UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

*ADAPTABILITY AND CHANGE READINESS AMONG
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES*

TAN FEE CHENG

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ADAPTABILITY AND CHANGE READINESS AMONG MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES

By

TAN FEE CHENG

Thesis Submitted to the Putra Business School, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Adaptability is of great importance to employees to remain competitive in a dynamic and
uncertain work environment. It is, therefore, essential to understand the factors that may
influence employees' adaptability. Although much has been done to investigate positive
change responses, i.e. change readiness, little is known about the relationship between
adaptability and change readiness. Hence, this research aimed to study factors, namely
managerial climate, on-the-job embeddedness, psychological ownership, and proactive
personality that influence employees' adaptability and its effect on change readiness in
the context of Malaysian public sector organizations by drawing upon the Bandura's
(1986) social cognitive theory. The study was conducted during a historical change in
the Malaysian government administration since independence. A quantitative approach
was employed whereby questionnaires were administered to public sector organizations
in Putrajaya and Kuala Lumpur. of 500 administrative and diplomatic officers
approached using a systematic sampling technique, 386 responded to the survey. The
data was analysed using SPSS and PLS-SEM. The results provide interesting insight into
the factors influencing adaptability and change readiness. Managerial climate,
psychological ownership, and on-the-job embeddedness were found to influence
employees' adaptability. While managerial climate and adaptability were found to
influence change readiness, no significant influence of psychological ownership and on-
the-job embeddedness on change readiness was observed. Meanwhile, adaptability was
found to mediate the relationship between managerial climate, psychological ownership,
on-the-job embeddedness, and change readiness. Besides that, proactive personality was
shown to negatively moderate the relationship between adaptability and change readiness.
This study enriched the adaptability literature by expanding knowledge of the
relationship between the antecedents, employees' adaptability, and change readiness.
Managers are advised to create the right climate that helps employees better adapt and
be ready to change over time. Subsequently, this will ensure change success in Malaysian
public sector organizations.

KEUPAYAAN ADAPTABILITI DAN KESEDIAAN PERUBAHAN DALAM KALANGAN PEJAWAT AWAM MALAYSIA

Oleh

TAN FEE CHENG

Ogos 2020

Pengerusi : **Profesor Madya Dr. Devika Nadarajah, PhD**
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Keupayaan adaptabiliti sangat penting bagi pekerja untuk terus berdaya saing dalam persekitaran kerja yang dinamik dan tidak menentu. Oleh itu, adalah mustahak bagi memahami faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi tahap keupayaan adaptabiliti pekerja. Walaupun terdapat banyak penyelidikan mengenai reaksi perubahan positif, seperti kesediaan perubahan, namun kajian hubungan antara adaptabiliti dan kesediaan perubahan adalah amat terhad. Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor seperti iklim pengurusan, perikatan kerja (*on-the-job embeddedness*), keempunyaan psikologi (*psychological ownership*), dan personaliti proaktif yang mampu mempengaruhi adaptabiliti dan kesannya ke atas kesediaan perubahan dalam konteks organisasi sektor awam di Malaysia dengan memanfaatkan perspektif dari segi Bandura (1986) teori kognitif sosial. Kajian ini dilakukan semasa berlakunya perubahan bersejarah dalam pentadbiran Kerajaan Malaysia sejak merdeka. Pendekatan kuantitatif dengan menggunakan kajian soal selidik telah dilaksanakan di organisasi-organisasi sektor awam yang terletak sekitar Putrajaya dan Kuala Lumpur. Daripada 500 pegawai tadbir dan diplomatik yang dikenalpasti dengan menggunakan teknik pensampelan sistematik, 386 orang telah memberi maklum balas terhadap kajian tersebut. Data dianalisa menggunakan SPSS dan PLS-SEM. Hasil dapatan memberikan gambaran yang menarik mengenai faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi adaptabiliti dan kesediaan perubahan. Iklim pengurusan, keempunyaan psikologi, dan perikatan kerja didapati mempengaruhi tahap adaptasi pekerja. Walaupun iklim pengurusan dan kebolehsuaian didapati mempengaruhi kesediaan perubahan, manakala tidak ada kesan signifikan didapati antara faktor keempunyaan psikologi dan perikatan kerja terhadap kesediaan perubahan. Sementara itu, keupayaan adaptabiliti didapati mampu memediasi hubungan antara iklim pengurusan, keempunyaan psikologi, perikatan kerja, dan kesediaan perubahan. Selain itu, personaliti proaktif menunjukkan kesan negative dengan melemahkan hubungan antara adaptabiliti dan kesediaan perubahan. Kajian ini memperluas pengetahuan tentang kesan adaptabiliti dan tahap kesediaan perubahan dalam kalangan pekerja, terutamanya dalam organisasi sektor awam di Malaysia. Pengurus disarankan untuk mewujudkan persekitaran yang sihat agar dapat membantu pekerja menyesuaikan diri dengan lebih baik dan bersedia untuk berubah dari semasa ke semasa.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 18 August 2020 to conduct the final examination of Tan Fee Cheng on her thesis entitled "Adaptability and Change Readiness among Malaysian Public Sector Employees" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADO	Administrative and Diplomatic Officer
AVE	Average variance extracted
CB	Covariance-based
CFA	Confirmatory factor analysis
CR	Composite reliability
DV	Dependent variable
ETP	Economic Transformation Programme
GTP	Government Transformation Programme
HRMIS	Human Resources Management Information System
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio
ICT	Information and communication technology
IV	Independent variable
JUSA	*Jawatan Utama Sektor Awam*
KPI	Key performance indicator
M	Mean
MAMPU	Malaysian Administrative and Modernisation and Management
MP	Malaysia Plan
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
RO	Research objective
PLS	Partial least square
PSD	Public Service Department
PSTF	Public Service Transformation Framework
SD	Standard deviation

SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
SPV	Shared Prosperity Vision
VIF	Variance inflation factor

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of this study on employee adaptability and change readiness in public sector organisations. It introduces the background of the study, reviews organisational change in Malaysian public sector organisations, and establishes the problem statement, research questions, research objectives and significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

The unexpected change in the Malaysian government in 2018 marked a new narrative for organisational change in the public sector. Public service employees now face whole new challenges in public governance and administration, such as new leader-employee relationships and major organisational restructuring that happened overnight. Also, many existing policies have been rendered irrelevant in public sector organisations. Therefore, leaders have urged public service employees to adapt and change to ensure an effective delivery system, as well as a resilient and, high-performing civil service (Zulfakar, 2018).

According to researchers such as Kuipers et al. (2014), van der Voet et al. (2015), and van den Heuvel et al. (2013), the change process in public sector organisations is far more difficult to manage than private sector organisations. The role of public sector organisations is very important as they are entrusted with the responsibilities to provide various services to the people and to guide the nation towards sustainable development. The interests of various stakeholders, such as the public, private organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and politicians are varied and, hence, difficult to manage. In this regard, public services management and administration is often more complex than the private sector, especially in the case of Malaysian public sector organisations that have been in the administration of same government for more than 60 years.

Currently, Malaysian public sector organisations operate within an uncertain, fluid, and dynamic work environment. Employees feel mistrusted, insecure, stressed, and unsure about the impending work culture as a result of the change in leadership, the new work environment, and the extra workload (Bernama, 2018; Kaur, 2018; Sivanandam, 2019). In this context, they need to be able to be adapt to new tasks or environments quickly, to be flexible in dealing with challenging issues, and to cope when things do not go as planned (Allworth & Hesketh,1999; Baard et al., 2014; Cullen et al., 2014; Griffin et al., 2007; Parent & Lovelace, 2018). Adaptability refers to employees' ability to cope with change events and adapt to a new work role or environment. Employees who have a higher adaptive capability tend to move through the change process more quickly (Cullen et al., 2014; Elsey, 2019; Ghitulescu, 2013), while those who are not adaptable tend to feel uncomfortable and get stressed. And, they are most likely will resist changing when faced with new, urgent or unexpected tasks. Thus, employees' adaptability plays an essential role in times of change, particularly in a volatile work environment.

