

Examining the Influence of Locus of Control on Readiness to Change in Higher Education

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Abstract. Higher education institutions in Indonesia have become an increasingly prominent topic of discussion due to their rapid transformation, which has created a highly complex competitive landscape. The demands of scientific advancement, strategic government policies, and the rapid development of technology are the main forces driving this transformation. These pressures not only compel universities to adapt to changing times but also to strive for leadership in their respective fields. This study aims to examine and analyze the influence of a psychological trait—Locus of Control (LoC)—on Readiness to Change (RTC), considering that human factors are often critical to the success of organizational change. A total of 95 respondents from 34 public and private universities participated in this study. Institutional clustering was not applied, as the primary focus was to assess the perceptions of staff and faculty members. The findings indicate that LoC exerts a positive and significant influence on RTC.

Keywords: higher education, locus of control, readiness to change

I. Introduction

Education is a fundamental right inherent to every citizen. In Indonesia, this principle is enshrined in the 1945 Constitution, which affirms that education is a right for all people. In essence, education serves as a cornerstone of national development, a view that is universally acknowledged not only in developing countries but also in advanced nations. Over time, the Indonesian education system has undergone significant transformations since the reform era, although its implementation has often generated both support and criticism. According to the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (2024), the nine-year compulsory education agenda has not yet achieved optimal participation rates. While school dropout figures show a declining trend, the level remains relatively high and thus cannot be regarded as an encouraging outcome.

At the higher education level, Indonesia faces even more complex challenges. The large number of universities has intensified competition without providing clear solutions. Although the number of universities has declined by approximately 7.23% between 2020 and 2024, concerns remain regarding the availability of teaching staff. The ratio of educators to students, both in public and private institutions, continues to be imbalanced (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2025). Such disparities in resources are likely to affect institutional performance, as the success of higher education institutions (HEIs) largely depends on the productivity and commitment of their academic community (Milang et al., 2024; Yasmin et al., 2023). Similar to other organizations, the sustainability of HEIs is determined by the quality of their academic staff, whose contributions play a crucial role in ensuring long-term success.

It is undeniable that the clustering of HEIs under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, the Higher Education Service Institutions (LLDikti), and the Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) overseen by the Ministry of Religious Affairs has created a highly competitive environment. As Hart and Rodgers (2024) note, inter-university competition has attracted both attention and criticism, as it drives dynamic transformations within the higher education sector. Increasingly intense competition compels institutions to develop competitive advantages by leveraging their unique strengths and capabilities to create value and achieve superior outcomes (Hart & Rodgers, 2024). In this context, competition generates not only pressure but also a sense of urgency and energy for transformation. Consequently, organizational performance and competitiveness are often linked to resource competence (Diwanti et al., 2021), employees' psychological factors (Pratiwi et al., 2021; Putra et al., 2021), and readiness to change (Wijaya et al., 2024), all of which enhance adaptability to market dynamics.

Readiness to Change (RTC) has emerged as an important concept in this regard. A substantial body of literature highlights its relationship with various performance outcomes, including sustainability (Hernelind & Hogréus, 2020), employee performance (Ratnawati & Sugiharti, 2023), and organizational entrepreneurship (Diwanti et al., 2021). Yet for many individuals, organizational change can be a daunting prospect, as it threatens their sense of security and emotional stability, often leading to resistance, stress, and related health issues (Niedhammer & Bertrais, 2024). Nevertheless, RTC remains vital for organizational survival, as failure in change initiatives is often not solely due to poor strategy but also to the human factor, which frequently serves as a barrier. In this sense, RTC functions as a critical predictor of successful organizational transformation (Neville & Schneider, 2021).

Furthermore, prior research has suggested that personality traits such as Locus of Control (LoC) are positively associated with RTC (Mujib & Rosari, 2023; Syarif et al., 2024). Findings indicate that LoC influences individuals' perceptions of change, particularly their sense of control over events affecting their lives. Individuals with an internal LoC tend to display optimism and confidence in managing their environment (Mujib & Rosari, 2023). Within organizations, this characteristic is highly valuable as it indirectly supports institutional transformation efforts while fostering a positive attitude among employees (Goswami & Lakshmi Priya, 2024). However, Stasielowicz (2020) argues that cognitive ability may be a more relevant predictor of adaptive performance than personality-based measures, suggesting the need for further exploration.

