rooted in an individual's unique interpretation of the organization's context."

H_6-The impact of change influences directly the readiness to change.

H_7-The perceived impact of change has the mediation influence on the contextual characteristics and work attitude.
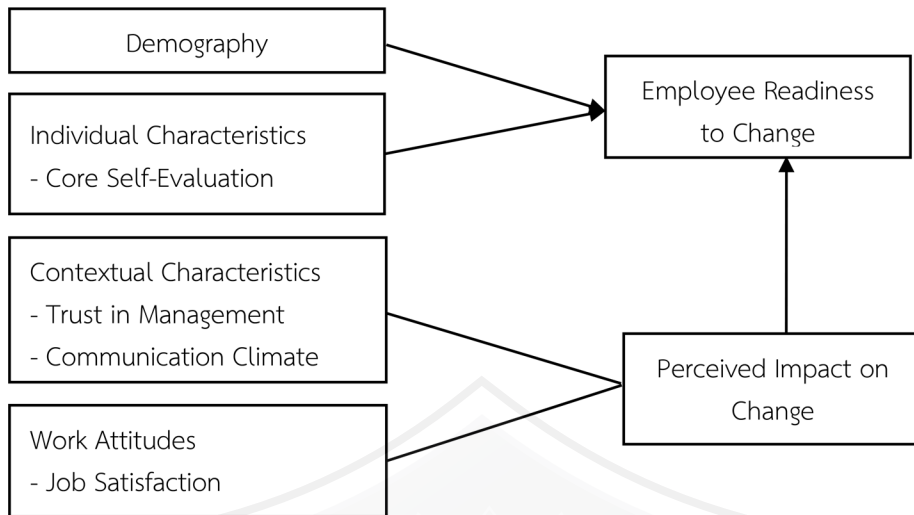
Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
Adapted from Vakola (2014) and Shah & Shah (2010)

Research Methodology

This paper is a typical case study based on a cross-sectional survey that explores the level of readiness to change of the employees who are facing the organizational change. The target population for this study is the academic employees who are working at the University of Economics, going to transform from non-profit to profit organization. The sample population of the study is all academic members of the three universities. According to the list of the Ministry of Education in the 2016-2017 academic year, there have 233, 152, and 114 academic staffs in Yangon University of Economics (YUE), Monywa University of Economics (MUE), and Meiktila University of Economics (MEUE) respectively. The participants were selected randomly from all academic employees worked for the organization.

The questionnaire was constructed based on the previous research. All 32 questions (not including eight demographics) applied the five-point Likert scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high). The data was collected by using online for pretest and paper for the primary study. The pilot study was conducted to test the reliability and validity. 30 academic faculty were collected to assess the reliability of the measurement instruments. The reliability coefficient (α) is the number that shows the consistency or stability of the collected data. The larger the value of the coefficient, the higher level of the reliability of the questionnaires. In this study, reliability coefficient is higher than 0.9, so all items are retained in the questionnaire for the primary study.

Results

The sample was made of 410 employees who worked for public sector institution, University of Economics. Among 410 respondents, 78 respondents (19%) were male, 332 respondents

(81%) were female. The majority of the respondents were above 39 years old (37.8%) followed by 25-29 years old (21.5%) while 20.5% being between 30-34 years old. The majority of the participants was single 255 (62.2%) and married 149 (36.3%). The respondents who got the position of lecturer 151 (56.8%) and assistant lecturer 126 (30.7%) are the majority. The main percentage of the respondents was 82.2% belonging to master degree. The majority of respondents had from 4 to 6 family members (48.8%). 42.9% (179) had been working for the organization above 9 years, 22.2% for between 1 and 3 years, and 19.5% for between 3 and 6 years. The respondents comprised the ones who earned between MMK 250,001 and 300,000 (40.5%) and followed between MMK 200,001 and 250,000 (24.6%) and between MMK 150,000 and 200,000 (32.2%).

