



Implementation of Positive Psychology Approach in Identification Process of Action Research

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Article Information

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Abstract

Positive psychology perspective on organizational development using SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) strategic is relatively new in the field of organization science. SOAR is a strategy to design the formulation and implementation of positive strategies to determine the strength, creativity build on existing opportunities, encourages to share aspirations, and determine measurable results and beneficial. In this article, SOAR is conducted as a case study in strategy identification stage of action research as the implementation of positive psychology for organizational development of a psychological service office. The results showed that the SOAR is not only able to analyze and yet be able to determine an action plan for the next stage, but also to create a positive approach to the organization's strategic plan and support a positive approach to all stakeholders involved.

INTRODUCTION

Positive psychology is a branch of psychology that studies the advantages and weakness, creating a good and correct deficiencies and health - mentally and physically - conditions (Peterson, 2013). It focuses on mental health, management advantages, positive emotions, and optimizing capabilities (Biswas-Diener, 2008). It also highlights wellbeing, happiness, positively interpretation of daily life events, individual strengths, wisdom, creativity, imagination and positive characters at individual, group, and organization level (Hefferon and Boniwell, 2011). The goal of positive psychology is a psychological change, not only renovate mistaken situations but also create beneficial and useful milieu (Seligman, 2002).

Applications of positive psychology are in a variety of contexts, including industries and organizations. The applications support organization members to achieve the targeted results. Positive psychology in this context is often referred to as a positive organization perspective that focuses on positive dynamics occur in the organization and is able to provide exceptional results for the organization (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2000). During organizational development process, this perspective encourages a positive atmosphere on the process of change and the sustainability of the organization in the future, including also for all stakeholders.

In the process of organizational development, identification stage is an important phase before determining the strategic plan. The initial step in each process of organizational change in the form of identification, learn and understand every belief and opinion on the system that is being undertaken. Thus, any knowledge can create either positive or negative future for the organization (Gergen, 1995). A positive future for the organization begins by applying positive values using positive psychology approach; including at the early stages of the change process is the identification, by implementing a strategy of SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspiration,

Results). SOAR is a method or a positive frame of mind that can be used by organizations to produce strategic thinking, discuss the problems together and analyzing the necessary action (Sprangel, Stavros, and Cole, 2011). This will be very useful for best future for the sustainability of the organization.

This article describes SOAR, an implementation of positive psychology, as a strategy in the identification stage of action research in organizational development. Action research is a systematic approach to investigate a current issue in organization and help the parties concerned to confront these problems effectively. Action research begins with understanding the problems or issues to be investigated in depth, then perform an investigation into the problem and its impact, and provide solutions to problems investigated (Stringer, 2007). Action research uses a scientific approach to studying directly the problem solving together with stakeholders related to this issue. The goal is to implement an action in order to be more effective while creating a new theory or knowledge. The results not only improve the effectiveness of performance or solve specific problems, but also to contribute to the development of science (Coghlan and Brannick, 2005).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Action research cycle consists of an initial step and the three main stages: planning, action and fact-finding (Coghlan and Brannick, 2005). The aim of initial step is to understand the context and defining the objectives of the activity. At this stage, identification of the importance of activities is carried out. Moreover, the planning stages include determination of the overall plan and decisions regarding the initial step. The next stage is action of carrying out the previous steps decided in advance. The third phase is a fact-finding which is form of evaluations about the results and then to analysis the findings that serve as the basis for improvement in the next step.

In the implementation process of action research, one of the important stages is identification. Some researchers, e.g Checkland and Scholes (1990), Midgley (2000), claim that identification phase is the most important step in the implementation of action research before decide appropriate solutions or actions, even before determining appearing problem or situation to resolve. Therefore, identification phase is a decisive phase in the process of determining plans, actions, and implementation in the next stage.

There are several methods or strategies for identification in action research. SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat) is a well-known strategy often implemented. It is an analytical tool for assessing an organization as well as internal and external environment. When an organization decides to use a SWOT analysis, it seeks to understand the nearby conditions, to classify its strengths and weaknesses and to determine the opportunities and threats faced by the organization (Stavros and Cole, 2013). SWOT begins with an analysis of an organization's internal factors, strengths and weaknesses, after that followed by external factors, opportunities and threats. This analysis emphasizes the strengths within the organization and tends to glorify the past and not necessarily relevant to the present era. Using this perspective from the inside to the outside (inside-out), the organization has possibility to generate strategies erroneous and not in accordance with the situation and current conditions.

