

A Narrative Review on the Resistance to Organisational Change: Commissioning of Organisational Change through Effective Communication among Malaysia Public Sectors Employees

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ABSTRACT

The resistance to organisational change among civil servants or employees within Malaysia's public sector has been flagged as a concerning issue. The absence of exit policies has created significant generational gaps within the public sector workforce. Research from both Western and Southeast Asian studies suggests that implementing organisational change through effective communication among Malaysia's public sector employees can help bridge these gaps. Consequently, the current study aims to explore resistance to change among Malaysian public sector employees, identify factors contributing to employees' acceptance of organisational change in the public sector, and explore effective communication methods among Malaysian public sector employees. To accomplish this, a narrative review was conducted using secondary data gathered from Google Scholar, focusing on studies from 2020 onwards to ensure relevance. The findings indicate that effective communication plays a crucial role in reducing gaps and fostering change among public sector employees in Malaysia. This is attributed to the clear understanding, assistance, guidelines, and training provided to employees. In summary, addressing resistance to change and promoting acceptance of organisational change in Malaysia's public sector requires effective communication strategies. By ensuring clarity, support, guidance, and training for employees, organisations can facilitate smoother transitions and foster a culture of adaptability and innovation within the public sector workforce.

Keywords: resistance, organisational change, effective communication, public sector, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Organisational change driven by technological advancement can pose several challenges. The common problems faced by many of the organisation are due to the resistance of change among the employees (Elgohary & Abdelazyz, 2020). Regardless of private as well as public sectors, both are facing the resistance to change among the employees specifically due to the psychological behaviour of human that afraid of uncertainties. Employees were found to resist adopting new technologies due to fear of job loss, unfamiliarity, or concerns about increased workload. Addressing this by providing comprehensive training, communicating the benefits of the technology, and involving employees in the decision-making process will help to reduce the complexity of rejection in human behaviour on changes of doing work. The introduction of new technologies often requires different skill sets which are challenging to employees that used to its way of doing things at work (Abe, Abe & Adisa, 2021). However, in coping with a fast environment, organisation need to update with recent technology and environment. Hence, organisation have to ensure that employees must be able to cope and ready with the changes. This is to avoid, incompetencies and ineffectiveness at work, that cause from the unfit employees. Many have gone the extra mile, by offering incentives for upskilling and providing opportunities for continuous learning among the employees. Integrating new technologies with existing systems can be complex and time-consuming, as it requires to introduce employees and training in making sure employees competencies. Conduct thorough planning and testing to minimise disruptions. To resolve the employees' competencies, engaging IT professionals and vendors early in the process to address compatibility issues and ensure smooth integration is helpful (Rangraz & Pareto, 2021). Implementing new technologies can be expensive, with costs often exceeding initial estimates. Ensuring employees are equipped with the necessary skill, organisation develops a realistic budget that accounts for both implementation and ongoing maintenance in maximising a cost-benefit analysis to justify the investment and prioritise initiatives that offer the greatest return on investment (Mehale, Govender, & Mabaso, 2021).

Studies also show that technology advancements introduce new security vulnerabilities, putting sensitive data at risk. Implement robust cybersecurity measures like encryption, access controls, and regular security audits. This highlighted that all employees must be educated on cybersecurity to minimise the risk of data breaches. Poorly managed organisational change can lead to confusion, frustration, and decreased productivity among employees (Adeyemi, 2022). In addition, developing a clear change management plan that outlines objectives, timelines, and responsibilities will help the employees to understand and trust the organisation. Also, studies show that the ability to communicate regularly with employees can keep them informed and address concerns promptly (Baran & Woznyj, 2020). Organisational culture sometimes clashes with technological changes, especially in traditional or hierarchical environments. Therefore, fostering an innovation and adaptability culture by rewarding experimentation, celebrating successes, and promoting open communication will help the employees to accept new changes (Jerab & Mabrouk, 2023). Yet, technology advancements may raise ethical concerns related to privacy, fairness, and societal impact. Organisation is advised to establish ethical guidelines and policies to ensure that technology is used responsibly and ethically (Lobschat et al., 2021).

