Assessing Change Readiness in State Universities: The Interplay of Justice and Work Engagement

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Abstract

This research seeks to examine the relationship between each of the four components of organizational justice (procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational) and readiness for change, while considering work engagement as a mediating factor. There are still few studies in the public sector that examine and investigate the four dimensions of organizational justice separately. This study is a casual explanatory study with a cross-sectional study category and a questionnaire survey method. The study employed a non-probability sampling approach to gather research participants from the university's administrative personnel. To evaluate the hypotheses proposed in this investigation, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was utilized as the analytical method. The results showed that from the four dimensions of organizational justice, there were only three dimensions that had a significant positive effect on readiness to change, they are procedural justice, distributive justice and informational justice. The findings also offer empirical evidence that work engagement acts as a mediating variable between the three dimensions of organizational justice (procedural, interpersonal, and informational justices) and readiness for change.

Keywords: Readiness for Change; Organizational Justice; Work Engagement; Universities

Introduction

Organizations must respond and adapt to a variety of factors in order to function properly and survive. Organizations that engage in continuous innovation improve their product to meet changing consumer demands and remain competitive in the face of global challenges, new technologies, and political and economic changes (Cawsey et al., 2016). Organizational members bear a greater responsibility to adapt to change in the face of a new government (Allvin et al., 2011), both management and decision makers (Boscherini, 2013) and employees play an important role in achieving the objectives of organizational change (Cawsey et al., 2016). Therefore, one critical issue related to organizational change that becomes a challenge for organizations is individuals' readiness for change.

Numerous studies have explored how organizational justice affects readiness for change. Nonetheless, only a limited number of these studies have focused on the individual dimensions of organizational justice. This research also highlighted the importance of overall justice (Ambrose et al., 2015), particularly in managing change (Marzucco et al., 2014). The perception of justice within an organization also plays a crucial role in sustaining members' trust, especially when facing potential adverse events and outcomes (Copranzano et al., 2007). Several studies have highlighted a positive correlation between organizational justice and the willingness to embrace change (Foster, 2010; Shah, 2011; Fuchs & Edwards, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2012; Arnéguy et al., 2018). Moreover, research conducted by Rodell & Colquitt (2009) and Marzucco et al. (2014) examines the influence of justice as a broad perception within change contexts, such as employees' psychological ownership (Bora, 2021). While extensive research has explored organizational readiness for change, no study has specifically investigated the direct connection between organizational justice and readiness for change (Shah, 2011). Prior studies have not thoroughly examined the relationship between the four dimensions of organizational justice and readiness to change in the public sector, particularly among the various specialized jobs in universities that are undergoing transformation. This provides the opportunity to more in-depth studies examining the relationship This indicates an inconclusive opinion about the pattern of the relationship between organizational justice and readiness for change. Therefore, this study needs to identify a mediator variable to cover the research gap on the influence of organizational justice on readiness for change.

In examining the dynamics of organizational justice and transformation, work engagement is suggested as a mediating factor. It has been identified as a crucial element in elucidating the connection between justice and the organization. Organizational justice significantly affects how engaged employees are in their work (Barling & Phillips, 1993; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Saks, 2006), which in turn positively impacts employee engagement (Ghosh & Rai, 2014; Singh & Choudhary, 2018). Conversely, employee engagement is one of the determinants that affect employees' readiness for change (Saks, 2006; Vidal, 2007; Zulkarnain & Hadiyani, 2014).

Numerous studies have employed work engagement as an intermediary variable to gain a deeper insight into the connection between job performance and the intention to resign (Halbesleben, J.R. & Wheeler, A.R., 2008); organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior (Yanthi & Rahyuda, 2019; Winarsih & Riyanto, 2020); the relationship between employee attitude and outcomes (Yalabik, Z.Y. et al., 2013); employee training and organisation justice on work engagement (Khan wt. Al., 2020); the relationship between organizational commitment and readiness for change (Zulkarnain & Hadiayanti, 2014); relationships between organizational justice and organizational engagement (Saleem et al., 2016); relationships between high performance work practices and job outcomes (Karatepe, O.M. & Olugbade, O.A., 2016); relationships between organizational justice and turnover intentions (Al-Shbiel et al., 2018). While work engagement has often been utilized as a mediating variable in numerous studies, no research has been identified that employs it to mediate the effect of organizational justice on readiness for change. This approach also facilitates a comprehensive examination of the relationship.

