

## **A Comprehensive Literature Review on the Factors Influencing Resistance to Organizational Change and Strategies for Effective Management**

Amaliah<sup>1</sup>, Tiara Titania Linggi<sup>1</sup>, Nurmadhani Fitri Suyuthi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Program Pascasarjana Manajemen, Universitas Fajar Makassar

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Fajar Makassar

\*Corresponding Author: Nurmadhani Fitri Suyuthi

Email: [nurmadhanifitri29@gmail.com](mailto:nurmadhanifitri29@gmail.com)

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### **Abstract**

*A typical organizational change management issue is organizational resistance to change. This paper looks at literature on sources of resistance basing it on individual, group and organizational factors. At individual level, the following variables were found to be the reasons for resistance; perceived risk by not knowing what to expect next in the course of implementing change, insecurity of their jobs, and perceived that leaders cannot be trusted. Other factors include: The interaction between people in as group since this leads to peer pressure and maintaining of standards that have been set, therefore leading to resistance of change. Institutional factors such as ineffective communication, inadequate resources and rather more set organizational culture also contribute to resistance. The recommendations are derived from a review of the coping strategies with clear directions of invoking communication, engaging the employees, leadership involvement, and procuring more competent training and support. Lacking proper attention to the concerns and requirement of the employees at the workplace can be the major hurdle in the path of proper implementation of change management. Indeed, the outcomes show that resistance cannot be regarded as an only negative factor, but it is the possibility to discuss and develop. By adopting and applying all these points, an organization can therefore learn how to manage change and embed change in order to bring about the Right Change successfully and sustainably.*

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## **Introduction**

Change has emerged as a significant phenomenon that characterizes most business environments today due to factors such as globalization, and technological innovations foremost. When organizations aim at implementing change, they often experience resistance from the employee, teams and even organizational system. Public attitude toward changes in the organizational environment, best viewed as adversarial at worst, continues to be a major issue for leaders and managers irrespective of the field. Although scholars have conducted studies on the concept of resistance, organizational scholars and change agents continue to grapple with how to comprehend the phenomenon and how best to manage it (Malhotra et al., 2021; Endrejat et al., 2021). This introduction will discuss why resistance to organizational change matters, what causes it and what it means for organizational effectiveness.

Change resistance is not always a bad thing. Some continues and claim that it can act as a positive feedback mechanism indicating either a problem with the proposed change or the process of change implementation (Flood et al., 2021). Hence, it can serve as an organizational protection mechanism against poor constructed initiatives, as well as assist organizations to improve their approaches. When resistance is not managed it usually leads to low morale, low productivity and high turnover that hinders organizational change initiatives (Rehman et al., 2021).

The human aspect plays an important part in every change management process, and therefore the specific target group the employees is an essential element of change. Employee resistance continues to rank as perhaps the most daunting challenge in the accomplishment of intended objectives. Survey research indicates that an estimated 70% of change initiatives are unsuccessful with resistance being pointed as a major cause (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). These statistics will only stress the pivotal importance of knowing why resistance happens and fixing that at its source.

Changes that occur in organizations have always faced resistance; this concept has however developed over time. Initially, they defined it as a set of sequentially psychological reactions manifested as a result of any change process (Khaw et al., 2023; Tomini et al., 2023; Wong, 2021). Recent literature, however, defines resistance as having individual, group, and organizational dimensions. At the individual level resistance may be attributed to those due to things such as uncertainty, loss of; job security and low level of trust on the leaders. While management can avoid or control these reactions, group dynamics help to enhance or diminish the amount of resistance because organizational culture and norms affect employees' perception of change programs.

The organizational processes which act as precursors to resistance include: Organizational System Factors including lack of communication, ineffective training, and lack of employee participation in decisions making (Malhotra et al., 2021; Saghafian et al., 2021; Gfrerer et al., 2021). The interconnection of these factors produces a highly intricate system of resistance that managers need to manage for change efforts to succeed. Recognizing this complexity is important for developing strategies to target resistance and promote change activation on the organizational level.

Management and communication are known to be essential pre requisites to overcome resistance towards change management. Task communication combined with change-oriented leadership reduces resistance as the latter affects the level of trust and commitment in the employees. Communication on the other hand outline how employees can benefit from the change, why the change needs to happen and what can be expected from the employees.

Most organizations continue to deal with employee resistance through flawed communication strategies along with leadership actions that deviate from employee expectations. The study delivers various suggestions regarding employee communication and involvement for the change implementation process. Such method restores most employee resistance levels and boosts staff commitment towards change initiatives.

