

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Resistance to Change and Organizational Culture among Managers in a Mass Consumption Company from Lima

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the greatest crises ever faced by the human race, generating unprecedented transformations which have required the development of adaptability and flexibility in all contexts. Organizations worldwide were forced to change in order to respond to the new challenges from their environment and remain in the market. This is why it is necessary for organizations and the individuals who are part of them to be prepared to conduct transformation processes. This is particularly true of managers, whose attitudes toward change can determine the success or failure of these processes, as they directly influence their employees' motivation and participation. The main aim of this study was to determine the relationship between resistance to change and organizational culture among managers in a mass consumption company from Lima. This was a non-experimental, cross-sectional and correlational-causal study. The sample was made up of 25 first- and second-line managers in the organization leadership. The results of this research determined that resistance to change is not related to organizational culture.

Keywords: resistance to change; organizational culture; managers; mass consumption.

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INTRODUCTION

The worldwide crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of developing adaptation and flexibility skills in all contexts. Organizations were forced to quickly redefine their objectives and strategies, and to make adjustments to face a new environment characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity. This situation had an impact on the organizations' sustainability and continuity; many were unable to overcome this.

In the organization under investigation, certain resistance to change factors were noted such as discomfort, lack of enthusiasm to comply with new regulations, and refusal toward new ways of thinking and doing activities. These signs were noted among workers but—notably—among managers, suggesting that there may exist an organizational culture already developed in such regard.

Organizational Change

All changes involve transformation, interruption, disruption, or breaking of a routine, and involve a separation from the past, allowing things to become different (Chiavenato, 2009). Change ends routines, calls habits into question, and revolutionizes the traditional decision-making criteria (García, 2005). In the context of organizations, change involves efforts aimed at achievements or improvements (Martínez *et al.*, 2018), affecting the work expected from employees (Newstrom, 2011).

The evolution of our world has resulted in the need for organizations to constantly transform, requiring the quick and wide development of adaptation and flexibility capacities in order to respond to the new challenges of a highly competitive environment; this should provide them with the opportunity to remain active in the market. Ignoring the need to transform themselves and preserving a similar way of thinking and doing things leads to stagnation and failure (Quirant and Ortega, 2006).

Organizational Change and Leadership

Leader attitudes determine, to a great extent, employee motivation and participation, as well as the success of the change process. According to Damanpour (as cited by Rabelo *et al.*, 2004),

it is leaders who have the capacity and responsibility for promoting and carrying out transformation. As a consequence, it is necessary to have leaders who attract workers and invite them to be part of this change. Success in this process is more likely if the leaders who oversee it make it evident that they are confident about reaching the defined objectives (García and Forero, 2020).

Attitude to Change

Change creates new practices; however, for these to become effectively consolidated, it is necessary for individuals to transform as well. Ultimately, what makes this process successful is their ability to embrace change and implement it in the organization.

How individuals feel about change is a factor that determines their reaction to it: while some may ignore the change, others may show resistance, and others may accept it and adapt to it. For this reason, a transformation process should not expect to be supported by every single individual (Quirant and Ortega, 2006).

Resistance to Change

Resistance is a natural phenomenon linked to every process involving change. It encompasses behaviors shown by individuals in order to discredit, delay or prevent an instance of transformation (Robbins and Coutler, 2014). It is the opposition to change, evidenced in behaviors and actions that prevent it from taking place (García *et al.*, 2011). It may have detrimental effects for the organization's efficiency and performance (Oreg, 2003); therefore, understanding it is in the interest of management (Boada *et al.*, 2018).

However, instead of considering resistance to change to be a problem, it is possible to use it as a source of information because it can be based on concerns which are valid from the point of view of those involved. Thus, it becomes something that organizations can leverage to manage and improve (Boada *et al.*, 2018).

Factors of Resistance to Change

Resistance to change is an inherent culture of every individual facing new situations (Quirant and Ortega 2006). For this reason, to increase the effectiveness of the transformation process,

it is necessary to recognize the factors directly influencing resistance; these factors can be grouped into: individual factors and organization factors.

Individual factors are linked to the personality of an individual, and reside in human characteristics. Firstly, human beings naturally experience fear of the unknown (Acosta, 2002) because what is new may seem threatening (Quirant and Ortega, 2006). In the second place, people are habit creatures and are accustomed to a way of relating to others and acting (Villegas *et al.*, 2012). In the third place, people feel afraid of losing personal status, power, authority or personal benefits (Robbins and Coulter, 2014). In the fourth place, people experience feelings of control loss or that change will bring an increase in commands and checks (Quirant and Ortega, 2006).

Organizational factors are resistance sources from the organization where change takes place. These can be: a lack of trust among managers and change leaders (Newstrom, 2011), the belief that change will not result in any benefit for the organization (Robbins and Coulter, 2014), the type of organizational culture that punishes mistakes excessively (López *et al.*, 2013), among others. Ultimately, it is people who show resistance, so all these causes are related to them, even if some are not particularly related to their personalities but to external factors.

