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The Role of Meaningful Work in Transformational Leadership and Work Outcomes Relationship

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***Abstract*—**Meaningful work is the topic that will be discussed in this article, especially in changing period. It has an important role because by reaching meaningful work, it will drive to be positive in the workplace. Therefore, task performance will be increased and cynicism about organizational change (CAOC) will be reduced. Moreover, it is influenced by situational factor, which is transformational leadership. In this conceptual paper, the author discusses how the construct of meaningful work influenced by transformational leadership that will have impact on the follower' work outcomes in the organizational change. It is proposed that the construct of meaningful work are susceptible with situational variable. Transformational leaders who are respectful on the process of humanizing the followers affect task performance and reduce CAOC in organizational change.

***Keywords*—**Meaningful work, organizational change, task performance, and work outcomes.

I. Introduction

MEANINGFUL work has become an active area for researchers and practitioners for decades. Ulrich and Ulrich [31] state that making meaning is an important and a lead indicator of long-term organizational success. Frankl [10] has argued that individuals have primary motive to seek meaning in their work. Employees will be more motivated to do their job because they feel meaningfulness in their work. Meaningful work does not only give positive impact for employees but also make sustainability of organization in the future.

May et al. [19] found that meaningful work displays a strong relation to the employees. However, there is still limited literature that concern about meaningful work in changing organization because it is inevitable. Organizational changes induced by market demand, high level of competition, as well as rapid technological change [2]. Organizational environment has an impact to the psychology of employees. Although, meaningfulness is an important individual and organizational concern, but the precise source of meaningfulness is not studied [34].

Wiersma and Morris [34] found that meaningful work must be created by the individuals themselves. They did not argue that leaders and organizational culture had no effect on the achievement of individual significance of meaningful work. Barrick et al. [3] stated that meaningful work influenced by external sources. Meaningful work is an important aspect in the organization and environment of organizations but also expected to contribute for employees in the organization to achieve the meaningful work [13]. It shows that meaningful work is also influenced by external factors. This source can be represented by the leaders to achieve meaningful in the workplace.

Leaders recognize the vital importance of meaning to everyone in organization [31]. Fukushige and Spicer [11] found that meaningful work can be achieved by role of leader as policy makers that have impact on the psychological condition of followers. They assume that leadership needs to be examined whether it is related to the meaningful work. Ulrich and Ulrich [31] argued that the leader has responsibility to direct the organization to reach meaningfulness, the leader must be able to touch multi dimension aspects that are not only limited to the mind and hand, but also leading to heart. It is in line with the theory of *Path-Goal Leadership Theory,* which aims to explain how leaders can help followers to achieve their goals [11]. Leaders must watch out the internal condition of followers. The essential role of leader is respect as a process of humanizing the followers is a form to focus on the individual. Transformational leadership has a positive impact on task performance reducing cynicism about organizational change (CAOC) [5], [15].

Soane et al. [28] found that the meaningful work has a negative effect on absenteeism. Employees are the ones who feel that meaningful work will show a positive attitude towards the progress of organization. It shows that the meaningful work has multiple effect on the progress of organization. To address these organizational changes, the employee must be able to respond positively about organizational changes. Therefore, meaningful work in organizational change will influence employees' work outcomes like CAOC and task performance. The challenges in organizational changes are how to make positive task performance and reduce CAOC.

Herriot (2001) in Cartwright and Holmes [7] states that an employee can make fit with the challenge of a new job, because the roles of organizations that make employees feel meaningful work. Employees' perceptions of organizational change is influenced by the situation of organization [9]. Fukushige and Spicer [11] stated that meaningfulness in the workplace can make employees perform better to achieve organizational success. It shows that meaningful work can give positive impact to organizational success.

This study aims to provide two major contributions. The first aim is to explain the role of the meaningful work in organizational change. This causes, organizational changes become uncertainty on followers. In one hand, Carwright and

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Holmes [7] argued that meaningful work can reduce CAOC, while Barrick et al. [3] stated that the meaningful work can improve task performance. The second aim is to integrate the transformational leadership on task performance and CAOC by looking the role of mediating variables of meaningful work.

II. Literature Review

A. Transformational Leadership

The theory of transformational leadership was developed by Burns in 1978 [4]. The theory of transformational leadership enhanced by Bass and Avolio with empirical research in 1985 [37]. This approach is used to understand the role of leadership. According to Bass and Avolio [4] transformational leadership is the ability to inspire and motivate followers to achieve results that exceed what they had thought before. The presence of transformational leadership makes the followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty, respect for the leader, and they are motivated to do more than what is actually expected.

