



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***MEDIATING EFFECT OF ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT ON THE  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
FACTORS AND ACCEPTANCE OF CHANGE AMONG  
ADMINISTRATORS IN MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SERVICE***

**SAFUWAN BIN SAMAH**

**FPP 2017 12**



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By

**SAFUWAN BIN SAMAH**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra  
Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**August 2017**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in  
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**August 2017**

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**Faculty : Educational Studies**

Organisations nowadays are constantly implementing changes to improve their work processes and outcomes to keep up with the changing demands. In the field of organisational change, the employees' behaviour towards change is likely to have a substantial impact on the progress and outcome of the organisation. This study was conducted to determine whether individual factors (i.e. locus of control and attitude towards change) and environmental factors (i.e. subjective norms and social influence) will influence acceptance of change behaviour in the presence of organisational support as a mediating variable. This study adopted quantitative research paradigm using correlational research methodology. Data were collected from 400 Administrative and Diplomatic Officers (ADO) from the Management and Professional Group in the Malaysian Public Service organisation. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to investigate the structural model of the study.

Result from the direct effect analysis showed that organisational support, attitude towards change, subjective norms and social influence significantly influenced the acceptance of change behaviour. More specifically, these results suggested that organisational support plays an important role in predicting the positive behaviour during the organisational change. Other than that, attitude towards change was also found to have positive effects on the employees' feeling of receptiveness towards any changes taking place in the organisation and embracing the changes with a positive mindset. In addition, the environmental factors (i.e. subjective norms and social influence) should not also be underestimated. Both factors offer several advantages during organisational change.

Findings from the SEM also indicated that subjective norms and social influence indirectly influenced the acceptance of change behaviour through the mediating role of organisational support. Organisational support is important as it guarantees assistance for the employees provided by the organisation to deal with the challenging situations during changes. Employees with higher level of organisational support are likely to have positive attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, clear information regarding on their new task can be enhanced with the support from higher management. Besides, this study also found that people with high level of subjective norms probably experienced higher satisfaction towards their organisational support since they really appreciate the interpersonal relationship. This study is in line with the notion of Organisational Support Theory which generally believes that the employees form about how much the organisation values their contribution will help employees to develop a reciprocity norm to care about the organisation and help it achieve its goal.

In addition, this study also provides new information for the Human Resource Development practitioner. This study can be used as input during change process in the context of public organisation especially in Malaysia. This study also supports the Social Cognitive Theory and Theory of Reasoned Action in emphasizing the importance of individual-related and environmental-related factors on the acceptance of change behaviour among the administrators in the public service organisation.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KESAN SOKONGAN ORGANISASI SEBAGAI PENGANTARA  
TERHADAP HUBUNGAN ANTARA FAKTOR-FAKTOR INDIVIDU DAN  
PERSEKITARAN KEPADA PENERIMAAN TERHADAP PERUBAHAN DI  
KALANGAN PENTADBIR-PENTADBIR PERKHIDMATAN AWAM DI  
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Organisasi pada masa kini sentiasa melaksanakan perubahan bagi menambah baik proses dan hasil kerja mereka untuk sentiasa bersaing dengan permintaan yang berubah. Dalam bidang perubahan organisasi, tingkah laku pekerja terhadap perubahan mungkin memberi impak yang besar kepada kemajuan dan keputusan organisasi. Kajian ini telah dijalankan untuk menentukan sama ada faktor individu seperti lokus kawalan dan sikap terhadap perubahan serta faktor persekitaran seperti norma subjektif dan pengaruh sosial mempengaruhi tingkah laku penerimaan perubahan dengan kewujudan sokongan organisasi sebagai pemboleh ubah perantaraan. Kajian ini mengguna pakai pendekatan penyelidikan secara kuantitatif. Data telah dikumpul daripada 400 orang Pegawai Tadbir dan Diplomatik (PTD) daripada Kumpulan Pengurusan dan Profesional dalam organisasi Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia. *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM) juga telah digunakan untuk menguji model struktur kajian tersebut.

Hasil keputusan analisis kesan langsung menunjukkan bahawa sokongan organisasi, sikap terhadap perubahan, norma subjektif dan pengaruh sosial mempunyai pengaruh yang positif terhadap tingkah laku penerimaan perubahan. Secara khususnya, hasil kajian ini menjelaskan bahawa sokongan organisasi memainkan peranan penting dalam menjelaskan tingkah laku yang positif pada perubahan organisasi. Selain itu, sikap terhadap perubahan juga didapati mempunyai kesan ke atas perasaan pekerja terhadap perubahan yang berlaku dalam organisasi di samping dapat meningkatkan pemikiran yang lebih positif. Di samping itu, faktor-faktor persekitaran (norma subjektif dan pengaruh sosial) juga tidak boleh dipandang

ringan kerana kedua-dua faktor persekitaran tersebut juga telah terbukti memberi kelebihan sewaktu perubahan organisasi berlaku.

Dapatan daripada analisis SEM juga menunjukkan norma subjektif dan pengaruh social secara tidak langsung mempengaruhi tingkah laku penerimaan perubahan melalui sokongan organisasi sebagai pengantara (*mediator*). Sokongan organisasi adalah penting kerana ia menjamin bantuan yang disediakan oleh organisasi kepada para pekerja mereka sepanjang tempoh proses perubahan tersebut. Oleh itu, maklumat yang jelas tentang tugas baru mereka boleh dipertingkatkan dengan sokongan daripada pihak pengurusan. Selain itu, kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa pekerja dengan tahap norma subjektif yang tinggi mungkin mengalami kepuasan yang tinggi terhadap sokongan organisasi kerana mereka amat menghargai hubungan interpersonal. Kajian ini adalah selaras dengan tanggapan Teori Organisasi Sokongan iaitu kepercayaan umum seseorang pekerja berkait rapat dengan penilaian organisasi dalam menilai sumbangan mereka akan menggalakkan lagi pekerja untuk membentuk norma kesalingan (*reciprocity norms*) untuk mengambil berat tentang organisasi serta membantu mencapai matlamatnya.