Solicit feedback from stakeholders and engage in transparent discussions about the ethical implications of technological changes. Flexibility allows for the adjustment of strategies and approaches as needed, ensuring agility in the face of change. Therefore, the present studies aim to achieve below objectives: -

1. To explore the resistance to change among Malaysian employees in the public sector.
2. To identify factors contributing towards employee's acceptance of organisation change in the public sector.
3. To explore ways of effective communication among Malaysian employees in the public sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Sectors Employees in Malaysia

Public sector employees in Malaysia encompass a wide range of professionals working in various government departments, agencies, and ministries at the federal, state, and local levels. These employees play crucial roles in delivering public services, implementing government policies, and supporting national development initiatives. Some common categories of public sector employees in Malaysia include civil servants form the backbone of the public sector workforce in Malaysia. They are employed in various government ministries, departments, and agencies, performing administrative, managerial, and operational roles. Civil service positions include clerical staff, administrative officers, policy analysts, and other professionals. Teachers and educators are employed in public schools, colleges, and universities across Malaysia (Hussin, 2020). They play a vital role in providing quality education and shaping the future of the nation by imparting knowledge and skills to students. Meanwhile, healthcare professionals work in public hospitals, clinics, and healthcare facilities to deliver medical services, promote public health, and ensure access to healthcare for all Malaysians (Awang et al., 2022). This includes doctors, nurses, pharmacists, allied health professionals, and administrative staff.

In addition, law enforcement officers, including police officers, immigration officers, and customs officers, are responsible for maintaining law and order, ensuring public safety, and enforcing regulations related to immigration, border control, and customs (Abdullah, 2022). Local government employees work in municipal councils and local authorities across Malaysia, providing essential services such as waste management, public transportation, urban planning, and community development. The public sector also employs professionals in various specialised fields, including finance, accounting, engineering, information technology, human resources, legal services, and communications. These professionals support government operations, policy development, and service delivery in their respective domains. Researchers and policy analysts work in government think tanks, research institutes, and policy advisory bodies to conduct research, analyse data, and provide evidence-based recommendations to inform government decision-making and policy formulation (Kuan et al., 2020). Recent reports, on Malaysian complaints about the government's inefficiency and ineffective in providing better services to Malaysian citizens are always related to civil servant incompetencies. Thus,

identifying the factors that contribute to civil servants' resistance is important to ensure government agencies and organisations stay competent.

Resistance to Change among Public Sector Employees

Resistance to change among public employees is a common issue that can arise in various organisations and can significantly hinder progress and innovation. Change often brings uncertainty, and creates fear for employees on the unknown aspects of the change, such as how it will affect their roles, responsibilities, and job security. Usually, many employees feel a loss of control over their work environment or processes due to changes being implemented which leads to resistance (Srivastava & Agrawal, 2020). Employees generally prefer stability and are comfortable with familiar routines and processes, especially among public sector employees, who receive a fixed and stagnant monthly income. Changes are also believed to disrupt employees' comfort zones, leading to resistance. Not understanding the actual objectives and the need for change may lead to high turnover in an organisation (Hubbart, 2023). However, since the government agencies have no exit policies. This might not impact them much. Yet, the severe impact shows when many resign and demotivated at work. Previous unsuccessful change initiatives or experiences of layoffs, reorganisations, or failed projects can lead to skepticism and resistance toward new changes.

Employees may perceive change as a threat to their job security or career advancement opportunities, leading to resistance. Therefore, organisational culture plays a significant role in shaping employee behaviour. Differences with existing cultural norms and values, resulting employee's resistance. Employees may resist change if they feel that they do not have the necessary resources, skills, or support to adapt to the new situation. Employees may resist change when their perception leads to negative impacts on their personal lives, such as increased workload, longer hours, or having to learn new skills. Thus, addressing resistance to change requires proactive communication, involvement of employees in the change process, providing support and resources, fostering a culture of trust and openness, and demonstrating the benefits of the change. Change management strategies should be tailored to address the specific concerns and needs of employees to minimise resistance and facilitate.