Prior studies on readiness for change have primarily focused on the immediate effects of organizational justice, with a particular emphasis on the influence of certain employee characteristics such as gender and marital status (Letasa et. Al., 2021), or leadership ability of their leaders (Hanh & Choi, 2019) where the private sector was addressed to a large extent (Armenakis et al., 1993; Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Holt et al., 2007; Foster, 2010; Fuchs & Edwards, 2012; Mitchell, et al., 2012; Arnéguy et al., 2018), certain groups of industries such as telecomunication (Khan; 2020). Many studies on the public sector have focused on job specifics such as librarians, while the public sector has received less attention (Jahangiri et. Al., 2020), construction workers (Lomoya et. Al., 2015). This research aims to deliver a comprehensive and well-supported evaluation of how to prepare employees for change at public universities transitioning into autonomous public university (namely: PTN-BH).

Due to the unique characteristics of the university transformation program toward PTN-BH and the lack of research on public sector readiness for change. This research examines how the four aspects of organizational justice—procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational—relate to the willingness for change within an autonomous public university.

Organizational Justice Impacts on Readiness for Change

Employee perceptions of justice in the workplace are known as organizational justice. Employees use perceived justice to predict the company's actions and attitudes toward them, similar to the justice heuristic theory (Lind, 2001), especially in periods of uncertainty such as organizational change. Perceived justice will help employees feel more secure about their future work environment, allowing them to more easily adapt to organizational changes.

According to Weiner (2009), when members of an organization are prepared for change, they are more inclined to initiate it, exert greater effort, and collaborate to ensure its successful implementation. For organizational change to be effective, individual transformation is essential. It is crucial to manage the human elements of the process, as people are both the origin and the instrument of change (Smith, 2005). Similarly, employees who are actively involved in achieving organizational values and goals will also find it easier to achieve readiness for change (Visagie & Steyn, 2011). Madsen et al. (2005) discovered a positive relationship between organizational identification, loyalty, and employee engagement with the willingness to embrace change. According to Armstrong (1999), when employees are actively involved in decision-making, their input is valued and influences outcomes, leading them to accept the resulting decisions or changes.

Previous studies have shown perceived organizational justice plays an important role in shaping individual responses to readiness for change. These studies have shown a link between organizational justice and readiness for change (Foster, 2010; Shah, 2011; Fuchs & Edwards, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2012; Arnéguy et al., 2018). In addition, Rodell & Colquitt, 2009; Marzucco et al., 2014; also examines the effects of justice as a global perception in the setting of change. This is in line with the growing evidence about the effect of justice on employee attitudes and behavior towards change. Based on this study, the hypotheses can be formulated as follow:

H_{1a}: *Procedural justice affects readiness for change.*

H_{1b}: *Distributive justice affects readiness for change.*

H_{1c}: *Interpersonal justice affects readiness for change.*

H_{1d}: *Informational justice affects readiness for change.*

The Effects of Organizational Justice on Work Engagement

A variety of studies have demonstrated that organizational justice plays a role in influencing employee engagement. Saks (2006) highlighted that organizational justice is a crucial element in forecasting the level of employee engagement with their tasks. This perspective is supported by Barling and Phillips (1993), who assert that employees are more likely to engage in prosocial actions towards their organization when they perceive fair treatment. Moreover, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) observed that employees who sense a high level of fairness within their organization often feel a responsibility to reciprocate by enhancing their engagement. According to Ghosh and Rai (2014), both distributive justice and interactional justice play a crucial role in enhancing employee engagement, as they effectively contribute to the attainment of organizational goals. Based on these findings, the following hypotheses are developed:

H_{2a}: *Procedural justice affects work engagement.*

H_{2b}: Distributive justice has an effect on work engagement.

H_{2c}: Interpersonal justice has an effect on work engagement.

H_{2d}: Informational justice has an effect on work engagement.