Di samping itu, kajian ini juga menyediakan maklumat baharu bagi pengamal Pembangunan Sumber Manusia. Kajian ini juga boleh digunakan sebagai input sewaktu proses perubahan dalam konteks organisasi kerajaan terutamanya di Malaysia. Kajian ini juga menyokong Teori Kognitif Sosial dan Teori Tindakan Beralasan (*Theory of Reasoned Action*) dalam menekankan kepentingan faktor individu dan persekitaran ke atas tingkah laku penerimaan perubahan dalam kalangan pegawai-pegawai pentabdir di perkhidmatan awam.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADO	Administrative and Diplomatic Officers
AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit
AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structure
AOC	Acceptance of Change
ATC	Attitude towards Change
AVE	Average of variance Extracted
BPA	<i>Biro Pengaduan Awam</i>
BPH	<i>Bahagian Pengurusan Hartanah</i>
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CI	Confidence Interval
CR	Construct Reliability
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
ETP	Economic Transformation Plan
GFI	Goodness of Fit
GTP	Government Transformation Programme
HRD	Human Resource Development
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ICU	Implementation Coordination Unit
IFI	Incremental Fit Index
INTAN	National Institute of Public Administration
JPA	<i>Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam</i>
KPI	Key Performance Indicators

KSN	Secretary General
LOC	Locus of Control
MAMPU	Malaysia Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit
MAPPA	Public Service Premier Gathering
NEM	New Economic Model
NEP	New Economic Plan
OS	Organisational Support
OST	Organisational Support Theory
PEMANDU	Performance Management & Delivery Unit
PSD	Public Service Department
PST	Public Service Transformation
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SI	Social Influence
SLT	Social Learning Theory
SN	Subjective Norms
SPA	<i>Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam</i>
SRI	Strategic Reforms Initiatives
TERAJU	<i>Unit Peneraju Agenda Bumiputera</i>
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, significance, scope and limitations, assumptions, and operational definitions of terms utilised in this study.

### Background of the Study

In recent decades, organisations are constantly implementing changes to improve their work processes and outcomes in response to the changing demands (Augustsson, Richter, Hasson, & Scharz, 2017; Samah, 2016). A number of organisations recognized that change is difficult to deal with as its process is distinct in nature and situation due to the differences in the nature of the organisation, the nature of the business, work culture and values, management and leadership styles, as well as the behaviour and attitude of the employees (Abdul Rashid, Sambasivan & Abdul Rahman, 2004). In the organisational change studies, the employee reactions, attitudes and beliefs about change tend to create a substantial effect on the progress and result of the organisation (Nielsen & Randall, 2012). That is, when the employees experience great feeling of readiness for change and accept the change, the change effort will be more effective to materialise a successful change. Employees' acceptance and support of change is crucial to the accomplishment of an organisational change (Nielsen & Randall, 2012, Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder, 1993; Miller, Johnson & Grau, 1994; Augustsson, Richter, Hasson & von Thiele Schwarz, 2017).

Acceptance of change (AOC) behaviour among employees today connects with organisational behaviour concerns and successful organisational change (Augustsson, Richter, Hasson & von Thiele Schwarz, 2017). Workers who hold close and successfully implement change will remain whereas those who discredit and are afraid of change might consider leaving the organisation. Employers strongly desire to retain the employees who embrace the change and become "successful change agents" in their group and entire organisation (Nielsen & Randall, 2012).

Despite some employees' fear towards change, they are factually aware that change is a norm and they will mostly stride an evolving course of life as a person and a professional (Samah, 2016; Johannsdottir, Olafsson, & Davidsdottir, 2015). Changes arise out of novel ideas, development in technology, innovation and progress, knowledge and communication, as well as mergers, takeovers, layoffs, and downsizing (Abdullah, Mansor, & Hamzah, 2013). In one hand, organisational change positively affects the employees in terms of job satisfaction, commitment, self-actualization and extra-role in an organisation (Samah, 2016). On the other hand, the changes may also influence an employee's career life. The effects are manifested

through sorrow, dissatisfaction, angst, and rage, downsizing workforce becomes necessary or, worse, when the organisation is forced to shut down.

Of most positive features of organisational change, it is never monotonous. In fact, it instils enthusiasm among the employees (Shah, Irani, & Sharif, 2017). Employees who accept the changes earn advantages to gain new knowledge, become more expert in what they are already good at, and progress in their career ladder by effectively adapting with the changes. A good employee is the one who enthusiastically by confronting the tests of embracing organisational changes, such as discovering innovations, expanding present networking base, gearing up expertise and risking themselves to encourage them to unleash their true potential (Cullen, Edwards, Casper, & Gue, 2014).

By accepting the organisational change, the workers become motivated to think more creatively from a multitude of perspectives. As a result, the employers will observe continuous string of novelties from the employees while upholding a positive work culture. Changes, which comprise flexibility in job descriptions, cross-training employees and work team formation in a unique approach, are ones that improve the productivity of the organisation (Simoes & Esposito, 2014). When products or services are greatly improved, the organisations rope in more returns, which mutually benefit the members of the organisation.

### **Organisational Changes in Malaysian Public Service**

The Malaysian Public Service, formerly known as the Malayan Civil Service, is the heart of government, which serves as an important administrative arm and has a pivotal role in putting the nation's effort in the right course of becoming a developed and high-income nation by year 2020. The Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1845 (Prime Minister Office, 2012) clearly delineates the main Malaysia Public Service ethos namely:

- i. a politically neutral civil service means complete loyalty to the government of the day regardless of its political complexion;
- ii. a profession public service, should offer impartial and appropriate advice, devoted to the public interest and obedient to the Minister and Cabinet; and
- iii. the public service should provide continuous stability when there is a change in government.

With the strength of more than 1.4 Million civil service officers and 274 schemes ranges from management and professional to supporting staffs (Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam, 2014a), the Malaysia Public Service has been responsible to negotiate, control, facilitate and perform numerous tasks including service delivery and handling public and stakeholder's interest in catering their needs and hopes. This also includes amending, acclimatizing and fine-tuning the economic and social national initiatives (Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam, 2014a).