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The capability of adaptability may influence the degree of readiness to which employees stay affectively committed to change initiatives (Oreg et al., 2013). Previous studies (e.g. Armenakis et al., 1993; Bouckenooghe et al., 2009; Mueller et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2010; Stevens, 2013) have claimed that promoting employee readiness in the early stage of change is crucial during the change process. This is because organisational change will take place more easily once employees are motivated and ready to change (Vakola, 2013).

Furthermore, readiness helps reduce employees' resistance to change (Armenakis et al., 1993). According to Armenakis et al. (1993), readiness is "the cognitive precursor to the behaviour of either resistance to or support for, a change effort" (p. 681). In other words, if employees are not ready in a time of change, they may reject the change and develop negative reactions, like resistance and sabotage. However, when employees are ready, they will embrace the change and commit to the implementation of change efforts. Hence, organisations should pay more attention to employees in the change planning stage as the managers can be a spur for the change success (Oreg et al., 2011; Rafferty et al., 2013; Bran et al., 2019). Following the above discussion, as Malaysian public sector organisations embark on another new wave of change, this study is timely and relevant in its aim to examine the factors that may influence employees' adaptability and its effects on readiness for change.

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory postulates that human functioning is the result of the interaction between the environment, personal factors, and behaviour. The theory proposes that human behaviour is a result of the environment and vice versa. Consistently, change success depends on the degree to which employees are willing to adjust their behaviour in line with the envisaged change (Ghitulescu, 2013). Rafferty et al. (2013) and Gelaidan et al. (2018) concluded that personal and environmental factors are consistent predictors of change readiness. Therefore, in this study, one environmental factor (i.e. managerial climate) and two factors (i.e. psychological ownership and on-the-job embeddedness) were considered to predict employees' adaptability and change readiness. Managerial climate refers to employees' perceptions of and experiences with their management or managers' daily behaviour (McGregor, 2006). Psychological ownership and on-the-job embeddedness are about individual psychological differences towards change events during the change process.

This study also examined proactive personality as a potential moderator in the linkage between adaptability and change readiness. Rooted in the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), proactive personality is believed to drive individual success in a changing and competitive work environment. Proactive personality is a self-behavioural tendency to initiate change in an uncertain and fluid work environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993). In sum, this study aimed to predict what organisations need to achieve change success by investigating the inter-relationships between personal factors (i.e., psychological ownership, on-the-job embeddedness, and proactive personality), environmental factors (i.e. managerial climate), employee adaptability, and change readiness in Malaysian public sector organisations.

1.1.1 Organisational Change in the Malaysian Public Sector

Changes or reforms in the Malaysian public sector were initiated during the 1980s with the Look East Policy 1982 and Malaysia Incorporated Policy 1983. The implementation of these policies and strategies had a major impact on the governance and administration of all public sector organisations. For example, according to Malaysia Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) (n.d.), 32 circulars and circular letters were issued from 1991 to 2007 to improve governance and administrative issues at public sector organisations, of which 11 were issued in 1991. These administrative circulars shaped the public sector organisational change, ranging from micro-management initiatives such as client charters and guidelines on conducting meetings, to quality work culture strategies like ISO9000, total quality management, and e-government initiatives.

Following the financial crisis of 2007 to 2008, public sector organisations were faced with increasing pressures to respond more adeptly than ever to the needs of various stakeholders. Reduced funding and the emergence of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) posed significant and ongoing challenges to public sector organisations as well. In 2010, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Najib Tun Razak, charted a roadmap for the national transformation agenda called the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) 2010. The GTP, together with the 11th Malaysia Plan (MP) and Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) signalled a desire for transformation in public sector organisations. Organisational changes in the form of altering work processes and procedures, improving service delivery, and introducing new media technologies were implemented to ensure better work performance and people engagement in the face of change (Siddiquee, 2014; Xavier et al., 2016). Moreover, the Public Service Department of Malaysia (PSD) (2014) prepared the Public Service Transformation Framework (PSTF) as a comprehensive guideline for public sector organisations in implementing organisational change. These milestones of changes in the Malaysian public sector from the 1980s to the year 2015 is presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