Afsaneh [1] defined that transformational leadership is attitude or habit that is more complex than the initiation of structure and consideration. Transformational leadership focuses on the exchange between leaders and followers, such as the emphasis on the importance of commitment and mission achievement of the organization. Bass and Avolio [4], stated that transformational leader can motivate followers by means of: 1) increase their awareness of the importance of their task and job; 2) encourage employees to be more concerned with the interests of the organization or team rather than personal interests; and, 3) raise the level of their needs to the higher extent, such as self-actualization. Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that transformational leadership is the ability of a leader to motivate and inspire followers to do the work and achieve results beyond what they thought before.

Bass and Avolio [4] state that transformational leadership includes four indicators. The first indicator is ideal influence, it defined as a process of influencing followers to generate strong emotions and identification with the leader. Winkler [35] cite Bass states that the leader becomes a source of inspiration and ideal influence of identification through enthusiasm and achievements. Furthermore, charismatic leader has a clear vision, so that follower can use it as platform of their behavior.

The second indicator is inspirational motivation, the capacity of a leader to act as role model for the followers. Transformational leaders motivate and inspire followers to share the mission and involve the followers on policy making. Leaders use a variety of symbols and emotional appeal to create a team spirit, so that followers can achieve higher goals. Moreover, the inspirational leader can communicate the expectations of organizational goals, focus on effort or action, and expresses an important goal in simple ways. Yukl [37] mentions that inspiring motivation consists of communicating the attractive vision and using symbols to focus the followers' efforts.

The third indicator is intellectual stimulation. It is a process that is performed by leaders to raise the followers' awareness of the issues and influence followers to look at the problems with new perspective. Leaders will encourage their followers to be creative, innovative, and using new approaches in facing the dynamic environment. These factors encourage followers to actively participate in solving the problem [35].

Fourth indicator is individual consideration, it is the process which account for the individual needs of followers and creates a supportive atmosphere through basic behavioral patterns of leadership. Individual consideration includes providing support, encouragement, and giving experiences on the development of the followers. Individualized consideration can be defined as a coaching and mentoring activity to give feedback and correlate the mission of organization to the follower's needs.

Podsakoff et al. [24] described the dimensions of transformational leadership in six dimensions. First is identifying and articulating the vision in this case of leader is to identify and provide opportunities to employees, divisions, and units in order to thrive. In addition, leaders have to be able to inspire followers to convey his vision forward. Second is providing appropriate model. It means that the leaders have to give an example to his followers in order to follow him. Therefore, the leader must be consistent with the values that have been assigned to serve as an example by his followers. Third is coaching the objectives of group. Organization is an association of different individuals who share different knowledge, culture, and family background. Leaders have to motivate teamwork in a group to achieve the common goals of the organization. Fourth is performing with high expectations. In this case Leaders must be able to demonstrate their hopes to their followers to be the best, as well as improving good quality performance. Fifth is encouraging individual. The followers need encouragement or stimulation from the leader, so that impetus is important to be concerned by leaders to fulfill the emotion and needs of followers. The leader must be sensitive to the conditions of employees to raise employee's loyalty and make the comfortable. The sixth is intellectual stimulation. It is obvious that followers want to grow and become more skillful. However, to achieve it, the leader must encourage them, both from inside and outside. Leader as frontline of organization must be able to encourage followers to be better. For example, the followers are required to rethink what they have done.

B. Meaningful Work

Meaningful work is one of the sources of the meaning in life achievement (Baumester, 1991) [18]. Meaningfulness in the workplace will have an impact on personal and organization. Wiersma and Morris [34] stated that the meaningful work is a focus for individuals and organizations. Meaningful work has an impact on the organization so that the organization needs to consider the meaningful work for followers.

May et al. [19] defines the meaningful work is the value of the work that perceived by followers as goals based on certain

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standard or ideal. Meaningful work is a form of individual perception on environmental conditions to existing jobs. Soane et al. [28] stated that the positive perception on job is related to affective and cognitive processes that can improve their role in the workplace.

The concept of meaningful work is not only an important element of identity and self-esteem, but also reflecting the growth of positive psychology that should be focused for development in several aspects of life and work [7]. The concept of meaningfulness is reflected in two-dimensional meaningful in life and work of employees, thus leading to balance life and work. Chalofsky [8] described that the concept of meaningful work leads to three dimensions, they are: sense of self, the work itself, and sense of balance. The three relationships can be seen in Fig. 1.

