

Connection Between Resistance to Organizational Change and Psychological Resistance of an Individual

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Abstract: Resistance to organizational change as a facet of psychological resistance of an individual is a widespread phenomenon through which countries, organizations and individuals suffer significant losses. The increasing amount of articles and scientific papers researching the phenomenon of change resistance published for the past 50 year serves as an indicator that the problem of people resisting the implementation of change has not yet been fully studied. Yet the relevance of the issue is far from decreasing as companies keep sustaining considerable losses with the desired changes failing to be implemented as suggested by multiple studies. We believe there is an insufficiently researched aspect of this issue. The purpose of the article is to establish a clear connection between resistance to organizational change and psychological resistance. We believe that such a connection attesting to change resistance being a psychological phenomenon will shift the focus of future research from the organizational or managerial standpoint to viewing change resistance in a psychological dimension. A thorough analysis of previously conducted studies serves as a basis for revealing commonalities between the reason for change resistance and psychological resistance. A chart representing own classification of the reasons for change resistance and psychological resistance illustrating the similarities of the two phenomena can be found in the article. The present study further explores the connections of various strengths that can be seen between the two phenomena and proposes a summary spreadsheet demonstrating the research findings. The article concluded a comparative classification of the reasons for PR and RC appearance, it was stated the connections differ in terms of strengths and permanence.

Keywords: Change resistance, psychological resistance, reasons for change resistance, reasons for psychological resistance, psychological phenomenon, organizational change.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 100 years of human development, we can observe dynamic, qualitative changes in all spheres of human life: technology, culture, politics, science. At the same time, the issue of resistance to change (RC) is shaping, gaining particular importance in such areas as management of organization first and later in psychology and sociology. The above-mentioned changes are growing faster and more intense with every coming year, rather than slowing down. Organizational changes (OC) deserve special attention because they are associated with significant losses and are very common occurring in the lives of the majority of the population. The Towers Watson research conducted in 2013 among 276 large and medium-sized companies in North America, Europe and Asia [1] suggests that 50-75% of attempts to implement changes in the organization were not successful. In the context of interaction with the progressively dynamic economic, technological and social environment, organizations depend on the ability of their employees to adapt to changes [2]. Employees are recognized as the most important resource of any organization, and the failure of an organization is a

failure of people [3]. Therefore, the issue of RC continues to be at the centre of attention. This also suggests that the problem has not been thoroughly investigated, and a solution for the RC issue has not yet been offered.

One of the first scientists to consider the concept of employees' resistance to organizational changes in the context of a management organization was K. Levin. The concept of RC was formed based on the physical concept of resistance as a restraining force that strives to preserve the status quo. According to D. Bukenug, most sources about RC consider this phenomenon at levels dictated from the top-bottom of the planned changes and personality. J. Hollander and R. Einwohner believe that the concept of resistance always includes the opposition. For decades, most studies on this topic considered RC not from an individual but an organizational standpoint [3]. In general studies of D. Buckenug and S. Piderit [4] it is indicated that recently some researchers, considering the existence of different definitions of RC and related phenomena (cynicism with regard to organizational changes), have been trying to create a more holistic approach to the way a person and an organization treat change [5]. S. Foerst and D. Keybel established the relationship between the RC, the interaction between the team leader and the type of influence that a manager chooses to employ with their subordinates [6].

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The scientific work of D. Erwin and A. Garman demonstrates changes in the paradigm of the research about RC and studies the cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions of the individual's resistance, and examines the impact of individual disposition to openness, individual assessment of the harm and the benefits of the offered changes, the communication quality level, understanding, participation, and trust in management, management style, attitude towards the agents of change [7].

Recently the number of researches that study the RC in the context of an individual and their peculiarities has increased. W. Bowie and E. Heed found a positive correlation between irrational ideas, behavioural intentions and RC [8]. A. Armenakis, S. Harris and K. Mossholder distinguish the notions of RC and readiness for change and research the influence of change agents on the willingness of employees to implement changes. They found that readiness for change includes attitudes, intentions and beliefs of the individual [2].

Also, we see significant changes in the perception of RC, in the scientific literature there is the concept of psychological resistance (PR). Previously, this phenomenon was considered to be purely negative, and the efforts of researchers were aimed at developing strategies to overcome it. A. Shoen notes that RC is not always a destructive phenomenon [9].