Malaysia Public Service has undergone numerous planned of organisational since the Independence Day in 1957. During the time, the British colonial administration was custodial in nature and the Malaysia Public Service played a limited developmental role. Its main functions were collecting revenues and maintaining law and order (Marican, 1979). Even after the country gained independence, the custodial nature of the public sector, which was inherited from the British administration, remained and continued until the 1960s (Ahmad, Mansor & Ahmad, 2003). The main change undertaken by the new government was "*Malayanising*" the bureaucracy by replacing the expatriates with the Malayan civil servants (Abdul Khalid, 2008).

As developing the country became more crucial and demanding, its scope and change initiatives grew larger in importance and broadened in the public sector. Immediately after the launch of New Economic Plan (NEP) via a revenue growth grant underlined in the Malaysia Plan (refer Table 1.1), the functions of the public sector significantly changed from those exercised under the colonial administration to ones directly involved in the country's economic expansion (Economic Planning Unit [EPU], 1979, p. 251). The government's central agencies, such as the Treasury, EPU, Malaysia Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) and National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN), were established to spearhead the public sector's planned organisational change initiatives (Ahmad, Mansor & Ahmad, 2003).

**Table 1.1 : List of Malaysia Plans**

No	Plan	Period of Implementation
1	1st Malaya Plan	1966 – 1970
2	2nd Malaysia Plan (MP)	1971 – 1975
3	3rd MP	1976 – 1980
4	4th MP	1981 – 1985
5	5th MP	1986 – 1990
6	6th MP	1991 – 1995
7	7th MP	1996 – 2000
8	8th MP	2001 – 2005
9	9th MP	2006 – 2010
10	10th MP	2011 – 2015
11	11th MP	2016 – 2020

Source: Economic Planning Unit, Malaysia (2015)



In the 1990s, the widening range of public enterprises' functions led to a number of developmental programmes (Muhammad Rais, 1995). The effect of the Look East Policy in 1982 and of the Malaysia Incorporated and Privatisation Policy in 1983 pioneered the transformations of the role, function and scope of the public sector (EPU, 1981, p. 244). Other initiatives, such as the office automation programme, improved the public sector organisational structure and human resource management as well as public personnel management as a whole (EPU, 1986, p. 433).

The planned organisational change initiatives in the 2000s had a huge impact on the Malaysia Public Service. The initiatives started with the enhancement of Information Communication Technology (ICT) usage in 2000, which continued until the enhancement of Service Delivery in 2005 (EPU, 2001, p. 626-627). With the implementation of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and other initiatives (EPU, 1996, p. 705), civil servants are now required to work efficiently to respond to the new environment and to meet the demands of the stakeholders.

However, public organisations often necessitate changes in the governance, design and public service delivery in today's challenging environment (Van der Voet, Kuipers & Groneveld, 2016). Changes in the public organisation are slightly different from the private practices in the traditions they embody, direction and assignments they perform. It is adequate to express that government organisations have a tendency to introduce more red-tapes than the private organisations as they may be, among others, by a more tyrannical administration style in view of the recognition of chains of commands, top-down administration and conventionality. Decision-making are likely to be influenced by rules and regulations and motivated by procedures. Taken together, separating management (e.g. civil servants) and control (e.g. politicians) represents lesser autonomy and flexibility that public organisations would have in decision making than the private ones (Junge, Kelleher & Hadjivassiliou, 2006).

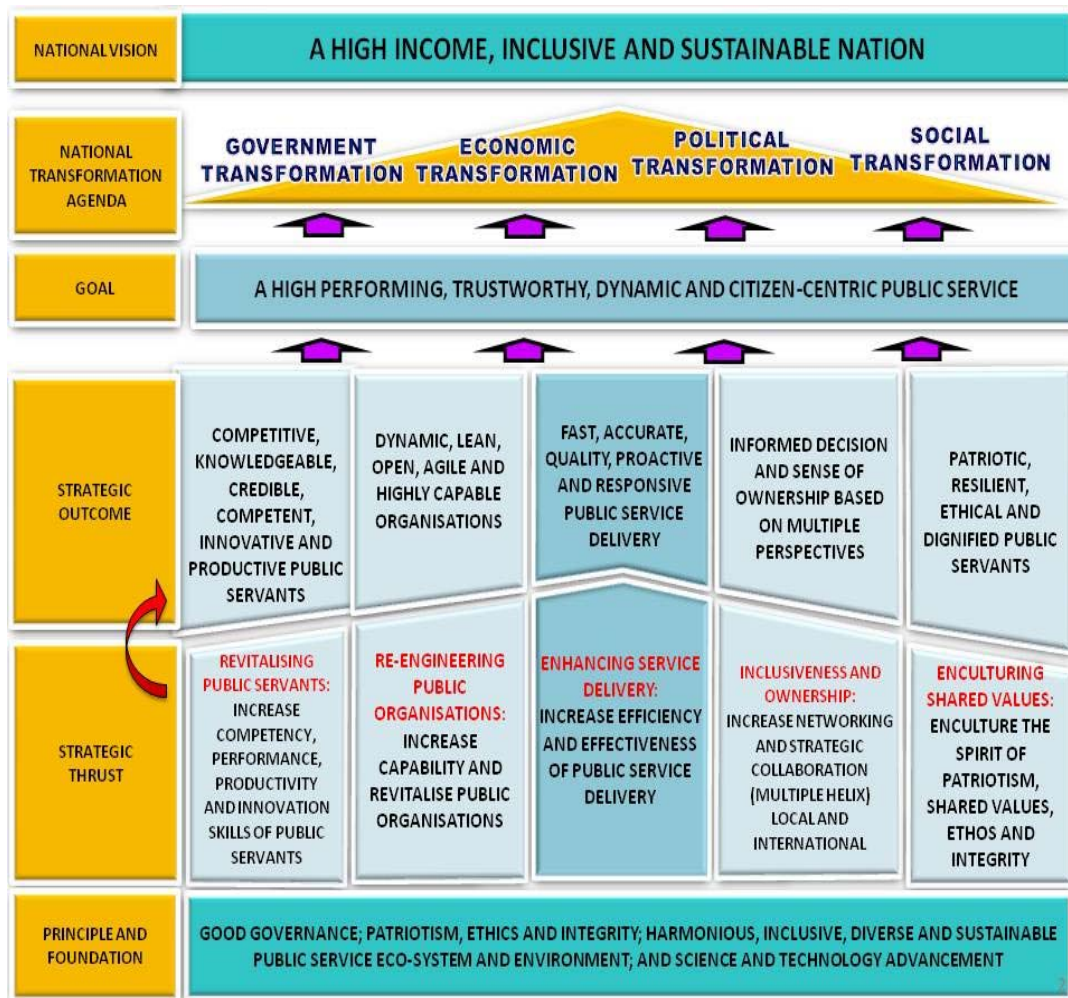
The Government Transformation Programme (GTP) is seen as the biggest planned organisational change initiative in the history of the country and it encompasses the vast area of the full public sector throughout 25 ministries, 141 departments and agencies, 127 Federal Statutory Bodies and about 1.4 million civil servants (Ali, Zain, Abidin, & Embi, 2015). Public Service Transformation (PST) initiative has been established to realise the goals and plans delineated in the 10th Malaysia Plan: 2011-2015 (10MP), chapter on 'Transforming Government to Transform Malaysia' (EPU, 2011). Of many crucial priorities, the 10MP highlights an urgent need for transforming the government's systems, processes and workforces to ensure the feasibility of its transformation programmes. It also explicitly reinforces the government's agenda to streamline the public sector while ensuring a more effective service delivery. By so doing indirectly improves fiscal expenditure and management of the public sector.

