

Managing Resistance to Change in Organizations: A Critical Review of Strategies and Best Practices

T. Dias* and P. Jayawickrama

*SLIIT Business School, Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology, Malabe, Sri Lanka,
thisuru.d@slit.lk

Abstract - With the advancement of new technologies, change has become a necessary survival strategy in several industries. To survive in this unpredictable business environment, it is necessary to have a deep understanding about change management. In spite of commonness of changes happening in organizations, a considerable number of change initiatives have failed. As the perspective about change is different from an individual to an individual, most of the time organizations come across resistance from the employees. This research article explores the causes, effective strategies, and methods to overcome the resistance to change within the organizations. Aiming to provide an insightful understanding of organizational change, change management theories, processes through the literature review. This research is an outcome of several journals that have been published. Around fifty journal articles have been gathered from various platforms such as ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, Harvard review. The result of the discussion discovers the fear of employees for the change and ways to navigate resistance effectively and implement successful change initiatives by providing practical recommendations for managing resistance, with aid of leaders, manager and change agents.

Keywords: Change, Change Agent, Employees, Organizational Change, Resistance, Strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced world, technological advancement is progressing at an unpredictable rate. In this environment it is necessary for organizations to make constant changes with new practices and technologies to maintain pace with new technological advancements, business markets and competitive pressures. Changes in an organization has been a timeless challenge, it is utterly important for organizations to adapt to new technologies, structures, and flexible culture. In most cases implementation of change aid to improve the performance of the organization, but the process of implementing the change is equally difficult. Due to this reason all the planned changes cannot be successful and be accepted by the employees. As a matter of fact, studies show the failure rate of the change management is up to 70% (Mosadeghrad & Ansarian, 2014). It clarifies that the attitude of the individuals towards the change plays a crucial part in the change management process. As individuals have their own perspective when it comes to change and once the opinion about change reside in the mind whether it's positive or negative, it is difficult to change that mindset (Lines, 2005).

The negative attitude towards change is called resistance. In management, resistance to change can be described as one of the main reason why implementation of change or the success of change is at a low rate (Mabin et al., 2001). Resistance from an individual arises with certain gaps of knowledge and attitudes, so it is essential to understand the real reasons for such resistance (Lawrence, 1969). When the reason for resistance is properly decoded, it can be used as an important factor to create effective and clear objectives and strategies for change management and can be used as a tool for successful change management implementation (Ford & Ford, 2009). Without a doubt

resistance to change is a main topic in change management considering the importance of change in an organization to achieve advantages of the transformation.

This research work aims to provide a deep analysis of organizational change, change management processes and theories, different factors influencing change resistance in organizational level, group level and individual level. This also discusses the strategies to overcome resistance with organization, responsibilities of managers, leaders and the role of change agents in managing resistance and how they play an important role in change management initiatives.

Research Questions

1. What are the primary factors contributing to resistance to change in organizations?
2. What strategies have organizations employed to manage and mitigate resistance to change?
3. What are the methods that the managers can use to reduce resistance?
4. What is the role of the change agent in change management and resistance?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizations experience a lot of pressure to adapt change because of the complexity of events and the rapidity at which technologies are advancing in the business environment. Organizations are expected to undertake change initiatives by a variety of causes and ongoing changes. It is evident that both external and internal environments of the organizations are the source of these pressures to change (Kılıçoğlu & Kılıçoğlu, 2013). External factors could include advancement in technology, pressure from the outside groups such as the government, or competitors. As in the present-day technologies keep evolving, so the first reason is technological changes. For that reason, organizations must adopt to technological changes that happens in industry. It can be big or small change, regardless the change size the work structure gets affected. Pressure from outside can be government policies, rate of inflation, change in customer's preferences in products. Individuals such as shareholders, management, or employees can be taken as the sources of internal change. Internal changes of management include organizational structure and processes. Sometimes, organizations must change their hierarchy structures as the old structure does not apply in current environment of the company and may have to change the processes to accomplish optimal effectiveness and efficiency in the organization. Other internal factor is employees, they bring the changes in organization by changing methods of working for the productivity and effectiveness of their work. The rise of globalization, new technologies, and cultural transformation are some of the factors that contribute to the face-paced environment in which organizations carry out their operations. As a result, organizations must adapt more frequently to address their surroundings. Regardless of the source, whenever there is a need for change, management faced with the question how to respond to it (Aninkan, 2018).

The literature's classification of change includes the concepts of reactive and proactive, planned and emerge approach. Change that is implemented in reaction to an external incident or to significant operational and management issues within the organisation is known as reactive change. Reactive change according to Bennis and Thomas (2002), is a modification made to organizational policies in response to an issue. Most changes are unplanned and made in reaction to a certain circumstance. Since management does not have time to thoroughly assess the situation and formulate a well-thought-out plan, they respond to the issue by making quick and regular modifications.

On the other hand, proactive change refers to the adjustments made when a business is not currently facing any significant issues, but manager foresee the need to change to improve the business's performance or to address any future possibilities to face issues (Thomas, n.d.).

