IJAAR PUBLISHING®

Journal of Global Interdependence and Economic Sustainability | ISSN: 2955-0815
Vol. 5, Issue 2 (2026) | https://doi.org/10.46654/sstx1q25

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND EMPLOYEES' RESISTANCE: THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE IN MANAGING THE MENACE IN MANUFACTURING COMPANIES

BY

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Abstract

The study investigated organizational change and employee's resistance: the strategic role of human resource in managing the menace in manufacturing companies. The objectives of this are to investigate the critical factors that are triggering change in companies, examine the reasons for employee's resistance to emerging changes in companies, and to ascertain the strategic roles of human resource professionals in change management in companies. The change management theory proposed by Lewin (1947) was adopted. The study adopted cross-sectional research design for the collection of both primary and secondary data. The secondary data were sourced from textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers as well as internet publications. Primary data was collected purposively with the use of questionnaire structured in four Likert format. The findings have shown that critical factors trigger change in companies, such as social factor, political factor, economic factor, technological factor, and government factor. In addition, the finding shows further that the fear of job loss, inadequate release of useful information, poor communication channel, lack of proper engagement and management, distrust between management and employees, and improper timing. The finding also revealed that the strategic role of human resource professionals in companies is to provide employees the needed awareness and information. Management should ensure that every individual is given the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the factors that trigger change in other to make the workforce have first-hand awareness of the factors. Management should also organize forums where employees can be communicated the benefits of organizational change.

Keywords: Organizational Change, Employee Resistance, Human Resource, Managing, Menace

Introduction

The ever-increasing condition organizations faces nowadays is on the issue of employees' acceptance and maintenance of frequent changes that usually takes place in the workplace. The constant changes are as a result of certain unforeseen demands the world's modern positions impacts on the today's business (Kotter, 2012). As globalization keeps trending, manufacturing companies invariably are poised to face high competition, as they try to improve productivity with the changes that mirror their practices. For changes to occur in companies, substantially, the integration of modern technologies as well as the optimizing of current work practices by implementing measures that are necessary to encourage non-resistance to change for sustainable productivity in organizations. A change to any company means a lot because it determines either the failure or success of the organization in terms of convincing employees to accept such change.

Change can be viewed to be difficult when it is poorly presented in the organization. Its acceptance or resistance portrays the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the role of change managers in a company. Employees meet with new change situation, and when such change isnot familiarized with, one cannot apprehend and then it is resisted. The resistance to change compromises organizations intension to swift acceptance to change. This however, ensure effectiveness to change adoption. The consequences of employee resistance to change comes in several forms, but it can outrightly make organizations to dwindle as well as face certain distorting outcomes which will be costly to reposition the organization in a stable path for rebuilding its structures for productivity and progress.

Resistance to change refers to non-acceptance of change. The failure of human resource (HR) manager to communicate the essence of the prevalent change to employees can lead to employee resistance. Change resistance can be reduced by HR personnel if they can play their right on time. By reducing employee's resistance to change by strategically playing the HR role, this can lead to increase in productivity, increase in turnover, as well as promoting of work efficiency. Furthermore, any resistance to change present hard consequences to the workforce, organization, and it can also jeopardize the organizations path to success. The pillars of change acceptance are the HR managers in companies. Therefore, HR managers play a critical role when it comes to managing change, promoting collaborations as well as connecting and communicating the change factors to employees.

Organizational changes nowadays appear in different forms such as structural changes, strategical changes, changes caused by new technologies, as well as changes in administration (Robbins & Coulter, 2016). In another perspective changes come as a result of government policy, politics, competition, and economy. Therefore, adopting and managing changes within companies are often described to be challenging, demanding, and time oriented. According to Ghany (2014) managing changes in organization is a very tedious role, since it involves managing the individuals. While organizations prioritize employee's loyalty to change by reeling out change programmes even when employees may not accept to collaborate entirely with such change initiatives. The timely implementation of changes in manufacturing companies delivers successful fortunes for the future of the companies in having employees with right perception of change through the strategic role of HR personnel (Ragadu, 2008). Change management enables employees to accept changes rather than resisting change (Lazenby & Radebe, 2011).