Factors Contributing Positive Organisational Change

Positive organisational change is attributed to various factors, which often work together synergistically to drive progress and improvement within an organisation. Some key factors contributing to positive organisational change include. Effective leadership is crucial for guiding the organisation through change. Leaders who inspire, communicate effectively, and actively involve employees in the change process that significantly impact its success. A clear vision of the vision and mission of the organisation is headed and a well-defined strategy for achieving goals provide direction and purpose for change efforts (Hubbart, 2023). This clarity helps align efforts and resources toward desired outcomes. The involvement of employees in the change process fosters a sense of ownership and commitment. When employees feel valued and engaged, they are more likely to support and contribute to the success of organisational change initiatives.

Transparency and open communication channels also facilitate understanding, build trust, and alleviate uncertainties associated with change (Zainab, Akbar & Siddiqui, 2022). Continuous communication and regular updates, feedback mechanisms, and opportunities for dialogue enable stakeholders to voice concerns, share ideas, and stay informed throughout the change process. A supportive and adaptive organisational culture that values innovation, learning, and continuous improvement can facilitate positive change. Cultures that embrace change as a natural part of growth are better equipped to navigate challenges and capitalise on opportunities (Teece, Raspin & Cox, 2020). Organisations that are resilient and adaptable will effectively respond to external pressures and internal dynamics. Thus, public sectors organisation are also need to be aware on the factors that contribute towards organisational change among its employees, in order to protect the organisation image and reputation.

Advantages of Organisational Change Employee's Acceptance

Utilising established change management methodologies and practices enhances the likelihood of successful outcomes. This includes planning, monitoring progress, addressing resistance, and providing support mechanisms for employees impacted by change. Sufficient resources, including finances, technology, and skilled personnel, are essential for implementing change initiatives effectively. In addition, adequate resource allocation able to ensures that necessary tools and support are available to facilitate the transition (Mourtzis, Angelopoulos & Panopoulos, 2022). Investing in employee development and learning opportunities enables individuals to acquire new skills and competencies needed to adapt to changing roles and responsibilities. As many organisation sustains longer due to their organisation commitment in the long run. Thus, continuous learning among the employees fosters a culture of innovation and resilience within the organisation. In addition, recognising and celebrating milestones achieved during the change process reinforces positive behaviors and motivates continued progress. Additionally, learning from setbacks and failures provides valuable insights for refining strategies and approaches in future change efforts. By prioritising these factors and leveraging them strategically, organisations can foster an environment conducive to positive change, driving growth, innovation, and long-term success.

Disadvantages of Employees' Rejection on Organisational Change

Employee rejection of organisational change poses significant challenges and drawbacks for the organisation. Organisational change rejection among employees leads to a decline in morale and motivation among them (Usman, 2020). Fear of the unknown, concerns about potential dangers to one's job stability, or doubts about the advantages of the change can all be causes of resistance. Employee disengagement could follow, which would be bad for output and general performance. Conflict inside the company might develop as a result of persistent resistance to change. This may show up as pushback from different departments or teams, as well as interpersonal disputes between staff members and management. Such disputes have the potential to poison the workplace, impair trust, and interrupt workflow. Opposition to change stifles creativity and makes it more difficult for the company to adjust to changing market conditions or technical breakthroughs. (Naveed, Alhaidan, Al Halbusi, & Al-Swidi, 2022).

Without buy-in from employees, initiatives aimed at improving processes, introducing new technologies, or pursuing strategic opportunities will be a total failure. Employee rejection of change can result in delays in implementation, leading to cost overruns and missed deadlines (Gaurang, 2020). Resistance may necessitate additional resources for persuasion, training, or addressing concerns, increasing the overall cost of the change initiative.

Organisational change that meets with resistance impacts the quality of products or services delivered to customers. This will lead to a reduction in employee morale and productivity which will result in a decrease in customer satisfaction, damaging the organisation's reputation and competitiveness in the market (Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020). Organisation may also miss out on opportunities for growth, innovation, and competitive advantage. Embracing change allows organisations to adapt to evolving customer needs, capitalise on emerging trends, and stay ahead of competitors. Resistance to change hinders these opportunities for growth and innovation. Thus, over time, this it erodes employee loyalty and commitment, making it difficult for the organisation to implement future changes successfully. Addressing employee rejection of organisational change requires proactive communication, engagement, and collaboration between management and employees are crucial at this stage. The case was applied to public sector organisation as many found rejecting to any changes made by the organisation due to its convenient and practices norm.