Oreg's Resistance to Change Scale

Individual orientation to change is becoming increasingly important because organizations need to adapt to a quickly changing environment, and because people must create an impact at work. Present-day organizational contexts value individuals who are willing and able to motivate and positively respond to change. However, the organizations attempting to initiate it can often be managed by individuals opposed to transformation, which has an impact on efficiency and performance (Oreg, 2003).

The resistance to change scale was designed to measure the personality component of resistance to change (Oreg, 2003). The author states that individuals are different from

one another in terms of their internal disposition to resist or avoid change, to devalue change in general and to find it aversive in various contexts and change types. Individuals who have a high degree of resistance to change will less likely introduce changes voluntarily and, when change is imposed on them, they will more likely experience negative emotional reactions. These differences can predict people's attitudes toward transformation initiatives.

The model includes four dimensions: routine seeking, emotional reaction, short-term focus, and cognitive rigidity (Oreg, 2003). Routine seeking means that individuals feel comfortable with familiar and stable activities and environments, a personal tendency to stick to habits and routines, repetitive actions, and difficulty in leaving the comfort zone (Oreg, 2003). The emotional reaction addresses the way in which individuals respond to imposed changes: while some become excited about change, others experience discomfort, lack of enthusiasm, stress, and anxiety (Oreg, 2003). The short-term focus proposes that individuals place excessive emphasis on the difficulties related to introducing change, rather than highlighting its potential long-term advantages (Oreg, 2003). Cognitive rigidity means the low acceptance of new ways of seeing and doing things. It indicates people's tendency to hold on to their own points of view, and their keeping deeply ingrained beliefs excessively.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be defined as the standardization of basic patterns shared by a particular group; this works well enough to be considered the correct way to think and feel (Schein, 2017); it also encompasses the values, customs, expectations and behavior shared by people (Aamodt, 2010), turning into the 'concrete' that compacts the entire organization (Sielh and Martin, as cited by Martínez, 2010), and uniting all members around shared objectives and way of behaving (Chiavenato, 2009). Organizational culture consists of the personnel who live it and reproduce it (Zimmermann, 2000), expressing the organization's identity and personality (Chiavenato, 2009), and distinguish it from other organizations (Robbins and Coulter, 2014).

Importance of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture has a significant effect because it is related to the employees' and organization's results (Gillespie *et al.*, 2008). Regarding the employee's results, organizational culture links them to a common mission, reinforces positive work habits, and keeps productivity high as the functions and expectations are defined for the organization members. In addition, organizational culture influences manager effectiveness because their decisions are influenced by the environment where they operate, and by the way in which they plan, organize, direct, and control (Aarnodt, 2010).

As for the organization's results, organizational culture can be used as a direction instrument; that is to say, as a targeted strategy to motivate the desired behaviors that will promote high performance (Zimmermann, 2000). When the culture is aligned with the strategy, it generates wealth, with a positive impact on sales, revenue, market share, and client satisfaction, according to Kotter and Heskett (as cited by Gillespie *et al.*, 2008).

On the other hand, organizational culture can be a factor for failure in the organization because it may contain dysfunctional aspects that have an impact on its effectiveness (Robbins and Coulter, 2014), as when it stops being adequate and becomes an obstacle for innovation and continuous improvement—conditions required to respond and adapt to changes, affecting the organization's financial performance.

Organizational Culture and Leadership

In management, there is a mutual influence between organizational culture and leadership (Aguilar, 2020). In that regard, studies and research on leadership and organizational culture have been performed under two approaches. In the first, culture determines the leadership type. Most research has been carried out under this approach. In the second, leadership determines culture. Under this approach, leaders generate and transfer organizational culture, according to Alcover (as cited by Aguilar, 2020).

Denison Organizational Culture Model (2004)

This model was designed and developed by Daniel Denison and his colleagues within business

contexts (Vesga, 2020), defining four dimensions of organizational culture: adaptability, involvement, mission, and consistency. The involvement dimension approaches employee alignment and commitment to the organization, and the development of their skills (Vesga, 2020). The consistency dimension means that activities are coordinated because there is a shared vision and internal integration (Denison and Mishra, 1995). The mission dimension indicates the purpose and direction to adopt (Vesga, 2000). The adaptability dimension involves the capacity to introduce changes to respond to the new demands of the environment (Martínez, 2010).

The findings and results of Denison and his colleagues' research demonstrated a positive association between culture and organization results, such as sales, financial performance, job satisfaction, innovation processes, and others. These studies also considered culture management to be a managerial competency that requires senior management to determine the most effective culture type for their organization, and which changes it may need to improve its effectiveness (Martínez, 2010).

