Change-Specific Cynicism among Academia in Malaysian Polytechnics

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Abstract
Workers' cynicism towards organizational change or known as change-specific cynicism refers to the tendency of workers to be cynical about any changes introduced by their respective organisations. Specific change in the organization of this study focuses on the changes of system in Malaysian Polytechnic regarding the corporatization of the organization. This survey-based quantitative study examines the level of informational, organizational and social support factors in association with the academia's change-specific cynicism towards their organisational change. 263 sets of questionnaires were analysed in this study. The descriptive analysis showed the moderate level for change-specific cynicism among academia and all three main factors associated with change-specific cynicism. Despite the moderate level for independent variables, the results showed that social support was the highest level, followed by organizational relation and information. This indicates that the formation of a framework based on a study of Social Information Processing Theory found the meaningful impact on the findings. Theoretical and practical implications of the study as well as suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: change-specific cynicism, factor of information, organizational relation

1.0 Introduction

The idea of change is often the fundamental thing in human life. In the context of the organization, it recognizes that the organization is able to change and that change can bring good (Delacroix & Swaminathan, 1991). Several decades ago, the number of organizational change has increased in tandem with increasing factors such as customer demand, globalization, cost pressures, and technological advances (Huy, 2002; Longenecker, Neubert & Fink, 2007). Madsen, Miller, and John (2005) point out that organizations are constantly faced with ongoing changes. This phenomenon is explained by the continuous transformation model that has been used previously (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Burnes, 2005; Greenwald, 1996). Based on this model, all organizations are regarded as analogous to their complex nature and require transformation continuously to remain relevant (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Stacey, 2003). The

ability to continuously change is an essential element in ensuring the organization remains competitive, especially in highly dynamic sectors such as information technology, retailing (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Greenwald, 1996) and education sector such as higher learning institutions (Lindholm, 2003).

Hence, changes are no longer seen as a sporadic activity, but they are important as the phenomenon of change in the workplace can affect individuals and organizations (Price, 2006; Vakola, Tsaousis & Nikolaou, 2004). Therefore, it is important for organizations to evolve to achieve success in the future (Madsen et al., 2005). Organizational ability to adapt and implement changes is required in order to align with the dynamic competition in an organizational environment (Price, 2006; Lines, 2005). As a result, organizations are constantly depressed to find ways to effectively manage the change (Probst & Raisch, 2005).

However, ecological members of the organization are of the opinion that the change will involve some destruction due to structural inertia resulting from internal and external constraints, structural transformation, and/or staff exchange (Boeker, 1989; Nelson & Winter, 1982). Therefore, although it is agreed that the organizational capacity to manage is critical for the organization to remain relevant (Carnall, 2003) and managing change is a must for efficiency (Dawson, 2003), the majority of organizations fail to develop this capability (Brodbeck, 2002; Burnes, 2004). This is evident from the fact that 70% of the efforts to change have failed (Beer & Nohria, 2000) and very few project changes achieve the expected objectives (Burke, 2002; Probst & Raisch, 2005). In addition, changes are often associated with maladaptive work patterns and negative effects (Bovey & Hede, 2001). Thus, the basis of organizational ecology emphasizes that organizational change is a difficult one and the organization experiences a strong inertia pressure (Haveman, 1992).

In spite of all that, studies focusing on affective effects such as worker commitment and cynicism when changes take place are very minimal (Rubin, Dierdorff, Bommer & Baldwin, 2009). Previous studies have proven that the change would lead to worker cynicism (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999) and efforts to change will fail if workers do not believe in the motives of change stated by the management (Reichers, Wanous & Austin, 1997). Hence, the change-specific cynicism becomes an important variable to be focused in the context of organizational change (Qian & Daniels, 2008). It encourages this study to examine the descriptive factors associated with the change-specific cynicism.

In this regard, the study will examines the level of informational, organizational and social support factors in relation with the academia's change-specific cynicism towards their organisational change. Such studies will enhance understanding of change-specific cynicism and behaviours correlated to it.