It is important to mention that in recent times RC/PR is considered as a multidimensional phenomenon. The author of the method for determining the level of RC Sh. Oreg distinguishes the personality of an employee and the organizational context among the components of the RC and also establishes the connection of these components with the attitude of employees to organizational changes of a large scale, which in turn, according to Sh. Oreg depends on job satisfaction, organizational commitment as well as intention to leave the organization [10]. From the above given one can generalize the following: in scientific studies, the issue of RC as a psychological phenomenon has not been sufficiently studied. Thus, *the purpose of the article* is to study the RC as a separate aspect of the personality's PR among student youth.

To achieve the goal set, the following *tasks* have been outlined:

- to conduct a theoretical analysis of the issue;
- to define RC and PR;

- to identify the causes of RC and PR;
- to establish grounded differences and consistent patterns of the RC appearance in the context of PR.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Based on the purpose and tasks of the research, 150 respondents – senior students and graduate students aged from 19 to 23 years old – were interviewed. The research was conducted based on random selection when all units of the general combination had equal opportunity to be included in the selection. The research was accommodated by Sumy State A.S. Makarenko Pedagogical University, Kryvyi Rih State Pedagogical University, Donbass State Pedagogical University, Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University, Institute of Human Sciences of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University.

Research methods: *general theoretical*: interdisciplinary analysis and synthesis of the literature on the research issue; comparison, systematization, generalization, interpretation of existing theoretical approaches and empirical results. *Statistical methods of material processing*. Data processing was performed using MS Access v.8 for Windows 9x database management system. Generation of consolidated tables was done using the MS Excel v.16.0 program. For the non-parametric data correlation variables, the Spearman coefficient was used. To check the received correlation relationships, Kendall's and Pearson's coefficients used for nonparametric data were applied. Also, the probability of the research results was established using the sign-rank double test T (Wilcoxon criterion) used by the IBM SPSS Statistics 22 program for non-parametric data.

According to the analysis of the ideas of psychoanalytic schools, PR is a person's belief that denies knowledge obtained in the process of or as a result of facing the interpretation of the unconscious and the repressed. According to S. Freud's definition, resistance, as well as psychological defence mechanisms, are the usual phenomena of the psychoanalytic process, he noted that the PR is a sophisticated multifaceted phenomenon, whose form of manifestation is constantly changing, even within one person [11]. PR is a phenomenon that is studied in psychological clinical practice, where a person directly or indirectly manifests paradoxical behavioural reactions, opposing the incentive to changes. This

impedes the development of a real, mutually nurturing experience in clinical conditions [12].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Main Causes of the PR

According to the results of our research, some classification approaches, psychosocial, economic and managerial components have been summarized regarding the PR causes.

1. **Fear of failure.** PR is an indicator of facing danger: a new unfamiliar situation (changes in management or the completion of a long-term therapy), unknown, unpleasant emotions, unpleasant discoveries about oneself (guilt, mistake). The fear of failure can be expressed with the idea "it is better not to start at all, if there is a risk of failure, and success is not guaranteed."
2. **Fear of success.** Achieving success is associated with significant changes (improving the quality of life, enhancing status), which can mean greater responsibility, the tension in relations with the old environment, the bigger workload can be a powerful source of PR.
3. **Absence of (or lack of) motivation.** It may be the result of the lack of awareness, vague goal-setting or their misunderstanding, it is a common cause of PR.
4. **Lack of interest.** An interesting task is a powerful factor that motivates, encourages and leads to consent to task execution, active engagement, and satisfaction with the process. Very quickly the absence of interest becomes a cause of intense PR.
5. **Lack of confidence.** Not believing in one's abilities, doubts about one's expertise can stimulate the PR, since one tends to avoid situations in which they experience discomfort or are forced to recognize the unpleasant truth about themselves.
6. **Uncertainty about the accuracy of actions.** A person can sincerely believe that a process or it's part (task, objective, implementation methods, people engaged in the process) is performed incorrectly and is inefficient or dangerous.
7. **Fear of criticism** that is associated with insecurity about one's powers, abilities, competencies to act or publicly defend one's actions is, in essence, shame, which, in turn, is recognized as a source of PR.
8. **Unhealthy perfectionism.** It is singled out as an independent cause of PR, it is closely related to the fear of criticism and the fear of failure, and may be accompanied by a person's mindset expressed by attitudes similar to the following one: "if there is any doubt that this can be done perfectly, it is better not to start at all".
9. **Procrastination.** The habit of a person to postpone doing unpleasant tasks, favouring tasks that bring more pleasure or a faster result, is considered one of the factors of PR.
10. **Fear of a task's complexity or volume.** The inability of an individual to break a large task into several small ones to ensure incremental execution can lead to PR.
11. **Anxiety.** The main functions of anxiety: to signal the potential danger, to encourage gathering the information about the danger and actively study the environment to identify the threat – all these anxiety functions, when manifested in human behaviour, lead to slowing down and resistance.
12. **Fear of expressing oneself and one's qualities.** A person may feel such fear if they had a negative experience of self-expression in the past, or they have witnessed somebody's negative experience of expressing themselves that promotes the appearance of PR.
13. **Self-fulfilling prophecy or anxious foreboding.** Some individuals tend to believe that talking about their negative thoughts, feelings and emotions out loud means that they will come true.
14. **Fatigue.** Such factors as fatigue (psychological and/or physical), general health condition, medical condition are known to be underestimated in terms of their contribution in causing PR [13].