It is a necessity for employees to be made ready to accept changes in organization at any point of any emerging changes. The HR department constitutes the change managers that induce employees to be made ready to accept changes in a company. Therefore, change

management utilizes HR management strategies within a timeframe to control employees as a result of evolving changes, as to assist individuals adopt the changes and function with the expectations (Prosci, 2018). Using change management mechanisms involves the application of structured and strategic processes that engages strategic approaches for demanding change (Rouse, 2014). Change management is the process that involves a structured and strategic ways of managing processes, individuals, and emerging technologies that impacts businesses by changing the operational modalities to gain a competitive advantage (Anyieni, 2016). For some companies managing employees and organizational changes involves the collaborative effort of HR, and employees in the adoption and adaptability to new ideas in fostering acceptance to prioritized changes in a company's work procedure and operational processes in relation to required innovative behaviour for the company to overcome pressuring challenges that attempts to slow its effectiveness in the business environment (Carlo-D 'Ortenzio, 2012).

The human resource management (HRM) plays the strategic role of accepting change even when it is not the change maker. But as implementers of change programmes. However, HRM manages, accepts changes in business organizations, and become a key strategic collaborator for change implementation in companies in other to achieve core goal of the firm (Acar & Yener, 2016). Furthermore, companies seek for smart HR strategies that can successfully align with desires and expectations in other to cope and manage the challenges of changes connected with technological transformation and advancement. Such changes affect the structure organizations, and the HRM intention is to permit the HR play the strategic role in ensuring change for organizational productivity (Sivathanu & Pillai, 2018).

The HR strategies for change management are the catalyst that is used to promote the employee's acceptance of change in companies. The strategies or techniques to communicate change in organizations can include team building, constructive training and counseling (Jones, 2010). The successful management of change begins with the mitigation of HR practice of identifying the drivers of change, and the recognition of HR role of initiating collaboration and involvement of employees for effective change management. The vital role of HRM on making employee to accept collaborating in the change process are important for encouraging effectiveness of change management processes (Hussain, Lei, Akram, Haider, Hussain & Ali, 2018). Furst & Cable (2008) opines that the HR active role on issues of organizational change can enable employees have positive feelings for the desired change in the organization. There such attitude can enhance employee's mindset for the acceptance of change being canvassed in the company (Oreg, 2006).

With the unfolding strategies on how to manage organizational change in the workplace, it is pivotal to acknowledge that despite the efforts there are still reports of abysmal records of change management decisions among companies. Meanwhile, the intriguing costs and efforts putted on managing workplace changes has shown detrimental outcomes on firm's financial records and on employees' well-being for either accepting or resisting the change. The critical factor that challenges change management in organizations is inertial. This refers to strong resistance to change initiatives. Organizations must adopt strategies that put off inertial and encourage a motion to change acceptance in the company. However, undermining inertial in companies can have delineating consequences at the workplace.

Scholars have observed the essential role of HR in managing organizational change (Innocenti, Peluso, & Pilati, 2012), while studies have also emphasized that HR manager and department are to be effective change enforcers in organizations (Edgley-Pyshorn, & Huisman, 2011; Kim & Ryu, 2011). Hanson (2013) found in a study that 77% of HR personnel play a slim role in managing change, and were inconsistent in such role. However,

HR managers are to make vital contributions toward halting resistance to organizational changes (Hanson 2013), as well as on how HR practices can confront the menace of change resistance. Therefore, it has been found that sensitivity training and communication efficiency in organizations can facilitate and sustain change management in organizations. This systematic and strategic ideal of HR practices for change management has been reported to have evidence of confronting change inertia (Whelan-Berry & Sumerville, 2010; Molineux, 2014). It is against these backdrops that this research seeks to investigate organizational change, employee resistance, and the strategic role of HR in preventing the menace of resistance to change, and how change can be managed effectively in companies to achieve organizational objectives.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the critical factors that are triggering change in companies.
2. To examine the reasons for employee's resistance to emerging changes in companies.
3. To ascertain the strategic roles of Human Resource Professionals in Change Management in companies.