## **Overview of Public Service Transformation (PST)**

The Malaysian Public Service Transformation (PST) is a strategic execution plan that serves to transform every public organisation to accomplish their purposes of organisational change from the existing state "as is" to a desired state "to be" (Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam, 2014b). This is in line with one of the objectives of 11th Malaysia Plan (11MP), which is to transform public services for greater efficiency and productivity (EPU, 2015).

The PST plan highlights four important components. The first and most important component is the public service framework which serves as a foundation for the overall performance of the transformation of the agency (Figure 1.1). The second component is the strategic thrusts, namely a key focus for the transformation implementation. There are five strategic thrusts set for the implementation to realise the transformation. The third component is the strategic measures. In this component, the agency must pay more attention to the needs of their clients and other patrons of interest (stakeholders). The fourth component is the initiatives and quick wins. The implementation of the quick wins helps sustain the transformation and reinforce the participation of all members of the organisation in these dynamic times. Some of the initiatives that have been identified under the strategic measures will become quick wins to attain the intended outcome in the near future (Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam, 2014b).

During the implementation period of the PST, the government is due to perform a detailed inspection of all government organisations and structures and reviewing their roles, functions, gaps and overlaps. The government aims to reduce overlapping and redundant functions by rationalizing agencies to streamline the government agencies towards achieving the national priorities. As challenges and opportunities will persist across public sector boundaries, a whole-of-government approach will be implemented throughout the 10MP period. This approach will necessitate the agencies to work across different portfolio boundaries at federal, state and local levels as an integrated government to address cross-cutting issues.



Source: Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (2014b)

**Figure 1.1 : Public Service Transformation Framework**

This planned organisational change approach will be useful for policy and programme formulation as well as the outcome delivery. The newly reconfigured government will affect a number of readily available government organisations in particular those with overlapping or redundant functions.

Organisational focus on the national priorities will be fortified and talent will be consistently created in the public service. Other initiatives, such as the Economic Transformation Plan (ETP), the New Economic Model (EPU, 2011, p. 333) and the creation of a people-oriented civil service (KSN, 2014), as well as the establishment of the Performance Management & Delivery Unit (PEMANDU), *Unit Peneraju Agenda Bumiputera* (TERAJU) and TALENT Corp, are deemed to be the driving forces for the public sector's transformation into a people-based institution (EPU, 2015, p. 9-19). In the 11MP (refer Table 1.2), the government hopes that the planned organisational change will focus more on the citizens and greatly enhance productivity and efficiency of the public service.

**Table 1.2 : Transformative Changes in the Public Sector**

<b>FROM</b>	<b>TO</b>
Hierarchical	Delayed
Traditional Performance Evaluation	Customised Performance Evaluation
Manpower Constraints	Focus on Capability Building
Internal Reporting	Increased Public Accountability
Overlaps and Duplication	Less Redundancies
Bureaucratic Procedures	Simplified Procedures
Government as Service Provider	Government as Service Facilitator
Governing for Citizens	Participatory Governance
Agency-Based Approach	Service and Information-Based Approach
RIGID Working Environment	FLEXIBLE Working Environment
Supply-Driven Delivery	Customised Service Delivery
Traditional Centralised Processes	Citizens at the Centre
Delivery by Public Sector Agencies	Community and Private Sector Partnerships
Service Design by Government	Citizen as Partners in Service Design

Source: Economic Planning Unit, Malaysia (2015)

The biggest challenge to transform the public service in the present time is to foster an institutional culture among the civil servants that accepts and supports the new service delivery model for the goodness of the citizens. Therefore, the Chief Secretary to the Government in his speech at the 13th Public Service Premier Gathering (MAPPA) stated that the trending philosophy in the context of PST requires the civil servants especially the Management and Professional Group as a change agent to be volitionally receptive, flexible and agile on the changes ahead (Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam, 2014b). Despite numerous implementations of planned organisational change initiatives by the government, the issue on acceptance of change (AOC) among the civil servants is the main restraining force that explains the shortfall in the outcomes of some initiatives (Prime Minister Office, 2015)