Work Engagement Impact on Readiness for Change

Employee engagement plays a crucial role during organizational change, as highlighted by Saks (2006). Engaged employees are more likely to contribute to the organization's success in overcoming competition and challenges, leading to increased productivity and reduced turnover rates. Likewise, Vidal (2007) found that employee engagement has an impact on the successful implementation of organizational change, especially in large-scale that involve all elements of the organization. Effective and successful change is usually characterized by encouraging change followed by creating readiness for change among managers and employees and trying to overcome resistance for change. Readiness for change are reflected in the beliefs, attitudes and intentions of organizational members regarding the extent to which change is needed and the organizational capacity for the changes to be successful (Armenakis & Harris, 2009).

Employee engagement can influence how employees perceive the support they receive from their organization (Ram & Prabhakar, 2011). Consequently, when it comes to embracing and adapting to change, employees who feel connected to the company are likely to view organizational support positively, ensuring that changes align with the accepted circumstances. One of the elements influencing an employee's willingness to embrace change is their level of engagement(Zulkarnain & Hadiyani, 2014). Based on this study, the following hypotheses can be formulated into:

H_3: Work engagement affects readiness for change

Work Engagement Mediating Role in Organizational Justice Impact Readiness for Change

Saks (2006) highlights that organizational justice, with a focus on distributive and procedural justice, plays a crucial role in shaping employee engagement. Employees desire fairness from their organization and often assess the balance between their input and the rewards they receive. When there is a fair exchange between what employees contribute and what they receive, both parties share a similar perception of justice within the organization (Aryee et al., 2002).

Numerous studies suggest that organizational justice plays a crucial role in predicting how engaged employees are with their work (Barling & Phillips, 1993; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Saks, 2006). The positive impact of organizational justice on employee engagement has been well-documented (Ghosh & Rai, 2014; Singh & Choudhary, 2018). Additionally, employee engagement is a key factor affecting how prepared employees are for change (Saks, 2006; Vidal, 2007; Zulkarnain & Hadiyani, 2014). Consequently, work engagement is conceptualized as a mediating variable to further elucidate the influence of organizational justice on change readiness. Prior research has highlighted the importance of considering work engagement when explaining the connection between organizational justice and its effects.

The process of acceptance and exchange shares similarities with Social Exchange Theory (SET), where the interactions between employees and their company develop over time, fostering a sense of mutual benefit and loyalty under specific conditions. In more intense conditions, SET concept is the basis for the emergence of a sense of attachment between employees and the company. Therefore, an employee will consider and support a change if they receive individual benefits. From this research, the following hypotheses can be developed.:

H4a: Work engagement plays a role in mediating the relationship between procedural justice and readiness for change.

H4b: Work engagement plays a role in mediating the relationship between distributive justice and readiness for change.

H4c: Work engagement plays a role in mediating the relationship between interpersonal justice and readiness for change.

H4d: Work engagement plays a role in mediating the relationship between informational justice and readiness for change.

Research Model

This study's model encompasses the four dimensions of organizational justice and examines how each dimension affects the readiness for change, with work engagement serving as an mediating variable.

