



Overcoming Obstacles to Progress: Exploring the Causes and Effective Solutions to Employee Resistance to Organizational Change

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Abstract

The study aimed to describe employees' experiences with and expectations of management during organizational change. The paper applied a descriptive qualitative research design with a purposive quota sampling technique. Thirteen Saudi employees from different food and beverage firms were recruited and interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol. Thematic analysis of English transcripts resulted in the development of three themes that highlight what aspects are important to consider when implementing organizational changes such as value-added taxation programs, from an employee perspective: (a) open communication, (b) training, and (c) timeframe. This research contributes to the literature on the resistance to change in the context of an emerging economy such as Saudi Arabia. Moreover, this paper sheds light on the main causes of and solutions to resistance to organizational change executed by firms and employees. Specifically, it provides practical insights into how open dialogue and training can significantly reduce employee resistance and facilitate smoother transitions during organizational change.

Keywords: Employee Resistance, Organizational Change, Change management, Employee Support.

Introduction

Organizational Change (OC) constitutes the strategic process through which a company or business undertakes significant alterations in its fundamental components, encompassing its culture, foundational technologies, infrastructure, and internal operational methods (Jacobs et al., 2013). In a dynamic pursuit of viability and expansion, virtually every organization embarks on transitional journeys to adapt and evolve (Ścibiorek, 2022). This transformative journey reshapes vital dimensions of an enterprise, ensuring its sustained relevance and propelling it from one operational state to another (Vos & Rupert, 2018). Despite the intrinsic significance of organizational change and the support extended by governmental initiatives, persistent resistance to these transformations persists among individuals (Aldossari et al., 2023; Elgohary & Abdelazyz, 2020).

The Saudi Arabian Government exhibits an unwavering commitment to fostering the private sector by orchestrating an array of internal business processes, regulations, and initiatives to invigorate investment and enhance the legal framework, financial transparency, and technological integration. This fervent enthusiasm aligns with a broader aspiration for amplified engagement in global market dynamics (Rahman & Alsharqi, 2019). However, these concerted endeavors, such as the introduction of the Value Added Tax (VAT) system, sometimes engender unforeseen challenges that necessitate innovative solutions or encounter delays in realizing projected benefits, as initially envisaged during their inception (Alkhodre et al., 2019; Sarwar et al., 2021). The implementation of VAT in Saudi Arabia, initiated at the outset of 2018, encompassed all goods and services except those explicitly exempted, underpinning a 15% taxation rate for enterprises exceeding the stipulated annual registration threshold (SAR 375,000) and mandating the

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submission of periodic VAT returns to the General Authority of Zakat and Tax (Sarwar et al., 2021). Consequently, entities bound by the VAT framework are compelled to undertake profound shifts in their organizational infrastructure and technological apparatus, signifying a substantial organizational change.

Elgohary and Abdelazyz (2020) underscore how developing economies have gained a profound appreciation for the transformative potential of technological systems across cultural, social, economic, and political domains. Nevertheless, the implementation and advancement of these technologies face multifaceted obstacles, among which stands the formidable barrier of user resistance to change (RtC). Despite previous research on this topic, a consensus on the main reasons for RtC and strategies to alleviate it – especially in the context of developing economies – remains low (Aldossari et al., 2023; Darmawan & Azizah, 2020; Elgohary & Abdelazyz, 2020). Yet, such insights could empower managers to anticipate and comprehend employees' reactions to proposed changes, ultimately bolstering the prospects of successful implementation (Vos & Rupert, 2018).

A qualitative study that attempts to capture all the relevant aspects seems to be currently missing. By conducting this qualitative study, the authors hope to provide a useful overview of the most pertinent factors that impact the emergence of labor disputes. The convergence of these factors underscores the compelling rationale for further exploration and understanding of RtC, unveiling the potential to refine change strategies and foster more seamless organizational transformations. As such, the purpose of this study was to describe employees' experiences with and expectations of management during organizational change.

The paper is organized as follows. First, a short literature review is provided to better understand available knowledge on the topic. Next, an overview of the applied methodology is captured, after which the results of this qualitative study are highlighted. The paper ends with a discussion of the results in light of existing literature, the study implications and the conclusion of the study.