Table 1 Descriptive Analysis

	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	Std. Deviation	N
Individual readiness to change	3.76	0.66	410
Core-self evaluation	3.92	0.52	410
Perceived impact of change	3.86	0.66	410
Trust in management	3.76	0.59	410
Communication climate	3.63	0.56	410
Job satisfaction	3.80	0.58	410

The descriptive analysis illustrated in table 1 that the mean value of the variables is between 3.63 and 3.92. These values are higher than the mid-point based on five-point scale.

Table 2 Demographic factors towards the employee readiness to change

Demographic factors	F-value	Sig
Gender	0.507	0.477
Age	6.074**	0.000
Marital status	0.594	0.667
Current position	3.407*	0.009
Educational level	8.857**	0.000
Family members	0.048	0.986
Working experiences	2.926*	0.021
Monthly income	4.272*	0.005

Regarding H_1, independent sample T-test for gender factor and one-way ANOVA for the last ones are used. Table 2 advocated that age, current position, educational level, working experiences and monthly income have the positive significance of individual readiness to change.

Table 3 Result of Tukey HSD Test for significant differences between Age and Readiness to change

(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
25-29 years	Less than 25	-.37500	.23802	.514
	30- 34years	-.27378[*]	.09893	.046
	35-39 years	-.45227[*]	.10058	.000
	Above 39	-.35339[*]	.08603	.000

[*]The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

In the table 3, Tukey post-hoc test results revealed that the age between 35 to 39 years (p = 0.000) and above 39 years (p = 0.000) was significantly higher than 30 to 34 years (p = 0.046). The other two groups have no statistically different level of readiness. Regarding current position, the Tukey test showed that it did not display any exact relationship between position level differences.

Table 4 Result of Tukey HSD Test for significant differences between Education Level and Readiness to change

(I) Education Level	(J) Education Level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Master	Bachelor	-.17227	.37579	.891
	Ph.D.	-.36149*	.08611	.000

[*]The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Illustrate in table 4, the Tukey test, between the education group Ph.D. and master have the largest differences or statistically significant at p = 0.000, while bachelor has the same group which is less related.

Table 5 Result of Tukey HSD Test for significant differences between Working Experiences and Readiness to change

(I) Working Experiences	(J) Working Experiences	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
1 to 3 years	Less than 3 years	-.31648	.19398	.478
	3 to 6 years	-.04802	.10027	.989
	6 to 9 years	-.07402	.11517	.968
	Above 9 years	-.24507*	.08447	.032

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

About working experiences, the Tukey post-hoc test in table 5 revealed that there is a statistically significantly difference in measuring individual readiness to change between 1 to 3 years and above 9 years (p = 0.032), whereas the other groups did not have any exact relationship.

Table 6 Result of Tukey HSD Test for significant differences between Monthly income and Readiness to change

(I) Monthly income	(J) Monthly income	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Above MMK 300,001	MMK 150,000-200,000	.39561*	.11556	.004
	MMK 200,001-250,000	.31370*	.11440	.032
	MMK 250,001-300,000	.22751	.10694	.146

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Regarding monthly income factors, the Tukey test in table 6 revealed that the income level between MMK 150,000-200,000 and above MMK 300,001 (0.004) is statistically and significantly higher than the level between MMK 200,001-250,000 and above MMK 300,001 (p = 0.032).

Table 7 Core self-evaluation towards the employee readiness to change

Model	Std. Error	Standardized coefficient Beta (β)	t-value	Sig
Core self-evaluation	0.050	0.612[**]	15.629	0.000

Note: R = 0.612, [**]significant at 0.01

About H_2, linear regression analysis illustrated in table 7 that the core self-evaluation was related to individual readiness to the change significantly and positively at p < 0.01.

The final set of hypothesis H_3 to H_7 deal with the analysis of mediating effect between predictors and criterion variable. Baron & Kenny (1986) proved that the three regression equations must be met to examine the mediation. The first equation is that the independent variables must effect on a mediator. Second, the predictors must be significantly related to the dependent variable. Third, both the independent variables and mediator must be significantly related to the outcome variable. They said that separate coefficients for each equation are predicted and tested. If all these equations hold in the forecasted direction, then the impact of predictors on the criterion variable must be less in the third statement than in the second. Also, one situation is that the relationship between dependent and predictors is weaker (partial mediation) or non-significant (full mediation) when the proposed mediator is put in the regression equation.