Milestones of Organisational Change in the Malaysian Public Sector, 1980s – 2015

Year	Reform	Description
1980s	Look East policy	To emulate the work ethics of Japan and South Korea
	Malaysia Incorporated strategy - Privatisation policy	Closer cooperation between public and private sectors
1990s	Management system and procedures - Modified Budgeting System - Total Quality Management	Improve governance and administration in organisations

Year	Reform	Description
	- New Remuneration Scheme	
2000s	ICT and public services delivery system - Human Resources Management Information System (HRMIS) - Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Enhance work performance and introduce effective service delivery to the public performance measurement system
2010	Government Transformation Programme	Transform the government into an efficient and citizen-centre institution
2014	Public Service Transformation Framework	Improve the service delivery system for public service

Note. Adapted from PSD (2014) and MAMPU (n.d.).

The Government of Malaysia has continuously introduced various strategic transformation programmes and public administrative reforms to provide better delivery of services and greater efficiency at work (Siddiquee, 2010, 2014; Xavier, 2014). Nevertheless, due to global economic uncertainties, Malaysian public sector organizations are not exempt from the struggle for business sustainability (ACCA Global, 2017). Furthermore, overall public service performance is viewed as still lags behind public expectations (World Bank, 2019). A recent report by Malaysia Economic Monitor (World Bank, 2019) indicated that Malaysia's government effectiveness index has remained stagnant and have even fallen in recent years (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1

Malaysia Government Effectiveness Index
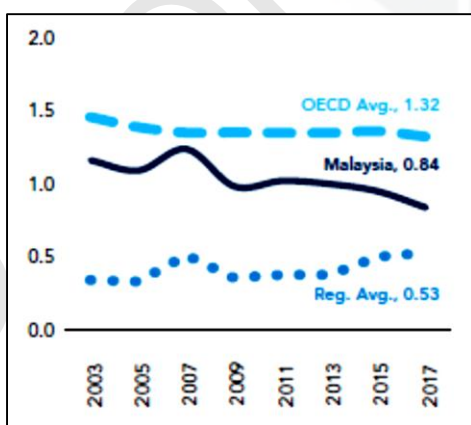
Note. Adopted from World Bank (2019).

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Since the new government was formed in mid-2018, public sector organisations have faced a new chapter in governance and administrative-related matters. Major organisational change, such as ministry restructuring (e.g. rightsizing, merges of ministries, and establishment of new ministry), reengineering of work systems and procedures (e.g. introduction of new system of myPortfolio and review of procurement procedures), and major staff reshuffling, including over 60 officers in top management posts within 2 months took place in public sector organisations (MAMPU, n.d.; PSD, n.d.). Public sector employees encountered a dynamic and rapidly changing environment. Employees may perceive such changes as disruptions to their routine and risks to their performance, skills, and relationships that have been acquired over time (Bartunek et al., 2006).

Furthermore, public sector organisations are pressured to further improve their delivery of public services to fulfil the new expectations and demands of stakeholders such as political masters, the public, private sectors, and NGOs. For example, the then Prime Minister of Malaysia Dr Mahathir Mohamad introduced Malaysia's Shared Prosperity Vision (SPV) 2030 blueprint to boost economic development. These continuous demands and new expectations are forcing public sector organisations to implement multitude of change initiatives that focus on good governance, transparency, and accountability. Perceptions of uncertainty, feelings of being overwhelmed by change information, and high levels of stress and anxiety now remain among public sector employees (Bernama, 2018; Kaur, 2018).

1.2   Problem Statement

Given the fact that change will not slow down anytime soon, do public services have the skills and abilities it takes (i.e. adaptability) to meet stakeholder needs? The success or failure of a change effort is likely to be attributed to the employees because they are the ones who execute change efforts (Keller & Aiken, 2008; Baran et al., 2019; van der Voet et al., 2016). Hence, it is imperative that organisations focus on employees in their change planning and management.

