

THE ROLE OF READINESS OF CHANGE IN WORK STRESS AMONG EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of readiness for change in work stress among Generation Z employees. Generation Z is the dominant group in today's workforce and faces various challenges in the modern work environment, including rapid organizational changes. Work stress can arise due to an individual's inability to adapt to these changes. Therefore, readiness for change becomes a crucial factor in reducing the negative impact of workplace changes. This study aims to understand the relationship between readiness for change and work stress among Generation Z employees. The research method used is a descriptive quantitative approach with a convenience sampling technique. Data were collected through a questionnaire utilizing the Readiness to Change Scale (Holt et al., 2007) and the Job Stress Scale (Shukla & Srivastava, 2016). The participants in this study consisted of 202 Generation Z employees who had been working for at least one year in companies undergoing or that had recently undergone organizational changes. The analysis results indicate a significant negative correlation between readiness for change and work stress ($r = -0.798, p < 0.05$). This finding suggests that the higher an individual's readiness for change, the lower the level of work stress they experience. This study highlights the importance of readiness for change in helping Generation Z employees adapt to dynamic work environments and reduce their levels of work stress.

Keywords: readiness for change, work stress, generation z

1. PREFACE

As society continues to evolve, mental health has emerged as a growing concern for individuals worldwide. Generation Z, in particular, has shown a heightened awareness of the importance of mental well-being and actively advocates for related issues. Defined by the Pew Research Center as individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019), Generation Z is notably more inclined to seek support for mental health concerns compared to previous generations (Schenarts, 2020). Poor mental health can adversely affect both personal performance and overall well-being. Yunita and Saputra (2019) found that many employees across Asia exhibit symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and fatigue, often stemming from poor mental health.

Nguyen et al. (2022) identified distinct traits in Generation Z, including shifting thought patterns, a sense of overprotection, underdeveloped communication skills, and a preference for instant gratification. These characteristics make them particularly vulnerable to stress when adapting to the real world. Shorey et al. (2021) further confirmed that Generation Z experiences mental health challenges more frequently than earlier generations. Additionally, the transition from academia to the workforce plays a crucial role in influencing levels of fatigue. Surveys reveal that many members of Generation Z report feelings of exhaustion due to demanding work environments (Goh & Lee, 2018).

In Indonesia, work stress has become a significant issue. A 2021 study by the Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that 13.6–19.4% of the adult population faces mental health problems, particularly work stress. DeCotiis (1983) described work stress as an unpleasant psychological response to job demands that exceed an individual's capabilities or resources. Robbins and Judge

(2011) highlighted three primary causes of work stress: environmental, organizational, and individual factors. The rapid changes brought about by globalization further exacerbate these stressors, as globalization requires individuals to be consistently adaptable (Rusman, 2022). Those who struggle to adapt often perceive globalization as a threat.

An individual's ability to accept and adjust to change is known as Readiness for Change (RC). The concept of RC, first introduced by Holt, Thatcher, and Oliver (2007), refers to an individual's preparedness to face and accept changes in the workplace. The importance of RC in organizations in the era of globalization cannot be overstated. Research by Utami et al. (2022) demonstrates that individuals with high readiness to change adapt more easily to organizational changes. Conversely, individuals with low readiness tend to struggle with adjustment, which can lead to stress.

Resistance to change can be observed in various contexts. For instance, the plan to relocate the capital city to Nusantara has sparked mixed reactions from civil servants, with many choosing to remain in Jakarta. An anonymous civil servant told BBC News Indonesia that they were not enthusiastic about the prospect of moving to Nusantara. One reason cited was the inadequate conditions of the Nusantara region in terms of weather, water quality, and access to accommodation (Anugrah, 2023). On the other hand, many employees have struggled to adapt to the change from manual to online attendance systems. A study by Dalimunthe (2022) revealed that 15 out of 104 civil servants in the North Sumatra Provincial Labor Office had difficulty adapting to the online attendance system, with one factor being a lack of understanding of how to use the system.

These phenomena share a commonality, the individuals involved felt unprepared for the changes. A lack of clear information, adequate training, and emotional support can exacerbate the situation and trigger work stress. Previous research by Utami et al. (2022) showed that readiness to change has a significant negative impact on work stress levels, indicating that higher readiness leads to lower work stress. Conversely, research by Arifiani et al. (2021) found that readiness to change did not moderate the impact of working from home on work stress, suggesting that readiness to change does not directly influence work stress levels.

Based on the aforementioned discussion, the researcher is interested in exploring the role of readiness to change concerning work stress. The difference between this study and previous research lies in the research subjects.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Based on a review of the theory and previous research, this research framework assumes that readiness to change plays a role in reducing the level of work stress in Generation Z employees. This study fills a knowledge gap by examining the relationship between readiness to change and work stress among Generation Z, providing theoretical and practical contributions to HRM strategies in dynamic organizations.

H1: Readiness to change has a negative role on work stress.

