The Effect of Machiavellianism on Employee Resistance to Change: The Mediation of Employee Needs

Nila Raudlotul Janah*[1], Siti Nuzulia[2]

[1, 2] Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan dan Psikologi, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

E-mail : *Nilaraudlotuljanah@students.unnes.ac.id
Corresponding Author

Abstract. *In today's organizational environment, the ability to survive the demands and change is the key to a company's success. However, the main problem faced by companies in implementing change is resistance from their employees although there have been many previous studies that discuss organizational dimensions in increasing employee acceptance. Therefore, this article discusses the relationship of employees' Resistance to Change with Machiavellianism and mediating role of Manifest Needs, which consists of Need for Dominance, Need for Achievement, Need for Autonomy, and Need for Affiliation. Data from 259 employees have been collected from various companies in Indonesia. The results obtained showing that Need for Autonomy significantly mediates the relationship between Resistance to Change and Machiavellianism as well as contributes to the theory while filling the research gap. In addition, this research also discusses recommendations for the future research and limitations associated with this research.*

Keywords: Organizational Change, Resistance to Change, Manifest Needs, Need for Autonomy, Machiavellianism

Introduction

Since COVID-19 was over, the term VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) in business and companies have shifted to BANI (brittle, anxious, non-linear, incomprehensible) where everything is changing, fast, and uncertain. This is in line with many researches that study how to get employees ready to accept company changes, such as by increasing communication between change agents (Endrejat et al., 2021), providing job security guarantees and information regarding changes to employees (Amarantou et al., 2018), perceived organization support and leader-member exchange (Rehman et al., 2021), and increasing job satisfaction (Heuvel et al., 2020). However, the facts in the field show that the application of the things above is still unable to increase the company's success in implementing changes (Belschak et al., 2020). Therefore, the change process has become one of the most difficult and challenging matters for companies up to now (Karasvirta & Teerikangas, 2022). Those facts are supported by John Kotter in his book entitled *Leading Change*, which states that only 30% of organizational change implementations are successfully applied and operate in the long term (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008), even those findings are consistent up to now (Errida & Lotfi, 2021).

The discussion about the level of organizational success in implementing new programs has a strong relationship with several aspects such as employee perceptions, employee needs for achievement (Oreg, 2003), and personality (Amarantou et al., 2018). However, Oreg (2018)

proposes that personality is the most influential aspect. The more positive employees' responses and attitudes toward change, then it will support the organization's success in implementing change, and vice versa (Ahmad & Cheng, 2018).

Many researches about RtC show that individual factor (e.g. personality) is the most influential factor among other factors (Allaoui & Benmoussa, 2020). However, previous research is still limited to investigating the relationship of RtC with the big 5 personality attributes, such as: consciousness in the big 5 personality is positively related to RtC (Paloş et al., 2022). As a matter of fact, there are many personality attributes that have not been widely explored, one of which is dark personality, especially Machiavellianism (Blickle et al., 2020; Thoroughgood et al., 2022). This should be interesting research as dark personality traits are also commonly associated with negative work outcomes, such as: workplace deviance and counterproductive behaviors (e.g., Belschak et al., 2018). Therefore, the lack of studies on the relationship between Machiavellianism (Mach) and RtC becomes a separate research gap, considering that RtC is also one of the negative work responses (Belschak et al., 2020).

Not only is the study of Mach and RtC still rare, but it turns out there are previous findings that show a positive correlation between Mach and RtC (Belschak et al., 2020; Thoroughgood et al., 2022). In other studies, it states that individuals with high Mach prefer ambiguous situations or organizations with less strict regularity so that they can manipulate the situation (Hart et al., 2021). Therefore, the inconsistency between the research results and the theoretical constructs of Mach needs to be reviewed.