Table 8 Multiple regression analysis of trust in management (TIM), communication climate (CC), job satisfaction (JS) and perceived impact of change (PIC)

Model	Std. Error	Standardized coefficients Beta (β)	t-value	Sig
Trust in management	0.066	0.276[**]	4.603	0.000
Communication climate	0.067	0.209[**]	3.669	0.000
Job satisfaction	0.065	0.198[**]	3.471	0.001

Note: R = 0.603, R^2 = 0.364, [**]significant at 0.01

As described in table 8, all predictors explained 36% of the variance in the impact of the change. The t-values of three predictors are higher than 2, so that it represents the significant impact of independent variables on the dependent variable. The table indicates that trust in management (TIM), communication climate (CC) and job satisfaction (JS) have a significant and positive influence on the perceived impact of the change regarding standardized coefficient value (β).

Table 9 Multiple regression analysis of trust in management (TIM), communication climate (CC), job satisfaction (JS) and individual readiness to change (IRC)

Model	Std. Error	Standardized coefficients Beta (β)	t-value	Sig
Trust in management	0.063	0.223**	3.884	0.000
Communication climate	0.064	0.194**	3.554	0.000
Job satisfaction	0.062	0.313**	5.721	0.000

Note: R = 0.645, R^2 = .416, **significant at 0.01

As described in table 9, all the variables included in the model seem to have explained around 42% variance in the dependent variable. According to the t-value of the factors, the three predictors are significant independent variables of the dependent variable. Moreover, the table describes that job satisfaction (β = 0.0.313) is stronger than trust in management (β = 0.223) and communication climate (β = 0.194). However, the three factors significantly support the individual readiness to change.

Table 10 Multiple regression analysis of trust in management (TIM), communication climate (CC), job satisfaction (JS) and perceived impact of change (PIC) towards individual readiness to change

Model	Std. Error	Standardized coefficients Beta (β)	t-value	Sig
Trust in management	0.051	0.056	1.227	0.221
Communication climate	0.051	0.067	1.567	0.118
Job satisfaction	0.049	0.193**	4.480	0.000
Perceived impact of change	0.037	0.605**	16.394	0.000

Note: R = 0.806, R^2 = 0.649, **significant at 0.01

Table 10 illustrates the results of multiple regression analysis. All the explanatory variables included in the model seem to have explained around 65% variance. The variable job satisfaction (JS) and the perceived impact of change (PIC) are highly statistically significant (p = .000). Whereas the contextual characteristic included TIM and CC is statistically insignificant (p = 0.221 and 0.118). Job satisfaction (β = 0.193) and perceived impact of change (β = 0.605) are solidly and significantly influence the readiness to change, although the trust in management and communication climate are insignificant. Results suggest that two of four variables positively contribute towards individual readiness to change of faculty members.

Regarding relationship between predictors and mediator as an independent factor, the model explained 36% variance. And before the mediator (perceived impact of change) entered into the relationship between predictors and the outcome variable, the coefficient of determination R^2 is 0.412, which explains 42% of the variance in the dependent variable. When the perceived impact of the change that plays as a mediator is entered as a predictor, the value of R^2 increased to 65% of the variance. Moreover, the effect of independent on the dependent factors is less than in third equation than in the second equation (table 9 and 10). Therefore, these three regression equations hold the predicted direction and it implies that the PIC is a good predictor that has a significant impact on the relationship between the two factors – contextual characteristics and work attitude.

