



Application of Cognitive Dissonance in Persuasive Communication of Leaders to Education Staff at SMK Negeri 1 Belida Darat

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the application of cognitive dissonance in persuasive communication of leaders in education staff at SMK Negeri 1 Belida Darat. This research is motivated by the difference between the personal beliefs of education personnel and the policies or directions implemented by school leaders, thus causing psychological discomfort that encourages adjustments in attitudes and behaviors. In these conditions, persuasive communication by leaders is an important factor in helping education personnel accept policies and adjust to organizational demands. This study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. The informants in this study consisted of school principals, teachers, and education staff at SMK Negeri 1 Belida Darat. Data is analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results of the study show that the application of cognitive dissonance in persuasive communication of leaders can be seen through four indicators, namely the desire for consistency, psychological inconsistency, dissonance driving change, and efforts to achieve consistency. When there is a discrepancy between personal beliefs and school policies, education personnel experience psychological discomfort in the form of doubt, confusion, and decreased morale. However, through persuasive communication that is carried out openly, clearly, and gradually, education personnel are able to adjust and accept the policies implemented. Thus, persuasive communication by leaders plays an important role in reducing cognitive dissonance and encouraging changes in attitudes and consistency in the work of education personnel in the school environment.

INTRODUCTION

Cognitive dissonance is a condition when a person feels uncomfortable because their beliefs are not in line with the actions taken (Tjandra, 2024). This term consists of two words, namely dissonance which describes mental conflict, and cognitive which refers to the thought process. Humans tend to seek harmony in their minds, so when faced with rules or instructions that are contrary to the habits that have been carried out, pressure or discomfort arises (Indah et al, 2023). This condition encourages a person to readjust their attitude or behavior in order to achieve balance. In the context of schools, dissonance can affect how education personnel receive messages, understand changes, and implement leadership policies. If left unmanaged, this tension can disrupt the communication process and decrease work effectiveness (Jatmika, 2024).

In this dynamic, SMK Negeri 1 Belida Darat still presents an interesting situation to be researched. The school recorded various achievements both academic and non-academic. In addition to these achievements, the quality of teachers is also relatively strong. Around 90% of teachers already have educator certification, while productive teachers have undergone upskilling and reskilling training in Medan to improve their competence in their areas of expertise. In this school there are also driving teachers, several teachers have participated in deep learning training, coding training, and other learning innovation training. There are also teachers who are selected as creators of educational content at the South Sumatra level and teachers who are pioneers in the preparation of the South Sumatra local content curriculum. The results of academic supervision showed that most teachers were in the "Good" category, and teacher performance assessment (PKG) was dominated by the "Good" and "Very

Good" categories. This condition shows that the quality of educators in this school is quite maintained and runs consistently.

There is data on teacher achievement at SMK Negeri 1 Belida Darat which is actually quite prominent and is one of the main strengths of this school. Some teachers have even shown professional abilities that are far above average. One of them is Ayu Oktari, S.Pd., Gr, teacher. Physics who actively participate in various self-development programs. He was recorded as a Driving Teacher, participated in in-depth learning training, became a pioneer teacher of the South Sumatra local content curriculum, and was trusted as a South Sumatra content creator teacher. His work makes learning in schools more lively and encourages other teachers to innovate.

In addition, there are also Jakpariyanto, S.Pd. and Taufik Asmadiantara, S.Pd., two productive teachers in the field of Motorcycle Engineering and Business (TBSM). They are known to actively guide students in workshop practice, develop engineering competencies, and regularly take students to training and vocational activities. The role of the two helped strengthen the identity of SMK Negeri 1 Belida Darat as a vocational school that is able to produce job-ready graduates. This collection of achievements shows that the professional environment at SMK Negeri 1 Belida Darat is actually very potential and has quite strong human resources. No wonder this school is growing faster than other schools in the Belida Darat area. But at the same time, this high standard of professionalism also makes the demands of adapting to new policies feel heavier for teachers, so the potential for cognitive dissonance to arise also increases.