### **Role of Management and Professional Group in Malaysian Public Service**

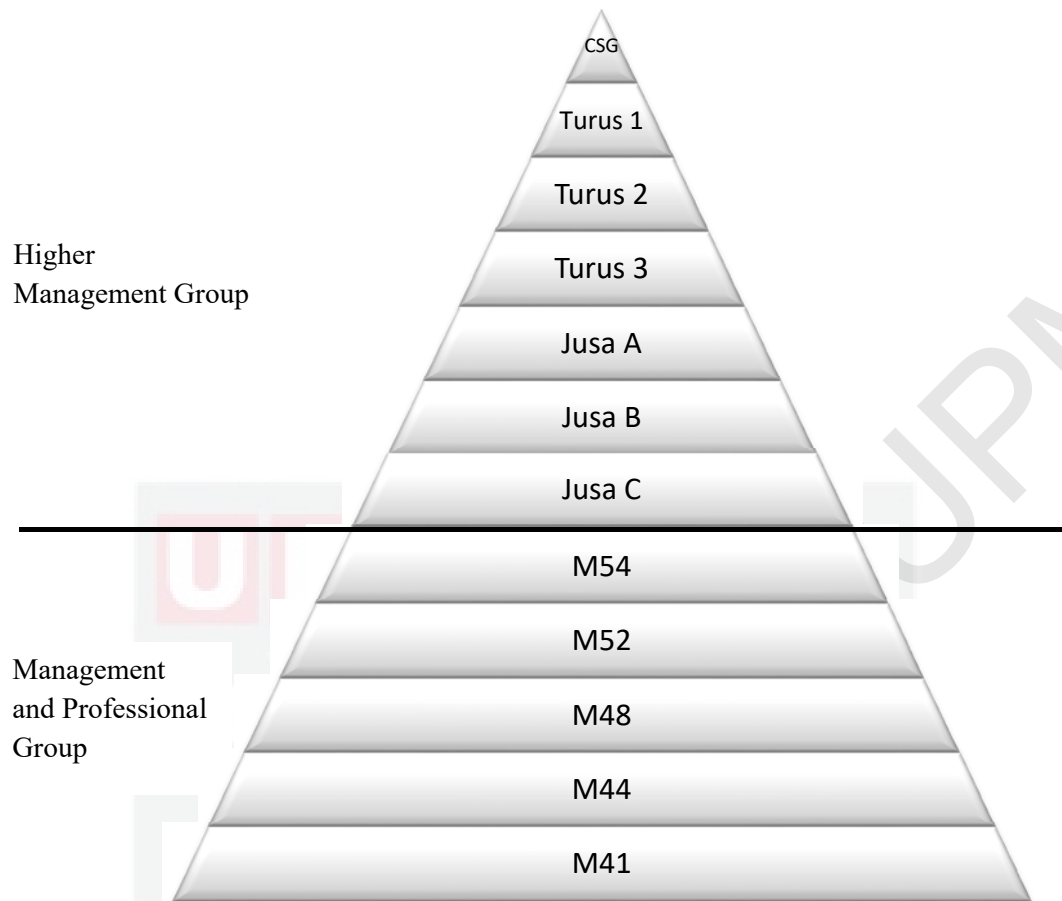
Given the current nature of the Malaysia Public Service as a learning organisation through various changes and initiatives, civil servants are now more knowledgeable, strong volitional character and more ambitious than ever before (Yusoff, 2005). In

addition, based on the research on civil servants' leadership behaviour in the public sector in Putrajaya, Ghani, Yunus and Bahry (2016) revealed that today's civil servants harbour their resentment towards their superiors as they have been over-managed and being pressed by their higher management. Their further investigation also led to the civil servants' expectations on their superiors and managers. The civil servants hope to be inspired and led by example. Besides, they look forward to an intellectual engagement with their bosses and a clear guidance of the direction of their departments and organisations. Additionally, they would expect their bosses to be team players rather than taskmasters. More often than not, a two-way communication between superiors and managers should encourage a mutually respectful dialog where the interaction potentially promotes a learning process for the benefits of the organisation.

Today's civil servants are open to new ideas and perspectives as well as having a full control over their behaviour as a result of numerous initiatives, awareness and training programmes provided by the government (Ghani et al., 2016; KSN, 2014; Yusoff, 2005). Middle-level managers discuss about issues with the same level of openness as those in the top level. As in a learning organisation, genuine disagreements are shared openly and discussed critically. In meetings and discussions, different views are presented and debated. There is a tendency for management to search for the best justification to support the decisions that are rationally made and mutually agreed upon.

As the middle-managers, they are also portrayed as the frontline officers who deliver services to the public. The managers are appointed according to the hierarchical grades. Figure 1.2 illustrates the hierarchical grades in the service scheme of Administrative and Diplomatic Officers (ADO) in Malaysia.





**Figure 1.2 : The Hierarchical Grades in the Service Scheme of Administrative and Diplomatic Officers**

Source: Public Service Department, Malaysia (2015).

This group of officers is in charge of the managerial and administrative affairs concerning various areas at central, federal and district levels. Therefore, they are also known as managers in their respective fields. The ADO as the subject in this study commence their service at grade M41 and will be gradually promoted to the higher grades until they achieve M54 in the same managerial and professional group. Top-performing ADO are usually appointed to serve the higher management group, which entitles them to a grade of *Jawatan Utama Sektor Awam* (JUSA) C. The highest managerial level in the public service is the Chief Secretary to the Government (Prime Minister Office, 2015).

Management and Professional Group as the middle managers may have a greater impact on organisational performance (Mollick, 2011) as they hold significant share of roles and responsibilities in sustaining the organisational development. He advocated that “the often overlooked and sometimes-maligned middle managers matter. They are not interchangeable parts in an organisation.” This remark connotes an important role of the middle managers in nurturing innovative and creative atmosphere in an organisation. Mollick (2011) further added that the middle

managers deal with daunting tasks as they appropriate a limited set of resource bundle. They virtually possess no control over everyone's actions. They can also infuse fury among people around them who do not demonstrate similar interest in changing course when necessary, and they must go into the direction that will ensure the change is a success although it is not widely accepted. Finally, the change has to be congenial with the organisational goals. It is also important to recognize the crucial role of middle managers in sustaining the circulation of information and creativity (Knuyt, 2013; Mollick, 2011).