Literature Review

Transitioning between roles or domains can evoke insecurity, as people often cling to the familiar in the midst of novel challenges (Amarantou et al., 2018; Aninkan, 2018). Uncertainty about new responsibilities, colleagues, and work settings can fuel anxiety, prompting initial resistance to change (Pereira et al., 2019). This resistance stems from the fear that change could disturb established routines and the comfort of a known work environment (Aninkan, 2018). Through a comprehensive literature review, the researcher witnessed several causes that may lead to resisting organizational change (see Table 1).

To counteract such resistance, some scholars have suggested the adoption of certain strategies (see table 2). Effective communication is a first indispensable cornerstone during organizational

Table 1: Overview of Causes for Resistance to Change as Identified in the Literature

Citation	Causes of resistance to change
(Bateh et al., 2013)	- Poor management and supervision. - Emotional response.
(Yilmaz and Kılıçoğlu, 2013)	- Poor communication. - Incompetence and fear of unemployment.
(Bringselius, 2014)	- Unemployment - Higher demands -fear of unknown
(Kulkarni, 2016)	- Incompetence and job insecurity.
(Basyah et al., 2017)	- Organization politics and peer pressure.
(Sundus, et al., 2017)	- Lack of trust. - Empathy
(Rafferty and Jimmieson, 2017)	- Organizational politics. - Lack of adequate support.
(Amarantou et al., 2018)	- Fear of the unknown. - Poor communication by the administration.
(Aninkan, 2018)	- Lack of trust in the new administration.
(Hultman, 2018).	- Lack of trust in the new administration
(Jain et al., 2018).	- Inadequate employee participation in decision-making.
(Vos and Rupert, 2018)	- Poor leadership and supervision. - Lack of support.
(Pereira et al., 2019).	- Fear of the unknown. - Poor leadership.
(Darmawan and Azizah, 2020)	- Poor employee education and awareness strategies.
(Kinicki and Williams, 2020)	- Peer pressure. - Separation of employees who are used to each other.
(Aldossari et al., 2021)	- Lack of trust in top management. - Fear of the unknown.
(Ścibiorek, 2022).	- Lack of sufficient education and awareness.

transitions (Pereira et al., 2019; Yılmaz & Kılıçoğlu, 2013). A vital facet of adapting to change lies in cultivating a lucid comprehension of the change's essence and rationale (Darmawan & Azizah, 2020; El-Taliawi, 2018). Defining its objectives and delineating its implications on roles and responsibilities can enhance this understanding (Hon et al., 2014; Malhotra et al., 2021), enabling employees to grasp the change's significance and their anticipated organizational impact (Appelbaum et al., 2015). When this understanding is missing, employees may be less willing to adapt to the change (Amarantou et al., 2018; Pereira et al., 2019).

According to Darmawan and Azizah (2020), effective communication should transcend mere awareness dissemination. It indeed necessitates a culture of openness, transparency, and receptiveness, where employees' concerns are heard and addressed (Goswami, 2022). For example, Hultman (2018) and Goswami (2022) found that the introduction of automation could make employees concerned about their job safety, and organizations should be prepared to address these concerns if they want to receive staff support for the upcoming organizational changes. This fosters a collaborative environment that counteracts resistance to change (Goswami, 2022). The practice of empathetic listening and guidance provision during challenging situations further contributes to building such a nurturing workplace (Krügel & Traub, 2018).

Furthermore, it holds significant importance to actively solicit the perspectives of employees during this process, transforming it into an ongoing dialogue rather than a mere directive (Aldossari et al., 2023). Acknowledging the likelihood of differing viewpoints among individuals, fostering meaningful dialogues becomes pivotal to achieving alignment (Aldossari et al., 2023; Schulz-Knappe et al., 2019). This approach not only conveys a sense of consideration toward employees but also ignites their motivation and engagement in the subject matter (Jain et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2017). However, cultivating such a dynamic requires an environment characterized by psychological safety, where employees feel empowered to openly engage with management and freely express their perspectives on organizational changes (Darmawan & Azizah, 2020).