Based on the data of the recap of teacher performance assessment (PKG) with these achievements, it can be understood that the problems that arise are not caused by low teacher competence, but are triggered by the way instruction and policies are communicated. This means that the phenomenon in this school is a communication problem, not a problem of the quality of human resources. However, high performance does not necessarily eliminate the potential for dissonance, because tension arises from the dynamics of communication in policy delivery (Molina, 2024).

There is a schedule and minutes based on July 2025 The school has actually provided a regular discussion forum (fordis) as a room for clarification. There is an increase in teachers' understanding of administrative changes. However, some education personnel still need additional explanations in some agendas. This shows that even though discussion forums are available, dissonance still arises when the explanation of the leader's policy is not yet fully understood (Putri et al., 2024).

The core problem was evident at the July meeting when the principal presented a new policy on prohibiting the payment of additional duties salaries for teachers. The principal emphasized that according to the latest rules, additional duties are no longer paid and must be considered as work done sincerely. This policy immediately triggered an inner conflict among teachers, because the task took time and energy and was always compensated. The gap between the expectation that "additional duties should be paid for requiring more effort" and the new reality of "additional duties are no longer paid" creates a strong dissonance.

Therefore, persuasive communication from the leadership is very important so that policies can be accepted and implemented without causing psychological pressure. Persuasive communication is basically the process of influencing a person's perspective or attitude through the delivery of a clear, convincing message, while respecting the recipient's freedom to judge the information (Wibowo et al., 2024). In a school context, persuasive communication is not just about delivering instructions, but also building trust and ensuring teachers understand the reasons behind any changes (Zamzami, 2023). Leaders need to be able to explain the benefits of the new policy concretely, convey their impact on teachers' work, and provide space for teachers to ask questions or express their concerns.

Based on empirical phenomena, good quality of human resources, and emerging psychological dynamics, research on "The Application of Cognitive Dissonance in Persuasive Communication of Leaders in Education Personnel of SMK Negeri 1 Belida Darat" is important to be carried out. This research is expected to be able to describe how dissonance arises, how leaders manage it, and how persuasive communication can help education personnel understand and accept new instructions without feeling pressured.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The type of research used is qualitative research, which is an approach that aims to understand phenomena in depth through observation of behaviors, experiences, and meanings that are directly felt by the research subject (May, 2024). Qualitative research is not oriented towards numbers or statistics, but rather emphasizes understanding of the process, context, and way individuals interpret an event. This approach was used to explore the dynamics of persuasive communication of school principals and the emergence of cognitive dissonance in education staff at SMK Negeri 1 Belida Darat. This approach was chosen because it is able to describe the process, meaning, and subjective experience of teachers when receiving instruction that is not always in line with their work patterns or beliefs. Teachers' cognitive and emotional responses to leadership instruction are not only influenced by the content of the message, but also by their interpretive process of leadership style and the context of communication that occurs (College, 2021). The dynamics of cognitive dissonance cannot be understood through numbers alone, but must be explored through the narrative of individual experiences, especially when one faces psychological distress due to mismatches between beliefs and actions (Fitriyani, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The application of cognitive dissonance in persuasive communication of leaders in education at SMK Negeri 1 Belida Darat

Desire for Coexistence (Beliefs, Attitudes, Behavior)

Overall, the results of interviews with all informants show similarities and differences in responding to organizational policies related to the desire for consistency. The similarity is that individuals still try to adjust and carry out policies as a form of responsibility even though they are not always in accordance with personal beliefs. While the difference lies in the basis of considerations, such as the suitability of personal values, compliance with rules, adjustments to the system, and the imbalance between workload and compensation. This shows that cognitive dissonance arises from a variety of factors, so individuals make adjustments to remain able to carry out their roles effectively in the organization.

Psychological Inconsistency

Overall, the results of the study show that psychological inconsistencies arise due to differences of views and disagreements with policies, which cause discomfort such as confusion, doubt, and decreased morale at the beginning. However, this condition is temporary because individuals try to adjust, and are supported by persuasive and participatory communication by the principal, thus facilitating the acceptance of policies and achieving a balance in carrying out their roles.

