

Change Management in an Era of Uncertainty: The Role of Strategic and Adaptive Leadership (A Case Study of the Local Government of Jombang Regency)

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ABSTRAK

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji kepemimpinan strategis dan adaptif dalam konteks manajemen perubahan di Pemerintah Kabupaten Jombang, khususnya di era ketidakpastian. Dengan menggunakan tinjauan pustaka dan wawancara, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa kepemimpinan adaptif sangat penting untuk mengatasi tantangan yang timbul dari perubahan sosial, ekonomi, dan lingkungan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan strategi kepemimpinan yang fleksibel dan responsif dapat meningkatkan efektivitas manajemen perubahan di tingkat lokal.

Kata Kunci: Manajemen perubahan, kepemimpinan strategis, kepemimpinan adaptif, pemerintah daerah, ketidakpastian.

ABSTRACT

This article examines strategic and adaptive leadership in the context of change management in the Jombang Regency Government, particularly in an era of uncertainty. Using literature reviews and interviews, this study found that adaptive leadership is crucial for addressing challenges arising from social, economic, and environmental change. The results indicate that implementing flexible and responsive leadership strategies can enhance the effectiveness of change management in local.

Keywords: Change management, strategic leadership, adaptive leadership, local government, uncertainty.

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INTRODUCTION

In an era of rapid globalization and digitalization, local governments face increasingly complex and dynamic challenges. The uncertainty generated by various factors such as economic crises, climate change, and pandemics compels leaders to adapt quickly. Jombang Regency, as one of the regions in Indonesia, is no exception in facing these challenges. This study aims to explore how strategic and adaptive leadership can be applied in change management within Jombang Regency.

Adaptive leadership becomes a key factor in addressing uncertainty. According to Indrayana (2023), adaptive leadership enables leaders to respond swiftly and effectively to change. In Jombang Regency, leaders are required not only to make the right decisions but also to motivate and inspire their teams in facing existing challenges. This aligns with the findings of Arfin et al. (2024), who stated that in today's dynamic era, the ability to adapt quickly and respond accurately to situations is crucial. Leaders who can modify their strategies and approaches adaptively within organizations facing challenges and opportunities are better positioned to optimize every opportunity and overcome obstacles efficiently. This ensures that the organization can achieve success and sustain itself, especially amid uncertainty and continuous change.

As explained by Mulianingsih (2020), successful change management requires careful planning and active participation from all stakeholders. Therefore, this study also seeks to explore various relevant leadership models that can be applied within the Jombang Regency Government, aiming to enhance the organization's adaptive capacity. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of effective communication in leadership, which is a key factor in achieving organizational goals. Aprianto et al. (2023) emphasized that effective communication strengthens the bond between leaders and their team members and enhances team participation and engagement during the ongoing change process. In other words, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of both theory and practice of leadership in the public sector, particularly within the context of change management in Jombang Regency. Consequently, the results of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for local leaders and administrators, enabling them to perform their duties and responsibilities more effectively and efficiently.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Change management is a discipline that focuses on how individuals, teams, and organizations successfully transition from their current state to a desired future state. According to Burnes (2004), change management encompasses a systematic approach to managing organizational change, including changes in structure, processes, and organizational culture. The basic concept of change management involves understanding change dynamics, implementation strategies, and managing resistance to change.

Several well-known models of change management include Lewin's Model and Kotter's Model. Lewin (1947) proposed a three-step model: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing, emphasizing the importance of preparing individuals for change before implementation. Meanwhile, Kotter (1996) identified eight steps to achieve successful change, from creating a sense of urgency to integrating change into the organizational culture. Both models provide useful frameworks for local governments in planning and implementing change management.

Uncertainty in an organizational environment refers to a condition where the information needed for decision-making is incomplete or unclear. According to Milliken (1987), uncertainty can stem from three sources: uncertainty about the external environment, uncertainty about the outcomes of actions taken, and uncertainty about the organization's ability to manage change. In the context of local government, uncertainty often arises from policy shifts, economic fluctuations, and rapid social dynamics.

