


**A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF PERSON-ORGANIZATIONAL FIT:
CHARACTERISTICS AND LEADERSHIP STYLES**

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received 04 October 2022</p> <p>Accepted 06 November 2022</p>	<p>Purpose: This study aims to determine the most effective leadership style for employees during the merger and acquisition process. This study focuses on the distinctive characteristics of leadership that can best assist employees in adjusting to the new organizational culture. Where the role of the leader is very important in helping the employee adjustment process.</p>
<p>Keywords:</p> <p>Person-Organizational Fit; Leadership; Adjustment Process; Organizational Culture; Merger and Acquisition.</p>	<p>Theoretical framework: Mergers and acquisitions have become an important strategy used by companies to achieve certain organizational goals. However, people-organization fit issues will occur during the post-merger or post-acquisition.</p> <p>Design/methodology/approach: The method used in the research was carried out using a qualitative-phenomenological approach. Choice of method contributes to M&A knowledge. Using a phenomenological approach, this study incorporates detailed nuances into our understanding of the role of leadership during M&A through an experienced perspective. Thus, a deeper descriptive exploration of the topic can be obtained.</p>
	<p>Findings: In this study, it is stated that the success of mergers and acquisitions is influenced by the role of the leader before, during and after the merger/acquisition is carried out. This study argues that the lack of attention to the leadership aspects of M&A creates a knowledge gap, where little is known about the role of leadership during M&A, as well as its role in ensuring a favorable organizational climate for creating employee person-organizations that are appropriate to the post-M&A process.</p> <p>Research, Practical & Social implications: Previous studies have stated the importance of leaders to help organizational members achieve person-organization fit. The relationship of person-organization fit after the acquisition process has also been investigated.</p> <p>Originality/value: This study concludes that in general an effective leadership style in the M&A process tends to be Transformational. One of the effective leadership styles told by the informants is the leader's ability to be able to provide motivation, which is in line with one of the "4I" concepts of Transformational leadership, namely Inspirational motivation.</p> <p>Doi: https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2022.v7i5.734</p>

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UMA INVESTIGAÇÃO FENOMENOLÓGICA DA APTIDÃO PESSOA-ORGANIZACIONAL: CARACTERÍSTICAS E ESTILOS DE LIDERANÇA

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este estudo visa determinar o estilo de liderança mais eficaz para os funcionários durante o processo de fusão e aquisição. Este estudo enfoca as características distintivas da liderança que melhor podem ajudar os funcionários a se adaptarem à nova cultura organizacional. Onde o papel do líder é muito importante para ajudar o processo de ajuste dos funcionários.

Estrutura teórica: As fusões e aquisições tornaram-se uma estratégia importante utilizada pelas empresas para atingir determinados objetivos organizacionais. Entretanto, as questões de ajuste de pessoas-organização ocorrerão durante o pós-fusão ou pós-aquisição.

Design/metodologia/abordagem: O método utilizado na pesquisa foi realizado utilizando uma abordagem qualitativa-fenomenológica. A escolha do método contribui para o conhecimento em fusões e aquisições. Utilizando uma abordagem fenomenológica, este estudo incorpora nuances detalhadas em nossa compreensão do papel da liderança durante as fusões e aquisições através de uma perspectiva experiente. Assim, uma exploração descritiva mais profunda do tema pode ser obtida.

Descobertas: Neste estudo, afirma-se que o sucesso das fusões e aquisições é influenciado pelo papel do líder antes, durante e após a realização da fusão/aquisição. Este estudo argumenta que a falta de atenção aos aspectos de liderança das fusões e aquisições cria uma lacuna de conhecimento, onde pouco se sabe sobre o papel da liderança durante as fusões e aquisições, bem como seu papel em garantir um clima organizacional favorável para a criação de organizações de pessoas-empregados que sejam apropriadas ao processo pós-fusões e aquisições.

Pesquisa, implicações práticas e sociais: Estudos anteriores afirmaram a importância dos líderes para ajudar os membros da organização a se adaptarem à organização pessoa-organização. A relação pessoa-organização se encaixa após o processo de aquisição também foi investigada.