2.0 Background of the Cynicism in Organization

Cynicism is known as "dog philosophy" which is a philosophy that criticizes society and the authorities (Goldfarb, 1991). Thus, cynicism is compared to dogs because of their unconventional actions and ways (Navia, 1996). In the literature,

cynics is described as those involved in social and political protests in Greek and Rome and acting contrary to normal circumstances (Navia, 1996). Cynics are known as shameless, ignorant of the feelings of others and do not require the help of others. They believe in freedom of speech, and therefore when speaking freely, it will often offend the person around it. Cynics feel that if they are asked to achieve a goal or to work stronger, they will influence others to have a negative feeling about the effort (Cutler, 2000). Modern cynics usually refer to negative connotation (Navia, 1996). It is seen as someone who rejects ethical values, questions or ignores honesty and truth, rejects with sceptics and satires (Navia, 1996), and sometimes ignores others (Chaloupka, 1999). It is also believing that the actions of others can not be trusted because they have the motives for selfishness (Navia, 1996). They believe that all these motives are hidden and everyone has hypocritical feelings and intrigue.

According to Chaloupka (1999) and Navia (1996), cynics are defined as someone who has learned how to live with a moral contradiction. Preliminary studies have defined cynicism as an attitude that shows dislike or disbelieve in others (Cook & Medley, 1954). Further studies such as Kanter and Mirvis (1989) combine cynicism with the emptiness brought about by the high expectations of individuals in America, but the state and its institutions failed to meet that expectation. They point out that the root cause of Americans cynicism is that they are given unrealistic expectations. Niederhoffer (1967) asserted that Americans will be embedded with materialism, dexterity and cynicism. This cynicism shows disbelief to politicians and rulers. If the expectations of the individuals are not met, they will become cynical.

However, Chaloupka (1999) and Navia (1996) defined cynics as someone who believes that others act with selfishness. According to Dean, Brandes and Dharwadkar (1998), this conception comes from two approaches of cynicism; (a) trait-based approach, and (b) community/institutional focus. Studies using trait-based approaches such as Cook and Medley (1954) and Guastello, Rieke, Guastello and Billings (1991) assumed that the degree of cynicism is relatively stable and there is little to do to change it. Guastello et al. (1991) stated that cynicism is a view of life as a whole. This contrasts with Frymier (1997) and Reichers et al. (1997) which view cynicism from a group of people through a community/institutional approach. However, they support the view that cynicism is derived from experience. Cynicism is not a human nature but it is a learned behaviour (Frymier, 1997). Reichers et al. (1997) also pointed out that cynicism is a learned attitude, where there are other possible external factors that affect the individual to become cynics. It gives credibility to the community/institutional approach. However, some researchers have found that the cynicism concepts are overlapping between community/institutional and personality approaches (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989). For example, Kanter and Mirvis (1989) have stated that cynicism levels can be influenced by management techniques.

In addition, there are studies on other cynicisms such as job cynicism. Job cynicism also contributes to stress and burnout in certain occupations, such as police and the service sector. His enormous work on cynicism was carried out by Niederhoffer (1967). His study found that police officers were suspected of having cynicism due to his stressful work. They are cynical towards the organization, serving the public and the law. Job cynicism is characterized as losing trust by individuals and the lack of passion to serve the public and the community. Though the study of cynicism is paying attention to the workplace, it is seen as limiting cynicism in certain occupations where stress and burnout are widespread. Since the 1990s, studies have expanded the scope of cynicism in the workplace of all types of jobs and organizations. Hence, cynicism has evolved through various studies. Like other attitude variables, cynicism can be explained through two perspectives namely personality and situation. Accordingly, cynicism studies generally fall in two directions; taking into account cynicism as a general construct that reflects individual traits, or cynicism as a special construct oriented towards society, occupation, institution and organizational change (Dean et al., 1998).