Employees react to change in a variety of ways. Some employees welcome change and view it as a chance to improve their wellbeing in the organisation. However, many feel uncomfortable with unexpected change and prefer to maintain the status quo, resulting in the tendency to resist change (Hon et al., 2014). Bovey and Hede (2001), Hon et al. (2014), and van Dam et al. (2008) argued that when changes fail, it is because employees simply resist changing. Another explanation for the failure in implementing organisational change is that employees are not ready for change (Armenakis et al., 1993; Rafferty et al., 2013; Vakola, 2014). Researchers imply that creating readiness can reduce the tendency for change resistance (Armenakis et al., 1993; Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Bouckenooghe et al., 2009; Oreg et al., 2011; Rafferty et al., 2013; Vakola, 2013). The literature demonstrates that employee readiness to change is one of the key determinants of effective implementation of organisational change (Bouckenooghe et al., 2009; Vakola, 2013). Despite the fact that research on employees' change readiness is gaining momentum (Oreg et al., 2011; Rafferty et al., 2013), studies on change readiness in public sector organisations is still limited (Kuiper et al., 2014; van der Voet, et al.,

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2016). These theoretical and empirical bases prompted the present study to examine employee readiness in the time of change.

In a volatile work environment, organisational change success lies in the ability of employees to quickly alter their actions, cope with stress, and perform new tasks effectively (Kozlowski et al., 2001; Tejeiro Koller, 2016; van Dam et al., 2015). Adaptability is becoming a critical capability that organisations seek in employees. The Flux Report indicated that 91% of human resource managers believe that, in the near future, employees will be recruited based on their capability to deal with uncertainty and change (Right Management, 2014). Dr. Ali Hamsa, the former Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia (2013), emphasised that public service employees today need be able to adjust to the rapidly changing environment and work effectively for people's well-being. The usual way of getting work done may no longer be adequate to address all the challenges faced by the employees. Employees' ability to adapt and cope with change is crucial as the backbone of an excellent performance and change success (Jundt et al., 2015; Pulakos et al., 2000; Pulakos et al., 2002; Shoss et al., 2012; van Dam et al., 2015).

According to Baard et al. (2014), the study of adaptability is "a vibrant, yet chaotic, line of inquiry; the progress has been stymied" (p. 81). Despite the increase in the amount of research on the antecedents of adaptability (Baard et al., 2014; Jundt et al., 2015), past studies tended to focus more on personal factors (e.g. personality traits, experience, leadership styles, perceived politics, self-efficacy, and self-regulation) and less on situational factors like managerial climate (Jundt et al., 2015). Jundt et al. (2015) encouraged researchers to continue focusing on various predictors to further expand knowledge of employees' adaptability. Hence, to enrich the knowledge of employees' adaptation, one of the objectives of this study was to investigate factors such as managerial climate, psychological ownership, and on-the-job embeddedness in influencing employee adaptability during change.

Moreover, the relationship between adaptability and change readiness is underexplored. Though there is scarce evidence of their correlations, some findings suggest that adaptable employees are more ready in times of change (Cullen et al., 2014; Rusly, Sun, & Corner, 2015; van Dam, 2013; van Dam et al., 2015). Thus, the relationship between adaptability and change readiness is ripe for further exploration, intended by this study.

van Dam (2013) noted that a clear understanding of the change readiness-adaptability relationship is still lacking. Correspondingly, one of the questions of when the adaptability-change readiness link occurs remains unexplored. Given, the potential of proactive personality, outlined in the Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, it was reasonable to find out whether proactive personality will buffer the relationship between adaptability and readiness. Indeed, proactive personality has been identified to predict effective work-related outcomes especially in an uncertainty work environment (e.g. Fuller et al., 2010; Griffin et al., 2007, and Li et al., 2014). Therefore, another motivation for this study was to take into consideration of the moderating effects of proactive personality on the relationship between adaptability and change readiness.