Employee reactions to change produce effects which extend past the realizations of organizational change objectives and successful change interventions (Khaw et al., 2023; Onyeneke & Abe, 2021; Montani & Staglianò, 2022). Airport security resistance creates substantial cultural decline because it damages employee trust in leaders and poisons workplace dynamics. Organization success will improve through better resistance management which creates greater employee engagement and stronger market position.

Modern organizations encounter unprecedented changes which has made resistance identification and resolution an urgent matter of priority. The author of this review surveys previous research on organizational resistance to change to describe literary weaknesses and provide professional insights. This research seeks to advance both theoretical and practical knowledge about this essential matter by researching various models along with the root causes and possible remedies for the problem.

## Method

This study employed a systematic literature review approach to explore the topic of resistance to organizational change. The methodology was designed to ensure a comprehensive, rigorous, and unbiased analysis of existing research. The aim was to identify key themes, theoretical frameworks, factors contributing to resistance, and strategies for mitigating it, while highlighting gaps in the literature.

The review was conducted using peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference proceedings as primary sources. Databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and Google Scholar were utilized to gather relevant studies. Search terms included "resistance to organizational change," "change management," "employee resistance," "organizational change strategies," and "overcoming resistance." Boolean operators and truncation symbols were used to refine the search and ensure inclusivity of results.

The inclusion criteria specified that articles must have been published within the last 10-15 years to capture recent advancements and trends in the field. Seminal works that laid the foundation for understanding resistance to change, such as Rosenberg (2023) change framework, were also included regardless of publication date. Studies were required to be written in English and focused on resistance within organizational settings.

The selection process followed a three-step procedure. Titles and abstracts were screened for relevance to the research objectives. Articles that did not explicitly address resistance to organizational change or related topics were excluded. Second, full-text articles were reviewed to assess their methodological rigor, theoretical depth, and contribution to the understanding of resistance. Studies with vague methodologies or insufficient discussion of findings were excluded. Finally, a snowballing technique was employed by reviewing the reference lists of selected articles to identify additional relevant studies.

Data extraction focused on identifying key information, including the theoretical frameworks used, factors contributing to resistance, and strategies for overcoming it. Thematic analysis was applied to organize findings into categories such as individual, group, and organizational-level factors, as well as leadership and communication strategies. Recurring themes, patterns, and discrepancies in the literature were identified and analyzed to provide a comprehensive synthesis of the topic.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the review, the selected studies were evaluated using established quality assessment criteria. These included clarity of research objectives, robustness of methodologies, and coherence of findings with the study's aims. Studies with clear objectives, rigorous methodologies, and significant contributions to the field were prioritized in the review.

## Theoretical Framework

Resistance to organizational change is a multidimensional phenomenon that has been extensively studied through various theoretical lenses. These theories provide a foundation for understanding the origins, dynamics, and management of resistance within organizations. This framework draws on seminal models and contemporary perspectives to explore the complexity of resistance, focusing on individual, group, and organizational dimensions.

One of the foundational theories in this domain is Pulido & Taherdoost (2024) Change Management Model, which introduced the concept of the "unfreeze-change-refreeze" process. Lewin emphasized that resistance is a natural reaction to the disruption of existing equilibrium within an organization. In his model, the unfreezing stage addresses the need to overcome resistance by preparing individuals and systems for change, while the refreezing stage ensures

the sustainability of new behaviors. This model underscores the importance of creating a sense of urgency and building readiness for change as key strategies to mitigate resistance.

Another influential framework is Warrick (2023), which highlights the critical role of leadership and communication in overcoming resistance. Kotter proposed that resistance often arises due to a lack of clear vision, poor communication, and insufficient empowerment of employees. By emphasizing the importance of creating short-term wins and consolidating gains, Kotter's model provides actionable insights into addressing resistance throughout the change process. This framework has been widely applied in organizational settings, particularly in large-scale transformations, where resistance tends to be more pronounced.

From a psychological perspective, Scholkmann (2021) offers a comprehensive understanding of individual-level resistance. that resistance is influenced by dispositional factors, such as personality traits, as well as situational factors, including the nature of the change and the context in which it occurs. His model categorizes resistance into cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, highlighting that individuals may resist change for different reasons, such as fear of the unknown, perceived threats to job security, or misalignment with personal values. This perspective underscores the need for tailored interventions that address the specific concerns of individuals.