The Importance of Effective Communication in Organisation

Communication ensures that all employees understand the organisation's goals, vision, and expectations. Clear communication helps align individual and team efforts with organisational objectives, fostering a sense of purpose and direction (Mascareño, Rietzschel & Wisse, 2020). Effective communication facilitates coordination and collaboration among team members and departments. It ensures that everyone is on the same page regarding project timelines, tasks, and responsibilities, leading to increased efficiency and productivity. Open communication channels enable employees to share ideas, provide feedback, and contribute to problem-solving and decision-making processes (Stadler, Hautz, & von den Eichen, 2020). This collaborative approach harnesses the collective intelligence of the organisation, leading to more informed and effective decisions. The employees that feel heard and valued, will be more engaged and motivated. Hence, effective communication fosters a culture of openness, transparency, and trust, which enhances employee morale and job satisfaction (Zainab, Akbar & Siddiqui, 2022). Miscommunication or misunderstandings can lead to conflicts within the organisation. Therefore, effective communication skills, such as active listening and empathy, are essential for resolving conflicts constructively and maintaining positive working relationships. Communication plays a critical role in managing organisational change. Transparent communication about the reasons for change, the anticipated impact, and the timeline helps alleviate uncertainty and resistance, increasing acceptance and buy-in from employees (Verghese, 2021). Communication with customers is vital for understanding their needs, addressing concerns, and building long-term relationships. Effective communication ensures that customers receive accurate information, prompt responses, and satisfactory resolutions to their queries or issues. Encouraging open communication and idea-sharing fosters a culture of

innovation and creativity within the organisation (Ghouri et al., 2021). When employees feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and exploring new concepts, it leads to the generation of fresh ideas and innovative solutions. Regular communication channels, such as performance reviews and team meetings, provide opportunities for feedback and reflection. Besides, constructive feedback helps employees identify areas for improvement and facilitates ongoing learning and development. Communication shapes the organisational culture by reinforcing shared values, norms, and behaviors, it also prioritises effective communication and promotes transparency, accountability, and mutual respect, strengthening the overall fabric of the organisation.

Ways of communicating effectively in Organisation

Effective communication in organisations takes various forms and utilise multiple channels to ensure that messages are conveyed, accurately, and comprehensively. Communicating using messages clearly and concisely, avoiding jargon or unnecessary complexity is one of the ways of best communication. Moreover, the use of simple language that is easy to understand by all members of the organisation. Encourage active listening during conversations and meetings to make them pay attention to what others are saying, show empathy, and ask clarifying questions to ensure mutual understanding. Foster an environment of openness and transparency where employees feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, concerns, and ideas (Zainab, Akbar & Siddiqui, 2022). Keeping employees informed about relevant updates, decisions, and changes within the organisation is crucial to ensure the messages are delivered from top management to employees. Utilise a variety of communication channels to reach different audiences effectively. This may include face-to-face meetings, emails, newsletters, intranet platforms, instant messaging apps, and social media. Schedule regular team meetings, one-on-one check-ins, and town hall sessions to discuss progress, address issues, and provide updates. These meetings facilitate collaboration, alignment, and accountability among team members. Incorporate visual aids such as charts, graphs, and presentations to enhance understanding and retention of information. Visual communication can simplify complex concepts and make data more accessible to a wider audience. Establish feedback mechanisms for employees to share their thoughts, opinions, and suggestions.

Encouraging constructive feedback and listening to employees will foster continuous improvement. Encourage employees to voice their opinions and take part in decision-making processes. Give other points of view the opportunity to be acknowledged and heard to foster a hospitable and inclusive community. Respond to inquiries, requests, and criticism right away to demonstrate your concentration and decorum. Avoid communication gaps as they might lead to misunderstandings and dissatisfied employees. Provide employees with training and development opportunities to enhance their communication skills. Additionally, offering training or materials on dispute resolution, persuasive communication, active listening, and other pertinent subjects to promote efficient communication inside the company aids in the employees' comprehension of the company's objectives. Moreover, making certain that the message is conveyed through all organisational levels and communication channels helps employees to stay updated with organisation. Thus, maintaining communication initiatives in

line with the organisation's goals benefits the organisation in preserving values, and brand identity to ensure credibility and trust. Leaders role nowadays has to be extended by setting the tone for positive communication inside the organisation. Finally, communicate in an open, courteous, and truthful manner to set a positive example for others to follow. By implementing these strategies, companies may foster a culture of efficient communication that encourages worker engagement, teamwork, and output.