Originalidade/valor: Este estudo conclui que, em geral, um estilo de liderança eficaz no processo de M&A tende a ser Transformacional. Um dos estilos de liderança efetiva contada pelos informantes é a capacidade do líder de ser capaz de fornecer motivação, o que está em linha com um dos conceitos "4I" da liderança Transformacional, ou seja, a motivação Inspiracional.

Palavras-chave: Adaptação Pessoa-Organizacional, Liderança, Processo de Ajuste, Cultura Organizacional, Fusão, Aquisição.

UNA INVESTIGACIÓN FENOMENOLÓGICA DEL AJUSTE PERSONA-ORGANIZACIÓN: CARACTERÍSTICAS Y ESTILOS DE LIDERAZGO

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Este estudio pretende determinar el estilo de liderazgo más eficaz para los empleados durante el proceso de fusión y adquisición. Este estudio se centra en las características distintivas del liderazgo que mejor pueden ayudar a los empleados a adaptarse a la nueva cultura organizativa. Donde el papel del líder es muy importante para ayudar al proceso de adaptación de los empleados.

Marco teórico: Las fusiones y adquisiciones se han convertido en una importante estrategia utilizada por las empresas para alcanzar determinados objetivos organizativos. Sin embargo, los problemas de ajuste entre las personas y la organización se producirán durante el período posterior a la fusión o a la adquisición.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque: El método utilizado en la investigación se llevó a cabo mediante un enfoque cualitativo-fenomenológico. La elección del método contribuye al conocimiento de las fusiones y adquisiciones. Al utilizar un enfoque fenomenológico, este estudio incorpora matices detallados a nuestra comprensión del papel del liderazgo durante las fusiones y adquisiciones a través de una perspectiva experimentada. De este modo, se puede obtener una exploración descriptiva más profunda del tema.

Conclusiones: En este estudio se afirma que el éxito de las fusiones y adquisiciones está influido por el papel del líder antes, durante y después de que se lleve a cabo la fusión/adquisición. Este estudio sostiene que la falta de atención a los aspectos de liderazgo de las fusiones y adquisiciones crea una laguna de conocimiento, en la que se sabe poco sobre el papel del liderazgo durante las fusiones y adquisiciones, así como sobre su función a la hora de garantizar un clima organizativo favorable para crear organizaciones-persona de empleados adecuadas para el proceso posterior a las fusiones y adquisiciones.

Investigación, implicaciones prácticas y sociales: Estudios anteriores han señalado la importancia de que los líderes ayuden a los miembros de la organización a lograr el ajuste persona-organización. También se ha investigado la relación del ajuste persona-organización tras el proceso de adquisición.

Originalidad/valor: Este estudio concluye que, en general, un estilo de liderazgo eficaz en el proceso de fusión y adquisición tiende a ser transformacional. Uno de los estilos de liderazgo eficaz que señalan los informantes es la

capacidad del líder para ser capaz de proporcionar motivación, lo que está en consonancia con uno de los conceptos de las "4I" del liderazgo Transformacional, a saber, la motivación Inspiracional.

Palabras clave: Ajuste Persona-Organización, Liderazgo, Proceso de Ajuste, Cultura Organizativa, Fusión, Adquisición.

1 INTRODUCTION

Merger and acquisition has become an important strategy utilized by companies to achieve specific organizational goal (Bansal & Kumar, 2008). Nevertheless, the issue of person-organization fit would occur during the post-merger or post-acquisition. From the organizational culture point of view, it was not easy to create harmony among employees after the merger or acquisition process happened. The new organization would consist of employees originated from two or more companies, each hold the distinctive culture and values from their previous organization. In the case of acquisition, acquired organization's members have to adjust with the new culture of the acquirer.

Previous studies has stated the importance of the leader to help organization members achieving the person-organization fit (e.g., Li, 2006; Tepper et al., 2017). The relationship of person-organization fit after the acquisition process have also been investigated (Datta, 1991). Nevertheless, it was reported by Cartwright and Schoenberg (2006) that during the thirty years period from 1976 to 2006 of mergers and acquisitions research; there were lack of improvements made on the topic. One explanation could be because the research in the merger and acquisition area remained incomplete in some way. For example, studies by King, Dalton, Daily, and Covin (2004) concluded that the post-acquisition performance was moderated by unspecified variables, while Stahl and Voigt (2004) stated that a large proportion of variances on the effect of cultural differences and acquisition performance remains unexplained. Such condition creates an opportunity for the present study to investigate other factor related to the success of mergers and acquisitions.