Seeing this inconsistency, the researchers are interested in investigating other aspects that also affect RtC, namely needs. This is because needs become the basis for the reasons of employees do work and even survive in a certain organization (Liu & Wohlsdorf Arendt, 2016) and have a strong correlation with personality (Schaffer & Manegold, 2023). Thus, this aspect needs to be re-examined, whether it greatly affects the relationship between Mach and RtC or not. From many existing motivation theories, McClelland's Theory of Needs has been proven to be considerably applied in empirical studies to describe why people invest their time in a particular activity (Abdullah et al., 2023). However, there have not been many studies that investigate the relationship between RtC and all aspects of manifest needs. Previous research only mentions that one aspect of MNQ, namely need for achievement (Nach) affects RtC (Oreg, 2006a). Meanwhile, three other aspects of MNQ are suspected to have an effect on RtC. First, need for dominance (Nad) is suspected to be related to power or prestige factors, Nau (Need for Autonomy) that is suspected to be related to Intrinsic Reward factors, and Naff (Need for Affiliation) that is related to social influence factors (Oreg, 2006a). However, there have been no recent studies, which have directly investigated the relationship between MNQ and RtC, especially in mediations relationship.

Therefore, it is important to be investigated more deeply. Particularly in the influence of MNQ on the relationship between Mach and RtC.

This article seeks to extend the limited existing findings on the inconsistent relationship between Mach and RtC. There is previous research on the relationship between Mach and RtC but only as a mediating variable (eg: Belschak et al., 2020; Thoroughgood et al., 2022). However, the absence of studies that investigate Mach with RtC directly results in a lack of information concerning how much impact Mach has on a person's acceptance of change in the organizational context. In addition, the mediating role of MNQ on the relationship between Mach and RtC has also never been investigated before, although needs are one of the important predictors of personality in showing certain attitudes, including in the context of organizational change (Schaffer & Manegold, 2023).

Research Methods

Populatian and Research Samples

The research design used was a cross-sectional study. It is part of quantitative research using structured questions which are then distributed to many people to answer. The answers will be recorded, processed, and analyzed using statistics by researchers. Meanwhile, the cross-sectional study design was conducted with one questionnaire filled out by respondents in a limited and relatively short period of time. The population in this research is employees who work in unlimited sectors in various regions in Indonesia. The data collection technique used convenience sampling that selects samples from units that are easy to find, deemed suitable, willing, and in accordance with the criteria determined by the researcher (Siregar, 2017). Before the data collection process, the researchers used G*Power to determine the minimum sample required, namely 138 respondents with the calculation of the expected effect size = 0.15 (Zaman & Qayyum, 2020), statistical power .95 and alpha .05. Based on the minimum sample size criteria, this research used 259 respondents as representatives who would fill out informed consent on the online questionnaire provided.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis used is regression analysis with mediation, which is a regression analysis that involves mediating variables in building the relationship model. This analysis uses Hayes (2013) bootstrapping method or it has the name PROCESS v3.0 by Andrew F. Hayes in SPSS. This analysis is used because it can simultaneously conclude the direct and indirect effects of two variables, where the third variable will intervene in the influence of the two constructs which are then called indirect effects. The following is the PROCESS v3.0 mediation model by Andrew F. Hayes in SPSS:

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$c = c' + a*b$ ....(1)

Description:

c = total effect

c' = direct effect

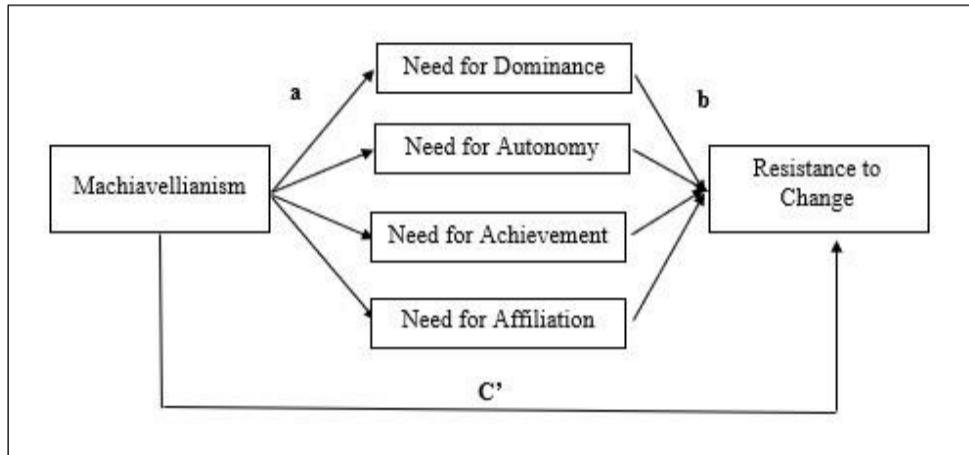a = indirect effect

b = indirect effect

Figure 1.
The Conceptual Framework

Instruments

Machiavellianism. The instrument used to measure the Machiavellianism trait amounted to 20 Mach-IV items from Christie and Geis (1970). This instrument measures three attributes of Machiavellianism, namely interpersonal tactics, a cynical view of human nature, and disregard for conventional morality. Each item consists of 5 answer options including: disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, and agree which are indicated by numbers 1-5. Based on these answer options, the higher the total score obtained, the higher a person's Machiavellianism level. The discrimination power of items on this scale ranges from 0.57 to 0.63.