Notably, research linking LoC and RTC remains limited, particularly within organizational contexts, as most studies have focused on student achievement and academic performance. Building on this gap, the present study seeks to explore the influence of LoC on staff and faculty readiness to change within Indonesian higher education institutions, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on organizational transformation in the education sector.

II. Literature Review

Locus of Control on Readiness to Change

Organizational change has become an inevitable process in today's competitive and dynamic environment. For change initiatives to succeed, employees must be both willing and able to adapt. This condition is captured in the concept of readiness to change, which reflects employees' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions toward organizational transformation (Jo & Hong, 2023; Milovanovic et al., 2022). Prior studies emphasize that readiness to change is not only shaped by organizational factors such as leadership support, but also by individual psychological characteristics. One personality dimension that has been consistently linked to work behavior is the locus of control.

Locus of control (LoC) refers to the extent to which individuals believe that the outcomes of their actions are determined by their own behavior (internal LoC) or by external factors such as luck, fate, or the influence of powerful others (external LoC) (Szabó-Morvai & Kiss, 2024). Employees with an internal locus of control are more likely to view change as an opportunity they can influence through their own efforts. This perception tends to foster greater adaptability, resilience, and openness to new ways of working (Gabay et al., 2025). In contrast, employees with an external locus of control may perceive organizational change as being beyond their control, which can lead to feelings of helplessness or resistance.

From this perspective, employees with a stronger internal orientation are expected to demonstrate a higher level of readiness to change (Syarif et al., 2024b). They are more likely to see change as manageable and beneficial, as they attribute outcomes to their own ability to adjust and perform. Conversely, those with a stronger external orientation may be less confident about navigating change and therefore show lower levels of readiness. Theoretically, this aligns with social learning perspectives, which suggest that individuals' belief systems shape how they interpret and respond to environmental demands.

Based on the reasoning above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

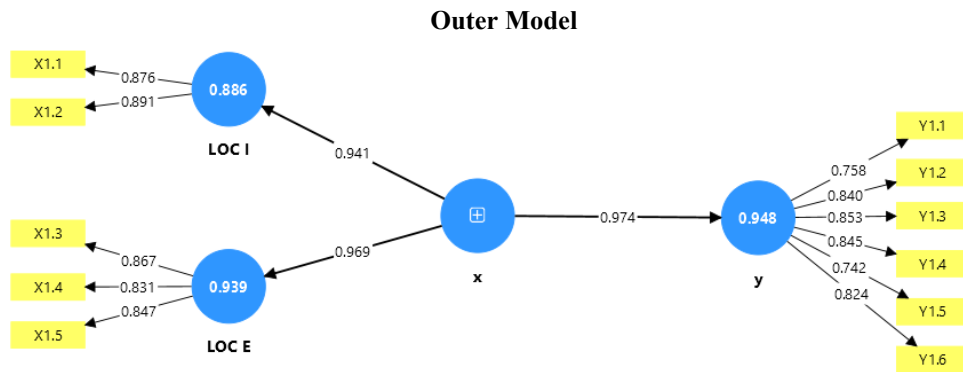
H1: Locus of control has a significant effect on employees' readiness to change

III. Research Method

This study employs a quantitative approach to examine and analyze the effect of Locus of Control on employees' readiness to change. The research population consists of employees (staff and lecturers) working in higher education institutions in Indonesia. Given the broad scope of the population, a convenience sampling technique was adopted to ensure accessibility to respondents. A total of 95 participants from 34 universities—both public and private institutions, including those under foundations and the Higher Education Service Institutions (LLDikti)—were involved in this study. It is important to note that the research does not attempt to classify institutions by type or region, as the focus lies on the individual level (staff and lecturers) rather than on institutional differences across Indonesian universities.