In the journal article of Aninkan (2018), it mentioned that the planned approach to organizational change tries to explain the transformation process. Moreover, the planned approach highlights each stage that an organization must undergo to transition from an unsatisfactory state to a desired state. The emergent approach to change is less concerned with outlining precise, pre-planned processes for every project and initiative involving change and more focused on helping employees to feel comfortable for change.

Change is an essential process. Therefore, to expand into new areas and systems where they may discover find more advanced in their operational settings, change management is a crucial process in an organization (Bengat, n.d.). Change management can be referred as to plan, initiate, realize, control, and stabilize the change process by properly handling hurdles at both corporate and individual levels (Bertsch et al., 2012). According to Korir et al. (2012) and Onyema and Onuoha (2021) change management is defined as the effective management of a business change such that executive leaders, managers and frontline employers work in concert to successfully implement the needed process, technology or organizational change. Change management techniques are needed when an organization encounter with change in mission, operations, new technologies and new management to overcome resistance, build commitment and attitudes of the employees. To lead a successful change, several change theories were introduced.

Organizational change process models, beginning with Lewin's in the mid-twentieth century, are sequential in nature, consisting of steps, stages and phases. They are extremely valuable for planning and managing change (Vrcelj, 2023). Kurt Lewin, also known as father of change management, introduced the change process which include three stages in early 1940s. The first stage is 'unfreezing' which describe the present state and is about to acquire new changes or new behaviours. The next stage is 'change', where the actual change happens, and the person learn and adapt to the change. The last and final stage according to Lewin is 'refreeze', this is where new habits are adopted or embraced by the individuals or the group. Lewin believed that the effective change can be bought through group encounters (Burnes & Bargal, 2017).

Another model is 7 Stage Model of Change by Ronald Lippitt (1958). Lippitt's model which extends Lewin's three stage model of organizational change. This model focuses on the change agent rather than the change itself, as opposed to Lewin's model, which emphasises the analysis of lead for change (Vrcelj, 2023). According to Mitchell (2013), Lippitt's works are more detailed, and it requires a greater level of understanding of change theory.

The Beckhard and Harris (1987) change process model can help managers plan and implement organizational change by highlighting the stages of change process and contributing to a common way of thinking about the change process. However, adopting simply this approach to change may oversimplify the entire process. Because organizations are nonlinear and broad, cause and effect analysis are always complex. As a result, simplistic and linear thinking processes might lead to evaluation errors and unpleasant results when it comes to change outcomes (Ćudanov et al., 2019).

In the 1990s more change management theories/models were introduced. Kotter's eight steps model can be used at the strategic level of an organization to change

its vision and subsequently transform the organization. The eight phases are: increase urgency, build guiding team, develop the vision, communicate for buying, empower action, create short term wins, do not let up, make change stick (Okolie & Memeh, 2022). Kotter's model's greatest strength is in its first two phases: increase urgency and build guiding team. Many leaders simply rush into changes before determining or recognizing the true need for change inside the organization. They believe they can lead change by authority or another source of power, rather than with the support of employees, who are capable and motivated to understand and support the changes. On the other hand, Kotter presents a complete checklist of everything to think about during the transition process, allowing a smooth transition (Vrcelj, 2023).

Another model is Judson's five phase model which has following phases: analysis and planning of change, communicating change, accepting new behavioural patterns, transitioning from the status quo to the desired state, and consolidating and institutionalizing the new state (Cheung, 2010). With the aid of Judson's change model, the importance of planning within a structured process becomes simple to understand. It begins with recognizing the need for change and ends with the organization's ability to maintain the new systems. The argument of "no single approach can possibly account the enormous variability of all the factors present in each unique situation and organization" is presented by (Stouten et al., 2018). "The remaining change management processes and models of organizational change bring out similar processes with its own strengths and weaknesses. They are very useful as they present a detailed process step by step (Vrcelj, 2023).

Jeffrey Hiatt, a renowned entrepreneur and the founder of Prosci Learning Centre, introduced the ADKAR model of change management in 2006. Where all the other change management theories and processes focus on implementation of organisational change management, ADKAR change management focuses on individuals. ADKAR present five phases which will aid in to manage resistance of individuals, which are: awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement. Awareness refers to the need for change, desire to support and participate in the change, knowledge of how to change, ability to implement the change and reinforcement to sustain the change. To manage change successfully organizational change management processes and individual change management must be used together. However, the change management theories and models need to adapt depending on the change and organization when it comes to implementation of change (Stouten et al., 2018).

During the change implementation it is important to choose the most suitable change theory/model for the organization for a smooth change. Also to consider the psychological aspects of change. Leaders must consider the psychological impact of change at the individual, team, and group levels. This has a significant impact on individual's ability to adjust to altering conditions, structures, or physical relocations. Even positive changes, like starting a new job or relocating to a new location, may involve some loss or pain from the past. Responses to change can be linked to Kübler-Ross' five stages of mourning, which involves temporary loss of competences as individuals adjust to change. The periods of denial, anger, bargaining, and despair may be necessary before accepting the new circumstances and return to full competency (Kubler-Ross, 2024).