Organizational Justice
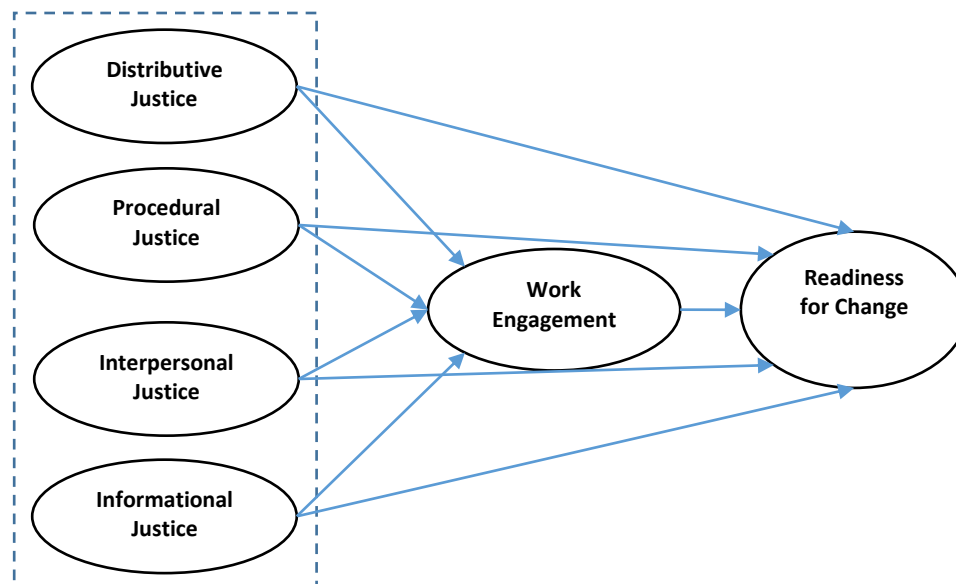
Research Methods

Population and Sample

The research population consists of all administrative staff at PTN-BH, with each individual staff member serving as the unit of analysis. This study utilizes a non-probability sampling method. The data sources for this research are primarily primary data. Primary data was collected through a survey conducted via an online questionnaire.

Respondents were dominated by male (55.8%) with ages between 25 to 58 years. Most of the respondents have staff/ non-echelon positions (82.4%). Based on years of service, most of the respondents have a working period of 1 to 14 years with a maximum education level of S1 (48.1%). Based on

employment status, most of the respondents have civil servant status (63.8%). The detailed information can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Description of Respondent Characteristics

Charateristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	231	55,8
Female	183	44,2
Ages		
25-32 years old	52	12,6
33-40 years old	124	30
41-48 years old	156	37,7
49-58 years old	82	19,8
Occupation		
Structural/ Echelon	73	17,6
Staff/ Non-Echelon	341	82,4
Years of Service		
1-14 years	210	50,7
15- 32 years	162	39,1
33-48 years	41	9,9
49-57 years	1	0,2
Education Level		
Senior High School	98	23,7
Diploma	59	14,3
S1	199	48,1
S2	58	14
Employment Status		
Civil Servant	264	63,8
Non-Civil Servant	150	36,2

Operational Definition and Variables Measurement

Organizational justice refers to the employment condition that influences an individual's perception of whether they are treated fairly or unfairly by their organization. The assessment of organizational justice relies on Colquitt's (2001) scale, which includes 7 items for procedural justice, 4 items for distributive justice, 4 items for interpersonal justice, and 5 items for informational justice.

Schaufeli et al. (2001) describe engagement as a positive and fulfilling mental state associated with work, characterized by energy, commitment, and immersion. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), developed by Schaufeli & Bakker (2001), is employed to assess work engagement and comprises 17 items.

Readiness for change involves evaluating how members of an organization perceive and react to the initiation of change, whether they support or oppose it (Armenakis et al., 1993; Holt et al., 2007; Armenakis & Harris, 2002). The Readiness for Change Questionnaire-II (RFCQ-II) is a psychometric instrument designed to assess this readiness, concentrating on four primary dimensions: appropriateness, management support, change efficacy, and personal valence.

Result

Research Instrument

To verify the validity of the instrument variables concerning organizational justice, work engagement, and readiness for change, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was applied, ensuring that factor loadings were at least 0.50. Additionally, reliability assessments were performed to evaluate the consistency of the questionnaire items, with Cronbach's Alpha values surpassing 0.70, confirming the reliability of all variables.

Hypothesis Testing

This study employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for hypothesis testing, utilizing the Goodness-of-Fit model and path coefficient analysis within the SEM framework.The explanation of each analysis are as follows:

Table 2. Goodness-of-Fit Model

Goodness-of-fit Indices	Cut-off Value	Result	Model Evaluation
Chi-Square (χ^2)	Expected small	2531,234	*Not Fit*
Degrees of freedom	Positive	1357	*Fit*
Probability level (p)	$\geq 0,05$	0,000	*Not Fit*
CMIN/DF	$\leq 2,0$	1,865	*Fit*
GFI	$\geq 0,90$	0,764	*Not Fit*
AGFI	$\geq 0,90$	0,742	*Not Fit*
TLI	$\geq 0,90$	0,925	*Fit*
CFI	$\geq 0,90$	0,929	*Fit*
RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0,054	*Fit*

Source: Processed primary data, 2024.