Wheelen and Hunger (2006) proposed TOWS (Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Strengths) as an alternative of SWOT that focuses on the strengths and opportunities that are owned by the organization in achieving success (i.e the quadrant SO). TOWS analysis starts on exploring external factors (threats and opportunities) followed by internal factors (weaknesses and strengths). This analysis is more inclined oriented changes that occur outside the organization. SWOT and TOWS consist of same four basic components but the remarkable different between these analysis lies in the process, TOWS analysis process is from outside to inside (outside-in) otherwise SWOT analysis is more inclined from the inside out (inside-out) (Kottler et al, 2008).

Beside SWOT and TOWS, more recent strategy with positive psychology approach is SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspiration, Results). It is a positive frame of mind used by organizations to produce strategic thinking, discuss the problems together and analyze the necessary action (Sprangel, Stavros, and Cole, 2011). The framework is a process of strategic thinking that focuses on an element S (strength) and O (opportunities) contained in the SWOT and TOWS approach. Basically, the framework SOAR using the paradigm of AI (Appreciative Inquiry) to develop and strengthen energy planning process that is poured into quadrants SO and further develop aspiration (A) of each stakeholder and determine the result (R) to be achieved (Mills, Fleck, and Kozikowski, 2013; Stavros and Cole, 2013).

SOAR focuses on the formulation and implementation of positive strategies and the aim is to determine the strength, creativity build on existing opportunities, encourages to share aspirations, and determine measurable results and beneficial. Additionally, SOAR takes into account the challenges and threats faced by the

organization, but transforming challenges and threats into opportunities, and creating a positive approach to the strategic plan (Stavros and Cole, 2013). The main characteristic of SOAR is the involvement of stakeholders in a discussion and strategic planning process. SOAR involve stakeholders in discussions to determine the strengths, opportunities, and aspirations to create shared value, vision, mission, goals, strategies, and results to be achieved. As strategic thinking and planning framework, SOAR is dynamic, modern, and using innovative approaches to generate strategic thinking, assessing the performance of individuals and groups, build strategies, and creating strategic plans (Stavros and Cole, 2013).

SOAR offers the flexibility to be applicable to any strategic planning and methods of change and as an analytical tool. SOAR helps individuals, groups and organizations to take advantage of strategic thinking and planning to produce something new and grow. SOAR has an approach in helping organizations to determine the power that, at the same time which can be utilized to implement the opportunities that can be developed. SOAR framework improve strategic planning and implementation process is by using positive guidance approach to determine the strengths, opportunities, aspirations and measurable results; provides an overview of the desired future; creating strategies, plans, systems, designs and innovative structure to build a sustainable culture; and inspire each stakeholder to voice their aspirations with the aim of producing high performance and optimal well as the implementation of the agreed strategy (Stavros and Cole, 2013).

Stavros and Hinrichs (2009) mention some comparisons between SWOT and SOAR. SWOT focuses on weaknesses and threats, SOAR focuses on strengths and opportunities, SWOT focuses on competition and become better. SOAR focuses on the ability and be the best extent possible, SWOT upgrades, SOAR increases in innovation and values. SWOT is from top to bottom (top down), SOAR is about involvement of stakeholders. SWOT analysis focuses on planning, SOAR focuses on planning and implementation. SWOT is about energy drain, SOAR produces energy. SWOT concern lies in gap, SOAR concern lies in results.

CASE STUDY

Case study is a research approach to study one or several phenomena that occur in depth. The case study focuses on one or several occasions, phenomena, or the unit of analysis, but it is not limited to just one observation only (Given, 2008). The strength of this qualitative case study lies in its ability to investigate cases in depth. Case study involves in-depth exploration, intense and sharp. Various methods can be used in a case study, e.g. semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and diaries. Data for case studies can also be derived from personal documents or photographs and official documents (Willig, 2008).