Regardless the change model and considering psychological aspect of change, resistance within the organization is hard to handle. When the topic of change is bought up, instinctively resistance is aligned with it. Even though change is implemented for desirable purposes, such as adapting to volatile environmental conditions and keeping

competitive, organization members frequently react adversely and resist change (Rosemond et al., 2012). However, there are some misconceptions about what resistance to change is, who resists it and why and how it should be controlled (Smollan, 2011). So, what is this resistance. According to Agoos (1997) resistance is “the pattern of organizational behaviour that decision makers in organizations employ to actively deny, reject, refuse to implement, repress or even dismantle change proposals and initiatives”. Different perspectives are mentioned in research articles, why and how resistance is a prime factor, affecting failure of change and the implementation of change management. Resistance is defined as an inherent trait characterized by negative attitudes towards change and a propensity to resist or even confront it (Oreg, 2003). Notably, resistance to change poses a significant challenge for organizational change initiatives, necessitating careful consideration by management. Employees can oppose change in three ways: passively, actively, and aggressively. When employees have negative feelings and attitudes about change, they quietly fight it. This could involve “agreeing verbally but not following through, feigning ignorance and withholding information” (Hultman, n.d.). When an employee actively resists change, he or she engages in more visible behaviours. Those behaviours depict in various forms of resistance exhibited by employees encompass boycotting, diminished engagement, strikes, as well as negative perceptions and attitudes (Coetsee, 1999). Aggressive resistance to change includes behaviours such as attempting to obstruct the change process. Aggressive resistance can manifest as rebel or sabotage. Aggressive resistance is uncommon and potentially dangerous.

In past research shows, there are several concepts and factors describing resistance. (Piderit, 2000) depict there are three different conceptualizations when it comes to resistance to change: as a cognitive state (negative thoughts about change), emotional state (frustration and anger, that can affect attitude) and behaviour state (intentional, inaction). There are number of factors that become a barrier for change (Mabin et al., 2001). They are individual factors, group factors and organizational factors. In Smollan (2011) research it presented, resistance to change as a “brick wall” and a “Dangerous roadblock to transformation”.

Where all the factors and concepts portray the negative attitude towards change by employees, there are group of people who take the change in a positive way. Both managers and employees view change differently (Strebel, 1996). Managers view change as a positive factor as they see it as an opportunity. As some scholars have claimed that resistance to change is not entirely a negative factor, because when it is relied on valid arguments against change, it contributes to improving the change management process (Furxhi, 2021). The positive effects of change are realization and successful implementation of change provide a seamless experience of positive outcomes of change for both individuals and the organization which increase in employee confidence, the organization’s flexibility and capacity to adjust to change will provide a competitive advantage, growth and dynamic (Jalagat, 2016). While employees perceive it as a negative factor as it is disruptive and intrusive. These negative approach towards change increase dissatisfaction towards job satisfaction, leading employees to experience irritation and frustration towards work and consider about resignation (Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Because of this it necessary for change agents/ managers mitigate negative attitude of employees towards change by communicating about the change clearly, continuously and eagerly (Ford et al., 2008).

When there is a change in an organization, they spend a significant amount for resources, training, and development processes for employees, continuously emphasizing

the significance of change for the organizational survival (Antonacopoulou & Gabriel, 2001). Although resistance is considered as a barrier for change, resistance can be seen as attempt to overcome difficulties in an organized way. By recognizing the causes for resistance and applying strategies to mitigate them, organizations will be able to implement change in organizations successfully.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Purpose and Objectives

The main purpose of this research paper is to identify the hurdles in implementing change management. The object is to get better understanding about resistance, causes for it and to study strategies to overcome it, utilizing secondary data derived from existing literature.

B. Method

This study adopts a systematic literature review methodology, which aims to collect and combine information from various studies to comprehensively address specific research questions. The systematic literature review method ensures a thorough and transparent process reducing bias and increasing the credibility of findings. A detailed search strategy was established to identify relevant literature. The strategy included examining several scholarly databases and sources including: ResearchGate, ScienceDirect, Harvard Review, Emerald, CENGAGE Learning, John Wiley publishers. A combination of keywords was used to identify a wide range of research on resistance to change and change management solutions. The keywords were “resistance to change”, “change management strategies”, “organizational change practices”, “employee resistance”, “managing change”, “change agent”.

To ensure that high quality and relevant studies are include, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. Inclusion criteria include credible academic publications, books and reports, studies published throughout the last 15 to 20 years, and English language publications ensure comprehension and clarity in data. Exclusion criteria include non-relational studies on handling change resistance and publications outside of the stated timeframe, unless exceedingly influential or foundational.

The selecting procedure included several stages such as initial screening and full-text review. Initial screening involved reviewing the titles and abstracts of identified studies to determine their relevance to the study. This stage attempted to immediately exclude studies that were clearly irrelevant. Full-text review involved full texts of relevant studies were retrieved and ensured that only research that met the pre-defined requirements were included.

Thematic analysis was utilised to discover and produce major themes and patterns in the chosen literature. Comparative analysis was used to identify differences and similarities between studies and contextual elements that influence strategy usefulness.

IV. DISCUSSION

This study aims answer research the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the primary factors contributing to resistance to change in organizations?