2.1 Change-Specific Cynicism

This study focuses on workers' cynicism toward specific organizational changes. Past studies have shown that organizational changes will result in cynicism (Shapiro, 1996). The lack of support for cynicism can lead to the failure of change, which would otherwise have taken place when reinforcing such support among members of the organization. Cynics about organizational changes is described as a pessimistic view of successful change of efforts as those responsible for making changes are being blamed for being lazy, inefficient, or both (Wanous, Reichers & Austin, 2000).

There are two forms of cynicism that influence the development of cynicism in the organization; worker cynicism and cynicism of organizational change. Worker cynicism is directed at three specific targets in the workplace including business organizations in general, corporate executives, and other objects at work (Andersson & Bateman, 1997). It is defined as disappointment, frustrated and negative feelings towards untrustworthy individuals, groups, ideologies, social or institutions. Andersson and Bateman (1997) explored the causes and effects of cynicisms at the workplace. They found that executive compensation, severe organizational performance, unemployed and abrupt retrenchment were some of the major causes of worker cynicism. Worker cynicism relates negatively to the intention to conduct behaviour as the organization's citizens and the intent to comply with the demand for unethical behaviour. This study considers worker cynicism as a result of work experience in the workplace rather than the nature of natural personality. The underlying assumptions of this study indicate that worker cynicism is due to the unjust service acceptance or not achieving organizational management expectations. This assumption is consistent with the concept of community cynicism by Kanter and Mirvis (1989).

The emergence of studies related to cynicism in recent years is cynicism towards organizational change. Researchers and practitioners are concerned about how to ensure the success of organizational change in an uncertain business environment. The spread of cynicism is believed to be one of the sources of organizational change failure (Wanous et al., 2000). However, sensational studies of organizational change are very limited and require further attention (Rubin et al., 2009). Hence, the focus of this study is to examine how cynicism exists and play a role in the context of work within the organization.

Stanley, Meyer and Topolnytsky (2005) defined change-specific cynicism (CSC) as workers' mistrust on the facts or management motives to make specific organizational changes. In this study, change-specific cynicism was operated using three dimensions namely cognitive, affective and behavioural (Qian & Daniles, 2008). The cognitive dimension refers to workers' distrust of the reality or motive of change introduced by the management. The affective or emotional dimension refers to a feeling of pessimism and disappointment to change while the behavioural dimension refers to such actions as minimizing, criticizing and circumventing from performing tasks related to change (Qian & Daniels, 2008).

Three main factors have been focused in this study which are associated to change-specific cynicism. These factors are information, organizational relation and social support.

2.2 Factors Associated to Change-Specific Cynicism

a) Factor of Information

Factor of information consist of two constructs, namely the perceived information in quality and perceived information in justice. Perceived information in quality (PIQ) was operated based on five dimensions: timeliness, usefulness, appropriateness, adequacy and favourableness (Miller, Johnson & Grau, 1994; Qian & Daniels, 2008). These dimensions refer to the dimensions of perception towards the quality of information received regarding the change. Dimensions of timeliness and usefulness refer to timely and useful information that is useful to workers. Lastly, dimensions of appropriateness, adequacy and favourableness refer to the information received on the changes which are appropriate, adequate and favor to workers (Miller, Johnson & Grau, 1994; Qian & Daniels, 2008). Furthermore, perceived information in justice (PIJ) is operated with four dimensions namely adequacy, reasonable, timely and specific (Colquitt, 2001; Shapiro, Buttner & Barry, 1994). Adequacy and reasonable dimensions refer to enough information received and the reasonableness of the worker to receive the information. While the timely dimension refers to the information received on the right time and the specific dimension refers to the information received specific to the implementation of organizational changes (Colquitt, 2001; Shapiro, Buttner & Barry, 1994).

b) Organizational Relation

Trustworthiness in management (TIM) was operated in three dimensions namely ability, benevolence and integrity (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995).