Resistance to change is measured using an adaptation of the instrument developed by Oreg (2003). Measuring 4 dimensions, namely: routine seeking, emotional reaction, short-term focus and cognitive rigidity. Consisting of 16 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale with answer options 1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree. From the 5 answer options, a high score indicates that a person has a high level of resistance to change, and vice versa. Finally, the discrimination power of this item ranges from 0.86 to 0.89.

Manifest Needs are measured using an instrument arranged by Steers & Braunstein (1976) based on the needs theory developed by Murray (1938), namely the Manifest Needs Questionnaire (MNQ). This instrument has been adapted according to Indonesian culture and language by

Lekahena & Sahrah (2020). It consists of 20 items that measure the components of need for achievement (nAch), need for affiliation (nAff), need for autonomy (nAut), and need for dominance (nDom). This instrument uses a 5-point Likert scale consisting of 5 answer options including: 1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neutral, 4: agree, and 5: strongly agree. Based on these 5 answer options, the higher the score obtained, then the higher the level of one's needs. Not only that, the discrimination power of this item ranges from 0.3 to 0.4.

Results and Discussion

Mean, standard deviation, alpha coefficient, and intercorrelation of all variables are listed in Table 1. Table 1 also shows the intercorrelation of all research variables, significant correlations were found in Machiavellianism and Need for Autonomy with Resistance for Change. However, no significant correlation was found in the variables Need for achievement, Need for Affiliation, and Need for Dominance with Machiavellianism.

Table 1. Descriptive Test Results, Intercorrelation Between Variables, Standard Deviation, and Cronbach's Alpha

Predictors	A	Mean (Std. Dev)	Mach	Nach	RtC	Naff	Nau	Nad
			Intercorrelation					
Mach	.033	50.62 (7.79)	-					
Nach	.366	19.59 (2.55)	-.080	-				
Rtc	.146	34.41 (9.10)	.326**	.281**	-			
Naff	.241	15.69 (2.27)	-.063	-.019	.098	-		
Nau	.315	16.02 (2.55)	.192**	.083	.234**	.235**	-	
Nad	.288	16.45 (2.97)	.108	.262**	-.061	.135*	.031	-

*Source: Processed from SPSS 21; Note. *p < .05. **p < .01.*

Mediation Test Result

Table 2. Standarized Coefficients for Stuctural Paths

Indirect path (Mediation model)	β	SE	Coefficient	LLCI	ULCI
Mach-Nad-RtC	-,0066	,0108	-,1602	-,0326	,0111
Mach-Nach-RtC	,0241	,0223	-,9255	-,0130	,0749
Mach-Nau-RtC	,0546	,0226	,8690	,0146	,1027
Mach-Naff-RtC	-,0127	,0160	,6928	-,0505	,0142

Source: Processed from SPSS 21; *Note. *p < .05. **p < .01; Mach = Machiavellianism; Nach = Need for Achievement; RtC = Resistance to Change; Naff = Need for Affiliation; Nau = Need for Autonomy; Nad = Need for Dominance*

Furthermore, mediation analysis was conducted to investigate hypothesis 2, namely the mediating role of Nach, Naff, Nau, and Nad in the relationship between Mach and RtC. Hypothesis testing was conducted using Hayes (2013) mediation model analysis, specifically using model 4.2. The results show that Mach has a positive direct effect on RtC, c' (SE) = 0.32 (0.67), p = 0.00, confidence interval (CI) = [0.189, 0.447]. Meanwhile, for the indirect effect, it was found that Need for Autonomy significantly mediated the relationship between Mach and RtC, c' (SE) = 0.87 (0.23), p = 0.001, CI = [.0146 - .1027]. While the research results showed the mediation relationship between Mach and RtC with NaD, c' (SE) = -0.17 (0.01), p = 0.00, (CI) = [-0.03, 0.01], the mediation relationship between Mach and RtC with NAch c' (SE) = -0. 93 (0.023), p = 0.00 (CI) [-0.13, 0.075], and the relationship between Mach and RtC mediated Need for Affiliation showed c' (SE) = 0.68 (0.016), p = 0.00 confidence interval [CI] [-0.05, 0.015].