Organizational Change and Culture

Following the dynamic pace of changes and modifications of current environments involves an adaptation challenge for organizations because the processes and procedures are affected, as well as deeper aspects such as organizational culture.

In this scenario, the success or failure of change initiatives is determined by the attitudes adopted by individuals when facing them. In the individual processes experienced by people when a change takes place in the organization, culture is a precedent of the individual general willingness or resistance to change (García *et al.*, 2011). Change and resistance to it are influenced by culture and, particularly, by the way in which employees regard it, according to Ford (as cited by García *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, any change in the organization should be supported by the individuals and the culture. However, in spite of its importance, organizational culture is not always taken into consideration during change processes and, for that reason, no direct interventions are made (Aarnodt, 2010), resulting in efficiency

and effectiveness lost, and hindering the ability to survive, adapt, and remain active, according to Berger (as cited by Valderrama, 2019).

Thus, the culture shared in an organization is one of the most important factors affecting transformation processes. Modifying culture is key to introduce changes in the organization; any change means a change in the culture (Acosta, 2002). Consequently, for changes in the organization to transcend and become true transformation processes, a redefinition of the culture is necessary; it is crucial for organizations to know how to include culture in their change processes. In addition, the strategy to introduce transformation processes in the organization should be framed within an organizational culture that predisposes the adoption of change, so that individuals recognize it is necessary, and therefore commit to acting in favor of it, according to Guns (as cited by Villamarin *et al.*, 2019).

METHOD

This research was non-experimental. A cross-sectional, correlational-causal design was used. The unit of analysis was the managers in a mass consumption company from Lima. The population consisted of the 25 first- and second-line managers under the general management of a mass consumption company from Lima. To collect information on each variable, a forty-six-item questionnaire was used.

RESULTS

To contrast the general hypothesis, the Spearman's rho coefficient was used, with a result of 0.603. This evidences that resistance to change is not correlated with organizational culture among the managers of a mass consumption company from Lima in 2021. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted (see Table 1).

Table 1
Correlation between Resistance to Change and Organizational Culture

		Percentage
Resistance to Change	Correlation Coefficient	-0.109
	Sig. (two-sided)	0.603
	N	25

Note. Prepared by the author, 2023.

DISCUSSION

Among the factors affecting individual processes experienced by people faced with an organizational change, culture has a key role (García *et al.*, 2011). For this reason, to effectively introduce a change initiative, it is important to know the culture, as well as individual and group behavior, according to Cameron and Quinn (as cited by García *et al.* 2020). Change and resistance to change are greatly determined by culture (García *et al.*, 2011).

These theoretical foundations have been verified by researchers in several studies. For example, Yatto (2018) concluded that there is a medium positive correlation between organizational culture and change management among the Proyecto Especial Madre de Dios 2018. In their research on organizational change factors, Prieto *et al.* (2018) determined that it is important to promote a solid culture in order to adapt to the changes required by the environment and generate favorable results for the organization. In another study, Díaz and Loayza (2020) identified a routine behavior that was engrained in civil servants from the educational management units in Apurímac as a result of conformity and risk aversion, leading to low disposition to achieve organizational change.

Based on the findings of this research, the null hypothesis is accepted, determining that there is no direct correlation between resistance to change and organizational culture among the managers of a mass consumption company from Lima in 2021. While these results may not seem to be supported by previous research, it is important to highlight that the world has recently undergone a process that changed the lives of people and organizations completely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced the world's population to transform all aspects of their lives. In addition, organizations underwent continuous change processes to face uncertain and ambiguous environments. Change was therefore adopted as a natural part of life for both individuals and organizations, so the need for change is no longer questioned, but how to achieve it effectively and successfully.

Regarding the low resistance to change levels identified among the managers in the or-

ganization studied, it may be explained by the marathon effect proposed by Bridges (as cited in López et al. 2013), which states that when managers reach higher positions in an organization, they can act more quickly in a change process because they may consider the goal to be more attainable. This may be a possible explanation for accepting the null hypothesis.

CONCLUSIONS

- With the results of this research on resistance to change and organizational culture among the managers of a mass consumption company from Lima, 2021, it is concluded that resistance to change is not correlated with organizational culture.
- It is important to review the change management plan, as it should consider the individual factors of employees in general, and of managers in particular, as well as performing new studies that can better explain the difficulty in adopting change initiatives.
- Based on the results, it may be questioned whether, after the crisis created by COVID-19, it is still appropriate to consider the concept of resistance to change as a natural attitude by individuals, or whether it is more appropriate to state that individuals have succeeded in developing a high degree of adaptability and flexibility. Further studies on change management should be extended to include an individual perspective.

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Competing interests

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Authors' Contribution

Ariana Vanessa Pacheco Lenti (lead author): Conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, research, methodology, project administration, validation, visualization, writing (original, revision and edition).