METHODOLOGY

This study will be using the narrative review to explore Resistance to organisational change: Implementation of organisational change through effective communication. By using this method, a comprehensive review of the current knowledge on this topic. The process of identifying and summarising is based on what has previously been published. A review was conducted on secondary data published from 2020 to 2024 on Google Scholar. This was used as the guide of this study to provide the latest and current insight into the study. The review encompassed a narrative review based on the advantages, and disadvantages of organisational change. Adding to the implementation of effective communication and its results from effective communication.

Inclusive Criteria

Apart from using previous research from the earlier timeframe, the process of analysing this study takes several criteria and factors that need to be considered in choosing the appropriate manuscript to be reviewed. Keywords effective communication, organisational change, advantages, and disadvantages to organisation in Malaysia were included in the searches. However, the review is not limited to online Malaysia but also extended to other countries as guidelines and comparisons to the Malaysian context.

Exclusion Criteria

Research published earlier than the year 2020 will be excluded from the search. The Searches also exclude other materials accepted for academic journals, books, and organisation official websites Journals that have insufficient or unreliable data on related keywords for the present studies are also excluded from the review.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Objective 1: To explore the resistance to change among Malaysian employees in the public sector.

Age Factor

Comparing older employees to newer generations that have grown up in the digital age, the former may have had less exposure to and familiarity with modern technologies. Opposition to technological improvements might stem from a fear of technology or a lack of confidence in using new tools. Because they may be more acclimated to hierarchical organisational systems,

older workers may be resistant to reforms that encourage more collaborative and agile work environments or flatten hierarchies (Chee, 2023). They found shifts in organisational structures or leadership philosophies as a danger to their power or prestige. If older employees believe that planned changes are primarily motivated by younger generations or external trends, they may doubt the proposed changes' relevance or worth.

Communication Preferences

As individuals age, they may become more set in their ways and less open to new ideas or perspectives. Cognitive rigidity can make it challenging for older employees to adapt to change, as they may be less inclined to consider alternative approaches or viewpoints. Different generations may have varying communication preferences, with older employees sometimes preferring face-to-face interactions or traditional forms of communication over digital channels (Hülür & Macdonald, 2020). Changes that rely heavily on technology-mediated communication may face resistance from older employees who prefer more interpersonal interactions.

Age-related reluctance to change necessitates proactive communication, focused coaching and assistance, and initiatives to promote an inclusive and cooperative culture. Acknowledging the distinct viewpoints and contributions of workers from various generations can aid businesses in efficiently managing change and capitalising on the advantages of a pluralistic workforce (Chua & Graham, 2020). In addition to bridging generational gaps, offering chances for mentoring, training, and conversation can support a culture of ongoing adaptation and learning.

Objective 2: To identify factors contributing towards employees' acceptance of organisation change in the public sector.

Effective Leadership

Effective leaders in the public sector articulate a clear vision for change and provide a compelling rationale for why it's necessary. They communicate how the proposed changes align with the organization's mission and goals, inspiring employees to support the change. Involvement and Empowerment of Leaders involve employees in the change process by soliciting their input, listening to their concerns, and empowering them to contribute to decision-making (Mizrak, 2024). By involving employees in planning and implementation, leaders foster a sense of ownership and commitment to the change. Leaders provide support and guidance to employees throughout the change process. They offer reassurance, address concerns, and provide resources to help employees adapt to new ways of working. Leaders also serve as role models, demonstrating openness to change and resilience in the face of challenges.

Effective Communication

Communication is key to gaining employee acceptance of the change. Leaders communicate openly and transparently about the reasons for change, the expected impact, and the timeline for implementation. They must address rumors and misinformation promptly and provide

regular updates to keep employees informed. Effective communication involves listening as much as speaking. Leaders actively listen to employees' concerns, questions, and feedback, demonstrating empathy and understanding. They create opportunities for dialogue and discussion, encouraging employees to voice their opinions and share their perspectives on the proposed changes. In addition, leaders tailor their communication strategies to the needs and preferences of different employee groups (Abdulah et al., 2023). They use a variety of channels, such as town hall meetings, team briefings, email updates, and intranet portals, to reach employees at all levels of the organisation. Communication is personalised, relevant, and accessible to all employees.