Data collection in this research is conducted through interviews and document study about psychological service office X in Indonesia. The number of respondents is six, including the owner of psychological services office, four owners of psychological services office in Indonesia, the board of Indonesian Psychology Association. The sixth respondents explained their experiences, and then the data obtained were analyzed using coding techniques. In this study, several key questions are needs analysis of psychological services office at this time, trends on psychological services today, management of psychological services, types of products and services that are either provided or absent, existing constraints faced by psychological services office, and resources needed.

RESULT

SOAR strategy is implemented for the psychological services office development during the identification stage of action research in order not only to meet consumer needs but also to synergize all parties involved for growth and development in the future. At the identification stage, SOAR serves as a method of investigation and analysis to find factors needed towards the looked-for organization, also as the basis in determining and implementing actions.

The implementations of SOAR at the stage of identification of action research are presented in the following table:

TABEL 1
THE IMPLEMENTATIONS OF SOAR

Strengths	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Competences and experiences in providing psychological services for examples action research, individual, group, and organizational assessments including assessment center, human resource management, human resource information system (ERP-HCM), personal and organizational development techniques. 2. Networking with psychologists, professionals from various disciplines, other psychological services offices, both business and government organizations. 3. A range of psychological services that can be provided to clients such as recruitment and selection, promotion, potential review, placement, performance appraisal, job analysis, quality of work life improvement program, training and development, counseling at work place, organizational development, talent management. 4. "The MODEL for organization" as joint developed service for organization development program. 5. Legal basis and the legal profession, such as a license to practice, institute legal entities.
Opportunity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clients' needs to have high quality services. 2. Awareness and knowledge of the community towards psychological services are increasing. 3. The existence of other psychological services, either in the same or different regions, as partners. 4. Possibilities for development of psychological services and products provided to clients or customers. 5. The professional organization, Indonesian Psychology Association, that assist and control psychologists in managing their psychological services offices. 6. Various media for promotion and marketing strategies, especially social media trend in Indonesia.
Aspiration	<p>Mutual cooperation among the psychological services office with various parties, such as community, fellow professions, other professions, other psychological services offices, education, and government. Some notions of the partnerships are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To provide collaborative psychological services with other parties, such as professional organizations, other professionals, both business and government organizations. 2. To develop innovative and novelty psychological products, for instance measurement tool, training program, counselling technique. 3. To conduct research about psychological trends, assessment and intervention at individual, group, organization and communal level.
Result	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excellent psychological services with zero complaint. 2. Increasing number of clients and costumers, 10 percents pro year. 3. Profit in the end of year increases with 15 percent pro year. 4. Business process is appropriately controlled and based on the psychologist ethic code as well as business ethics.

After this identification process, the next step is to determine the strategic plans. Based on these explanations, it is clear that the application of SOAR at identification stage has a significant role in the implementation of organizational development program.

DISCUSSION

SOAR is a positive frame of mind used by organizations to produce strategic thinking, discuss the problems together and analyze the necessary action (Sprangel, Stavros & Cole, 2011). It serves to guide the planning and strategic thinking by harnessing the power, opportunities and gather aspirations (Stavros et al., 2003, 2007). SOAR framework is able to optimize the values of the organization to balance the needs of various stakeholders, including customers, new customers, employees, suppliers, business partners, communities and shareholders (Stavros & Saint, 2009). SOAR concept as a current organizational development method has changed the approach and previous philosophy of creating high-performing organizations (Rothwell et al., 2010). By utilizing the method SOAR, the psychological services office has capacity to produce a strategic plan to build their future through cooperation, mutual understanding and shared commitment to implement the action research method in the organization. As an integrated systems approach, SOAR connects the organization's internal strengths and external opportunities with the vision and mission of the organization.

According to Stavros and Cole (2013), implementation of SOAR consists of the constructionist principle, simultaneity principle, poetic principle, anticipative principle, and positive principle. Firstly, the constructionist principle explains that knowledge regarding an organization and sustainability interconnected between each other. The principle refers to an acceptance and understanding of the social constructionist position toward social knowledge and reality. From the case study, beliefs and perceptions of the truth about the psychological services office, and the capability of organization members to reflect on how the beliefs were created, influence personal behaviour and the way transformation is approached in that system. The first task of the psychological services office change process is inquiry, i.e., understanding and making sense of what is learned and said about the system. SOAR surrounds the development of strategy around a strategic inquiry with a positive intent. It means that the upcoming condition of the organization is planned around its strengths and potential, for example, have a partnership and networking among professional psychology, psychology bureau, and of multi-disciplinary.