Samples

This research involved 202 Generation Z employees from various industries. The participants met the following criteria: 1) They were aged between 18 and 27; 2) Had a minimum high school diploma; 3) Had at least one year of work experience; and 4) Were employed in companies that

are currently undergoing or have recently undergone organizational changes. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which aligns with the characteristics of Gen Z, who have a high potential to be impacted by organizational changes.

Measurement

The Readiness to Change Scale developed by Holt et al. (2007) was used to measure readiness for change. This scale was adapted to Indonesians based on the study by Meilian (2022). It consists of 29 items covering dimensions such as personal readiness, beliefs about the benefits of change, and management support. This scale uses a 4-point Likert format. In terms of reliability testing, Cronbach's alpha for the appropriateness dimension was 0.82, for management support it was 0.63, for change efficacy it was 0.86, and for personal beneficial it was 0.87. These results suggest that the variables and dimensions used are reliable.

Table 1
Reliability Test Readiness to Change Scale

Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha	N
Appropriateness	.827	10
Management Support	.633	6
Change Efficacy	.860	6
Personal Beneficial	.874	7

The Job Stress Scale was created by DeCotiis (1983) and further developed by Abhishek Shukla and Rajeev Srivastava (2016). This scale uses a 5-point Likert format with a total of 22 items. It was adapted into Indonesian based on the study by Angelita (2024). In terms of reliability testing, Cronbach's alpha for the job stress scale dimension was 0.92, for role expectation conflict it was 0.88, for co-worker support it was 0.89, and for work-life balance it was 0.87. These results indicate that the variables and dimensions used are reliable.

Table 2
Reliability Test Job Stress Scale

Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha	N
Job Stress Scale	.928	9
Role Expectation Conflict	.889	5
Co-Worker Support	.890	4
Work Life Balance	.871	4

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through an online questionnaire distributed during September 9-23, 2024. On the first page of the questionnaire, subjects were asked to complete an informed consent form stating their agreement to participate in the study voluntarily and without coercion. Additionally, it was conveyed that the data provided would be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. The second page of the questionnaire contained 29 questions related to the readiness to change variables. The third page included 22 questions pertaining to the work stress variable. On the final page of the questionnaire, there were several questions regarding the subject's demographics, such as name/initials, gender, age, marital status, length of employment at the current company, company sector, and current division or department.

Data was analyzed using SPSS 24 software. First, a reliability test of items per dimension was carried out. The reliability test used Cronbach's Alpha, with items that have a corrected

item-total value above 0.3 and a Cronbach's Alpha value of more than 0.6 considered reliable. After that, descriptive statistical analysis was carried out to describe the demographic data of the participants, by calculating the mean, frequency, and standard deviation.

Furthermore, a classic assumption test was carried out, including a normality test to check whether the data were normally distributed, using the One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. In this test, the data is considered normal if the significance value is greater than 0.05. The researcher conducted a correlation test with a correlation matrix to analyze the relationships between variables in the study. The researcher conducted a simple linear regression test to test the hypothesis. The researcher also conducted multiple regression tests to determine which dimension of readiness to change had the most influence on work stress.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The hypothetical mean for the readiness for change variable is 2.5 while the empirical mean is 3.2477 with a standard deviation of 0.44716. This suggests that the participants have a high level of readiness for change. The hypothetical mean for the work stress variable is 3, while the empirical mean is 2.1647 with a standard deviation of 0.84745. This indicates that the level of work stress among the 202 participants can be considered low.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Readiness for Change and Work Stress

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Readiness For Change	220	1.10	3.90	3.2477	.44716
Work Stress	220	1.00	4.64	2.1647	.84745

Based on table 4 the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for normality was performed on the unstandardized residual values. If the p-value is greater than 0.05, then the research data is normally distributed. Conversely, if the significance value is less than 0.05 then the research data is not normally distributed. A significance value of $0.2 > 0.05$ was found, which means that the data is normally distributed.

Table 4

Normality Test

	Unstandardized Residual
N	202
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.200

Pearson correlation was used to determine the strength of the relationship between the variables. If the significance value is less than 0.05, then the variables are correlated. Based on the table above, the significance value is 0.00, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the variables of readiness for change and work stress are correlated. The Pearson Correlation value of -0.798 suggests a strong negative correlation between the variables of readiness for change and work stress. This means that as readiness for change increases, work stress decreases, and vice versa.

Table 5

Correlation Test

Variable	Readiness For Change	Work Stress
Readiness For Change	Pearson Correlation	1 -.798**

Work Stress	Sig. (2-tailed) Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000 -.798** .000
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Based on table 6 the R-squared value is 0.637. This means that 63.7% of the variation in work stress can be explained by readiness for change, while the remaining 36.3% is influenced by other variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that readiness for change has a negative impact on work stress, accounting for 63.7% of the total effect. The negative influence means that as the readiness for change of a Generation Z employee increases, their level of work stress decreases.