Even when staff is informed about the change and their concerns have been answered, the practical transition to a new process can still be complicated (Amarantou et al., 2018). Management should therefore provide resources to help the transition because it is essential to get clear directions on moving forward. It's essential to acknowledge that educating employees about change is a time-intensive endeavor, demanding a gradual, step-by-step approach to effectively convey the significance of organizational transformation (Jain et al., 2018).

While the aforementioned strategies hold promise, Bateh et al. (2013) caution that employees are prone to resisting planned changes if they can discern evident

Table 2: Summary of Solutions for Overcoming Resistance to Organizational Change in Existing Literature

citation	Proposed initiative
(Boohene and Williams, 2012)	Lowering resistance by encouraging employee input into decision-making processes.
(Yılmaz and Kılıçoğlu, 2013)	Proper communication curbs employee RtC
(Bateh et al., 2013)	Managers might be able to lessen conflict and boost cooperation if they had a better grasp of the phenomenon of resistance.
(Hon, 2014).	Critical thinking and techniques to be applied in order to counter resistance.
(Appelbaum, 2015)	Leadership is an input that has indirect effects on organizational change.
(Kulkarni, 2016)	It's possible that workers may justify their activities on ideological grounds rather than as acts of resistance.
(Fernandez, 2017)	Managers should understand the importance of change to manage it.
(Basyal et al., 2017)	Maintain constant and early contact. As soon as feasible, notify staff about upcoming changes to the status quo.
(Vos, 2018)	Take on new challenges and learn new skills.
(Stouten, 2018)	Stay positive and keep an open mind.
(Aninkan, 2018).	Trust in the change process.
(Jain et al., 2018)	Increase workers' input into decision-making regarding the process as a whole to lessen pushback to transformation.
(Karaxha, 2019)	Negotiation can be utilized and offering employees support curbs employee resistance.
(Schulz-Knappe, 2019)	Communicate with the team and colleagues
(Darmawan and Azizah, 2020)	Communication of changes to employees in advance and motivating them curbs RtC.
(Ścibiorek, 2022).	Simplifying the change process.
(Ścibiorek, 2022)	Career change

drawbacks in the implementation scheme. Hence, a crucial consideration lies in devising an implementation plan that accommodates employees' adjustment time. Rushed implementations, indeed, risk compromising skill development, leading to employee struggles within their roles and, consequently, heightened resistance to change (Goswami, 2022; Yılmaz & Kılıçoğlu, 2013).

Methodology

The paper applied a descriptive qualitative research design because the aim of the study was to describe employees' experiences with and expectations of management during organizational change. Specifically, the paper looks at adaptation of new technologies and infrastructures regarding value-added taxation programs. A descriptive design was chosen because of its general and practical nature which borrows and merges components from other research designs such as phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography (Lambert & Lambert, 2012; Turale, 2020).

In total, 13 individuals were recruited by means of a purposive quota sampling technique. Participants were Saudi employees from different food and beverage firms where value-added taxation programs were recently implemented. A purposive quota sampling technique was chosen because addressing the research objectives required the recruitment of study participants with specific pre-determined characteristics (Berndt, 2020). Participant demographics are visualized in table 3.

Interviews were carried out face-to-face between January 2023 and March 2023. Following advice from Bearman (2019), a semi-structured interview protocol was formulated, with ad hoc follow-up questions incorporated as needed (Creswell & Poth, 2016). After each interview, significant concepts and recurring themes were documented by the researcher. The decision to conclude data collection was made after conducting 13 interviews, as theoretical saturation had been achieved, and further interviews were not anticipated to yield significant new insights.

Interviews were transcribed, and when necessary, translated into English, striving to retain the conversational essence of the Arabic language as proficiently as possible (Santos et al., 2015). The study employed a thematic analysis methodology, which is commonly employed in tandem with a qualitative descriptive design (Doyle et al., 2020). Rather than opting for an exclusive inductive or deductive approach, the researcher embraced a hybrid method amalgamating both techniques (Swain, 2018). Specifically, the researcher employed Braun and Clarke (2021) iterative six-step process, initially acquainting themselves with the data by thoroughly reviewing the transcripts. Subsequently, they employed both deductive and inductive coding on text segments, from which themes were derived, reviewed, and defined. These themes were then consolidated into a results section, detailed subsequently. Despite its portrayal as a linear, sequential procedure, the research analysis unfolded in an iterative and introspective manner.