Strategic and adaptive leadership are two interrelated concepts in change management. According to Sary (2024), strategic leadership involves decision-making oriented toward long-term vision, while adaptive leadership focuses on the ability to respond swiftly to change. Both are essential for creating resilient and responsive organizations. The theory of adaptive leadership emphasizes flexibility and the capacity to learn from experience. Norman et al. (2024) stated that adaptive leaders can identify necessary changes and implement them effectively. In the context of Jombang Regency Government, applying this theory can help leaders respond to challenges arising from social and economic change.

In the literature, several leadership models are relevant to this context. The transformational leadership model, for instance, emphasizes a leader's ability to inspire and motivate their team (Nurhidayat et al., 2021). This model can be applied in Jombang Regency to enhance employee performance and engagement in the change process. Furthermore, the concept of adaptive capacity also serves as an important foundation for this study. Maulana Mukhlis (2016) explained that an organization's adaptive capacity includes its ability to learn, innovate, and collaborate. In Jombang Regency, developing adaptive capacity can be achieved through human resource training and development, enabling employees to acquire the skills necessary to face change. Finally, the importance of communication in leadership cannot be overlooked. Therefore, this study explores how communication can be optimized in the context of strategic and adaptive leadership within the Jombang Regency Government.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced and the role of leadership in the ongoing change management process in Jombang Regency. The qualitative method is appropriate as it allows the researcher to explore multiple perspectives and experiences of individuals involved in the ongoing change process. As stated by Creswell (2014), qualitative research has the capacity to provide in-depth and rich insights into complex social phenomena. Thus, this study can be categorized as field research specifically targeting the local government of Jombang Regency, with the expectation that the findings will make a significant contribution to understanding and managing change in the region.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that the Jombang Regency Government has implemented several adaptive leadership strategies in response to emerging challenges. One of the most notable strategies is enhancing internal communication. Through regular discussion forums and training sessions, leaders in Jombang Regency strive to increase employee engagement in decision-making processes. This aligns with the findings of Aprianto et al. (2023), who stated that effective communication strengthens employee commitment to

change.

Additionally, this study found that leaders in Jombang Regency have adopted a collaborative approach to change management. By involving various stakeholders, including the community, in planning and implementation processes, leaders ensure that decisions are more responsive to public needs. This supports Mulianingsih's (2020) view, which emphasizes the importance of participation in change management. However, despite some progress, the study also identified challenges in implementing adaptive leadership. One major challenge is resistance to change from some employees who feel comfortable with old work routines. According to Zainal (2023), such resistance can be overcome through a more inclusive and transparent communication approach during the change process.

Furthermore, interview findings show that leaders who successfully apply adaptive leadership are those who demonstrate empathy and understand their employees' feelings. As stated by one respondent, a school principal and neighborhood head, "Leaders who listen and understand us are easier to follow." This supports Yoyoh Rohaniah's (2021) argument about the importance of empathetic leadership in government contexts.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the implementation of strategic and adaptive leadership within the Jombang Regency Government enhances the effectiveness of change management. However, achieving optimal results requires continuous efforts to build the organization's adaptive capacity and improve communication between leaders and employees.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study affirm that strategic and adaptive leadership play a highly significant role in the change management process within the Jombang Regency Government. Leaders who can quickly adapt to emerging changes and involve employees in every stage of decision-making contribute to improving overall organizational effectiveness. Nevertheless, challenges such as resistance to change remain. These challenges should be addressed through more inclusive and empathetic approaches to ensure that all parties feel involved and valued in the change process.

For future research, it is recommended that scholars explore in greater depth the factors influencing adaptive leadership, particularly in different local government contexts. Moreover, the development of training programs focused on enhancing employees' adaptive capacity is strongly encouraged. Through these measures, local governments will be better prepared to face future challenges, thereby improving performance and the quality of public services.

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