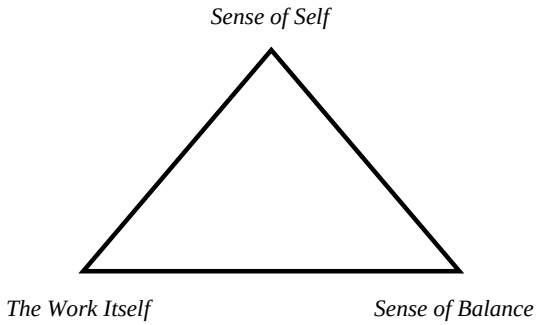


Fig. 1 Meaningful in the Work Place: An Integrative Framework [8]

C. Task Performance and Cynicism about Organizational Change

Organizational change will increase uncertainty and make employees cynical and less trust [22]. Rubin et al. [25] defines CAOC as a sign view that changes in vain and wrong placement program related to facilitator changes, usually by management. The definition illustrates that management has a role in reducing employee's tendency on CAOC. The cynicism can appear because of errors and lack of education about the importance of change.

CAOC comes due to lack of a persuasive approach by a leader. Thus, Cartwright and Holmes [7] stated in order to reduce the CAOC, there are three steps can be done as following. First, empowering employees to deliver and express authority associated with the aspirations of the organization. Second, the organization must be able to provide fair treatment to all elements of the organization. The justice can be known by the time management has been structured well. Third, Management provides an understanding for employees to learn.

CAOC will have an impact on the sustainability of the organization. Therefore, if it is not addressed, it can threaten the existence of the organization. Feldman (2000) in Cartwright and Holmes [7] stated that CAOC is a new paradigm about relationship between leader and follower as a result of ineffective leadership and management, the new agreement, and the slowness of the organizational growth.

Since CAOC will make a less harmonious relationship within the organization, indeed CAOC must be solved by leaders because, otherwise, it will cause negative attitude of the employees in the workplace. The negative attitude can be minimized by various measurement taken by the leaders, such as: employee involved in formulating the strategy, employee empowerment, and organizational justice. Dean et al. (1998) in Cartwright and Holmes [7] argued that employees CAOC will lead to a negative attitude which is reflected in the three dimensions.

a. Inequal integrity in the organization
b. Negative impact on the organization
c. Tendency cause deviate attitudes and critical behaviors to the organization by the consistency of the belief.

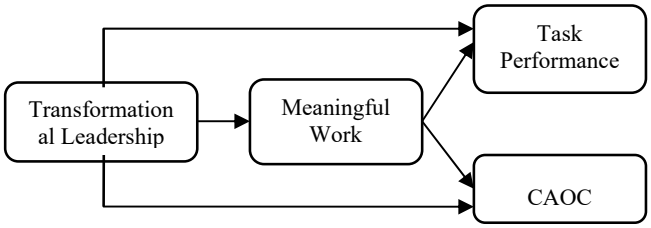


Fig. 2 The Role of Meaningful of Transformational Leadership Toward Task Performance and Cynicism about Organizational Change

D. Transformational Leadership and Meaningful Work

As role model in the organization, the leader has a strategic role to achieve organizational objectives, and have to be responsible to the followers. Transformational leader always motivates and inspires followers to keep a positive view and work optimally. Leaders do not focus on achieving organizational goals, but also help follower's work goals. *Path-Goal Leadership Theory* describes that the leader more control over reward to make subordinate valence on performance and to make work-outcomes (House, 1971) in [11]. Leaders are required to help followers to achieve their personal goals. Fukushige and Spicer [11] argued that intellectual stimulation can improve the performance of followers, while individual consideration can make followers be positive on achieving positive psychology in the workplace. Transformational leadership can accommodate the aspirations of followers [27].

Rich et al. [25] stated that the support of management and interpersonal relationships with others in an organization will make employee's engagement. Dimension on individual consideration is one of the dimensions of transformational leadership which care of leaders and as a form of humanizing followers. Shih et al. [27] transformational leadership can coverage the differences and aspirations of followers. It shows that a transformational leader is able to make followers feel respected in the organization. Appreciating and humanizing followers in the organization do not only bring impact in improving performance, but also reach the achievement of the followers' positive psychology.

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If the followers are appreciated well, they will feel psychological meaningfulness in the work place. Markow and Klenke [18] argued that the meaningful work can be influenced by a leader who reflects worthwhile value of creation and action. Transformational leader would be figure for followers, so the followers will feel the meaningfulness due to the attitude of a leader who cares to the followers. The leaders' care is reflected by their actions which is able to cover all aspirations and attentions to followers' internal psychology.