Results

Data were analyzed thematically and resulted in the development of three themes which highlight what aspects are important to consider when implementing organizational changes such as value-added taxation programs, from an employee perspective. The themes are: (a) open communication, (b) training, and (c) timeframe. Confidentiality was ensured by assigning a unique participant number to each individual. Findings were supported using direct participant quotes, which underwent translation from Arabic to English and slight modifications to enhance clarity for English-speaking readers (Santos et al., 2015).

Table 3: Demographics Details of the Participants.

Participant Number	Job department	Years of Experience	Age
1	Sales	9	39
2	Sales	7	37
3	Sales	8	36
4	Procurement	6	33
5	Procurement	5	35
6	Procurement	4	32
7	Accounting	6	35
8	Accounting	4	34
9	Procurement	5	33
10	Procurement	8	37
11	Financial	10	41
12	Financial	7	37
13	Sales	15	46

Open Communication

Effective communication towards employees is a first crucial component in implementing organizational changes. To receive the buy-in and support from staff members, participants indeed explain that proper communication on the planned changes is required. This translates into a thorough outline of what the change entails, the reasoning behind it, its objectives, and the expected outcomes. When employees have a better understanding of these aspects, participants believe that they are more likely to see the value of the change and align their efforts accordingly.

The firm first took the time to explain the technology to the employees, its effectiveness, and why it was necessary for the company. [5]

The firm responded to the resistance in an effective way making clear the reasons to adoption of the new policy and its beneficial effects for the employees and employer in long term. [11]

In addition to upholding consistent communication with employees, participants emphasized that it is imperative to effectively distribute information regarding impending organizational changes across a spectrum of channels within the organization. Solely relying on a single channel is believed to entail a degree of risk, as certain channels might not be as universally utilized as others. For instance, though official emails serve as a pivotal avenue for communication, there exists the possibility of them being inadvertently overlooked. By incorporating diverse channels, participants believe that a broader outreach can be guaranteed.

The company used a variety of official and informal channels to get the word out to all of its workers about the upcoming shift. [6]

Furthermore, the utilization of multiple channels can substantially enhance the resonance of the messages. The repetition of change-related information through various channels indeed was said to cultivate a sense of familiarity among employees, enabling them to acclimate to and embrace the modifications more swiftly. In other words, this iterative exposure offers employees the opportunity to become more attuned to the changes, expediting their adaptation process.

Beyond the evident significance of consistent and clear communication on organizational changes, our findings strongly advocate for a more dynamic approach – one that transforms this communication into a genuine dialogue between employees and management. The sentiment among participants indeed underscores the necessity for employees to not merely be passive recipients of information, but rather be active receivers. This entails fostering an environment where employees have the opportunity to inquire about the change initiatives and express their concerns.

I faced the management with my concerns, and they were willing to hear my plea. [7]

Conversely, failing to address employees' questions and concerns, even when the change has been communicated promptly, can result in added confusion. This proves that, regardless of the timing, providing employees with a platform to voice their questions is of paramount importance in garnering their support.

Even though the department did communicate upcoming changes to us early on, that is all we got. We were never given any information on what we should do or who to contact if we would have any questions or face any issues, even after the implementation started." [12]

Thus, through effective communication, a platform for addressing these concerns openly and honestly can indeed be created. By acknowledging and empathizing with employees' worries, participants believe that leaders can alleviate anxieties and demonstrate a commitment to supporting them through the transition. Additionally, encouraging employees to ask questions and express concerns may make employees feel involved, which enhances their perception of being valued contributors to the organization's success. Such perceptions, according to participants, create trust which in turn fosters a positive attitude toward the changes.

The firm decided to engage every employee in the change process to create trust in the workforce. [6]

In alignment with the above, participants explain that when employees trust their leaders and the organization, they are more likely to buy into the proposed changes and actively engage in the process. Such trust is important, because change often meets resistance due to fear of the unknown or concerns about the impact on job security, roles, or work processes. Trust helps to mitigate such resistance by creating a positive environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their concerns, and believe that the organization has their best interests at heart.