In the present study, it is argued that the success of mergers and acquisitions was affected by the role of the leader before, during and after merger/acquisition carried out. Unfortunately, studies on the role of leadership during the M&A were scarce. Only few notable studies specifically address the leadership aspect of the M&A process (e.g., Gill, 2012; Sarala & Junni, 2014; Vasilaki, Tarba, Ahammad, & Glaister, 2016; Waldman & Javidan, 2009). On the other hand, major studies in the context of M&A focus more on portfolio diversification (Lubatkin, 1983), strategic management aspect (Ramaswamy, 1997; Singh & Montgomery, 1987), executives' motives (Agrawal & Mandelker, 1987; Morck, Shleifer, & Vishny, 1990),

culture (Di Guardo, Marrocu, & Paci, 2016; Sarala, Vaara, & Junni, 2017) and financial impact (Bansal & Kumar, 2008; Di Giovanni, 2005). The present study argue that the lack of attention on the leadership aspect of M&A creates a knowledge void gap (Müller-Bloch & Kranz, 2015), where little are known about the role of leadership during the M&A, as well as its role in ensuring good organizational climate to create employees' person-organization fit on post M&A process.

To fulfill the identified gap, this study propose the following research question: What is the effective leadership style in the M&A process? The investigation towards the research question is conducted by utilizing the qualitative-phenomenology approach. The choice of the method contributes to the M&A body of knowledge, as the majority of the M&A research were mostly quantitative. By employing phenomenology approach, the present study incorporate detailed nuances into our understanding of the role of leadership during the M&A through the experienter's point of view. Thus, a deeper descriptive exploration of the topics may be obtained.

2 METHODS

This study aims to investigate the effective leadership style in the M&A process using qualitative phenomenology approach. There are several methods that can be used to conduct qualitative research; however, (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013) recommend the following five methods: case studies, grounded theory, ethnography, content analysis, and phenomenology. In this study, the research method used is the phenomenology method. Phenomenology studied the structure of various types of experiences ranging from perceptions, thoughts, memories, imagination, emotions, desires, and physical awareness, manifested actions, and social activities, including linguistic activities (Polkinghorne, 1989). This approach used when the purpose of research is to understand the meaning of human experience (Creswell, 1998) or to explore concepts from a new perspective (Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000). The present study focus on the experience of participants to give deeper understanding regarding the role of leaders in the M&A process and phenomenology approach is used so that this study will be able to understand an experience from the perspective of the respondents (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

Following Creswell (1998) suggestion on the number of the participants involved in a phenomenological study, the present study involves 10 participants working in various organization in Java Island, Indonesia. All participant were in the staff to middle managerial level during the time of the interview. Each participant works in a company that experiences

merger or acquisition process. For the confidentiality purpose, all participants agreed that pseudonym will be used.

The interview process for all informants was carried out outside the working hours in a location agreed by both interviewers and participants. This strategy was used so that participants felt comfortable in answering the interview questions. Before the interview process begin, a brief explanation was given about the aim of the research and the questions that will be asked during the interview process. Each informant gets a confidentiality letter of data that has been sent via personal email and/or work email along with an interview question guide, with the hope that the informant can have better preparation during the interview. The interview process took approximately two months to be completed.

3 RESULTS: EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS IN THE PRE AND POST M&A

3.1 Effective Communicator

The interview with Ratna who served as Marketing said that before the merger, the leaders of the two companies had communicated with the employees about the reasons and objectives of the merger. The first communication on the merger was conducted through an e-mail which explained that the merger aims to increase revenue, increase market share and enhance the brand image of the combined entity. Ratna explained as follows:

"Previously we heard that there was a plan for Bank X to be merged with Bank Y. Not long after that, there was a notification from the boss through email, followed immediately by socialization." (Ratna, 47 year old, Marketing)

Furthermore, employees were asked not to worry about the occurred impacts due to M & A. One concern generally felt by employees whose companies conduct M & A is the possibility of downsizing. To answer this concern, Ratna said that the top management offered an early retirement scheme for employees who did not wish to continue working for the newly formed company with a high severance policy. In essence, the top management was trying to reduce the employees' anxiety by asking them to be positive about the merger plan.