Research Questions

1. What are the critical factors triggering change in companies?
2. What are the reasons for employee's resistance to emerging changes in companies?
3. What are the strategic roles of Human Resource Professionals in Change Management in companies?

Triggering Factors of Change

The changes that often emerge at the workplace has inherent factors attributed to its occurrences. This becomes a concern for organizations to communicate the changes to its workforce in other to manage it squarely. On the issue of change management, it is required essentially that company managers recognize the significance of change in the firm. Therefore, using designed procedures, organizations have to identify, strategize, and roll out essential protocols, tools, and forums that can enable the addressing of change issues to employees as to draw more of their attention and acceptance to the purpose of the change, and how it may benefit the people and the organization. Change management is needed to provide support or assistance to individuals that are critically affected by such change in other to make them become engaged with the change, cling to the change, and adopt the change without any delay (Prosci, 2021). Change management can be described as a vital responsibility of managers with mandatory skills, abilities, and thoughtfulness in communicating changes to workers within the company. In the world of business, changes are prone to occur, however, such changes are not without coercing factors. Organizations must acknowledge and implement change for total acceptation and adaptation of the employees as necessitated by current business needs as well as the corresponding global economic progressions. Meanwhile, it is obvious that change management strategies have been evolving in recent times. With the use of definite strategies, proposals, as well as designs that are developed to help companies quell change resistance, firms can manage and deal with any disaffection among employees for the change in organizations (Maciej, Roza, Roza, 2017).

As organizations keep on making effort to adapt to the changing global working practices and environments, it becomes important for companies to stay prepared to abreast the situation whenever it occurs. Companies must also view the business environment as being dynamic, and often time requires deepened, rapid, and positive reactions needed to drive along with the

change. Therefore, the business environment can seldom become stable. But the changes in different industries such as manufacturing, agriculture, information and communication, energy, banking, transportation, hospitality, and so on continue to flow with the rapid technological transformations. At this juncture, it becomes compelling for companies in various scope of industry to adjust, and connect with the change despite the intriguing factors of change (Organizational Behavior, 2017).

Economic Factor

Economic factors play more serious role on the functionality of organizations, as well as on the change management practices. It also recognizes ardent opportunities and challenges that increases pressures on business competition as well as the dominance of economic insecurity. In addition, factors like changes in business environment, inflation rate, currency rates, import and export duties, economic recession, interest or forex rates fluctuations, economic policies reforms, tax payment reforms, oil price instability, country of operation financial instability, as well as loss in consumer purchasing confidence (Management Study Guide, 2020).

Political Factors

The evolving nature of world politics and the challenges it has on global economy is vastly evolving around the business environment. The weight of world of politics continues mix global politics with global business economy, and this has been causing significant shift, posing severe obstruction to companies such as changes in legislation policies, and regulations, as well as variations in economic structure caused by globalization as well as business liberalization (Management Study Guide, 2020).

Technological Factors

Technology advancement is a very prominent factor that contributes to change in work performance. In addition, it creates a shift in work practices. Technology and innovation continue to affect companies operating from various industries. Technological transformations in communication, information, computers and manufacturing continue to advance company's functionality by offering new ways to communicate and perform job at the workplace. Emerging technologies make businesses to grow and perform better. Furthermore, technological factor is major in business changes and advancement. More advancements in digital technology will keep helping businesses to survive as well as make communication channels in business world more sustainable and effective in work performance among employees in different industries (Management Study Guide, 2020).