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To date, few studies have considered the combined effects of antecedents, adaptability, and change readiness (Oreg, et al., 2016; van Dam, 2013). Baard et al. (2014) acknowledged there is a lack of specific theoretical underpinnings that prescribe the mechanisms that impact human motivation and predict the relationship between antecedents, adaptability, and outcomes. van Dam (2013) revealed that adaptability might serve as a mediator in change-related outcomes (i.e. change readiness). This means that gaps exist concerning understanding of how the skill of adaptability helps employees be more ready for change. Therefore, consistent with their argument, this study investigated how adaptability could link the antecedents (i.e. managerial climate, on-the-job embeddedness, and psychological ownership) and change readiness.

1.3   Research Questions

Based on the above discussion, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Do managerial climate, psychological ownership, and on-the-job embeddedness influence individual adaptability?

2. Do managerial climate, psychological ownership, on-the-job embeddedness, and individual adaptability influence change readiness?

3. Does individual adaptability mediate the relationship between the antecedents (i.e. managerial climate, psychological ownership, and on-the-job embeddedness) and change readiness?

4. Does proactive personality moderate the relationship between individual adaptability and change readiness?

1.4   Research Objectives

This study was undertaken to examine the relationships between managerial climate, on-the-job embeddedness, psychological ownership, proactive personality, and adaptability and change readiness. Accordingly, this study attempted to meet the following objectives:

1. To examine the relationships between managerial climate, psychological ownership, on-the-job embeddedness, and individual adaptability.

2. To ascertain the relationships between managerial climate, psychological ownership, on-the-job embeddedness, individual adaptability, and change readiness.

3. To determine if individual adaptability mediates the relationship between the antecedents (i.e. managerial climate, psychological ownership, and on-the-job embeddedness) and change readiness.

4. To investigate the moderating effect of proactive personality on the relationship between individual adaptability and change readiness.

1.5   Scope of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the influence of antecedent factors on employee adaptability and its effect on change readiness in Malaysian public services. Understanding the triggers and influential factors from the employees' perspective will bring public sector organisations closer to accomplishing an adaptable workforce and a readiness for change that allows them to evolve and achieve excellence at work. Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory of triadic reciprocity postulates a valuable framework to understand the cognitive process of employees' change readiness in a dynamic work environment. The literature (e.g. Oreg et al., 2018; van Dam, 2013; van Dam et al., 2015), likewise, emphasises that both adaptability and change readiness are crucial in time of organisational change. This study was also intended to test and extend the influence of adaptability by demonstrating several routes (i.e. managerial climate, on-the-job embeddedness, psychological ownership, and proactive personality) that may translate the effects on employees' change readiness in Malaysian public sector organisations.

Public sector employees in Malaysia are categorised into three groups (see Table 1.2). They are: (1) top level management [JUSA – *Jawatan Utama Sektor Awam* (key positions in the public sector)], who are similar to chief executive officers or heads of department in the private sector; (2) management and professionals, who are related to the middle managers or executive level of officers in the private sector; and (3) support group, who involve individuals alike support staff in the private sector.

In 2018, Malaysia government introduced a new promotion grade, Grade 56 for education service officers. However, this new promotion grade is not applicable for other type of officers, for example administrative and diplomatic service officers who were in grades 41 to 54. The management level officers from administrative and diplomatic service officers (ADOs) (Grades 41 – 54) were chosen as the sample of this study because they are the key persons in the organisation that plan and implement organisational change initiatives.

Table 1.2

Malaysian Public Sector Employees' Categorisation

No.	Categories	Grade
1	Top Level Management (JUSA) (CEOs and managers)	C and above
2	Management and Professional (Executive officers)	41 – 56
3	Support Group (Support staff)	1 – 40

Note. Adapted from JPA (www.jpa.gov.my).