These three dimensions refer to the competence, willingness to help and reliability of the management acting as a trustee and worker as a trustor. These dimensions will be assessed and be the determinants of whether workers are willing to fall prey to the management due to the trust they give to them (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). However organizational identification (OI) was operated using four dimensions namely construct of cognitive, relational and comparative, social identity and classification (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Identification is seen as a perceived or cognitive construct that is unnecessary related to behaviour or affective in particular. The dimensions of relationship and comparison refer to an individual who is having relationships with other individuals in different categories. For example, the category of men will only be meaningful if there is a relationship with the category of women. Given these circumstances, the theory of social identity holds that individuals are identically separated for increasing self-esteem. Thus, individuals tend to contribute good self-value and see their social identity positively, though any identification may be painful, even debilitating when their groups are facing failure (Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

c) Factor of Social Support

Perceived organizational support (POS) was operated using three dimensions including values of contribution, welfare that cares and assistance provided (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli & Lynch, 1997). Worker contributions are valued and evaluated by the management. The maintenance of the welfare of workers and assistance provided by the management if necessary the dimensions are measured in perceived organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1997). Other than that, perceived supervisor's support (PSS) was operated using four dimensions, providing performance feedback and career guidance to workers, as well as enhancing the performance of workers through challenging work assignments and providing career opportunities for workers (Greenhaus, Parasuraman & Wormley, 1990). While perceived co-workers' support (PCS) was considered to be operated using two dimensions, it functioned to safeguard the welfare of workers and provide assistance to workers where necessary (Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison & Pinneau, 1980).

Thus it can be concluded that this study focuses on change-specific cynicism in the organization. The factors associated to it include information (2 constructs), organizational relation (2 constructs) and social support (3 constructs). The summary can be seen in the research framework as illustrated in figure 1 below.
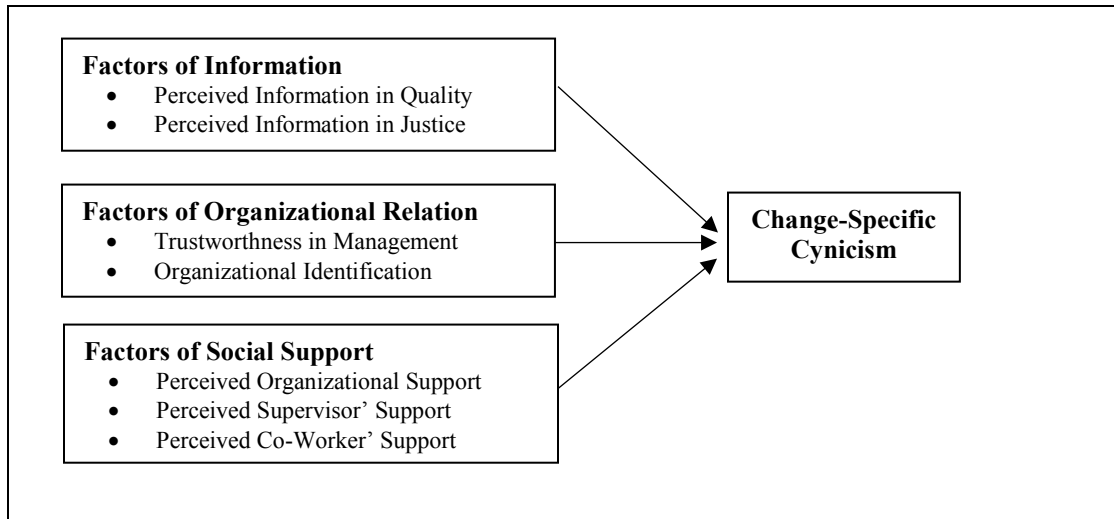
Figure 1: Research Framework

3.0 Research Methodology

This quantitative type of study uses a descriptive approach that seeks to understand change-specific cynicism among lecturers in Malaysian polytechnics. The polytechnic institution was chosen as the focus of this study due to its various changes after being separated from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in 2004. Among its main changes are the exchange of academic staff services schemes. In relation with that, some other changes move along with it such as promotion criteria, polytechnic transformation program and others. It is a cross-sectional survey study where data is collected once to answer all research questions. The unit of analysis is limited to individuals who serve as full-time lecturers in Malaysian polytechnics. This study analyses the feedback of each polytechnic lecturer who becomes the respondent as an individual data source. The population of the study comprised 7,388 lecturers among from 36 Polytechnic institutions in Malaysia. Referring to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining the sample size, 364 lecturers were selected as sample of the study.