Discussion
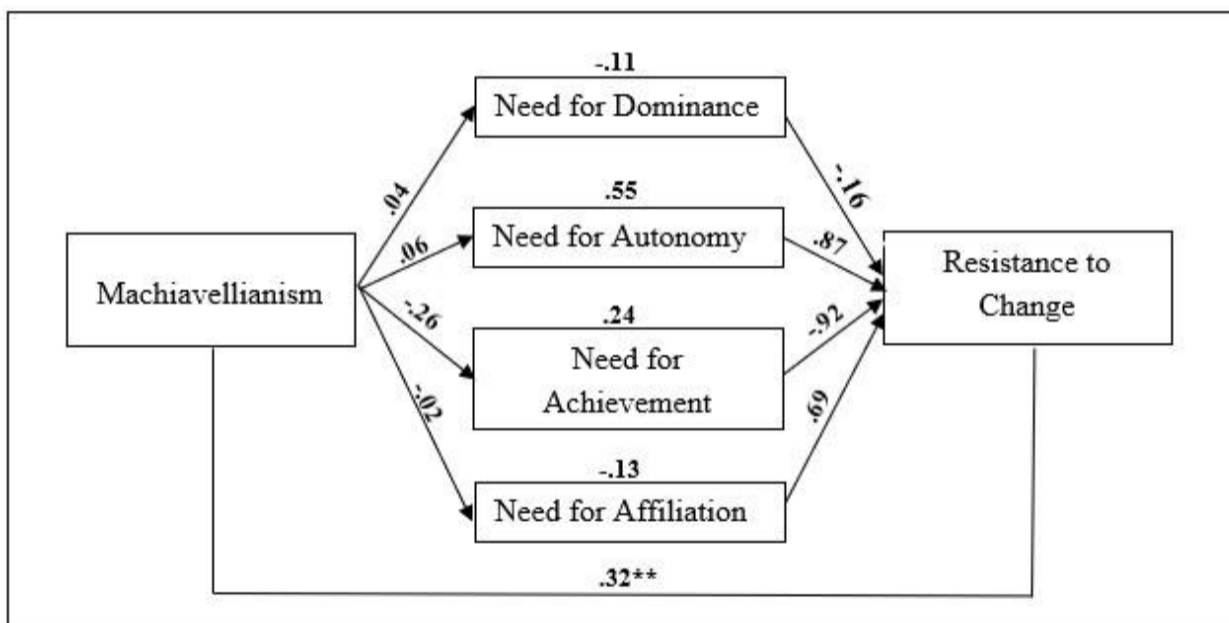
Note: **p <.001

Figure 1. The Final Model of Mediating Process

The research results successfully provide an empirical contribution, namely the relationship between Machiavellianism and Resistance to Change personality is influenced by Need for Autonomy. This research also succeeded in proving a significant relationship between Machiavellianism and Resistance to Change. This supports previous research that employees with high levels of Machiavellianism will experience a more drastic decline in performance and even a

higher desire to move when faced with organizational change (Belschak et al., 2020). This dynamic can occur because basically, individuals with high Machiavellianism are characterized as having a cynical (negative) view of the world (Jones & Paulhus, 2009). In addition, when compared to someone with low Mach, high Mach consistently experiences higher levels of job strain, so it is easy to get stressed (Kiziloglu et al., 2021). Moreover, previous studies have also found that Mach is associated with reluctance in the face of ambiguity (Belschak et al., 2020). Based on the exposure of the above studies, individuals with high Mach will certainly develop negative beliefs when change occurs in the workplace considering that change is synonymous with uncertainty and ambiguity, which has the potential to cause stress (Belschak et al., 2020; Oreg & Berson, 2011). In the end, ambiguity is associated with situations and structures that are loose and have few rules (De Hoogh et al., 2021). Meanwhile, the context of ambiguity in organizational change cannot be controlled by Machiavelli.