Training/Upskilling Provided

Change often requires employees to acquire new skills or enhance existing ones. Leaders provide training and upskilling opportunities to equip employees with the knowledge and competencies needed to succeed in the new environment. This may include technical training on new systems or processes, as well as soft skills training on adaptability, resilience, and change management. Promoting a culture of continuous learning and development, where employees are encouraged to seek out learning opportunities and take ownership of their professional growth (Hassan et al., 2021). They provide access to resources such as online courses, workshops, and mentorship programs to support employees' ongoing development. Leaders recognise and reward employees who demonstrate a willingness to learn and adapt to change. They celebrate milestones and achievements related to skills development, reinforcing the importance of ongoing learning in driving organisational success. By emphasising effective leadership, and communication, and providing training/upskilling opportunities, public sector organisations can foster employee acceptance of organisational change and increase the likelihood of successful change implementation (Ragunathan, 2023). These factors help build trust, engagement, and resilience among employees and navigate change with confidence and adaptability.

Objective 3: To explore ways of effective communication among Malaysian employees in the Public Sector.

Supportive Organisation Environment

Effective communication among Malaysian employees in the public sector is essential for promoting collaboration, aligning efforts, and delivering quality public services. Utilising multiple communication channels such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and other communication platforms will help the employees to get updates fast. Recognise that different employees may prefer different communication channels. Use a mix of channels such as face-to-face meetings, emails, official memos, intranet portals, and instant messaging apps to reach employees across different departments and levels (Jabbar et al., 2021). Define clear communication protocols and guidelines to ensure consistency and clarity in messaging. This includes guidelines on how to communicate changes, updates, and important announcements, as well as procedures for seeking feedback and resolving communication-related issues.

Foster a culture of openness and transparency where employees feel comfortable sharing information, ideas, and concerns. Encourage leaders to communicate openly about organisational goals, challenges, and decisions, and provide opportunities for employees to ask questions and provide feedback (Zainab, Akbar & Siddiqui, 2022). Communicate messages in clear and simple language that is easily understood by all employees, regardless of their level of education or background. Avoid using technical jargon or complex terminology that may confuse or alienate certain employees. Establish formal feedback mechanisms, such as suggestion boxes, surveys, or online feedback forms, to gather input from employees (Macnamara, 2020). Act on feedback received and communicate outcomes or actions taken to address employee concerns or suggestions. Provide training and development opportunities for employees to enhance their communication skills. This includes training on effective listening, conflict resolution, interpersonal communication, and cross-cultural communication, which are particularly important in a diverse workplace like the Malaysian public sector.

CONCLUSION

Communication is the lifeblood of any organisation, serving as the conduit through which goals, expectations, and visions are conveyed. Clear and effective communication aligns individual and team efforts with organisational objectives, fostering a sense of purpose and direction. By facilitating coordination and collaboration among team members and departments, communication ensures everyone is on the same page regarding project timelines, tasks, and responsibilities, thereby enhancing efficiency and productivity. Moreover, open communication channels empower employees to share ideas, provide feedback, and contribute to decision-making processes, harnessing the collective intelligence of the organisation. When employees feel heard and valued, their engagement and motivation soar, nurturing a culture of openness, transparency, and trust that bolsters morale and job satisfaction.

However, miscommunication can sow seeds of conflict within the organisation. Hence, honing effective communication skills such as active listening and empathy is crucial for resolving conflicts constructively and maintaining positive working relationships. Additionally, transparent communication is instrumental in managing organisational change, and fostering acceptance and buy-in from employees. Externally, communication with customers is indispensable for understanding their needs and building lasting relationships. Encouraging open communication and idea-sharing cultivates innovation and creativity, leading to the generation of fresh ideas and solutions. In essence, effective communication not only shapes organisational culture but also promotes transparency, accountability, and mutual respect, fortifying the fabric of the organisation and propelling it toward success.

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