This study uses the quantitative approach with the adapted questionnaires as the instrument to obtain data from respondents. The purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain clearer descriptive data and to follow the facts to be sought from this study. This study involved the variable of change-specific cynicism and eight variables associated to the change-specific cynicism. The measurement of items included demographic questions and questions that used the 5-point Likert scale. Table 1 below shows a summary of variables, dimensions and number of items used to measure variables.

Table 1: Summary of variables, dimensions, number of items and alpha value of pilot test

Variables	Dimensions	No. of Items	Alpha Value (α)
Change-Specific Cynicism [27	Cognitive, Emotional and Behaviour	13	.913
Perceived Quality of Information [44]	Timeliness, Usefulness, Appropriateness, Adequacy & Favourableness	6	.877
Perceived Justice of Information [45]	Adequacy, Reasonable, Timely & Specific	5	.736
Trustworthness in Management [28]	Ability, Benevolence & Integrity	5	.703
Organizational Identification [48]	Cognitive construct, Relational and comparative, Social identity & Classification	6	.815
Perceived Organizational Support [49]	Values of contribution, Welfare that cares & Assistance provided	8	.877
Perceived Supervisor' Support [50]	Performance feedback, Career guidance, Challenging work assignment & Work opportunities	9	.885
Perceived Co-Worker' Support [51]	Welfare that cares & Assistance provided	4	.824

The pilot study was conducted at Polytechnic Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah (PSA), Shah Alam, Selangor. A total of 36 teaching staff of various academic departments at the institution were selected to answer the questionnaire. The reliability test obtained alpha values in the range between .703 and .913 and this was generally considered adequate for conducting the study (Nunally, 1978). Hence, these measurements are relatively reliable.

4.0 Data Analysis and Results

The total number of questionnaires that can be used for analysis was 263 sets with a percentage of 72 percent compared to 364 sample of studies. The majority of respondents in this study were females (62%) compared to males and their ages were in the range of 31 to 40 years (49.8%). Meanwhile, their highest academic qualification was master's degrees (50.6%) and their position in grade was DH41/42/44 (75.3%).

Meanwhile, a descriptive analysis was carried out to answer the objectives of this study. The results from descriptive analysis on the variables related to the study are shown in the table 2 below.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

Variables	Mean	S.D
CSC - Change-Specific Cynicism	3.32	1.16
Factor of Information		
• PIQ - Perceived Information in Quality	2.52	1.08
• PIJ - Perceived Information in Justice	2.62	1.18
Total	2.57	1.13
Factor of Organizational Relation		
• TIM - Trustworthiness in Management	2.28	0.91
• OI - Organizational Identification	3.30	0.98
Total	2.79	0.95
Factor of Social Support		
• POS - Perceived of Organizational Support	2.94	0.90
• PSS - Perceived of Supervisor' Support	3.32	1.98
• PCS - Perceived of Co-Worker' Support	3.94	0.86
Total	3.38	0.94

The descriptive analysis showed the moderate level for change-specific cynicism among academia (m=3.32) and all three main factors associated with change-specific cynicism. Despite the moderate level for independent variables, the results showed that social support was the highest level (m=3.38), followed by organizational relation (m=2.79) and information (m=2.57).