In most cases, middle managers will contribute to a successful organisational change as they have valuable ideas and willingness to contribute and implement voluntarily even if the processes take long hours (Knuyt, 2013). They also suggest that middle managers are much better in an informal working environment than higher management level since they are part of the day-to-day operations in the organisation. As middle managers are close to the support staff, they will be the first to notice the changes in moods and emotional needs of all staff and stakeholders. Therefore, the higher management level may refer to the middle managers in collecting and learning the feedbacks from the support staff and stakeholders as well as keeping up with the progress of any tasks and projects in the organisation.

Alamsjah (2011) suggested that middle managers can balance the pressure between continuity and change as they involve and work throughout the entire change processes. They are good at tackling extreme boredom and chaos in the organisation. Moreover, the middle managers are responsible for sustaining the change in the new processes and organisation upon the completion of change implementation.

### **Acceptance of Change Behaviour among Management and Professional Group in Malaysian Public Service**

Today, the environment of Malaysian Public Service has become more volatile and the challenges are even more complex despite the dynamic evolvement and changes made in the Malaysian Public Service. The Public Service Department (PSD), which is one of the central agencies in the government, has been given the mandate to lead the transformation in line with the National Transformation Agenda (KSN, 2014). Now that much progress of changes have been achieved parallel with the national transformational strategies in the government, economic, social and political aspects, the public service is obliged to ensure that the human infrastructure be sufficiently equipped and strengthened to meet these new challenges ahead. The success of these changes very much depends on the level of acceptance behaviour among civil servants, who also act as a change agent (KSN, 2014). Undivided commitment from them towards the organisation, leaders and the tasks given as a change agent will give the big impact on the change and the government specifically.

Acceptance of change behaviour among the Management and Professional Group has become one of the most difficult and challenging issues facing the Malaysia

Public Service organisation. When the officers under this group have a problem in accepting the changes in their workplace, it can cause work deviant behaviour which has been regularly testified in the mass media (Abdul Rahim & Mohd Nasurdin; Awanis, 2006). Substance abuse, bribery, fraudulence, underperformance, lack of integrity at work, and fake medical claims were often reported (Abdul Rahman & Aizat, 2008; Abdul Rahim et. al, 2008; Awanis, 2006). Indeed, acceptance of change behaviour issue significantly impacts organisational development. The consequences are imminent. It causes dissatisfaction, distrust among employees and, in turn, affects the development of the organisation (Shim, 2010). Employees will leave the organisation and while others remain unmotivated. Such phenomena are destructive to the organisation (Hallowell, 1999; Johnson & Indvik, 2001) and affect employees' performance in the organisation (Chang & Wei, 2008; Kunze, Boehm & Bruch, 2013). Shim (2008) also highlighted that Human Resource Development (HRD) aims are on competency development which emphasizing on the expansion and performance of organisation; therefore, HRD is in a vital situation to inculcate acceptance of change behaviours in order to achieve the organisational change objectives.

The above phenomenon of AOC among the officers in the public service context calls for an effort to determine the predictors that are related to the AOC behaviour. If AOC is not well address and assess, it can thwarts cohesiveness and personal relationships by agitating retaliatory feelings in organisations (Shim, 2008). If there is a problem in accepting the change, it will imply potential negative relations between members in the organisation (Gonthier, 2002). AOC also affects the ethics and conduciveness of an organisation. In addition, other concerns indicated in the literature are organisations' failure to compete and meet challenges in the global economy (Gonthier, 2002; Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000) and high resignation of employees (Tepper, 2007; Maier, Laumer, Eckhardt, & Weitzel, 2013; Raza, Khan & Mujtaba, 2017). Even worse, problem in AOC may be contagious to other employees.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The importance of employees' reactions towards change has been rigorously discussed over the last decades. However, a comprehensive empirical investigation on the positive reaction of change or acceptance of change, which are beneficial for both the employees and the organisations, remain scarce (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016). Majority of the studies tended to examine employee resistance or negative reaction as a dependent variable (Petrou, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2016; Di Fabio & Gori, 2016). Similarly, empirical studies on organisational change also has been largely dominated by systems-oriented which focus on the overall management of the organisation and less research has been conducted on person-oriented focus (i.e. employee behaviour or ability to face change) (Judge, Thoresen, Pucik & Welbourne, 1999; Elias, 2009; Xu, Payne, Horner & Alexander, 2016; Fu, Zhang, Li, & Leung, 2016). Understanding and accepting change at the individual level is crucial for personal development, particularly because coping with change is often



very difficult for many individuals (Wanberg and Banas, 2000; Line, 2005; Kavanagh & Ashkansy, 2006; Di Fabio & Gori, 2016).

Existing literature suggests that change initiatives are somewhat the norm for companies in the present time regardless of their size, sector or industry of their company (Bellou & Chatzinikou, 2015). However, most of the studies of change tend to focus on the private sector and mostly target the private sector managers. Existing empirical evidence indicates inadequate investigation on the organisational change and the employees' reactions in public organisation (Van der Voet, Kuipers, & Groeneveld, 2016) especially which focuses on the Management and Professional Group officers as middle managers (Battilana, Gilmartin, Sengul, Pache, & Alexander, 2010). Reasoning from the prevailing issue of AOC in the public organisation, this study fills an important gap.

Many factors must be considered when studying employee behaviour during the process of organisational change including the predictors that lead a person to accept the change. Past studies indicated that personal perspectives are one of the vital components when implementing change. Linstone and Mitroff (1994) cited from Abdul Rashid, Sambasivan and Abdul Rahman (2004) argued that people are the most significant reason that explains change behaviour and most difficult to manage in an organisation. According to Vakola, Armenakis and Oreg, (2013) and Oreg, Vakola and Armenakis (2011), individual, who has low confidence in their abilities, tends to underperform in change initiatives. However, little is known about what employees can do by themselves to facilitate their adaptation to organisational change (Petrou, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2016). In addition, overseeing the organisational members appears to be a difficult task in dealing with change processes as it embodies values, preferences, and attitudes toward a particular activity (Carnall, 1990). He further added that attitudes, for instance, potentially prevent the people to change from their usual learning grounds as a result of stereotyping, fear of taking risks, intolerance to ambiguity, and possibly the need to uphold tradition. Thus, more studies are indispensable in gathering more conclusive findings to characterise the relationship between individual factors and acceptance of change (Straatmann, Kohnke, Hattrup & Mueller, 2016).