"The point is that they have done their best (effort). So that we feel comfortable, and not stress out. Because this plan could cause a demonstration, especially when most employees disagree with the plan. We are also very anxious for layoffs. But it turns out that the process is slow." (Ratna, 47 year old, Marketing)

In Ratna's case, the top management are successfully able to communicate the merger plan. The role of the leader in conveying information related to the company's strategy is very important to ease employee concerns due to the occurrence of M & A.

The communication failure during the merger process could be observed in Shabi's case. Shabi works as a Business Development staff in a software company in Jakarta. Since there was no intense communication between the top management and the employees on the merger plan, the staff were still unhappy and questions the management decision regarding the merger process. Employees feels that the merger process have no transparency, since the company decided to merge with its competitor. Furthermore, they were confused in carrying out their work because there were no clear rules and socialization about their work responsibility after the merger.

3.2 Ability to Motivates

In addition to the ability to communicate, leader have to possess the ability to motivate employees during the M&A. In the case of Elan, he stated that his boss knows best how to motivates employees, so that resistance on the merger process could be minimized. Following is the statement of Elan:

"Basically, our motivation to work here is because of the salary offered. My boss said that there will be a new post-merger policy. If we can meet the target or exceed the target established, we will get more bonuses compared to the old scheme "(Elan, 44 Year old, Customer Service)

Despite the satisfaction stated by participant with regard to the post-merger compensation policy, other participant, Nasim, stated the opposite. He said that the ideal leader must also have the ability to understand his subordinates and be able to create a comfortable working environment.

"I like him (the boss) because he knows us. He does not put pressure and coercion. That is ideal for me. So he knows exactly the condition of the subordinates, what they actually wants." (Nasim, 44 year old, Bank Teller)

According to Nasim, a comfortable working environment can be created through leader's attitude, such as respecting the subordinates. Some leader were unaware of the importance of giving transactional action toward their subordinates. The simplest thing can be in the form of giving praise for employee achievements or explicitly showing gratitude for the efforts made by employees – no matter how small it is. Even the smallest form of appreciation

could raise employee's morale. Thus, employees will be encouraged to provide the best for the company and their loyalty would increase.

In the case of Mirza, who works in a telecommunication company, the leader motivates employees before the merger process take place by ensuring them that the process would bring better career opportunities. Mirza's boss explained about the career path, as well as the new scheme of training and development program which aimed to promote the career advancement of the employees.

3.3 Responding to Employees' Needs and Problems

Problem at the workplace could escalate and became conflict, either functional or dysfunctional. However, resolving conflict is not an easy matter. Some leaders prefer to avoid responding to conflict in order to create a harmonious impression to their subordinates.

Sisil, who works in a telecommunications service provider company, said that the leader's role in responding to the employee needs was far from expected. According to Sisil, whose company she works at was acquired two years ago; her boss was too focused on the company's work targets, without realizing that interpersonal relationship among employees deteriorates. Thus, the leader failed to be responsible in neutralize or minimize the conflict, causing the morale of the employees low.

Another participant named Ratna recalls the first meeting held after the acquisition. In that meeting, it was obvious that employees preferred to sit together with friends originated from the same company. Fortunately, the General Manager immediately took the initiative to randomize the seating, with the hope that employees from the newly acquired company could engage quickly with the other staff. At first, Ratna felt uncomfortable with the changed seating, but soon she realized that the General Manager would like to diminish the gap between junior and senior employees.

In the case of Shabi, she was quite satisfied with how the leader responded to employee complaints about the new policies after the merger. Following is Shabi statement:

"If I ask something that I don't understand, he explain it again from the beginning to the end. That's what I like –so much patience" (Shabi, 23 year old, Business Development)

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that leaders who respond well to the needs and problems faced by employees will receive high respect from their employees,

especially in the case of M&A. This leadership style can accommodate the characteristics and needs of employees. Employees will be more motivated, directed and pro-active.

3.4 Firm and Discipline

Discipline is closely related to leadership. A leader needs to uphold discipline in an organization to set a clear organizational goal. Although most participants did not fully satisfied with the leadership style after M&A, most of them acknowledged that the leadership style demonstrated by leader after M&A was more effective compared to the pre M&A period. Some of them highlight the existence of clear organization rules and discipline demonstrated by the leader.