When there is a high level of trust in management, there is less resistance to change in organizations. [2]

Contrariwise, when employees do not feel valued and there is a low level of trust, employees may be more inclined to resist change. This resistance stems from skepticism regarding the company's commitments associated with the proposed changes. Lack of trust may

A few of my coworkers fought against the new systems because they didn't believe the company would follow through on its claims. [6]

Training

Participants explain that organizational changes are frequently perceived as a source of uncertainty. The shift to new methods and processes can evoke a fear of the unknown, prompting worries about one's competence and adaptability in the face of change. The prospect of unfamiliar systems being introduced indeed often triggers apprehension, particularly due to concerns about potential implications for promotions and career trajectories.

It's a constant source of anxiety for me that this will reflect poorly on my performance evaluations, threaten my job security, and reduce my salary. [10]

Most participants believe that this specific apprehension stems from a perceived deficiency in skills and qualifications. Indeed, organizational changes frequently demand the acquisition of fresh knowledge and competencies, and a considerable number of employees exhibit resistance to these modifications out of a genuine fear of inadequate adaptation. The concern that they might be unable to effectively navigate these alterations and subsequently face the risk of job displacement intensifies the resistance observed among many.

I had the feeling that the adaption of new systems and technology might affect my financial situation. For example, if I did not acquire the needed skills, I would fail to get promotions or rewards by the end of the year, because I might not be able to reach the sales target. [13]

We were generally worried that this would have a negative impact on our evaluation system, job security, and potential earnings. ... Some of my coworkers were first hesitant to embrace the change because of their routine or fear of the system demanding qualifications or training that they do not have or were able to learn. [2]

As a result, participants elucidated that a prominent tendency among staff is to exhibit resistance toward impending changes. Employees are inclined to seek thorough training and comprehension of newly introduced systems, driven by a concern that errors could incur penalties. Thus, they prioritize gaining a comprehensive understanding of the new changes prior to their practical implementation in their daily routines.

I refused and requested that we should first be trained to understand it, to effectively use it for the profit and expansion of the firm, since these are new complicated systems and mistakes will lead to penalties. [5]

To successfully implement changes, participants felt that it is essential for organizations to acknowledge that such apprehensions are a natural response to organizational change. As suggested above, man-

agement can play a crucial role in alleviating these concerns by providing comprehensive training and demonstrating a commitment to supporting their workforce through these transformations.

The main reason for the resistance was that the software was new and advanced compared to our educational backgrounds. So, the firm's first and foremost step was to provide adequate training and knowledge to all employees. [8]

According to participants, the provision of such training not only serves as a knowledge infusion but also fosters a sense of security and competence among the workforce, effectively diminishing the hesitations associated with adapting to the unfamiliar technological landscape. Participants explained that the provision of learning opportunities indeed reflects a proactive effort to equip employees with the tools they need to excel in their roles, thereby bolstering their confidence and competence.

First, I resisted change because it was beyond the scope of my academic and administrative skills. It required an additional degree with sound knowledge of modern audit methods. [11]

Furthermore, participants strongly emphasize that providing training opportunities to employees conveys a compelling message as it gestures a tangible manifestation of their significance within the organization and a testament to the organization's sincere dedication to their employees' personal and professional advancement. Indeed, participants interpret the allocation of resources and concerted effort to foster employees' skills as a profound acknowledgment of their potential and an unwavering pledge to foster their growth. This virtuous cycle engenders a reciprocal relationship of trust and genuine appreciation between the organization and its workforce.

When you work with well reputed organization you feel valued as they provide regular training and skill development opportunities to their employees, preparing them for any new system developments. I feel every organization should adopt this approach. [4]

However, a crucial aspect to address is the effectiveness of the training program, which must encompass a comprehensive exploration of essential elements within a feasible timeframe. Interestingly, certain participants recounted less-than-satisfactory encounters, where they were presented with brief tutorial sessions rather than thorough training. These experiences left employees feeling ill-prepared, lacking the necessary proficiency to adeptly implement forthcoming changes. Therefore, relying solely on condensed training sessions would fall short of equipping employees with the profound skills required for navigating and seamlessly integrating the upcoming transformations.