Government legislation Factor

Strict government legislative laws, regulations, intervention, and reforms pose a lot of impact on companies to make changes to work requirements by modifying work procedures. Deregulation and devaluation of currency are state-controlled economic interventions. Political power of government usually influences economic regulations and interventions at all levels (Management Study Guide, 2020).

Competition Factor

The heated competition in the business world defines how most of the successful companies swiftly adapt to change to sustain their effort in matching with the competitive business industries. Therefore, companies must maintain flexibility and responsiveness to organize its workforce to adjust quickly with the changes so as to compete efficiently in the global

business environment (Organizational Behavior, 2017). As the global competition surges, the challenges that confront businesses to thrive makes companies to adopt changes in order to be relevant in the business environment. Competitive factor remains a change force that can help businesses to effectively sustain competition in changing work patterns to remain visible and viable in the global business environment (Management Study Guide, 2020).

Social Factor

The trending social factor that affects companies changes the way of doing business such as product packaging, marketing and distribution strategies. The changes allow consumers or customers to meet and interact through internet chat rooms as well as through bloggers to share company's product information. Most companies put their products on sale, and advertise services through networks made up of strong online influencers. Partnering with social and marketing influencers gives more advantage to product marketing. Online marketing is a vicious strategy to grow product and service brand in manufacturing and marketing firms (Organizational Behavior, 2017).

Environmental Factor

Environmental factor refers to pressures from the environment that harbour the company. Meaning that people and the inhabitants in the location companies are sited are increasingly pressuring company's operations in the area. There is also a fact that green or eco-friendly operations are important in the environment where manufacturing companies are located. It is encouraged that green energy facilities be used to replace obsolete mechanized equipment. As a result, companies have begun to invest in green energy and eco-friendly technologies to collaborate in securing the business environment from devastation and to reduce the negative impact of fossil fuel and other pollution on the climate condition (Organizational Behavior, 2017). Furthermore, people are becoming more aware of industrial impacts on the environment, and have begun to advocate that companies should adopt green approaches to manufacturing and marketing activities. Finally, these demands keep increasing pressure on firms to make necessary changes while adapting and sustaining eco-friendly technology in manufacturing (ManagementStudyGuide,2020).

Reasons for Employees Resistance to Emerging Changes

Employees resistance sometimes occurs whenever there is change in organization. This refers to change in attitude and work behaviour at workplace. Such resistance is shown in employees' unwillingness to collaborate, support, and accept the emerging change within the company (Yılmaz & Kılıçoğlu, 2013). The employee's resistance to change can be described as the resistance that brings loss of value to the company. Such resistance can be undermining a universal truth that is well recognized globally for effective company operations (Burke, 2008). In addition, the resistance can connote passive resignation or calculated sabotage on the organization (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010). Therefore, Robbins & Judge (2013), has to argue that employees who resist change do so because of the fear of losing their value. Hence, they lack the right understanding of need for the change as well as its importance to the company, and they have the disbelief that change can be meaningful to the company, or because of the difficulty to cope with the impact of the change, and or the inability to adapt, practice, and uphold the change.

According to Expert Program Management (2019) employees can resist change in various ways such as when they have feeling of losing individual interest of value, misunderstanding or misconstruing the change purpose, making wrong assessment of the change, as well as being parochial in thinking that the old system of work is better than the new way. However,

Paycor (2016) provided some of reasons for employees' resistance to organization change confirming to include fear of job loss, inadequate release of useful information, poor communication channel, lack of proper management and engagement, distrust between management and employees, and improper timing. Change in companies can be resisted by groups, individuals, customers, executives, and stakeholders. Paycor (2016) also argued that some individuals choose to stay aloof over change because of their personalized and professional interest. Over decades change has been occurring in different sectors in the global business environment. Some companies have managed to adapt with changes in the competitive industries.