According to Dila, employee performance improved after the merger since the new HR policy clearly stated that discipline is among the criteria of the performance evaluation. According to Dila, the before the merger her company tend to have no clear target since most team leader tend to utilize conflict-avoidance management style. If a team member failed to meet the target, there was no consequences implemented by the team leader.

"I called it Indonesian style; family-ism was high, target could be bargained, which cause poor performance. Now it is better, although the challenge is greater. If someone doesn't work hard, results won't be achieved and yes, don't expect salary increase. "(Dila, 55 year old, Marketing)

A leader should also able to identify the working load of the subordinates, and be firm in implementing their job description and responsibility. Mieke, a Marketing Officer of a start-up company, said that at the present, the leadership style is more effective. Before her previous company acquired, workload was not divided according to each employee's job description and responsibilities. Seniority among staff made it worse, since a more senior staff would pass their work to the junior one due to the excuse that if junior and younger staff did the job, it would be completed quickly due to the mastery of the recent technology. It can concluded that the firmness and discipline applied by the leaders could help improving employee morale on the M&A process to succeed.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From the results of the interview, it can be concluded several characteristics of the effective leader during and after the M&A process. The first is *effective communicator*, since communication is the most important process during the M&A (Towler, 2003). Nevertheless,

this study found that that there were complaints were made against the leader who failed to facilitate changes during the M&A, especially during the initial integration process. At the company where Shabi and Mieke worked, the leader did not make formal communication to the employees regarding the notification of merger plan – which is against the Indonesian Limited Liability Corporation Law. This resulted in the refusal of employees against the plan. The results was in accordance with Mikkelson, York, and Arritola (2015) findings that a great leader must excel in communication. As a communicator, a great leader have a clear set of values and consistently promotes and instill this value to the followers – something that do not exist in Shabi and Mieke’s boss.

Secondly, an effective leader has to be able to motivate employees. In this study it was found that there are many factors that could increase employee motivation, such as employee training and development, promotion, salary, and work environment conditions. From these factors, it can be concluded from the interview that the ability to motivate employees to face uncertain condition of the post M&A is vital. These findings are supported by (MacKillop, 2017) that leaders are said to be successful if they are able to influence employees to help achieve organizational goals.

The effectiveness of leadership is critically dependent on the ability of leaders to motivate followers toward collective goals or mission or collective vision (Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, & Popper, 1998). Therefore, a leader must realize that individual needs depend on where they could find themselves in the hierarchy of needs pyramid (Udechukwu, 2009). A good leader will help employee to find satisfaction in their work during the change process and able to explain how employee could the employee motivation increase after the change occur (Hom & Kinicki, 2001).

Furthermore, an effective leader would be able to respond to the needs and problems faced by employees. In this study, Shabi said the most important part of being a leader is being able to solve the problems and concerns experienced by employees. All participants said that they were anxious during the merger or acquisition process, fearing that they would be laid off after the process. Such condition escalates conflict potential. If the leader does not act fast in solving this issue, the change process could be disrupted. A leader who respond well to the needs and problems faced by employees will receive high respect from their employees.

Lastly, it turns out that the characteristics of firmness and discipline are among the determinants of the successful integration process. Most of the participants acknowledged that they experience better leadership in the post M&A, since the leader have set clear rules and enforce discipline. Discipline is one of the criteria for being a successful leader since it reflects

regularity and consistent efforts to achieve goals. This is in accordance with Gorbunovs, Kapenieks, & Cakula (2016) statement that no one could achieve and maintain success without extraordinary self-discipline.

Of the four attitudes in leadership described above, this study conclude that in general, effective leadership styles in the M&A process tend to be Transformational. One effective leadership style told by informants is the ability of leaders to be able to provide motivation, which is in line with one of the "4I's" concepts of Transformational leadership namely Inspirational motivation (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Furthermore, the results of the study stated that employees wants a leader who are able to respond to problems and needs faced by employees, which is similar to the leadership dimension of Individualized Consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Further study could utilize top management of the company experiencing M&A as the sample, since top leader would be able to identify the barrier during the M&A process, as well as solutions they did to overcome the barrier.

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