Dissonance Drives Change

Overall, the results of interviews with all informants show that cognitive dissonance not only causes discomfort, but also plays a role as a driver for changes in individual attitudes and behaviors. This is shown through a persuasive, open, and participatory communication process from the leadership, as well as the awareness of individuals to adjust gradually. Thus, cognitive dissonance in the context of an organization is not purely negative, but can be a mechanism that encourages individuals to achieve a balance between thinking and acting in carrying out their roles.

Efforts to achieve consistency

Overall, the interview results show that efforts to achieve consistency in the organization do not happen instantaneously, but rather through a gradual process that involves understanding, communicating, and adjusting the individual. The differences of opinion that arise do not directly cause rejection, but are addressed by efforts to understand through explanations and open discussions. Persuasive, participatory, and non-repressive communication is an important factor in helping individuals realign their thoughts, attitudes, and actions. Thus, cognitive dissonance that initially causes discomfort can actually encourage individuals to achieve consistency and carry out their role more optimally in the organization.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on the application of cognitive dissonance in persuasive communication of leaders in education staff at SMK Negeri 1 Belida Darat, it can be concluded that persuasive communication carried out by leaders plays an important role in helping education staff face the incompatibility between personal beliefs and organizational policies. Through open, clear, and gradual communication, education personnel are able to reduce psychological discomfort, adjust to policies, and achieve harmony in carrying out their duties. The application of cognitive dissonance in persuasive communication can be seen through the following indicators:

At the level of desire for consistency

Education personnel have a desire to maintain harmony between beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in carrying out their duties. When there is a mismatch between personal beliefs and school policies, cognitive dissonance arises that encourages individuals to conform. In this case, persuasive communication by the leadership helps teachers and staff understand the policy so that harmony is created in carrying out their roles in the school.

At the stage of Psychological Inconsistency

Differences in views or policies that are not in accordance with individual thinking cause psychological inconsistencies in the form of confusion, doubt, and discomfort. However, these conditions can be overcome through open and participatory persuasive communication, so that teachers and staff can more easily understand policies and adjust gradually.

At the stage of dissonance drives change

The cognitive dissonance experienced by teachers and staff not only causes discomfort, but also encourages changes in attitudes and behaviors. Through persuasive communication that is carried out clearly, openly, and gradually, individuals are encouraged to understand policies and make self-adjustments, so that there are positive changes in the implementation of tasks.

Finally, at the stage of trying to achieve consistency

Efforts to achieve consistency are carried out through a process of self-adjustment after the individual experiences cognitive dissonance. Teachers and staff seek to realign thoughts, attitudes, and actions through understanding, communication, and open discussion. In this process, persuasive communication from leaders is an important factor in helping to create consistency and effectiveness of work in the school environment.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of the research on the application of cognitive dissonance in persuasive communication of leaders to education staff at SMK Negeri 1 Belida Darat, the researcher gave the following suggestions:

At the stage of the desire for consistency, for school principals, teachers and staff, schools, and researchers. The principal is expected to continue to provide good direction and explanations so that teachers and staff can more easily understand the policies implemented, so that harmony between beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors at work can be maintained. Teachers and staff are also expected to remain open in accepting school policies and trying to adjust to the applicable rules. In addition, schools need to maintain a supportive work environment so that the adjustment process can run well. For the next researcher, it is hoped that they can develop research related to factors that affect the consistency of education personnel in the school environment.

At the stage of psychological inconsistency, for principals, teachers and staff, schools, and researchers. School principals are expected to pay more attention to the psychological condition of teachers and staff when conveying policies, especially when differences of opinion arise, so that discomfort can be minimized. Teachers and staff are also expected to be able to express their opinions well when experiencing doubts or confusion, so that problems that arise can be resolved through open communication. Schools need to create a comfortable communication space so that work relationships remain harmonious. For the next researcher, it is hoped that they can further research the impact of psychological inconsistencies on the performance of education personnel.

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