Human Resource Roles in Change Management and Employees Adoption toChange

According to Griffin (2006) the progress, stability or failure of a company is traceable to the effectiveness of its workforce collaboration with the HR managers. In addition, Benedict (2007) opined that HR personnel must ensure that employees get the needed awareness on change to ensure that management initiative of change is well understood by all in the organization so that they can willingly embrace trending change in the company. HR has the capacity interface between employees and organizational change. For Adeniji, Osibanjo & Abiodun (2013) since HRM sits at the centre of organizational purview and interest for the achievement of company's objectives, it becomes a priority for HR to align employees with the goals of change in the firm. By this, employees can decide to accept and adapt to the change without any form of unwillingness to changes cherished by organization. Macky & Boxall (2007) argued that HRM role is able to influence employees work behaviouras well as their attitudes. Further, Tummers, Kruyen, Vijverberg & Voesenek (2015) argued that the HR managers must act proactively to convince employees to accept change in organization.

According to Benedict (2007) HR as change managers must ignite the awareness of change, as well as offering more understanding of change programme to employeesin order to make them become willing to accept change. The HR roles in change management involves; i)initiating a viable communication route to pressure employees to embrace organizational change; ii) employing and training employees; iii) sustaining transparent remuneration systems; iv) creating opportunity for individuals; and v) ensuring positive interaction and experience among employees and other clients. According to Adeniji, Osibanjo, & Abiodun (2013) consider that the role of HRM in change is to makes use of performance metrics such as, financial results, operational efficiency, leadership commitment, communication effectiveness, and the perceived need for change to design appropriate strategies, to avoid change failures or solve troubled change projects. In addition, Baran (2016) opined that HR has the capacity and competencies to change management through improving employee perception on change, improving communication channels, increasing employee job satisfaction, increasing more trust with the organization, improving skill and efficiency of employee, rewarding and awarding employees, and sustaining change programme duration.

Theoretical Framework

Change management theory proposed by Lewin (1947) was adopted in this paper. Lewis presented three-step change management for the explanation of change. The theory provided the sense for which change management is viewed as a way of understanding how organizations can manage change (Management Study Guide,2015). According to Lewin (1947), change management can be successful through the following steps, such as unfreeze, which emphasizes the current condition, change referring to transition stage, and refreeze which means the final outcome or stage). For more perception, unfreezing is the critical step that sees organization make a strong decision for change management by collapsing existing

framework that new changes. At this point awareness is emphasized, and communication about the change is transmitted to employees with its outcomes. The second step is the change which seem to be the hardest in the process of change in which organizations is ready to act on the new change. At this point, management uses training and support to assist employees to embrace new changes while they get to accustom it through proper communication and clarity on the change in the company. The third step is to refreeze, which is the last step of Lewin's three-step change. Refreeze refers to a situation where the organization has successfully implemented the new change, and is really benefiting from adapting to new standards as the desirable state for the company. Refreezing is incorporating the new change behaviour in the organization. At this step, organizations have embraced the new changes with the employees.

Materials and Method

The study enlisted cross-sectional research design for the collection of both primary and secondary data. The secondary data were sourced from textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers as well as internet publications. This research approach enabled the use of questionnaire for the collection of primary data. In support of this method, this approach aims to collect, analyze, and present data. For the collection of primary data, questionnaire structured in four Likert format of strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, and disagree were administered to respondents from three manufacturing companies. The purposive sampling technique was used while distributing the questionnaires to the respondents from the manufacturing companies. The 36respondents were the observed sample of the study comprising personnel from the human resource arm of the companies. Therefore, 36 copies of questionnaire were retrieved from respondents, analyzed, and presented on tables.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Summary responses that there are critical factors that are triggering change in companies.