The goodness-of-fit model table shows that χ^2 is at a significance level below 0.05 is achieved with a χ^2 value of 2531,234. Chi-Square is very sensitive toward sample size, thus other indicators are needed to produce a definite justification regarding model fit (Ferdinand, 2006). In this study, the GFI and AGFI values suggest a low level of conformity, while the CMIN/DF, TLI, CFI, and RMSEA values indicate a high level of conformity. Consequently, it can be inferred that the overall model is acceptable.

Path Coefficient Analysis

Table 3. Regression Weight

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Work Engagement	<---	Procedural Justice	,191	,066	2,901	,004
Work Engagement	<---	Distributive Justice	,052	,039	1,328	,184
Work Engagement	<---	Interpersonal Justice	,269	,080	3,344	,000
Work Engagement	<---	Informational Justice	,236	,076	3,103	,002
Readiness for Change	<---	Procedural Justice	,200	,049	4,080	,000
Readiness for Change	<---	Distributive Justice	,061	,027	2,228	,026
Readiness for Change	<---	Interpersonal Justice	,020	,055	,375	,708
Readiness for Change	<---	Informational Justice	,107	,053	2,004	,045
Readiness for Change	<---	*Work Engagement*	,127	,046	2,762	,006

Source: Processed primary data, 2024.

Path Coefficient Analysis test show that from the nine analyzed paths, there are seven paths that have a significant influence, as seen from the magnitude of the significance level (p) of hypothesis testing which is smaller than 5%. Three dimensions of organizational justice, they are procedural, distributive and informational justices. Each have an effect on readiness for change, it stated that H_{1a}, H_{1b}, and H_{1d} are supported. However, the influence of interpersonal justice on readiness for change (H_{1c}) is not supported. Meanwhile, in relation to work engagement, there are three dimensions of organizational justice that have a positive effect on work engagement, they are procedural justice, informational justice, and interpersonal justice. H_{2a}, H_{2c}, and H_{2d} are supported. The effect of distributive justice on work engagement (H_{2b}) is not supported. Path Coefficient Analysis also shows that work engagement has an effect on readiness for change, (H_3) is supported.

In addition, a Sobel test was conducted to find out whether the indirect effect of organizational justices on readiness for change through work engagement is significant or not.

Table 4. Sobel Test Result

Influence	Sobel Test Score	
	t	Sig (p)
Procedural justice on readiness for change is mediated by work engagement	2,000	0,045
Distributive justice on readiness for change is mediated by work engagement	1,197	0,231
Interpersonal justice on readiness for change is mediated by work engagement	2,129	0,033
Informational justice on readiness for change is mediated by work engagement	2,063	0,039

Source: Processed primary data, 2024.

The findings suggest that work engagement acts as a mediator in the relationship between procedural justice and the willingness to embrace change, thereby supporting H_{4a}. In a similar vein, work engagement also serves as a mediator in the relationship between interpersonal justice and readiness for change, thereby confirming H_{4c}. Moreover, work engagement serves as a mediator for the impact of informational justice on readiness for change, thereby supporting H_{4d}. Nevertheless, work engagement does not mediate the link between distributive justice and readiness for change, as H_{4b} is not supported.

Discussion

Organizational Justice Impacts on Readiness for Change

The findings revealed that the three facets of organizational justice—procedural, distributive, and informational—each significantly enhanced the willingness to embrace change. This suggests that when employees perceive a sense of procedural, distributive, and informational justice within an organization, they are more inclined to accept change. The connection between these dimensions of justice and readiness for change underscores that they are the primary precursors to successful organizational change implementation. These three dimensions of organizational justice are essential for organizations aiming to achieve successful change.

The findings of this study align with the research by Dirks et al. (2009), which indicates that employees are more likely to exhibit behaviors that support change when they are involved in organizational decision-making. Furthermore, Visagie & Steyn (2011) noted that employees who actively participate in achieving the organization's values and goals are more likely to be prepared for change. Similarly, Madsen et al. (2005) discovered a positive correlation between identification with the

organization, loyalty, and employee engagement, and individual readiness for change. When employees feel included in decision-making, with their ideas being considered and contributing to outcomes, they are more likely to accept the decisions or changes implemented (Armstrong, 1999). The findings of this research align with earlier empirical studies that have shown a positive correlation between organizational justice and the willingness to embrace change (Foster, 2010; Shah, 2011; Fuchs & Edwards, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2012; Arnéguy et al., 2018). Nonetheless, interpersonal justice does not significantly impact readiness for change. This implies that the degree of interpersonal justice perceived by employees within the organization does not substantially affect their readiness to undergo change.