Honestly, I found my company did not pay much effort into this regard. You got only like 2 hours of the tutorial. We did not engage in training workshops. [13]

In instances where the organization's training is insufficient, some employees may feel compelled to pursue self-education regarding the imminent changes. Drawing on their own experiences, participants explained that this often involves seeking out after-work training sessions, which can pose a significant financial and logistical challenge for employees.

Some of my friends take some courses that are costly which I could not afford. [13]

Having to independently seek training without organizational support often fosters increased resistance towards the company and should be actively circumvented. This practice can indeed evoke feelings of under-valuation and cultivate a sense of skepticism among employees. Therefore, participants strongly advocate that organizations steer clear of this approach and instead adopt a more judicious strategy, one that entails prioritizing substantial investment in comprehensive workforce training prior to enacting transformative changes

Timeframe

Although, as explored in the above themes, communication and training are two crucial components, participants explain that the efficacy of these strategies is intricately linked to the element of meticulous

timing. In other words, while effective communication and comprehensive training play pivotal roles, their impact is optimized when synchronized with a well-structured and acceptable timeline.

No change should be conveyed immediately - it needs time to change the routines of employees. [10]

Specifically, participants recommend a phased approach to implementing organizational changes. This approach entails introducing alterations in gradual stages, allowing employees the opportunity to acclimate themselves to the new systems and cultivate a sense of security in their adoption. Such a staged implementation not only promotes a smoother transition but also carries the profound implication of demonstrating the organization's genuine regard for its workforce. Indeed, breaking down the transformation into manageable phases enhances the likelihood of employees recognizing a concrete validation of their significance. This, in turn, cultivates a more profound sense of worth and alignment with the organization's goals.

Implementing the change in different phases is always productive for the company and helps employees feel more secure as they feel value in their organization. [3]

Pinpointing an exact timeframe can prove challenging, as participants indicate its variability based on staff and the nature of the change. Complex changes demanding comprehensive training, for instance, might necessitate more time compared to minor adjustments easily adaptable. Soliciting employee input may be a promising approach, as they are indeed best placed to advise on the time needed for adjustment to the new implementations.

Employee input is very crucial in managing change as they are the direct stakeholders of change. [10]

In alignment, participants indeed recommend that besides giving employees the opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns, organizations should seek constructive feedback from their employees and encourage them to contribute their own insights as to the change requirements and advised timeframe.

Implementing such changes in such a short period of time was very frustrating for the employees, so one thing we did is reported our grievances to the resource department about the new changes, and ask them to implement the new changes with gapes. [9]

Furthermore, and much to the advantage of management, by engaging employees as consultants and advisors, employers can harness the collective wisdom of their workforce, leading to more effective and well-rounded execution of these transformative endeavors. Thus, this dialogue enables leaders to gain insights into employee perspectives, make necessary adjustments to the change plan, and further enhance buy-in.

On the other hand, lack of employee consultation may be negatively received, and may be counterproductive and harmful to organizations. In the long run, lack of involvement may indeed harm the trustworthiness of management and may negatively impact support from employees.

In our organization policies are implemented without any consultation with the employees. We see a notification on noticeboard early in the morning directing us to adopt certain new policies and report the department immediately. [4]

Discussions and Conclusion

The findings of this study are overall in line with what has been found in earlier research, but add more detail and new insights in terms of knowledge on how management in developing economies can effectively implement organizational change. Overall, our findings highlight three key areas that organizations should take into account during restructuring: (a) open communication, (b) training, and (c) timeframe.

Having a good grasp of these elements is crucial and the authors hope that these insights can help organizations in revising their strategies.

First and foremost, we confirm the results from scholars such as Pereira et al. (2019), Yılmaz and Kılıçoğlu (2013), Darmawan and Azizah (2020), and El-Taliawi (2018) who found that effective communication towards employees is a first crucial component in implementing organizational changes. Our results indeed highlight that to receive the buy-in and support from staff members, a thorough outline of what the change entails, the reasoning behind it, its objectives, and the expected outcomes, is required. When employees have a better understanding of these aspects, it is believed that they are more likely to see the value of the change and align their efforts accordingly.