The next researched component was the concept of RC. The classic definition of the phenomenon of RC offered by the American expert on strategic management, I. Ansof, states that the RC is a

multifaceted phenomenon, causing unforeseen delays, additional costs and instability of the process of strategic change implementation. Resistance is always manifested in response to any changes [14].

N. Tichi and M. Devanna in their researches developed the "technology-politics-culture" paradigm, which was used to analyse the causes of RC. Among them, they singled out the technical, political and cultural ones. If we consider the problem of RC from a psychosocial standpoint, as it was done in the studies by J. Cotter and L. Schlesinger [15], the following causes of RC can be distinguished: personal interest, misunderstanding and lack of trust, differences in the assessment of the situation, low readiness for change [16], peer influence, the fatigue caused by frequent changes, the previous experience of failed changes [17]. J. O'Tool's research provides a wide range of reasons for the appearance of RC: conformism, chauvinistic thinking, ego, habits, institutional thinking, fallacy of the exception, future shock, futility of effort, ignorance, short-term thinking, sleepwalking, ideology, collective fantasy, scientism, determinism, despotism of customs, insufficient self-confidence, rectitude of the authority, short-sightedness, the status quo bias, unwillingness, confidence that nature does not move by leaps, fear, homeostasis, inertia, satisfaction with the current state of things, human nature, cynicism, distortion.

The Main Causes of RC

In our opinion, RC is a psychological state of a personality, which at the behavioural level manifests itself with actions of resistance aimed at stopping, slowing down or alleviating the changes that are perceived as a threat. According to the results of our research, some classification approaches, as well as psychosocial, economic and managerial components, are summarized concerning the main causes of the RC appearance, namely:

1. **Inertia** – a term borrowed from physics, in human systems means slowing down the reaction to changes, may occur in the form of conservatism or backwardness, and therefore is one of the reasons for RC.
2. **Inconsistency.** From the point of view of social psychology and management, inconsistency should be understood in a broad sense, it can mean discrepancies between the interests of the employees and the management, the difference in the perception of the situation because the

employees occupy different positions, and therefore have different levels of knowledge, understanding of the situation, responsibility etc., and therefore, they may be unequally convinced of the need for change.

3. **Fear.** Similarly, to "inconsistency" it can mean a variety of states, but often there is the fear of the future, which is completely natural and inherent of each person to different degrees.
4. **Incompetence** in issues related to future changes, inadequate level of knowledge and skills, according to the Peter principle, which states that "in the hierarchical system, any employee rises to the level of their incompetence" is the reason for RC [18].
5. **Avoiding difficulty.** The difficulties can be diverse, these are not only conflicts and problems, but also responsibility and new knowledge. If such a feature is manifested among employees, it may be the cause of RC.
6. **Cognitive bias**, such as status quo bias, if it is not a thoughtful decision taken based on thorough analysis and synthesis, is responsible for the human brain perceiving any deviation from the proper state of affairs as a loss or a failure, causing the RC as a result. This bias is closely related to chauvinistic thinking, which manifests itself in irrational tendencies to assume that the present state of affairs is better than any other purely because the person belongs to it [19-20].
7. **Previous experience of unsuccessful change.** Even if a long time has passed since, it may prompt people to perceive the new offered changes as undesirable, related to failure, hence leading to RC.
8. **Uncertainty** about goals, implementation methods or other aspects of change makes them unattractive and unclear, and therefore cause the appearing of RC.
9. **Distrust.** Researches of the RC issue have found people to behave more openly and more inclined to accept changes if the agent of the change is similar to them, seems attractive and respectful. On the contrary, if the agent of changes is very different from the audience, it causes distrust, and, in turn, resistance.