Machiavellianism personality is also associated with a tendency to neglect social relationships, including relationships in the work environment (De Hoogh et al., 2021; P; Jungst et al., 2021;), and has low dedication, such as: to the organization, supervisor, and organizational change (Jungst et al., 2021). This is because someone with high Mach tends to be concerned with personal goals rather than achieving organizational goals (Belschak et al., 2020; Jones & Paulhus, 2011). Meanwhile, changes in organizations are created certainly to improve quality, achieve goals, and meet consumer expectations (Appelbaum et al., 2015). Therefore, it actually makes sense when Machiavellianism is positively correlated with Resistance to Change.

It turns out that the relationship between Machiavellianism and Resistance to Change is mediated by Need for Autonomy. In table 2, the mediating relationship between Need for Autonomy is partial; this means that there are some aspects of the Need for autonomy that fall to support the relationship between Machiavellianism and Resistance to change. Basically, individuals with high Machiavellianism have a high need for autonomy (P. Jonason et al., 2018). This is because individuals with high mach prefer places with minimal regulations (free and unfettered) so that they can develop manipulative behavior freely (Ma et al., 2023). Therefore, based on table 1, Mach and NaU have a significant positive relationship. Furthermore, individuals with Machiavellianism who require high autonomy will resist changes that occur in their environment, including the work environment. This is due to their negative assumptions about change (Belschak et al., 2020). Furthermore, change is related to the drafting of new regulations that have the potential to curb and conflict with the freedom they crave. This is in line with previous studies, which reveal that individuals with high Mach will have high job satisfaction when in a less restrictive work environment (high autonomy) (P. Jonason & Webster, 2012).

Nad was found that it is not to mediate the relationship between Mach and RtC. This is a new finding because there has been no related research before. One explanation for the inability

of Nad to mediate the relationship between Mach and RtC is that individuals with a high need for Dominance usually occupy strategic positions (Palmen et al., 2021). Someone with a strategic position in the company is a stakeholder who often takes part in making changes and benefits from these changes. Additionally, Nach also does not mediate the relationship between Mch and RtC. This might cause since someone with a high Need for Achievement will also consider that change is also a challenge that must be achieved and solved. Lastly, Naff does not mediate the relationship between Mach and RtC. This might cause since someone with a high Naff will tend to comply with existing changes to maintain good relationships with their superiors and colleagues. By having good relationships, the need for affiliation of individuals with high Naff is fulfilled.

In this research, researchers also found a significant negative relationship between Nach and RtC. This is consistent with the main theory of resistance to change, which states that one of the fulfillments needs of someone with high Nach is the provision of challenges, including changes in the organization (Oreg, 2006b). In addition, this finding is also consistent with research also conducted in Indonesia with lecturer subjects, which suggests that someone with a high need for achievement will have an urge to show achievement, in this context successfully facing organizational change is also an achievement (Prihatsanti, 2012). This actually makes sense, because someone with high Nach will still face challenges (e.g. organizational change) by studying the risks that will be faced. In addition, the character of someone with high Nach is unlikely to abandon a task when it has not been completed, even tending to expend maximum effort until they are satisfied with the results of their work.

Conclusion

The findings of this study help companies in the employee recruitment process. Not only competency assessment, the use of assessment constructs regarding personality and needs assessment are important to be applied. This is important in order to adjust employees to the culture and goals of the company in the future. In this case, it is related to the willingness of employees to changes that occur in the organization, because it turns out that individuals with machiavellianism and high needs for autonomy cannot easily accept changes. Meanwhile, individuals with high needs for dominance, achievement, and affiliation tend to be able to accept changes in the organization. By applying this, it will help the company in implementing changes and achieving goals.

However, this research is not free from several limitations. This research uses a cross-sectional design limiting causal inference between characteristics and variables. Then, this research did not include control groups that may mediate the relationship between Machiavellianism and Resistance to Change such as: gender; length of employment; position; job sector; and even salary. Through this research, the researchers found that need for autonomy

mediates the relationship between machiavellianism and resistance to change. The researchers found that among the aspects of the manifest needs questionnaire that successfully predict resistance to change in organizations is need for autonomy, which this aspect is often associated with positive things such as creativity and independence in completing work.

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