Employee resistance to change is occasionally mentioned at various organizational levels, such as organizational level resistance, group level resistance, and individual level resistance (George and Jones, 2012) and situational resistance.

A. Organizational Level Resistance

The first reason for resistance at organizational level is power and conflict. It occurs when the change benefits only a selected department or departments and employees while another department/ department are harmed within the organization. Which lead to power struggles and conflicts within the organizations, making it hard for organizations to initiate change within the organization.

The second is difference in functional orientation. This occurs because different departments and divisions may have varying viewpoints on the root cause of a problem, making it harder to come to an agreement about change. Third reason for organization level resistance is mechanistic structure of an organization. As employees working “supposed to behave in predictable ways and do not develop the initiative to adjust their behaviour in changing conditions” (George & Jones, 2012).

B. Group Level Resistance

George and Jones (2012) mention three reasons for group level resistance in change, group norms, group cohesiveness, and groupthink and escalation of commitment. The first reason group norms occur as change can disrupt group norms and expectations by altering task and role connections within the group. As result, members of a group may oppose change as it requires developing new norms to fulfil their requirements.

Second reason, group cohesiveness arises when members of a group want to maintain things such as members and tasks consistent inside the group.

Resulting in resistance to change as a group. Third reason resistance because of groupthink and escalation of commitment emerge when members overlook unfavourable information, even when they are aware that their actions are incorrect, to agree with one another, making a change in group behaviour extremely difficult.

C. Individual Level Resistance

The first reason for resistance is concerns about future competences (Kanter, 1985). When a change occurs, the employees might need to learn new skill set and they might feel that they must start all over again. With this they will have questions like, whether they will be able to adapt to new skills? how will they do it? will they have skills operate new systems? These concerns will be a barrier for then to accept the change within the organization.

The second is stress (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). Change in an organization lead employees to be in continuous pressure and stress. The stress is not only about workload, but they also stress about job security, losing comfort environment. Therefore, stress impact the change in a negative way. The third is disposition towards change (Amarantou et al., 2016). Which basically mean an inclination towards embracing the change in work environment, from the very beginning. The fourth one is the employees believe that there is not any need for the change (Hultman, n.d.). This is known as one of the common causes for resistance as people do not feel that there is a need for change, and they are satisfied with the current process of the organization.

The fifth is low job autonomy and self-efficacy (Jaramillo et al., 2012). Low job autonomy means not having control over the work processes, methods, and schedules, while low self-efficacy means lack of confidence in own abilities to successfully accomplish tasks. When they face these challenges, they will feel frustrated, demotivated, and disengaged leading resistance towards change.

D. Situational Resistance

The first is, the ‘difference’ effect (Kanter, 1985). The ‘difference’ effect is where people need to change their daily habits and routines, question their process in the company. When you are working in a company most of the work become habitual. As an example, you work with a certain system and there are certain codes to be typed to get the work done. Now with change implementation, the older system is replaced with a new system and the codes are also different in the system. At that point employees feels exhausted and frustrated as their familiar environment is no more there.

The second, according to Jones and Ven (2016) lack of leadership support, increase the change resistance. It is important to have a supportive leadership during the process of change, by giving continuous feedback, guidance and building interpersonal relationships with employees. The third is culture compatibility (Trader-Leigh, 2002). Occasionally some companies can have poor organizational culture. When an organization implement change if the organizational culture is not decent, change will fail as the resistance will be originated by organizational culture itself. The fourth factor is lack of communication (McKay et al., 2013). Most of the time company fails to communicate the employees about the change in detailed. Leading the employees to not have a clear idea about the changes, how it is happening? Why is it happening? How can they adapt to it? What are the ways that they can give their inputs? all these questions do not reach upper level or from upper level they do not get answers. Lack of communication and information increases uncertainty pioneering resistance.

Fifth, the lack of participation (Lines, 2004). Lack of participation block interaction between change agents and change recipients. Highlighting change recipients’ resistance. This would make them feel unimportant in the company, leading them to feel confused and rejecting changes.

RQ2: What strategies have organizations employed to manage and mitigate resistance to change?

Even if organizational change is defined as changes in technology, hierarchy, or structures, change has a significant impact on employees within the organization. However, many organizations fail to implement change efforts because they underestimate the impact of change on individuals. As a result, failing to consider employee’s psychological views of change. For successful change implementations, it is vital to effectively manage the psychological transition of employees (Kılıçoğlu & Kılıçoğlu, 2013). It is critical to recognize that effective change management requires a thorough grasp of human behaviour within the organization. Individuals may respond to challenge of change with emotions such as uncertainty, frustration, or dread, as well as feeling of threat and disorientation which are reasons for resistance. People frequently demonstrate a protective and negative attitude, and they reject change initiatives. Because change is a complicated and psychological occurrence, it must be respected and skilfully managed. Organizational success requires a dedicated team and effective change management. Furthermore, the impact of change on each individual and the nature of the change should be examined. Although there are no certain solutions, there are several strategies or techniques that can be applied to overcome resistance. The strategies to overcome resistance are education, communication, facilitation, participation and involvement, culture of change, negotiation and agreement, manipulation and co-optation, explicit and implicit coercion.