Table 6
Regression Linier Test

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.798a	.637	.635	11.265

Multiple regression tests were conducted to determine which dimension of readiness to change had the most influence on work stress. Based on the analysis results, a Beta value of -0.224 was obtained for the appropriateness dimension with a p-value of $0.001 < 0.05$. Then in the management support dimension, a Beta value of -0.056 was obtained with a p-value of $0.248 > 0.05$. Furthermore, in the change efficacy dimension, a Beta value of -0.174 was obtained with a p-value of $0.016 < 0.05$. Finally, the personal beneficial dimension has a Beta value of -0.455 with a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$. It can be concluded that the personal beneficial dimension has the most significant negative influence on work stress.

Table 7
Multiple Regression Test

Dimensions	t	p	B	R2	F
Appropriateness	-3.350	0.001	-0.224	0.658	94.904
Management Support	-1.160	0.248	-0.056	0.658	94.904
Change Efficacy	-2.427	0.016	-0.174	0.658	94.904
Personal Beneficial	-6.250	0.000	-0.455	0.658	94.904

This study found that readiness for change plays a significant role in reducing work stress, particularly among Generation Z who are just entering the workforce. These findings support the concept that readiness for change is not merely a technical or procedural adaptation, but also involves an individual's psychological and emotional readiness to face change (Holt et al., 2007). A significant finding of this study is the significant negative correlation between readiness for change and work stress. This is in line with previous research by Utami et al. (2022) which found that individuals with high readiness for change are more easily adaptable to change and experience lower levels of stress. These results underscore the importance of readiness for change as a factor that can help employees, especially Generation Z, better cope with the challenges of organizational change. Other research by Rafferty et al. (2013) also found that readiness for change is significantly related to reduced stress and increased adaptability in the workplace.

This study also conducted multiple regression tests to analyze the contribution of each dimension of readiness to change to work stress. The results showed that the personal beneficial dimension had the most significant negative effect on work stress with a Beta value of -0.455 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that an individual's perception of the personal benefits derived from change is the most decisive factor in reducing work stress. This finding is in line with research by Alolabi et al. (2021), which states that employees' perceptions of the direct benefits of change, such as

financial rewards or career development opportunities, play an important role in driving readiness to change and reducing work stress during organizational transitions. Employees who feel that change brings personal benefits tend to have a more positive attitude towards change, making them more able to face the challenges that arise.

Conversely, the management support dimension did not have a significant effect ($\text{Beta} = -0.056$, $p > 0.05$), which indicates that management support alone is not strong enough to directly influence work stress. In addition, the appropriateness ($\text{Beta} = -0.224$, $p < 0.05$) and change efficacy ($\text{Beta} = -0.174$, $p < 0.05$) dimensions also had a significant effect, although not as large as the personal beneficial dimension. Overall, these results suggest that organizations need to focus on communicating the personal benefits of change to employees, strengthening self-efficacy, and ensuring the relevance of change to individual and organizational needs. This approach can help reduce work stress significantly and increase employee readiness for change.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrates that readiness for change plays a significant role in work stress among Generation Z employees. Based on the data analysis, there is a strong negative correlation between readiness for change and work stress, meaning that the higher the readiness for change, the lower the level of work stress experienced by employees. This supports the research hypothesis that readiness for change plays a role in reducing work stress. Furthermore, regression analysis shows that readiness for change explains 63.7% of the variability in work stress. This means that a large portion of work stress among Generation Z employees can be reduced by increasing readiness for change.

Although readiness for change significantly influences work stress, this analysis also shows that a portion of the variability in work stress (36.3%) remains unexplained by readiness for change. This suggests that other factors influence work stress besides readiness for change. Based on the research of Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002), perceived organizational support (POS) can serve as a moderating variable that strengthens individuals' readiness to change, while reducing work stress. POS refers to employees' perceptions of the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. When employees feel supported by their organization, they tend to be more ready for change and experience lower levels of stress during times of change. Therefore, including the variable of perceived organizational support in future research can provide a deeper understanding of how organizational support interacts with readiness for change in influencing work stress, particularly among Generation Z employees who tend to be more responsive to a supportive work environment.

This research is limited to Generation Z employees in Indonesia, so the results may not be generalizable to other populations, such as other generations or employees from different countries. Future research can address this limitation by conducting cross-generational studies. Future research can also consider adding moderating or mediating variables. For example, perceived organizational support can be used as a moderating variable.

The results of this study emphasize the importance of organizations providing adequate training and support in dealing with change. Companies need to design training programs aimed at increasing employees' readiness for change, particularly in terms of understanding the benefits of change and developing the skills needed to navigate such changes.

Acknowledgment

This research was completed with the help and support of many individuals, to whom the author wishes to express sincere gratitude. The author would like to extend their deepest appreciation to the Head of the Psychology Study Program at Tarumanagara University and the first academic advisor. Her guidance, support, and motivation throughout the research process were invaluable to the successful completion of this manuscript. The author would also like to thank the second academic advisor, for his insightful direction and encouragement, which were instrumental in bringing this research to fruition.

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