Grant [12] in his research found that transformational leadership will affect the meaningfulness in the workplace through the intrinsic motivation to the followers. Intrinsic motivation for followers will bring impact on the internal state of followers. Psychological conditions are associated to the meaningful work of followers. Kovjanic et al. [14] found the relationship of transformational leadership on followers' job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a part of the achievement of the follower's meaningful work. Followers who reached meaningfulness in the workplace will be satisfied at work.

The mutual trust relationship between leader and follower will have an impact in improving the effectiveness and performance in the workplace [17]. Followers will feel amazed and put their trust to the leader, thus, they will work more optimally. It is a result of the achievement of meaningful work because the leader is able to establish a harmony relationship with followers. The characteristic of transformational leadership is the ability of a leader to build communication with followers.

Wiersma and Morris [34] stated that the meaningful work is influenced by the management of meaningfulness as well. Leaders contribute to the achievement of meaningful work, because leader as a symbol of the organization for creating a conducive environment and making followers feel comfortable and safe at work. The management meaning is one of the concepts that is needed by leaders, direction organizational and human resources managers to be practiced in the organization.

Proposition 1: Transformational leadership will be positively related to meaningful work of followers.

E. Transformational Leadership with Task Performance and Cynicism about Organizational Change

Wanous et al. [33] stated that an effective leader is negatively related to CAOC. Effective leaders indicated by transformational leadership as one of the criteria transformational leadership which can make quality of informal relationship between leaders and followers. Krishnan [13] argued that transformational leadership style has a stimulating mutual relationship and mutual binding between leader and follower. The attachment relationship will be perceived by followers as a token of appreciating and humanizing followers. Therefore, the performances of followers do not only fulfill the obligation, but also become a form of contribution on the progress of organization. Employees who have a positive perception indicate the achievement of meaningful work.

Individuals' performance on organizational change will also be decreased, since the condition of the organization is still unconducive. Therefore, the role of a leader is significance in the process of change. Liu and Batt [16] argued that transformational leadership will take time in training the followers, so the relationship between leaders and followers will be harmonic. Intellectual stimulation is transformational leadership dimension which is able to direct followers to increase their capabilities and performance, especially in organizational change.

Carter et al. [6] argued that in organizational change, followers react to change both in intended and unintended ways. Transformational leader will always inspire and motivate followers to be able to positively respond the organizational change and increase task performance. Followers' performance also influenced by the role of a leader and his other perception to the work. Transformational leadership is characterized as the attitude of a leader who can touch the cognitive and psychological aspects of followers. Dimension of inspirational motivation aim to increase the spirit and positive outlook on the organization and task performance.

As a motivator for their followers, leaders have a role to increase not only followers' performance but also the organization's performance. Morgeson et al. [21] argued that the higher work-related skills will further improve the performance of individuals. Competence of the individual will be able to improve the performance of followers. As a result, task performance will also increase because of the role of transformational leaders [15]. This means that inspirational motivation dimension of transformational leadership, illustrates that leaders can improve and encourage followers to increase task performance.

Transformational leadership is the prior of organizational change, facilitates the quality of the relationship between leaders and followers [6]. The quality of relationships in the process of organizational change can make followers realize that a change is needed. Besides, followers will not CAOC, because CAOC is a complex cognitive, affective, and behavioral [5]. Intellectual stimulation dimension can affect followers' cognitive so that followers will have a positive view to the organizational changes.

Proposition 2a: Transformational leadership will be positively related to task performance.

Proposition 2b: Transformational leadership will be negatively related to CAOC.

F. Meaningful Work with Task Performance and Cynicism about Organizational Change

Meaningful work leads to emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of employees [8]. Meaningfulness of employees in organization has an important role, especially in the processes of organizational change. It is since the changing process affects the psychological and behavior processes of employees. Psychologically, employees feel less comfortable to the change due to the previous conditions which have been considered safe and fit to the employees. It is in line with the

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argument of Barrick et al. [3] who stated that the meaningful work will have an impact on task performance and job satisfaction.

Michaelson at al. [20] explained the meaningful work is stated necessary in achieving work outcomes, such as task performance, work motivation, and job satisfaction. Followers will judge the workplace can make followers comfortable so that followers will be able to improve task performance. Experiencing meaningful work will improve both followers' performance and activity [30]. Rich et al. [23] stated that engaged individual invest physical, cognitive, and emotional energies into their role work by enhancing performance.

Employee's behavior tends to resist the organizational change that can influence the employees to leave the organization [33]. Rubin et al. [25] stated that employees CAOC resulted from their perception that organizational change is in vain. Moreover, they also think that placement errors in program-related changes are usually created by the facilitator of change management. Therefore, meaningful work can reduce the CAOC. Meaningful work is as the psychological aspect of the work and increase the capacity of employees [8].