At the organizational level, Systems Theory provides a holistic view of resistance by emphasizing the interconnectedness of organizational components. Resistance is seen as a systemic response to disruptions in the equilibrium of the organization. Changes in one part of the organization, such as a shift in leadership or technology, can trigger resistance in other parts due to interdependencies (Malhotra et al., 2021). This theory highlights the importance of viewing resistance not as an isolated issue but as a manifestation of broader organizational dynamics. Leaders must therefore adopt a systemic approach to managing resistance, considering the interrelationships between people, processes, and structures.

### **Factors Contributing to Resistance**

Organizational resistance to change emanates from one of the following areas, which are; individual, group, and organizational. These factors are quite intertwined; if one looks at the issue from the humanity side, individual fears crowdsource organizational failure and vice versa. It is important to understand these contributing elements well in order to tackle resistance well and ensure that transition during change initiatives is smoother.

At individual level, one of the main reasons for resistance is fear of the unknown. Whenever change is proposed, employees tend to develop certain level of apprehension that specifically relates to their duties, or even their jobs (Rahmani et al., 2023). Having unclear vision about why change is necessary, and what consequences are expected out of it only increases ambiguity, which in turn brings about guarding. Employees may perceive threat in the change process because they lack the capacity to handle new changes such as the new technological practices complained. There is another set of predictors at the individual level, including low openness to experience as well as high levels of rigidity (Rozgonjuk et al., 2021).

This element makes it important for us to discuss the contribution of group dynamics to change resistance in organizations. Resistances inside work teams are often boosted by peers and shared understanding, especially if leading employees in the work group are less than supportive of the change initiative. It therefore becomes easy for groups to cultivate some beliefs and synthesize some routines that they hold and practice regularly for stability's sake. Alterations of these recognized patterns give rise to collective voices because the group members may Perceive that they have lost their group identity or cohesiveness. At times, resistance may take a group form where representatives feel threatened by the change process

and organization goals and values in a coordinated manner. On the organizational level one can note that structural and procedural constraints or and regulation play a great part in creating resistance. Lack of communication on advocacy of change, the process and the usefulness as well is one of the most common problems in organizations. This leaves the employees VP of the change effort and therefore feels that change has been thrust on them and this entrenched resistance (Yue et al., 2023). Invoices such as lack of adequate training and development of contingency mechanisms to support the change can lead to resistance due to perceptions of inadequate preparation among the employees of an organization from the change.

As for the organizational level cultural factors also play a considerable role in creating resistance. Where organizations are bureaucratic, highly centralized, operate with hierarchical structures or have a record of managing change poorly, there is likely to be resistance. The kind of changes proposed may not be believed by employees owing to the environment in which the organization is situated in. Another reason why resistance might occur is where the change to be affected is in a way that may negate the organizational culture, goals, objectives, values or principles of the organization.

### **Strategies to Overcome Resistance**

There are recommended approaches towards managing organizational resistance which involve specific, intentional efforts to manage change at individual, group and organizational level. Strategies used should seek to make people accept change, have interest and make change process as easy as possible. They are crucial to reduce any form of interruption and enhance successful outcomes of change.

Still, the management's most powerful weapon is action: informing the employees clearly and transparently. Resistance can be mainly attributed to change phobia which can be overcome by offering adequate, timely, details, stressful information about the change to the employees (Evans & Britt, 2023). The change message should therefore provide reasons why the change is being made, aimed at, and what is expected to be gained by the organization and its employees. This not only minimizes risk, which of course is an important component of organizational development, but it also produces a positive attitude and feeling of rapport or trust on the part of the participants. Further, press releases, conferences, or staff meetings and surveys, as two-way communication systems, enable employees to air their sticky feelings or opinions, thus minimizing resistance.

Involving employees as the other major approach is another important element of this process. When people are involved in planning and decision making then they will be committed and feel that change is their responsibility. Bottom-up techniques like cross organization teams or focus groups allow employees to bring their ideas and their point of view to the process. This combined approach not only enhances the quality of change practices but also minimizes the idea that change is an imposition from outside, in a way that diminishes resistance.

Another area that warrants attention in order to manage resistance to change is the issue of training and cross implementation supports were change calls for new skills, new equipment or a new way of working. Change may be not welcomed by the workers because of their self-perceived behavioral competence. Through these training programs, workshops and practical assistance they can gain not only the knowledge base required for the transition but also the skills to do it properly. Providing additional support starting from one-on-one support and extending to follow-up with resources for support as needed more guarantees that the employees feel ready and able during the change process.