The first strategy is education (Schermerhorn, 1999). The main goal of the educating employees about change is to be letting them understand the reason for change. Also to give them time to adjust to change before the implementation of change process. This will reduce resistance to a certain extent as the employees are aware about the change and they have time to adapt to the new change.

The second strategy is communication (Beauregard, 2017), can be taken as one of the most important and effective strategy or technique. It is essential to communicate to the employees because change is necessary. It is even more important to make sure that the change is not misinterpreted. If there is open communication between the upper-level management and the employees, it is easy to address the concerns of employees regarding resistance. To maintain a healthy communication, there are communication strategies that can be implemented.

The third, facilitation (Schermerhorn, 1999) means giving support, not only in technical aspect but also emotionally for the employees that find difficulty embrace the change fully. By applying this technique, the organization can know the challenges of employees and facilitated them with required training. Facilitation will help to reduce to frustration of employees. Forth, participation and involvement (Griffin, 2016). Giving an opportunity to employees to participate in the planning and implementation process of the change, will provide better understanding about the change. With is the feeling of uncertainty is reduced. Moreover, they have an opportunity to express their ideas and to understand other perspective about change. This will help them to accept change graciously and will make them feel involved in organizational decisions reducing resistance.

Fifth strategy is developing a culture of change by creating positivity (Beauregard, 2017). It is important to create a positive, supportive environment for the employees when the change is going on. To appreciate employee's innovative ideas, their efforts to adapt to new change, their accomplishments should be celebrated, and their mistakes should not be punished. According to (Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008) negotiation and agreement, manipulation and co-optation, explicit and implicit coercion are also strategies to overcome change. The sixth strategy is negotiation and agreement, negotiation is especially useful when it is obvious that someone will lose out because of a change yet that employee's ability to oppose is significant. Negotiated agreements can be a relatively simple techniques to avoid considerable opposing.

The seventh strategy is manipulation and co-optation. In some cases, managers use convert tactics to persuade people. Co-optation is a prevalent method of manipulation. Co-opting an individual typically involve assigning the employee a desirable position in the implementation of the change. But this strategy has its own drawbacks as if they feel that they are being tricked they might resist even harder. The eighth is explicit and implicit coercion. In this method, managers force employees to accept change by either explicitly or implicitly threatening them or firing or transferring them. Coercion, like manipulation, is a risky procedure since employees would naturally hate forced change.

The ninth strategy is to give psychological support to the employees. Leader are urged by (Fullan, n.d.) to "appreciate the implementation gap", which states that when people innovate and gain new abilities, their performance and confidence may suffer and they may become hesitant to try new tasks or take on new positions in an effort to maintain their current status. It is therefore helpful for leaders to think about how responses are planned, or unforeseen changes may affect the implementation timeline and provide with required support to individuals progress and work by keeping an awareness and

understanding of the stages of loss, transition (Mckimm & Till, 2015). These change management strategies have their main advantages and disadvantages, that is summarized in the below table.

Table 1. Change Management Strategies

Strategy	Advantages	Disadvantages
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People committed to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively slow • Requires resource and costs
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce misinformation • Build trust • Encourage open dialogue and feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming
Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps employees to adjust to change • Address personal issues and reduce anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be costly
Participation & involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change more likely to be accepted • More people committed to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively slow to implement • Complex to manage • Requires more resources • Increased costs
Culture of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage innovation and adaptability • Reduce resistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time and effort to build and maintain such a culture
Negotiation and agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change recipients have the option to voice their concerns • Reduced resistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be relatively slow • Anticipate that change may have to be modified
Manipulation & co-optation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be a quick way to gain support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can lead to feelings of betrayal • Not a sustainable long-term strategy • Can harm organizational culture
Explicit & implicit coercion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can achieve rapid compliance • Clearly communicates the seriousness of the change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can create fear and resentment • Damage morale and employee relations • Can lead to high turnover and loss of employees

Psychological support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helps employees to cope with emotional aspects of change• Reduces stress and anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires investment in resources
-----------------------	---	--

Source: Authors' compilation.

According to Jalagat (2016) with reference to (Hortho, 2008), present key areas that can be considered to ensure change management success:

- Adequate identification of the problem and assessing the urgency of the need for change should be done to understand the present situation of the organization as well as determining what kind of change is required to address the problem identified.
- Envision the desired future state of the organization by developing a realistic picture of the ideal company situation after applying the change and effectively communicate the vision to all participants of the change and devising an effective mechanism to ensure the smooth transition of change from the old state to the new state. It also requires the high level of stability in the change process like assuring and aligning the change efforts to the organization's goals and objectives.
- Change should be implemented in a systematic and orderly manner. Effective transition of the change is highly required and should consider the effectiveness in allocating resources, ensuring that planned change is carried out, persons given the responsibility to lead such change has the ability to do it, and make sure that the planned change are coordinated from the top management down to the lowest level so everyone in the organization are well aware of the direction of change. Leaders in the organization should initiate the change with enthusiasm and serve as role models in dealing with change.
- Effective management of resistance to change increase the level of participation of the people to the change efforts. Leaders have the major role to play in initiating the change and share their vision towards the change. The higher the level of resistance will likely result to more difficulty to implement the change. Appropriate strategies should be applied to minimize the degree of resistance.
- Managing change proactively is also an effective means of maximizing flexibility to adapt change in the future and can be considered as a creative way in dealing with the dynamics of change. This is possible with the help of the human resource department and all participants of the change.