10. **Feeling of loss.** Many people feel changes to be related to the feeling of loss: the acquired status (if the existing competencies are not sufficient to maintain their status under the new conditions; loss of status may mean loss of power, respect of management or reputation), satisfaction of essential needs (a new state of affairs may mean that not all essential needs will be satisfied now), developed social relationships (the introduction of changes often results in disruption of social interactions and interpersonal relationships).
11. **Habits.** They are a source of comfort to which everyone aspires and usually tries to maintain, and therefore, there is likely to be resistance to changes, implying the loss of the comfortable conditions and the extra energy and time expenditure.
12. **Lack of employees' engagement.** It has been established that the invitation of employees to participate in the process of development and implementation of changes (unlike the situation when they are simply informed about the fact of implementation) promote the development of the sense of belonging to the process and minimizes the intensity of the manifestation of RC [21].
13. **Poor communication.** It is worth mentioning that poor-quality communication can be both a reason for RC as well as a form of its manifestation. The lack of channels for good communication between executives and employees eliminates the chances of adequately informing employees about all aspects of change, giving and receiving feedback and information, which will help improve the process of implementing the change.
14. **Fatigue from changes.** It has been found that fatigue is responsible for 70% of unsuccessful changes. Changes require an increased amount of individual's resources (physical, mental energy, time, etc.), and therefore, permanent changes can exhaust employees who lack resources to implement all new changes, contributing to the appearance of the RC [22-30].
15. **Lack of confidence.** This is a very unpleasant and uncomfortable state that blocks personal resources which could be used to support and implement changes or to adapt to a new state of things.
16. **The sentimental value of the past.** Being manifested in thoughts such as "It's just the way it used to be", "I remember that in the childhood...", "Even my father used to do it this way", such sentimental feelings are one of the reasons why people do not want changes (unwillingness to lose something valuable) and resist them.
17. **Unreadiness.** The internal unreadiness for changes, in general, may be caused by, 1) the bias that the offered changes are a fad of the management, and thus the workers do not perceive the changes as serious and permanent; 2) the inadequacy of the efforts, resources and competencies necessary for the implementation of the changes and the offered remuneration 3) criticism of the planned methods of change implementation (while the essence of the changes may seem right and reasonable, their implementation methods may be questioned and criticised by employees) [31-35].
18. **Conformism.** Conformity is a tendency to conform, that is, the adoption of such behaviour that is most common or dominant in a group, even if such a position is not clearly expressed, indicated or even real. Therefore, if an individual's subjective assessment indicates that the proposed changes are undesirable in the group to which the individual belongs, they will manifest resistance.
19. **Short-sightedness and short-term thinking.** There are individuals unable to see that the changes are in fact consistent with their own wider interests or unable to delay instant gratification for the achievement of a major goal or important results that can improve the quality of life more or for longer than instant satisfaction).
20. **Cynicism.** People are known to treat the agents of change with suspicion. Such a manifestation of cynicism (distrustful attitude to the motives of other people) is a cause of RC.

Comparative Classification of the Main Reasons for the Appearance of PR and RC

Analysis of the reasons for the appearance of PR and RC has allowed to group them into 4 classes: emotional, motivational, personal, and situational. This classification is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Reasons for the Appearance of PR and RC (Comparative Classification by Emotional, Motivational, Personal and Situational Components Developed by Z.V. Gromova)