IV. Results and Discussion

The distribution of respondents' answers indicates that staff and lecturers in Indonesian higher education institutions show no hesitation regarding readiness to change (RTC), regardless of gender, age, years of service, or employment status. Interestingly, governance and administration emerged as the most highlighted sectors in need of change, both in public and private universities. These findings suggest that readiness to change is relatively consistent across different respondent characteristics, although certain organizational areas are perceived as requiring greater attention in the transformation process. Prior to hypothesis testing, prerequisite analyses were conducted by evaluating factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability, with indicator items that failed to meet the required thresholds subsequently removed from the research model.



Source: Research data processed using SmartPLS version 4.0.9.5 (2025)

Figure 1. Results of the outer model path analysis

From Figure 1, it can be observed that the outer loading values exceed 0.70, indicating that the indicators in this study are valid and appropriate for further analysis.

Table 1. Validity Indicators (Outer Loadings) and Convergent Validity (AVE)

Laten Variable	Construct Variable	Loading (>0.70)	AVE(>0,5)
Locus of Control Internal (X)	X1.1	0.876	0.720
	X1.2	0.891	
Locus of Control Eksternal (X)	X1.3	0.867	0.781
	X1.4	0.831	
	X1.5	0.847	
Readiness to change (Y)	Y1.1	0.758	0.659
	Y1.2	0.840	
	Y1.3	0.853	
	Y1.4	0.845	
	Y1.5	0.742	
	Y1.6	0.824	

Source: Research data processed using SmartPLS version 4.0.9.5 (2025)

Meanwhile, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value in Table 1 also meets the minimum criteria for convergent validity, namely greater than 0.50 (>0.50), thus fulfilling the required standard (Hair et al., 2022). Initially, the researcher used six question items to represent the Locus of Control (LoC) variable and eight question items to represent the Readiness to Change (RTC) variable. However, the results of the convergent validity test showed that one item in the LoC variable and two items in the RTC variable did not meet the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) criterion, with values below 0.50. Therefore, these items were removed from the model to ensure that the research constructs met the validity standards. Furthermore, in the construct reliability test measured using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha, the constructs were declared reliable as they achieved composite reliability values above 0.70.

Table 2. Construct Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability)

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
Locus of Control Internal (X)	0.720	0.722	0.877
Locus of Control Eksternal (X)	0.805	0.806	0.885
Readiness to change (Y)	0.896	0.900	0.920

Source: Research data processed using SmartPLS version 4.0.9.5 (2025)

From the above information, it is also confirmed that this research model meets the requirements for further testing, as it is considered to have fulfilled both validity and reliability criteria.

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination (R²)

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Readiness to change (Y)	0.948	0.947

Source: Research data processed using SmartPLS version 4.0.9.5 (2025)

The coefficient of determination (R²) indicates a relatively high value of 0.950, equivalent to 95%. In other words, locus of control explains 95% of the variance in readiness to change, while the remaining 5% is influenced by other factors outside the research model. Furthermore, the results of the hypothesis testing reveal that:

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing of the Direct Effects in the Research Model

	Original sample (O)	P values
Locus of Control (X) -> Readiness to change (Y)	0.974	0.000

Source: Research data processed using SmartPLS version 4.0.9.5 (2025)

From Table 4, it can be observed that the relationship between Locus of Control (X) and Readiness to Change (Y) yields an Original Sample (O) value of 0.974 and a P-value of 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05. Based on these results, a significant positive effect is confirmed. Thus, **H4 is accepted** and H0 is rejected. Once again, this study reinforces the findings of previous research (Mujib & Rosari, 2023; Syarif et al., 2024). The outer loading results further indicate that internal Locus of Control (LoC) plays a crucial role in influencing Readiness to Change (RTC). In other words, the stronger an individual's belief that they have control over their success or failure, the greater their readiness to embrace organizational change.

V. Conclusion

This study once again affirms that internal Locus of Control significantly influences Readiness to Change. As change is inevitable, it is crucial for organizations to assess employees' readiness at an early stage before implementing transformation initiatives. This is particularly important considering that organizational change efforts often fail due to human factors, as employees serve as the primary agents of execution in the change process.

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