RQ3: What are the methods that the managers can use to reduce resistance?

Smollan (2011), suggest a set of guidelines for the managers that they can reflect on while implementing change.

- Assess the potential impact of change on various stakeholders – individuals, groups, departments and organisations. To facilitate this, wherever possible discuss the proposed change with the stakeholders and engage their views. Participation might produce better decisions and the process of inclusion itself sends a welcome message to those affected and enhances the prospect of greater commitment. Opposition may turn into collaboration or compromise.
- Understand that there might be winners and losers, and that people naturally defend against loss, not against change itself. Together with affected stakeholders try to work out how to either minimise the losses or compensate people for them.

- Note that people react (and resist) on cognitive, emotional and behavioural levels and that these reactions are not always aligned.
- Handle resistance with care. Do not assume that it is wilful or ignorant. Do not equate doubt, dissent, disagreement and alternative proposals with refusal, disobedience and disloyalty. Understand that resistance may be conscious, semiconscious or unconscious and that behavioural resistance may be overt or covert.
- Consider resistance as an orange light, not a barricade to be stormed. The management proposal or action may not have been thought through well enough and alternatives may be more appropriate.
- Before choosing strategies to deal with resistance, consider their ramifications and the power of other parties to undermine the effectiveness of the change or to derail it altogether. Will participation simply waste valuable time while problems grow or opportunities wither? Will coercion or manipulation get the job done but alienate the staff in the process, leading to more subtle forms of resistance? How helpful and costly will emotional and tangible support be?
- Whenever possible aim for just processes and outcomes and underline them with regular, full and honest communication. Laying people off by email or text message which has been done exacerbates resistance to change.

According to Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) for a successful change management, recommend few steps that the managers implement to address resistance within the organization, such as analyse situational factors and determining the optimal speed for change. Analyse situational factors: the management must strive to answer questions like, how much and what kind of resistance do they expect? What is the manager's position in relation to resisters, in terms of power and trust, and whether he has less organizational power than those who may oppose the change? Who has the most reliable information regarding what changes are required? Whether the management expects requiring information and commitment from others to plan and implement the change. Determine the optimal speed of change: bases on analysis of situational considerations, the manager must decide how quickly or slowly the change should be implemented. These steps will help the managers to analyse the resistance of employees and to address them adequately, making the change implementation a success.

RQ4: What is the role of change agent in change management and resistance?

Past research articles depict that the change agent plays an important role in change management. It can be positive or negative, depending on the way how change agent or the employees interpret it. A change agent is a person or group that takes on the responsibility of bringing about and overseeing change within an organization. Managers or staff members designated to supervise the change process are the examples of internal change agents. Many organizations train both managers and staff to build the necessary abilities to oversee change. Change agents can also be external, such as consultants from the outside of the organization (Lunenburg, 2010). Change agents' actions or inaction can bring positive or negative effects.

Employees may feel disrespected, lose confidence, and exhibit resistance when change agents neglect to include them in the process and instead concentrate solely on pointing out errors and misunderstandings that they believe to be the cause of the resistance (Ford et al., 2008). One of the main causes of the employee resistance is lack of trust between change agents and employees. When change agents violate their

promises, either before to or during the change process, employees become resistant to change. Employees develop feelings of injustice, resentment, disloyalty, towards the organization, less dedication, low productivity, increased turnover, and mistrust as a result (Eldejany, 2017).

Ford et al. (2008) claim that change agents' interpretations and self-interest cause them to categorize some employee behaviours as resistance. Employees may, for instance, be in favour of change but act in a way that change agents interpret as opposition. Alternatively, employees may not be in favour of the change yet exhibit signs of acceptance and be seen as supportive by change agents (Eldejany, 2017). Employee resistance is thus a byproduct of the way change agents interpret their own behaviour.

According to Lunenburg (2010) there are three roles that change agents play to positively affect the organization in change management process. They are consulting, training and performing research. In the change agent capacity as a consultant, managers connect staff members with external source of data or assist group members in producing internal data sources. The main goal is to assist staff members in solving issues by analysing reliable data.

The manager might also serve as a trainer in addition to being a consultant. Here, the manager instructs staff members on how to use data to drive change. In addition to helping organization members determine implications for action from the current data, the manager, or outside change agent if one is used, serves as a trainer by giving them new skills, such as how to retrieve, interpret, and apply new data to address future issues. Numerous businesses have used outside consultants to train group members on how to enhance their company's overall performance.

Finally, the manager may take on the function of researcher, which is closely related to the prior one. In their capacity as researchers, managers can impart to staff members the knowledge and abilities required to conduct reliable analyses of the success of action plans that have been put into practice. Additionally, the manager will create an evaluation component that may be used to address both the current and future problems as a part of the broader intervention approach.

Resistance can mitigate, if the leaders and managers and change agents know how to overcome it. The mentioned strategies, key areas and guidelines for the managers to handle resistance in reference to the past articles bring out the possibility of successful change management while adequately handling resistance.