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strongly agree	15	41.7		
Agree	13	36.1	14	1.0
Strongly disagree	5	13.9		
Disagree	3	8.3	4	1.0
Total	36	100		

Source: (Nworgu, 2026)

Table 1 displays the summary of responses based on the first objective of the study, that there are critical factors triggering change in companies. However, 15 (41.7%) respondents strongly agree and 13 (36.1%) respondents agree that there are critical factors triggering change in companies with mean and standard deviation scores of 14 and 1.0 respectively. On the other hand, 5 (13.9%) respondents strongly disagree and 3 (8.3%) respondents disagree to the stated opinion with mean score of 4, and standard deviation score of 1.0. It is very obvious that majority of respondents agree to the opinion, therefore the study stands to accept that there are critical factors triggering change in companies. The finding shows that critical factors trigger change in companies, such as social factor, political factor, economic factor, technological factor, and government factor.

Table 2: Summary responses that there are reasons for employee's resistance to emerging changes in companies.

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strongly agree	11	30.6		
Agree	12	33.3	11.5	0.5
Strongly disagree	7	19.4		
Disagree	6	16.7	6.5	0.5
Total	36	100		

Source: (Nworgu, 2026)

Table 2 indicates the summary responses that there are reasons for employee's resistance to emerging changes in companies in accordance to the second objective of the study. This is as 11 (30.6%) of respondents strongly agree and 12 (33.3%) respondents agree that there are reasons for employee's resistance to emerging changes in companies with mean and standard deviation scores of 11.5 and 0.5 respectively. On the contrary, 7 (19.4%) of respondents strongly disagree and 6 (16.7%) of respondents disagree to the stated opinion with mean and standard deviation scores of 6.5 and 0.5 respectively. The respondents that agree to the stated opinion is more than those that disagree. The study stands to accept that there are reasons for employee's resistance to emerging changes in companies. The finding shows that fear of job loss, inadequate release of useful information, poor communication channel, lack of proper engagement and management, distrust between management and employees, and improper timing were the reasons found for employees' resistance to emerging changes in companies.

Table 3: summary responses that there are strategic roles of Human Resource professionals in Change Management in companies.

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strongly agree	12	33.3		
Agree	17	47.2	14.5	2.5
Strongly disagree	4	11.1		
Disagree	3	8.3	3.5	0.5
Total	36	100		

Source: (Nworgu, 2026)

Table 3 reveals that summary responses that there are strategic roles of human resource professionals in change management in companies. Accordingly, 12 (33.3%) respondents and 17 (47.2%) respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that there are strategic roles of human resource professionals in change management in companies with mean and standard deviation scores of 14.5 and 2.5 respectively. But, 4 (11.1%) respondents strongly disagree, while 3 (8.3%) disagree that there are strategic roles of human resource professionals in companies with mean and standard deviation scores of 3.5 and 0.5 respectively. As the number of respondents that agree to the stated opinion is more, the study stands to accept that there are strategic roles of human resource professionals in change management in companies. The finding reveals that the strategic roles of human resource professionals in

companies include to ensure that employees get the needed awareness and information to ensure that change management initiative is well understood.

Conclusion

This study has affirmed that changes in companies can be embraced effectively by employees as the organization implement change strategically, and by communicating the change to the workforce timely. The findings have shown that critical factors trigger change in companies, such as social factor, political factor, economic factor, technological factor, and government factor. In addition, the finding shows further that the fear of job loss, inadequate release of useful information, poor communication channel, lack of proper engagement and management, distrust between management and employees, and improper timing were the reasons found for employees' resistance to emerging changes in companies. The finding also revealed that the strategic roles of human resource professionals in companies is to provide employees the needed awareness and information to ensure that change management initiative is well understood.

Recommendations

1. Employee should be made to understand the critical factors that trigger change in companies. Management should ensure that every individual is given the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the factors that trigger change in other to make the workforce have first-hand awareness of the factors.
2. Management should organize a forum where employees are communicated the benefits of organizational change to employees and the company so as to prevent employee's resistance to changes in companies.
3. Management should mandate the Human Resource Professionals in companies to ensure that they strategically manage change in the company before to enable employees embrace and collaborate with the company for it to progress.

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