Organizational Justice Impacts on Work Engagement

The results indicated that procedural, interpersonal, and informational justices significantly positively influenced work engagement. In other words, the more employees perceive these forms of justice within the organization, the greater their level of work engagement. The findings of this research are consistent with Marciano (2010), who argues that employees are more likely to engage when they feel respected and valued. It demonstrates that employee engagement emerges when employees are genuinely committed, dedicated, and loyal to the company, their superiors, their work, and their colleagues. Furthermore, Marciano (2010) notes that engaged employees exhibit behaviors such as proposing innovative ideas at work, showing enthusiasm for their tasks, taking the initiative, actively fostering their own development as well as that of others and the organization, consistently surpassing set goals and expectations, overcoming challenges while remaining focused on their duties, and demonstrating commitment to the organization. The findings of the study align with those of Ghosh & Rai (2014) and Singh & Choudhary (2018), which suggest that organizational justice positively impacts employee engagement.

The influence of distributive justice on work engagement appears to be insignificant. In other words, employees' perceptions of distributive justice within an organization do not significantly affect their level of work engagement. This finding stands in contrast to Ghosh & Rai (2014), who contended that the dimensions of distributive and interactional justice could act as mechanisms to boost employee engagement due to their functional role in achieving goals.

Work Engagement Impacts on Readiness for Change

The impact of work engagement on readiness for change reveals a significant positive effect. In essence, the more engaged employees are in their work, the more prepared they are for change. The study's findings suggest that as employee engagement increases, so does their readiness to embrace change. These results align with previous research indicating that work engagement is a key factor influencing employees' readiness to handle organizational change. The study predicts a positive correlation between employee engagement and their preparedness for organizational change. Regarding employees' readiness for change, those who are engaged will support the implementation of organizational change efforts. They have high enthusiasm, initiative and enthusiasm in carrying out tasks related to ongoing organizational changes. In addition, if these employees experience difficulties in carrying out their duties, they will not easily give up. Thus, it can be seen that the characteristics of engaged employees indicate that they are ready to change.

This research is in line with Saks (2006), during organizations' change, employee engagement becomes an important element in the change process. Employees who have engagement will be able to contribute to the organization's success in facing competition and challenges, resulting in more productive work and low turnover tendencies. Likewise, Vidal (2007) found that employee engagement has an impact on the successful implementation of organizational change, especially in large-scale that involve all elements of the organization. Employee engagement is one of the factors that affect employee readiness for change (Zulkarnain & Hadiyani, 2014).

Work Engagement Mediations on Organizational Justice Impact on Readiness for Change

The findings of this study empirically substantiate that work engagement serves as a mediating variable in the relationship between procedural justice and employee readiness for organizational change. Furthermore, work engagement also mediates the influence of interpersonal justice and informational justice on readiness for change. These results indicate that higher levels of perceived procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice among employees are associated with increased work engagement, which, in turn, exerts a significant positive impact on employee readiness to confront organizational change. The findings of this study suggest that employee engagement positively influences the relationship between organizational justice and employee readiness to adapt to organizational change. However, employee engagement does not mediate the effect of distributive justice on readiness for change.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence indicating that among the four dimensions of organizational justice, three—procedural justice, distributive justice, and informational justice—exert a significant positive influence on readiness for change. Conversely, interpersonal justice does not significantly affect readiness for change. Procedural, distributive, and informational justice are essential precursors to the successful implementation of organizational change with respect to readiness for change. These three dimensions of organizational justice are vital for organizations seeking to achieve successful organizational change. The findings of this study provide empirical evidence that work engagement functions as a mediating variable in the relationship between the three dimensions of organizational justice—procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice—and employees' readiness for organizational change. This suggests that when employees perceive higher levels of procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice, their work engagement is enhanced. Consequently, this has a significantly positive effect on their preparedness to embrace change. The scope of this study is confined to state universities in Central Java that are transitioning to PTN-BH status. It is recommended that future research employ a more extensive sample, encompassing a broader range of state universities undergoing the transition to PTN-BH across Indonesia.

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