Consistent and visible leadership is the other area where efforts are made to build trust. In the context of organizational change, it was found that leaders have the great influence in the



attitudes and perceptions of their subordinates (Onyeneke & Abe, 2021). Competent leaders might minimize reliance on threat appeals because they would warrant confidence within the targeted subjects. Moreover, establishing and seeking short-term wins according to Gustafsson et al. (2021) ensure the trust with the change process and strengthen further continuing change for future. To some extent, such early wins show that the change is productive and keeps the workers focused in order to register more such achievements.

Crucial to work with the emotional resistance by learning clients' feelings and comforting them. People may get afraid, stressed, or lose something during the change process, and it is all about people. Managers should truly listen to the employees and assure them to calm them down. One way of managing stress and promoting organizational resilience, is by encouraging managers to cultivate a culture that allows the employees to freely display their feelings. Besides, things like counselling, organizing group sessions or creating friendly team building activities enable employees address emotional stresses relating to change.

### **Synthesis of Findings**

The results of this study show that there are antecedents of resistance to organizational change within the individual, group, and organizational levels. Lack of trust in leadership, perceived threats to job security, fear of the unknown and inadequate motivation were cited consistently that at the individual level as potential sources of resistance. One reason that employees are not open to change is because of insecurity because of their perceived capacity to deal with change in terms of roles, processes or technologies (Ali et al., 2021). Second, self-claimed personality variables, low on openness to change and high on stability were reported to predict resistance. Based on these results, it is necessary to develop specific interventions which will take into account such issues as personal worries and self-confidence in the workplace.

On the group level, the evidence presented also highlights social factors as enablers of or barriers to resistance. Co-workers are resistant to change mainly when special groups within the organization perceive change as a threat to their common stressful norms, values, or practices (Küçük, 2022). Influence within the groups was observed to enhance or lessen resistance, contingent to the attitudes of some influential group members. At times, the resistance was organized and group-based because the members perceived that the change eroded important group cohesiveness or group culture. They emphasize the need to work on the group level since teams should be enlisted and addressed as receiving change.

In the case of the organizational level, it was revealed that structural and cultural barriers played a major role in resistance. Some of the reasons that emerged in the literature included weak communication, inactive or limited employee participation in organizational decision-making process as well as inadequate resources to underpin change efforts. Companies with highly defined structures or that possessed bureaucratic workplace cultures reported high levels of resistance since the affected employees tended to regard change efforts as authoritative and hierarchical. The same analysis also revealed that organizational culture influences the employees' perception of change as well. Temitope (2022) discovered that cultures that embrace change, flexibility and creativity encountered less resistance than those of order, control and predictability.

Recommendations on how best to address resistance were then grouped into broad categories they included communication, engagement of the employees and leadership. Good and clear communication was turn out to be effective in minimizing on the uncertainties and the trust among the employees was established. Also postulated that whenever employees are involved in decision-making and change related activities, resistance is minimized as the employees put their best efforts for the management of change. Furthermore, the results underscore the role

of leadership, where leaders are seen as key agents in displaying and promoting message reception and change incentives. It shows that the analysis of Papers proves that people's resistance to organizational change: is not always and not only negative estimation of the change. To ameliorate these concerns, both individual, group and organizational strategies present in this paper can help shift resistance from a negative force to a positive source of feedback. Anticipating resistance as a possibility to discuss and grow, organizations can not only manage problems, but also build the culture of trust, cooperation, and flexibly. The results of this research offer a broad synoptic of resistance, begging practical implications that should benefit the field of change management, as well as giving academic researchers clues to enhance their abilities and locate future research inquiries.

## Conclusion

Organizational resistance to change is a complex entity that depends on individual and group susceptibility to change as well as the features of the organization. Surprisingly, resistance may be useful to some extent because it reveals attitudes and weaknesses of an organization and its employees. Allow me to express that managing resistance involves advocating for a proper understanding of change, engaging employees, encouraging and empowering leaders, and ensuring employees have what they need to make the change happen. If an organization wants to change people's resistance into a strength, that is, approach change systemically in a manner that embraces the culture of people, institutions and business shall learn and adopt the culture of trust, collaboration and adaption. Therefore, the enhancement of the efficacy in the management of change resistance is crucial to increasing the success and continuity of change management in the complex world of organizations.

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