Meaningful work is a fundamental aspect for employees, because the impact of meaningful work can make a positive perception of employees and organizational changes that will be encountered [7]. Employees are able to view the change as something that can have a positive impact for themselves and the organization, so CAOC will be minor. Meaningful work is the relationship between individuals and organizations who will lead to commitment, loyalty, and dedication of employees [8]. Liang and Chi [15] stated that the challenge for organization is to improve task performance to achieve organizational goals and give benefits for employees. The direction focus is not only on the individual performance to achieve organization's success, but also on the people who work. They should be able to achieve the employees work goals in the organization.

Dedication of employees to the job, especially in the process of organizational change is a positive attitude of employees. Employees who have showed the dedication to organization will perform better. May et al. [19] argued that meaningful work as antecedent of employee's dedication, so the employees will be more positive in the organization.

Proposition 3a: Meaningful work will be positively related to task performance.

Proposition 3b: Meaningful work will be negatively related to CAOC.

G.Meaningful Work as Mediator of Transformational Leadership with Task Performance and Cynicism about Organizational Change

Transformational leadership is always an interesting topic to be discussed because transformational leader has given positive impact to the psychological aspect of followers. Xu and Thomas [36] argued that transformational leadership showed a consistent relationship between leaders and followers. The good quality relationship between leader and follower will bring the impact the meaningful work of followers and positive view on task performance and cynicism about the changes will be reduced.

Inspirational motivation can make the followers sincerely and vigorously themselves to the job. Song et al. [29] described that the dimensions of transformational leadership, ideal influence which indicates that a leaders is a role model for followers. Inspirational motivation and ideal influence shows the role of a leader is to create positive psychological aspects to the followers. As a result, followers will feel safe and comfortable which will lead to meaningful work in the organization.

As policy makers and role model, leaders should be consistent between instruction and attitude, so that followers will totally engage to the work [32]. Transformational leadership can be considered as charismatic leadership, since transformational leader is the one who has a considerable influence by being consistent in taking regulation. Transformational leader is also indicated by the relationship and informal communication between leaders and followers. The relationship between leaders and followers would cause followers to believe that the leader has a great influence to them.

Schaufeli et al. [26] in their article found that there is a positive relationship between social supports, leadership, co-workers relationship. Therefore, leaders need to motivate their followers in order to feel meaningful. It is since, followers who have experienced meaningful work will be more positive and reduce the CAOC. Feldman (2000) in Cartwright and Holmes [7] argued that CAOC is a new paradigm about leader and follower relationship, the result of ineffective leadership and management and will affect to the slowness of the organization growth.

Proposition 4a: Meaningful work will mediate the positive relationship transformational leadership on task performance.

Proposition 4b: Meaningful work will mediate the negative relationship transformational leadership on CAOC.

III. Implications

In spite of meaningful work has become a focus that becomes powerful for decades, only few researchers who see the role of the meaningful work in organizational change. It is in line with the argument of Barrick et al. [3] who argues that the meaningfulness of work has been an important source of followers' motivation on task performance since long time ago.

In the cognitive aspect, meaningful work will give impact on the followers' performance. Meanwhile, it will reduce the followers' CAOC in the affective aspect. Therefore this study to meaningful work in organizational change here is quite essential to be conducted, since it is important in the changing process. This is in accordance with the arguments of Chalofsky [8] who stated that meaningful work leads to emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of employees.

This study also supports the theory of *Path-Goal Leadership Theory*, which intends to explain the leader influence the magnitude of sum personal outcome available

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(House, 1971) in [11]. Therefore, meaningful work has important role for mediating transformational leadership with task performance and reducing CAOC.

Practically, this study may be a stage for practitioners both to improve task performance and to reduce CAOC. Therefore, leaders must make followers experience meaningful work. Leaders must motivate and stimulate intellectual follower, so that followers will feel appreciated and more motivated.

IV. Conclusion

This article gives some contribution to the existing literature. First, it is the specific theory which explains the role of the meaningful work in organizational change to improve the performance of followers and reduce CAOC. Second, meaningful work also be influenced by external factors and one of those is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership can affect the cognitive and affective aspects of followers.

The power of meaningful work mediates the relationship of transformational leadership to task performance and CAOC. This article helps to both the factors that can improve performance and reduce CAOC which caused by the high rate of meaningful work attained by the follower from the role of transformational leadership as motivator and role model in organization.

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