V. CONCLUSION

"Change" has now become an inevitable reality in corporate world, as part of the goal for improved organizational performance and to keep up the competitive environment. However, successful management of technological changes is important to achieving any degree of long term and lasting success. To overcome resistance to change, the human side of change management must be adequately addressed. Implementing change frequently causes periods of organizational tension since it involves going from familiar to the unknown, which is complex (Thomas, n.d.).

This study attempts to identify the causes of resistance and strategies to overcome them. Also, this study presents importance of change agent and their role in the change management. The study concludes with that there are many factors affecting resistance, and in this study presents an analysis of the factors. Furthermore, to overcome resistance, the study has identified few strategies that will help with successful implementation of change and how managers can aid the change management initiatives.

However, the leader and the managers should have a strong presence in the organization to implement the change while addressing the causes of the resistance and implementing the strategies, to lead a successful change.

As a summary, some of this study conclusions are:

- Resistance to change is depicted in four levels, organizational level resistance, group level resistance, individual level resistance and situational resistance.
- Organizational level resistance includes, power and conflict, functional orientation and mechanistic structure.
- Group level resistance includes, group norms, group cohesiveness, groupthink and escalation of commitment.
- Factors influencing individual level resistance are concerns about future competences, stress, disposition towards change, belief that change is not necessary, low job autonomy and self-efficacy.
- Fourth factor, situational resistance includes, difference effect, lack of leadership support, culture compatibility, lack of communication and lack of participation.
- To mitigate resistance this study, mention nine strategies, which includes, education, communication, facilitation, participation and involvement, culture of change, manipulation and co-optation, explicit and implicit coercion and providing psychological support.
- Key areas to ensure change management success.
- Guideline for managers to implement the change management.
- The importance of change agents, their roles, the positive and negative effects of change agents.

VI. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

This study is based on secondary data. ensuring rigor by using credible and reliable sources and properly citing all sources to acknowledge the original authors' work.

VII. LIMITATIONS

The study is limited by the scope of the literature review. While the search approach was intended to be comprehensive, some relevant studies may have been missed or excluded due to search term constraints, database access, or publication bias. This study restricted itself to English-language publications, which may indicate a language bias. Relevant research published in other languages were not evaluated, perhaps resulting in lack of representation of non-English speaking locations and their viewpoints on managing change. This study has been relying on secondary data which implies that the study is dependent on the original research's reliability, quality, and comprehensiveness. The conclusion of the study is based on research undertaken in a variety of organizational contexts, and industries. While the diversity provides a wide understanding of handling resistance to change, it also means that the application of individual techniques varies greatly depending on the environment. To address these limitations future research could, focus on specific organizational contexts or industries to provide more detailed insights, explore the long-term effectiveness of change management strategies through longitudinal studies, which can provide a deep understanding of how resistance to change evolves over time and sustainability of various strategies. By acknowledging the ethical considerations and limitations, this research work maintains integrity and provides a clear framework for future studies.

REFERENCES

- Agocs, C. (1997). Institutionalized resistance to organizational change: Denial, inaction, and repression. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 16, 917–931. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1017903409151>
- Amarantou, V., Kazakopoulou, S., Chatzoglou, P., & Chatzoudes, D. (2016). Factors affecting “resistance to change”: An explanatory study conducted in the healthcare sector. *International Journal of Strategic Innovative Marketing*, 3, 23–40.
- Aninkan, D. O. (2018). Organizational change, change management, and resistance to change – An exploratory study. *European Journal of Business and Management*.
- Anon. (2024). *Death the final stage of growth*. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. Available at: <https://filepdf.cloud/pdf/death-the-final-stage-ofgrowth-elisabeth-kubler-ross-4874078> [Accessed 20 Jul. 2024].
- Anon. (n.d.). *Managing the human side of change* [PDF]. Aston University. Available at: <https://www.aston.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/5.2%20Managing%20the%20Human%20Side%20of%20Change.pdf> [Accessed 27 Mar. 2024].
- Anon. (n.d.). *Engaging with resistance to change* [PDF]. Stratton Consulting. Available at: <https://strattonconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Engaging-withResistance-to-Change.pdf> [Accessed 18 Jul. 2024].
- Antonacopoulou, E., & Gabriel, Y. (2001). Emotion, learning, and organizational change: Towards an integration of psychoanalytic and other perspectives. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 14, 435–451.
- Beauregard, B. (2017). Leading organizational change. pp. 1–5.
- Bengat, J. (n.d.). Organizational change and resistance dilemmas: Resolution approaches and mechanisms.
- Bertsch, A., Singh, K., & Saeed, M. (2012). Key factors influencing employee response toward change: A test in the telecom industry in India. *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, 13.
- Burnes, B., & Bargal, D. (2017). Kurt Lewin: 70 years on. *Journal of Change Management*, 17, 91–100.
- Cheung, M. (2010). An integrated change model in project management. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/117201659/An_integrated_change_model_in_project_management [Accessed 18 Jul. 2024].
- Čudanov, M., Tornjanski, V., & Jaško, O. (2019). Change equation effectiveness: Empirical evidence from South-East Europe. *Management*, 22, 99–114.
- Eldejany, R. (2017). When change agents manage change. *International Journal of Management Excellence*, 9.
- Ford, J., & Ford, L. (2009). Decoding resistance to change. *Harvard Business Review*, 87.
- Ford, J., Ford, L., & D’Amelio, A. (2008). Resistance to change: The rest of the story. *Academy of Management Review*, 33, 362–377.
- Fullan, M. (n.d.). Leading in a culture of change.
- Furxhi, G. (2021). Employee’s resistance and organizational change factors. *European Journal of Business and Management Research*, 6, 30–32.
- George, J. M., & Jones, G. R. (2012). *Understanding and managing organizational behavior* (6th ed.). Prentice Hall.