Reasons for the PR	Reasons for the RC
Emotional	
Fear of failure	Fear of future
Fear of success	Feeling of loss
Fear of criticism	Sentimental value of the past
Fear of the task's complexity or volume	
Fear of expressing oneself and one's qualities	
Motivational	
Motivation (its lack or absence)	Lack of engagement
Lack of interest	Incompetence and/or ignorance
	Conformism
	Short-sightedness (and short-term thinking)
	Cynicism
Personal (character, bias)	
Procrastination	Lack of confidence
Unhealthy perfectionism	Incompetence and/or ignorance
Lack of confidence	Inertia, habits
Self-fulfilling prophecy or anxious foreboding	Avoidance (of difficulties, responsibilities, new knowledge)
Anxiety	Conformism
	status quo bias
	Mistrustful attitude to the agents of changes
	Sentimental value of the past
	Short-sightedness (and short-term thinking)
	Cynicism
Situational	
Uncertainty about the actions taken	Previous experience of unsuccessful change
Fatigue	Discrepancy of the interests and perception
	Incompetence and/or ignorance
	Fatigue
	Poor communication
	Cynicism (distrustful attitude to the agents of changes)
	Unreadiness
	Uncertainty

From the data presented in Table 1, it is evident that all three components of the reasons for the appearance of PR and RC are unevenly distributed. Thus, it has been estimated that the reasons for the appearance of RC are quantitatively prevalent (14 versus 20 reasons). However, the qualitative comparison reveals that PR causes dominate within the emotional component. Within the motivational, personal, and situational

components, units related to the RC are quantitatively prevalent. The reason for this distribution is a greater number of causes of RC, as well as the fact that such reasons of the RC as incompetence and/or ignorance, cynicism, shortsightedness and short-term thinking, conformism, the sentimental value of the past, distrust in the agents of change are found in several components simultaneously. Based on the results of

Table 2: Relationship between the Reasons for Appearing PR and RC

Reasons for PR	Connection strength	Reasons for RC
Fear of failure	→	Fear of future
	→	Previous experience of unsuccessful change
Fear of success	→	Lack of engagement
Motivation (its lack or absence)	→	Lack of confidence
Lack of interest	→	Discrepancy of the interests and perception
Lack of confidence	→	Incompetence and/or ignorance
Uncertainty about the actions taken	→	Fatigue
Fear of criticism	→	Inertia, habits
Fatigue	→	Avoidance (of difficulties, responsibilities, new knowledge)
Procrastination	→	Feeling of loss
Fear (of the task's complexity or volume)	→	Conformism
Anxiety	→	Poor communication
Fear of expressing oneself and one's qualities	→	status quo bias and chauvinistic thinking
Self-fulfilling prophecy or anxious foreboding	→	Distrustful attitude to the agents of changes
Unhealthy perfectionism	→	Sentimental value of the past
	→	Unreadiness
	→	Uncertainty
	→	Short-sightedness and short-term thinking
	→	Cynicism
Note →: Strong, regular, direct connection ($p \leq 0,01$) - - - → Weak, partial or volatile connection ($p \leq 0,05$)		

the research, the analysis of the correspondence and connections in the pool of the reasons for PR and RC appearance has been provided. It has been established that 67.7% of the reasons for RC and PR appearance are regular and strong, and 32.2% are volatile and weak. The relationship between the reasons for PR and RC appearance is shown in Table 2.

From the data presented in Table 2 on the reasons for PR and RC appearance, the following can be highlighted: there are connections between the reasons for PR and RC, their strength varies from the regular

and strong to the volatile and weak. Interestingly, here are overlapping reasons for PR and RC. These include fatigue, uncertainty in one's strengths.

CONCLUSION

According to the results of the research, a comparative classification of the reasons for PR and RC appearance has been introduced. 4 components of the reasons for PR and RC appearance have been distinguished: emotional, personal, situational, and motivational. It has been established that the connections differ in terms of strengths and

permanence. According to the results of the research, it can be noted that RC having a 4-component psychological dimension requires the development of a comprehensive system for managing it at both personal and organizational levels.

The prospect for further research lies in the study of the interrelation and synergistic effect of the influence of macro- and micro- psychological and social factors on the development of the RC of an individual, as well as the identification of adaptation and maladaptation factors that contribute to overcoming or increasing change resistance in a person. Designing a comprehensive system for overcoming RC, including a diagnostic and assessment instrument for RC in a person, a training on overcoming the RC in a person (cognitive-behavioural approach) and a methodology to evaluate the effectiveness of the developed comprehensive system for overcoming RC in a person will prove beneficial.

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