Discussion

This study explored the level of readiness to change of the academic faculty members. In support of H_1, the five of eight demographic factors–age, current position, education level, working experiences, and monthly income–are related to the readiness to change. According to ANOVA and post-hoc test result, the oldest employees (above 39 years) have a higher level of readiness to change than the middle ones. Regarding the education level, the employees with the highest degree is more ready than the others. The difference of working experiences among the staffs is also an essential factor in shaping readiness to change of academic staffs. It is also found that the staffs that are maximum experience as a teacher are more willing to change the organization. The employees with the highest position, degree, tenure and income are more willing to change.

According to the results, individual characteristics of the employees are significant to the readiness to change. Most of the academic staffs are confident themselves about the change of the organization in the future. Vakola, Oreg & Armenakis (2013), Oreg, Vakola & Armenakis (2011), Wanberg & Banas (2000), Cunningham et al. (2002) and Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder (1993) proved that the staffs would actively participate when they have the confidence in their ability concerned with their job and Vice versa.

Apart from the individual factors, context is also related to the perceived impact of change. The employees believe that their managers' ability can bring the success for the

organizational change so that they will be perceived the change as the positive attitude. Cunningham et al. (2002) argued that trust in management influence the perceived impact of change. The information about what is going on and what will do in the organization can be communicated by creating effective two-way communication between managers or supervisors and the academic employees in the organization. Wanberg & Banas (2000) proved that communication climate was related to the perception of change.

Regarding work attitudes, most academic staffs are happy in their respective departments, and then, they perceived as a positive if the organizational change is taking place to improve the effectiveness of the organizations. Wanberg & Banas (2000) argued that the more job satisfaction the employees had, the more positive consequences they got. Some employees who are not happy to work for their organization view change as an opportunity of improvement, whereas other employees who are very happy with their jobs may reject change because they wish to preserve the status quo. In other words, satisfied employees are more ready to change because they weigh the positive consequences of changing as significant and therefore decide to embrace change.

Moreover, the perceived impact of the change is positively related to the readiness of academic staffs to change the organization, and being a good mediator between the two factors – contextual characteristics and working attitude and individual readiness to change.

The employees of the economic universities assumed that the change would create the opportunities for them and this belief can lead to disappear the anxiety on the negative impact of change and maintain their level of satisfaction in the organization. Consequently, this situation increases the readiness of the academic staff for the organizational change.

There are some managerial findings of the study be useful for the managers to do proper preparation before implementing the change program. According to the results, sharing knowledge and experience is vital to make the change process successful. Therefore, the department heads can create a corporate culture that encourages the employees to share their knowledge and experience each other by providing workshops and presentations in the organization. The managers can train the employees to promote their self-confidence because the more the employees are confident themselves in their jobs, the more they are positive about the change. Moreover, the managers need to lead the academic staffs to reduce their resistance to change by making their employees to trust them with using their leadership skills. If the employees perceive the change as an opportunity for themselves, they will be ready for this change. Because of the effect of the employees' perception of change on their readiness, the managers need to inform their employees about both the reasons why the organization should change and the benefits of doing the changes. Without the commitment of the employees, the change process cannot

be smooth in the organization. The source of employees' commitment is job satisfaction so that the managers need to support them with enough salaries, sufficient facilities, and enjoyable working environment.

Although the results of the present research are significant, several limitations in the study show scopes for future research. The first limitation associated with the generalizability of the results. Also, the data had collected the respondents by using the one-short question-naire. It might be collected more detail by using interviewing because the organizational change and individual readiness level are very soft and tough on the respondents. Next, the study focuses on three primary variables that influence the individual readiness to change through the perceived impact of change. In reality, the employees' level of readiness to change is more complicated, and they consider more factors than the variables in this study.

According to the limitation of the study, there are several needs for further research. Future research could expand to investigate in another field like another enterprise and the companies that have the plan to do a change. It could add more variables such as another one of the contextual characteristics such as peer relationship, and commitment. The government enterprise in this study is going to do change, so its stage is the pre-change situation. Therefore, in this study, it did not include the process variables. As future research, the process factor could be added the framework. In conclusion, despite this study completes with some limita-tions, its results explicit the beneficial to the University of Economics and other educational institution.

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