Apart from investigating the relationship, a thorough analysis of past literatures revealed that there are few studies that have used organisational support as mediating variable in acceptance of change behaviour research. Previous studies have employed organisational support as mediating variable but, not in the case of acceptance of change behaviour study. The studies focused on other criterion variables, such as stress and affective commitment (Omer, Ameer, & Khalil, 2010), job security, compensation structure, organisational commitment (Ibrahim & Boerhaneoddin, 2010), employee engagement (Gao, 2016) and intention to stay (Liang, Chan, Lin, & Huang, 2011; Park, Newman, Zhang, Wu & Hooke, 2016,).

Support from the organisation has been shown to be consequential for a host of positive employee behaviour, pro-organisation activities and work outcomes, including engagement, task performance, and citizenship (Kwon Han, Koh & Han, 2010; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). As the organisational support research area is becoming more mature, it also becomes suitable for new theoretical insights (Kwon et al., 2010). For example, in the recent literature review, Baran, Shanock & Miller, (2012, p.139) noted that "to date only a few of the relationships explicated in organisational support theory (OST) have been tested internationally". More importantly, these authors also noted that "future research on POS should continue to explore whether the relationships hold across cultures, whether they differ in strength, whether new antecedents or outcomes are relevant, and why" (p. 139). Hence, this study responded to such call by offering theoretical clarifications with the support from previous studies (Bausch & Krist, 2007; Reus & Rottig, 2009; Stahl & Chua, 2012; Tan & Sousa, 2013).

Schein (1999) argued that many organisational change initiatives are primarily proven ineffective due to the organisational failure to infuse readiness for change. It should be noted that during the process of organisational changes, both employees and employers must work hand in hand while assuring the acceptance of the change initiatives by the employees. However, resisting workers, who have conditioned their minds and believed that the changes will not work or refuse to innovate, will paralyse the organisation's expansion and hamper adaptation to change. Owing to the matter, this study incorporated both individual-related and environmental-related factors as well as the mediation effect of organisational support on environmental-related factors in understanding the AOC behaviour. In doing so, this study substantiated Bandura's (1986b) theory of social cognitive.

Given the substantial effects on resources and output lost due to the AOC issues, investigating the factors that explain the behaviours of acceptance of change is necessary for research (Hastings & Finegan, 2011). The effort to instil various forms of acceptance of change among Management and Professional Group of ADO as middle managers constitutes significant challenges for Malaysia in its quest to be a developed country by the year 2020. Thus, the study attempted to address the following questions: To what extent do the individual-related and environmental-related factors predict acceptance of change behaviour among the Management and Professional Group of ADO in the Malaysia Public Service? Does organisational support mediate AOC behaviour? Answers to the questions will provide a novel perspective in understanding the prevailing AOC issues in the specific context of AOC among Management and Professional Group of ADO as middle managers in Malaysia Public Service.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The overall objective of this study is to investigate the mediating effect of Organisational Support (OS) towards the relationship between Locus of Control (LOC), Attitude towards Change (ATC), Subjective Norms (SN) and Social

Influence (SI) and Acceptance of Change (AOC) among Management and Professional Group of ADO as middle managers in the Malaysia Public Service.

Specifically, this study aimed to:

- i. determine the level of acceptance of change among Management and Professional Group of ADO in Malaysia Public Service;
- ii. determine the level of organisational support, individual-related factors (locus of control and attitude to change) and environmental-related factors (subjective norms and social influences) among Management and Professional Group of ADO in Malaysia Public Service;
- iii. determine the relationship between individual-related variables (i.e. locus of control and attitude towards change) and environmental-related factors (i.e. subjective norms and social influences) with acceptance of change among Management and Professional Group of ADO in the Malaysia Public Service;
- iv. determine the influence of individual-related factors (i.e. locus of control and attitude towards change) on acceptance of change among Management and Professional Group of ADO in Malaysia Public Service;
- v. determine the influence of environmental-related factors (i.e. subjective norms and social influences) on acceptance of change among Management and Professional Group of ADO in Malaysia Public Service; and.
- vi. determine the mediating effects of organisational support on the relationship between environmental-related factors (i.e. subjective norms and social influences) on acceptance of change among Management and Professional Group of ADO in Malaysia Public Service.

### **Research Hypothesis**

The research hypotheses were formulated based on the literature reviews (presented in Chapter 2), research questions, and the objective study. Specifically, this study has nine set of hypotheses. These hypotheses were presented individually to represent each of the variables under study.

**H1:** Organisational support significantly influences acceptance of change among ADO in Malaysia Public Service Organisation.

**H2:** Locus of control significantly influences acceptance of change among ADO in Malaysia Public Service Organisation.

**H3:** Attitude towards change significantly influences acceptance of change among ADO in Malaysia Public Service Organisation.

**H4:** Subjective norms significantly influences acceptance of change among ADO in Malaysia Public Service Organisation.

**H5:** Social influence significantly influences acceptance of change among ADO in Malaysia Public Service Organisation.

**H6:** Organisational support mediates the relationship between subjective norms and acceptance of change among ADO in Malaysia Public Service organisation.

**H7:** Organisational support mediates the relationship between social influences and acceptance of change among ADO in Malaysia Public Service organisation.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study adds value to the theoretical evolution, practice, and policy development. For theoretical evolution, the current study aims to broaden the existing knowledge of organisational change which is the phenomenon of organisational development in the context of public organisation in Malaysia. Other than that, the present study also extends Bandura's (1986b) theory of social cognitive by integrating other related variable such as organisational-related factors as a mediating variable to provide better clarity on the interactions between all related variables and to explain the phenomenon of AOC specifically in the Malaysia Public Service. Bandura's (1986b) theory of social cognitive posits that individual-related factors and environmental-related factors influence AOC behaviour. In addition, this study also employed Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1967) and Organisational Support Theory (Eisenberger, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986) to provide a better understanding on the phenomenon of acceptance of change behaviour among Management and Professional Group officers in the context of Malaysia Public Service.