- Griffin, R. W. (2016). *Fundamentals of management* (8th ed.). CENGAGE Learning.
- Hultman, P. (n.d.). Managing resistance to change.
- Jalagat, R. (2016). The impact of change and change management in achieving corporate goals and objectives: Organizational perspective. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*, 5, 1233–1239.
- Jaramillo, F., Mulki, J., Onyemah, V., & Pesquera, M. (2012). Salesperson resistance to change: An empirical investigation of antecedents and outcomes. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 30, 548–566.
- Jones, S., & Ven, A. (2016). The changing nature of change resistance: An examination of the moderating impact of time. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 52.
- Kotter, J. P., & Schlesinger, L. A. (2008). Choosing strategies for change. *Harvard Business Review*. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2008/07/choosing-strategies-for-change> [Accessed 18 Jul. 2024].
- Lawrence, P. R. (1969). How to deal with resistance to change. *Harvard Business Review*. Available at: <https://hbr.org/1969/01/how-to-deal-with-resistance-to-change> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2024].
- Lines, R. (2004). Influence of participation in strategic change: Resistance, organizational commitment, and change goal achievement. *Journal of Change Management*, 4, 193–215.
- Lines, R. (2005). The structure and function of attitudes toward organizational change. *Human Resource Development Review*, 4, 8–32.
- Lunenburg, F. C. (n.d.). Managing change: The role of the change agent.
- Mabin, V., Forgeson, S., & Green, L. (2001). Harnessing resistance: Using the theory of constraints to assist change management. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 25, 168+.
- McKay, K., Kuntz, J. R. C., & Näswall, K. (2013). The effect of affective commitment, communication, and participation on resistance to change: The role of change readiness. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 49, 235–257.
- Mckimm, J., & Till, A. (2015). Clinical leadership effectiveness, change, and complexity. *British Journal of Hospital Medicine*, 76, 239–243.
- Mitchell, G. (2013). Selecting the best theory to implement planned change. *Nursing Management*, 20, 32–37.
- Mosadeghrad, A., & Ansarian, M. (2014). Why do organisational change programmes fail? *International Journal of Strategic Change Management*, 5, 189.
- Okolie, U. C., & Memeh, N. J. (2022). Influence of change management on modern organizational efficiency. *Jurnal Riset Ekonomi dan Bisnis*, 15, 171–195.
- Onyema, N., & Onuoha, C. (2021). Change management and organizational performance of banks in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. *International Journal of Advanced Academic Research*, 138–147.
- Oreg, S. (2003). Resistance to change: Developing an individual differences measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 680–693.
- Piderit, S. (2000). Rethinking resistance and recognizing ambivalence: A multidimensional view of attitudes toward an organizational change. *Academy of Management Review*, 25, 783–794.
- Rosemond, B., Asamoah, A., & Williams. (2012). Resistance to organisational change: A case study of Oti Yeboah Complex Limited. *International Business and Management*, 4.

- Smollan, R. (2011). The multi-dimensional nature of resistance to change. *Journal of Management and Organization*, 17, 828–849.
- Stouten, J., Rousseau, D., & Cremer, D. (2018). Successful organizational change: Integrating the management practice and scholarly literatures. *Academy of Management Annals*, 12.
- Strebel, P. (1996). Why do employees resist change? *Harvard Business Review*. Available at: <https://hbr.org/1996/05/why-do-employees-resist-change> [Accessed 26 Mar. 2024].
- Thomas, D. O. O. (n.d.). Change management and its effects on organizational performance of Nigerian telecoms industries: Empirical insight from Airtel Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education*.
- Trader-Leigh, K. E. (2002). Case study: Identifying resistance in managing change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 15, 138–155.
- Vakola, M., & Nikolaou, I. (2005). Attitudes towards organizational change: What is the role of employees' stress and commitment? *Employee Relations*, 27, 160–174.
- Vrcelj, N. (2023). Towards successful organizational change management: New process model identification. *Journal of Process Management and New Technologies*, 11, 1–15.
- Wanberg, C., & Banas, J. (2000). Predictors and outcomes of openness to changes in reorganizing workplaces. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85, 132–142.
- Yılmaz, G., & Kılıçoğlu, G. (2013). Resistance to change and ways of reducing resistance in educational organizations. *European Journal of Research on Education*, 1(1), 14–21. <https://doi.org/10.5861/ejre.2012.1>