Next, correlation analysis was performed in an attempt to determine the relationship between seven dimensions of three independent variables to change-specific cynicism. The results of the analysis are shown in the table 3 below.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis

Variables & Dimensions	CSC	PIQ	PIJ	TIM	OI	POS	PSS	PCS
CSC: Change-Specific Cynicism	1							
Information								
- PIQ	-.679**	1						
- PIJ	-.637**	.475**	1					
Organizational Relation								
- TIM	-.215**	.399**	.126*	1				
- OI	-.334**	.438**	.192**	.320**	1			
Social Support								
- POS	-.467**	.519**	.316**	.257**	.474**	1		
- PSS	-.372**	.348**	.274**	.128	.301*	.395**	1	
- PCS	-.036	-.056	-.066	-.182**	.061	.098	.130*	1

*Note: **correlation is sig. at the 0.01 level, *correlation is sig. at the 0.05 level*

From the correlation analysis in the table above, six dimensions of the three independent variables yielded significant findings but were negatively associated with change-specific cynicism. Only the Perceived of Co-Worker' Support dimension of Social Support variable was found to have no significant relationship to change-specific cynicism (r = -.036).

5.0 Conclusions and Future Directions

The results of each construct on change-specific cynicism indicate the overall status of the perception of polytechnic lecturers at moderate level of satisfactory. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the perceptual status of polytechnic lecturers on the variable of change-specific cynicism is moderately satisfactory. This signals that their perception toward the organizational change is still at a positive level.

In addition, the results of the correlation analysis indicate that the majority of dimensions are important to be examined and taken seriously due to their significant and negatively correlated relationship with change-specific cynicism. The dimensions involved include Perceived Information in Quality and Perceived Information in Justice (Factor of Information), Trustworthiness in Management and Organizational Identification (Factor of Organizational Relation) and Perceived of Organizational Support and Perceived of Supervisor 'Support (Factor of Social Support). While another dimension of Perceived of Co-Worker 'Support has no correlation with organizational change-specific cynicism.

From the aspect of information, academicians need to equip themselves to receive information with a high degree of readiness to the changes introduced. A lecturer needs to be sensitive to the changes taking place in his organization by proactively obtaining more information from management. In addition, they should be proactive in gaining information on organizational changes to enhance an understanding of changes introduced without having to wait for the management's direction. This proactive behaviour is important in enhancing understanding and avoiding confusion regarding changes introduced in the organization.

In terms of organizational relations, the academia must see organizational management as an important change agent in self-development and their careers in the organization. They should be rational and see the management from a positive angle. They should also be open-minded when accepting any decision from the management and at the same time ask the management to accept the suggestions or ideas provided by them. The management needs to make decisions based on facts in solving any problems without involving sentiment and emotionally assessment. As such, lecturers need to understand the situation and support the management's actions based on facts and data and not on the assumptions and feelings basis.

Furthermore, in terms of social support, positive social communication is needed in building effective and transparent relationships between the

management and lecturers. The lecturers do not have to be confused with the burden of bureaucracy and the sense of encumbrance with a formal relationship. Open social communication is necessary in creating a positive work environment and reducing work pressure, grievances and objections or cynicism towards the task being carried out. Lecturers also need to assist the organizational management by focusing on building a conducive working environment so that a mutual understanding will be built with other colleagues. They need to be friendly and positive relationships with fellow lecturers and other management staff.

In order to reduce cynical behaviour in the polytechnic organisation, the lecturers need to feel happy as they are part of the organization. They have to be proud in serving for the development of their nation. The lecturers need to look forward to the potential of the organization in terms of competition, asset strength and organizational reputation. Therefore, they can create an affection for the organization thus reducing cynicism. In addition, they also need to be firm in their stand and do not aspire to resist change or look for other organizations if there is little change in the organization. The strength of their stance is necessary to develop self-esteem, loyalty and trust towards organizational management.

Further studies on examining cynicism among academia need to be carried out in various stages including in public and private organization in Malaysia. The results from various backgrounds in different organizations may generate different insights. This is important in determining the consistency of the research findings. In addition, further assessments are recommended to employ the cynicism model of workers against organizational change from the communication perspective. This is because this study is one of the earliest studies in exploring the concept of workers' cynicism in the perspective of communication through the framework of the theory of Social Information Processing. Hence there is still plenty of space to explore in the future work.

Acknowledgement

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