Adding novel findings to the existing body of literature, our research indicates that organizations should communicate important and significant changes through a spectrum of channels. Solely relying on a single channel was deemed risky, as certain channels might not be as universally utilized as others. More so, we find that the utilization of multiple channels can effectively cultivate a sense of familiarity among employees, enabling them to acclimate to and embrace the modifications more swiftly. In other words, this iterative exposure offers employees the opportunity to become more attuned to the changes which then expedites their adaptation process.

In line with findings from Darmawan and Azizah (2020), our findings highlight the significance of transforming organizational change communication into an interactive dialogue between employees and management, moving beyond traditional one-way communication. This research indeed stresses the need for employees to actively engage and not just passively receive information, which entails cultivating an environment where employees can seek clarification and voice concerns. Encouraging employee inquiries and expressions of concern fosters a sense of involvement and value, which in turn seems to build trust. Subsequently, trust was found to foster a positive outlook towards the changes, ultimately leading to a more receptive attitude among employees.

Building further on existing literature, we find that when employees trust their leaders and the organization, they are more likely to voice concerns and opinions and buy into the proposed changes and actively engage in the process. Contrariwise and in alignment with findings from Darmawan and Azizah (2020), our results suggest that when employees do not feel valued and there is a low level of trust, employees may be more inclined to resist change because they do not believe the company's promises linked to the change.

Aligning with Amarantou et al. (2018) and Aninkan (2018), our findings emphasize that organizational changes frequently trigger uncertainty and employee anxiety. Specifically, we find that the introduction of unfamiliar systems raises concerns about promotions and careers which leads to apprehension. The shift to new methods indeed induces fear of the unknown and makes employees question their competence and adaptability. Our results suggest that this apprehension persists until thorough training is provided, empowering employees to engage with change confidently. The provision of learning opportunities becomes therefore paramount, as also suggested by Jain et al. (2018), as proper training equips employees with the tools they need to excel in their roles, thereby bolstering their confidence and competence.

Adding new insights, we find that the provision of training may be interpreted by employees as tangible evidence that their management cares about their professional growth, which increases their motivation to support the change. The opposite is however also true, as our results imply that a lack of training can further stimulate resistance. Indeed, rather than forcing their staff to undertake self-education, organizations should invest in proper training for employees – preferably during work hours. This training should, however, comprehensively cover the relevant information and should be organized within a practical timeframe.

Lastly, although communication and training were highlighted as two crucial components, we find that the efficacy of these strategies is intricately linked to the element of meticulous timing. In other

words, while effective communication and comprehensive training play pivotal roles, their impact is optimized when synchronized with a well-structured and acceptable timeline. Confirming results from Goswami (2022) and Yılmaz and Kılıçoğlu (2013), we find that rushed implementations, indeed, risk compromising skill development, leading to employee struggles within their roles and, consequently, heightened resistance to change.

In light of the above, the study results emphasize the value of a phased approach that entails introducing alterations in gradual stages which allows employees the opportunity to acclimate themselves to the new systems and cultivate a sense of security in their adoption. To ensure a proper timeframe, organizations should consider requesting employee input. Indeed, besides giving employees the opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns, study results recommend that organizations should seek constructive feedback from their employees. This is much to the advantage of management, as our results indicate that by engaging employees as consultants and advisors, employers can harness the collective wisdom of their workforce, leading to more effective and well-rounded execution of these transformative endeavors. Thus, this dialogue enables leaders to gain insights into employee perspectives, make necessary adjustments to the change plan, and further enhance buy-in.

Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

This study's limitations include its focus on a specific sector (food and beverage) and a small sample size, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research should explore these themes across different sectors and cultural contexts to confirm the applicability of the findings. Longitudinal studies would help understand the long-term impacts of communication and training strategies on change adaptation. Further research could also examine the role of leadership styles in reducing resistance and the optimal timing for implementing organizational changes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our study highlights three aspects that organizations should consider when planning to implement organizational changes: (a) open communication, (b) training, and (c) timeframe. By putting into action these tactics, organizations have the ability to cultivate a strong and productive workforce that is ready for and in support of organizational change. The findings of this study could be expanded upon in subsequent research by investigating in more detail how management should communicate change, and what aspects during training are most important for employees. Such research can be carried out through workshops, for example.

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