1.6   Significance of the Study

This study offers several theoretical and practical contributions. First, the results of this study provide meaningful insight into the complex interactions between an environmental factor (i.e., managerial climate), personal factors (i.e. psychological ownership, on-the-job embeddedness and proactive personality) and human actions/behaviours (i.e., adaptability and change readiness) which are central to the social cognitive theory. Human actions are based on the concept of self-belief and self-motivation. This study took an integrative approach to examine the various links among the identified variables, the mediating role of adaptability in facilitating employees' change readiness, and the moderating role of proactive personality between adaptability and change readiness This study also enriches the theory of social cognitive by bringing in the change responses model (Oreg et al., 2018) to further explain the cognitive process of change readiness among employees in public sector organisations.

Second, this study provides a better understanding of the employees' perspective in organisational change literature. It extends the existing knowledge of change readiness by investigating the relationships between adaptability and antecedent factors (i.e. managerial climate, psychological ownership, and on-the-job embeddedness) and change readiness. Results from the study may provide useful information to further describe, explain, and predict employees' ability to adapt and be ready for change through metacognitive mechanisms.

Third, this study offers lessons on research issues that have the potential to affect organisational change success. Empirical evidence related to employee adaptability is focused in Western countries (Baard et al., 2014; Jundt et al., 2015). By using Malaysian public sector organisations as the sample of this study, the findings may broaden the understanding from the Malaysian perspective of employees' adaptability to change.

Finally, on a more practical level, the findings of the study may enlighten practitioners' understanding of the importance of managerial climate, psychological ownership, and on-the-job embeddedness in influencing employee adaptability in the workplace and their readiness for change. Given that Malaysian public sector organisations are dedicated to driving change and infusing new innovative strategies, the results will be of great assistance to the managers in introducing appropriate interventions or strategies for the current organisational human resource management and subsequently improve work-related outcomes.

1.7   Operational Definition of Key Terms

The definition of the key terms used in the study are as follows:

1.   Change readiness is an employee's psychological state of believing in (cognitive), feeling about (affective), and acting towards (intention) change efforts (Armenakis et al., 1993).

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2. Adaptability refers to an employee's capability to cope and adapt to a new or different task and work environment (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006).

3. Managerial climate refers to employees' perception of managers' daily behaviour and strategic communication that characterises the work environment (McGregor, 2006).

4. Psychological ownership is about an employee's possessive feelings of being psychologically tied to his or her job (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004).

5. On-the-job embeddedness occurs when an employee is attached and enmeshed in his or her job (Mitchell & Lee, 2001).

6. Proactive personality characterises an employee who seeks out opportunities, shows initiative, and perseveres to bring about meaningful change (Bateman & Crant, 1993).

1.8 Organisation of the Chapters

This study consists of five chapters including Chapter 1. Chapter 2 review the literature on the key variables of the present research, specifically appraising how employees' change readiness, adaptability, managerial climate, on-the-job embeddedness, psychological ownership, and proactive personality are correlated with each other. This chapter also presents the research framework and the development of hypotheses.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to conduct the research, including population and sampling design, selection of measurement, data collection procedures, and the methods used to analyse the data. Chapter 4 reports the findings of the statistical analysis. Finally, Chapter 5 provides discussions on the results by linking them to theory and literature, outlines the implications, limitations, and suggestions for future studies.

1.9 Summary

By concentrating on the issues of change readiness and adaptability, this chapter introduced the background, problem statement, objectives, and the significance for this study. The next chapter reviews the relevant literature on the study variables.

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Tan Fee Cheng, 48, was born in Kangar, Perlis. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in History from University Malaya in 1997 and received her Master of Public Administration from University Malaya in 2008. She joined Malaysian Civil Services as an Administration and Diplomatic Service (PTD) officer in 1998. She has vast knowledge and experience in the civil service where she has served for 22 years. She had previously been appointed to serve in the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Multimedia and Communication. In 2016, she was offered a scholarship by the Public Service Department to pursue her PhD in Management at Putra Business School, Universiti Putra Malaysia. Currently, she is working in Management Consulting Division for Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU), under the Prime Minister Department.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Journal Article (In Progress)

Tan Fee Cheng and Devika Nadarajah (2021). Adaptability Features, Proactivity, and Change Readiness: An Empirical Investigation of Public Sector Organisations. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* (Vol. 11, No. 1, March 2021).

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