By practice, this study will be of great help for the HRD researchers and practitioners in understanding the problems related to acceptance of change behaviour. MacKenzie, Garavan, and Carbery (2011) postulated that HRD has the competency and skills to challenge the status quo and assist organisations to promote a good governance practice specifically in minimising the issue of acceptance of change behaviour. Hence, the information gathered from this study are beneficial in advocating employee training programmes and formulating HRD intervention remedial programmes (extreme cases) pertaining to AOC. HRD professionals play a vital role to facilitate the creation of a healthy and positive work culture among employees in the organisation. Due to AOC, the employee relationships will be affected and impact the sharing of knowledge. This will in turn affect the performance and development of employees in the organisation. Therefore, it is imperative for HRD practitioners to determine the factors predicting acceptance of change behaviour. Review of literature has also demonstrated that organisational supports are vital in determining the successful change. Therefore, at the organisational level, this study attempts to help managers understand the phenomenon.



This study also provides crucial information for policy development. The findings would enable the Human Resource personnel to develop policies and procedures that necessitate improvement in the work practices of Management and Professional Group of ADO not only in the Malaysia Public Service, but also in other public sectors. Thus, the study genuinely supports the call by the government to create an agile and efficient workforce as stipulated in one of the Public Service Transformations (PST), Strategic Reforms Initiatives (SRIs) and New Economic Model (NEM). Finally, the findings of the study will provide insights to future researchers on the AOC phenomenon in the Malaysia Public Service organisation context in terms of factors influencing the acceptance of change behaviour.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study confines itself to an understanding of acceptance of change behaviour among the Management and Professional Group of ADO in the Malaysia Public Service. Issues surrounding the employee's behaviour such as lower acceptance of change are sensitive which may affect the employee's self-reputation. Therefore, it is regarded as classified by the employees and not entirely willing to share or disclose their experiences in the level of acceptance of change. The same challenge has been widely recognised by other researchers (e.g., Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007; Schmidt, Viswesvaran, & Ones, 2000) that self-reported behavioural studies are concerned about the honesty of responses due to the nature of acceptance of change behaviours. Despite the expectation, evidence suggests that surveys using self-reported data are generally precise (Spector, 1992), including those for undesirable behaviours (Lee, 1993; Ones, Viswesvaran, & Schmidt, 1993). Thus, this study used self-administered questionnaires for data collection to reduce the effect of dishonesty and sensitivity.

### **Limitation of the Study**

One potential limitation of this study concerns with the participants' interpretations of employee acceptance of change. What one participant identifies as acceptance may be considered different to another participant. For example, giving constructive opinion in a change processes are viewed as an acceptance to one employee, but to another employee that is the sign of protesting the change effort. Therefore, one's interpretation can affect how they respond to the AOC questionnaire items. To minimise this limitation, acceptance of change focuses on the specific initiative by the Malaysian Public Service called Public Service Transformation (PST) where its definition was explained beforehand to the respondents and the Human Resource managers. In addition, appropriate design of the questionnaire, correct word use, standardisation along with precise and unambiguous phrasing within question (Sapsford, 2007), and the scale used (Barker, Pistrang, & Elliott, 2002) were checked by the researchers and supervisory committee members.

Another limitation of the study is social desirability which is seen as a potential source of common method bias. Criticisms of self-reported data often focus on social desirability bias (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Sackett & Harris, 1984; Sackett, Burris,

& Callahan, 1989). The participants tend to provide socially desirable responses in studies of this nature (Smithikrai, 2008). The participants may not be willing to disclose that they are less-accepted on the changes at work. This act will generally conclude with over reporting good behaviour or under reporting bad behaviour. In solving the issue, reducing social desirability and maintaining participants' anonymity were proposed to ensure greater confidence in the results (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Ones et al., 1993).

The population of this study is the Management and Professional Group of ADO as middle managers in the Malaysia Public Service. As such, the results would therefore be only limited to the Malaysia Public Service organisations and cannot be generalised to other employees in different work sectors such as private organisations. Based on the literature review, this study found that several variables were significantly related to AOC. However, this study limits itself to examine several predictor variables only i.e., locus of control, attitude towards change, subjective norms, social influence and organisational support. These variables were chosen due to their significant contributions in explaining the acceptance of change behaviour.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

This study takes into account few primary assumptions. Based on the extensive literature reviews from articles, reports as well as the verbal resources from the Malaysian Public Service Department, this study is fully aware of the existence of acceptance of change issue in the Malaysia Public Service which deserves an equal attention and adequate remedy. The independent variables used in this study were identified as important variables based on the literature reviews and found to be contributing towards acceptance of change behaviour. Thus, the study assumes that the examination of the relationships between the selected independent variables, acceptance of change, and organisational support as the mediating variable would help in understanding acceptance of change behaviour in the Malaysian Public Service context.

All Management and Professional Group of ADO have attended various training programmes and courses to develop and enhance their attitudes, skills and knowledge ever since their service commencement in the Malaysia Public Service. Therefore, this study also assumes that the Management and Professional Group of ADO as middle managers in the Malaysian Public Service have full volitional control over acceptance of change behaviour taking into consideration the Malaysian Public Service as a learning organisation which supports and allows them to boost their true potential by engaging themselves into the implementation and decision making during PST processes.

## **Operational Definitions**

The operational definitions in this study are as follows:

**Acceptance of change** is defined as Management and Professional Group's assenting behaviour towards Public Service Transformation and successfully implements it.

**Locus of control** is defined as the degree to which Management and Professional Group has a strong or weak ascendancy on the influence of luck, faith or chances.

**Attitude towards change** is defined as Management and Professional Group's overall positive or negative evaluative judgment of a change initiative implemented by Malaysia Public Service.

**Subjective norms** refer to perceived social obligation exerted on the Management and Professional Group either to act or not to act.

**Social influence** is defined as perceived social belonging exerted on Management and Professional Group whether or not he/she fits in a group.

**Organisational support** refers to Management and Professional Group's perception that their higher management group values their contributions, compliments them, and genuinely cares about their well-being.

**Management and Professional Group** refers to middle managerial level of ADO between grades 41 to 54 in Malaysia Public Service organisation.

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