Secondly, the simultaneity principle appears in harmony with the constructionist principle in an understanding that inquiry is change. This principle means that the earliest issue we enquire was fateful in that the psychological services office would turn its power in the track of that first question, if negative or positive. As a result, the seeds of change were embedded in the questions. For example, at the stage of aspiration, it is

identified that the desired changes would be managed through synergy between the psychological services office with various parties, such as community, fellow profession, other professions, other psychological services office, education, and government. This principle recognized that the inquiry and change were not split moments but were simultaneous. As a result, the inquiry in reality turned into an intervention with the intention that the questions we asked set the phase for detection; what it is discovered created the stories that lead to dialogues concerning how the psychological services office would build its future.

Thirdly, the poetic principle attracts individuals to identify that the meaning and energy created in conversations depend upon the point of focus of the conversation. This principle recognizes that stories (like good poetry) are able to be told and interpreted about each component of an organization's reality. These stories symbolize the organization's past, present, and future as everlasting sources of learning and interpretation, just as an excellent poem is open to continuous interpretations. This offers a chance for discussion to increase values and promote an organization's spirit. For example, when the owner of the psychological services office and their members engaged in conversations that concentrated on events of success or what sustainability means to the organization's prospect, the organizational values concerned with success and sustainability are important.

Fourthly, the anticipatory principle agrees that human beings logically predict upcoming events, and that this has an influence on organizations and individuals who manage and preserve them. Anticipatory images assist to illuminate that existing actions and decisions are based on what we consider, study, or visualize may take place in the future. Consequently, when the psychological services office acts from a hope, it moves towards what it anticipates. SOAR leads to an inquiry into the aspirations of the psychological services office's stakeholders to question what the psychological services office is and what it should be. This occurred during reflection of the strengths and opportunities identified to anticipate where the psychological services office should go in the future and what strategic initiatives would support aspirations. It can be seen from the stage Results which resulted in an agreement to run the bureau psychological services office appropriately and based on the professional code of ethics and business ethics.

Moreover, Mills, Fleck, and Kozikowski (2013) mention that positive psychology itself has construct, implications, and applications, especially in the workplace, such as resilience, appreciate inquiry, empowerment, gratitude, psychological capital, employee involvement, perceived organizational support, a positive working relationship, and positive leadership. Resilience is not just limited to being able to bounce back from adversity, but at the same time fix the past by using the positive power of contemplation back is to understand, realize and internalize the lessons learned (Luthans et al, 2010). Also, resilience linked to a variety of effects to the success of organizations, such as effective leadership (Harland et al, 2005), the success of coping with stress (Zunz, 1998). In the context of the development of the psychological services office, strategies for increasing resilience at the level of individuals, groups, and organizations, carried out by increasing the competence and efficacy of employees to enhance access while effectively utilizing all available resources, reinforce learning orientation aimed at continuous training and flexible growth, and restructuring experience of the employees so that employees are able to make their own decisions that led to the success of the employee.

Furthermore, Spreitzer (1995) mentions that empowerment is a multidimensional construct that consists of the ability to manage the work, the involvement of the appropriate roles, the meaning of the work, competence, and impacts. According to Feldman and Khademian (2003), the essence of empowerment as an key element of change management and also an important thing to penetrate a rigid bureaucracy that could interfere with the organization to innovate and change. Seibert, Wang, and Courtright (2011) describe that empowerment provides a range of benefits both for individuals and organizations, such as increased commitment, job satisfaction, performance, and have a negative relationship to job burnout and a desire to resign. Through the implementation of the psychological services office, empowerment can be enhanced through sharing and transparency of information, providing autonomy to describe the boundaries of effective and minimizes the traditional organizational hierarchies by improving the utilization of group functions.

This study describes the application of positive psychology in the identification stage of action research process. There are some notes about the research process. First, the research was carried out at the stage of identification and needs to be developed to the next stage. Second, the organization is still relatively small scale, it is necessary to study the large-scale organizations, such as multi-national, and also for government agencies. Third, the factors moderator, for example organizational culture, need to be tracked so that it can give a more complete description.

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