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Predicting openness and commitment to change

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Predicting openness and commitment to change

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Openness and
commitment to
change

485

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Abstract *Developed and tested a model of the change management strategies that predict openness and commitment to a large-scale organizational change. Based on a sample of 164 employees, a partially- and a fully-mediated model were compared with the former providing the best fit to the data. Communication and job security predicted openness and trust both directly and indirectly, via procedural justice. Participation predicted trust directly and indirectly but predicted openness to change only indirectly (via procedural justice). Turnover intentions were negatively predicted by openness and trust. Finally, turnover intentions predicted neglect. These results highlight the role of procedural justice perceptions in understanding organizational change.*

Predicting openness and commitment to change

The term “resistance to change” has immediate appeal. It strikes a responsive chord because, over the years, industry estimates have quoted nearly 40 percent failure rates (Cartwright and Cooper, 1992) for some change efforts. Most often the culprit is identified as employee resistance to change. Adverse consequences to failed change efforts have included higher turnover rates, lower efficiency, restriction of output and decreased organizational commitment (Coch and French, 1948; Goldstein, 1989; Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979).

Unfortunately, there has been no single, clear, definition of the problem. Some researchers have differentiated between passive and aggressive resistance (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979). Others have suggested a two-factor structure for “openness to change” (the inverse of “resistance to change”), comprising a willingness to support change and a positive affect towards change (Wanberg and Banas, 2000). Still others have simply defined resistance as willful opposition to change (Goldstein, 1989). Moreover, as Armenakis *et al.* (1993) point out; resistance to change has often been used interchangeably with terms such as a lack of change readiness.

In the current study resistance to change was defined as “an adherence to any attitudes or behaviours that thwart organizational change goals”. Resistance might be better viewed in two components – as attitudinal *and* behavioural responses to change. Within this framework, attitudinal resistance to change would entail a psychological rejection of the need for the change, whereas behavioural resistance would be represented by behaviours that reflect an unwillingness to support the change or unwillingness to stay with the organization through this tumultuous time (i.e. lack of commitment to change).

This two-component nature of resistance is supported by clinical research, which identifies resistance to change during therapy in terms of its cognitive and behavioural



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facets (Goodyear, 1990). The two-component structure of resistance to change also conforms to the theory of reasoned action that posits that an individual's attitudes precede and affect behaviour albeit through their more immediate influence on intentions to perform the behaviour (Fishbein and Azjen, 1975). Consequently, in keeping with both Armenakis *et al.*'s model and the theory of reasoned action, resistant attitudes are hypothesized to precede and predict behavioural resistance. On the basis of this definition of resistance to change, the current study proposed and tested a model that predicts resistance to change (Figure 1).

The proposed model specifies that popular change management strategies (such as an organization's communication and participation strategies during change) and assurances of job security can attenuate negative attitudinal and behavioural responses to change. These variables are the most frequently recommended strategies for implementing successful change (Antonioni, 1994; Carson and Griffeth, 1990; Wanberg and Banas, 2000). In light of their import, the rationale for their inclusion is reviewed briefly.

Trust

Trust is particularly critical for large-scale change because such a change effort is relatively high in risk. It necessitates a radical shift in the norms of the organization, and thus, requires the support of everyone to ensure a smooth transition (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993). Fiorelli and Margolis (1993) have suggested that resistance is reduced, and that receptivity and commitment to the change are enhanced under conditions of trust. When there is little or no trust in management, employees display the strongest resistance to change (Coch and French, 1948).

Unfortunately, the study of trust in organizations has remained problematic because of the prevalence of various definitions of trust or because trust is often confused with its antecedents and consequences (Mayer *et al.*, 1995). For example, in some instances trust is interchangeable with concepts such as cooperative or risk-taking behaviours (Mayer *et al.*, 1995). In other instances, trust is suggested as being predictive of the same concepts (Mayer *et al.*, 1995). To address this confusion, in the current study a single definition of trust was used. Trust was defined as

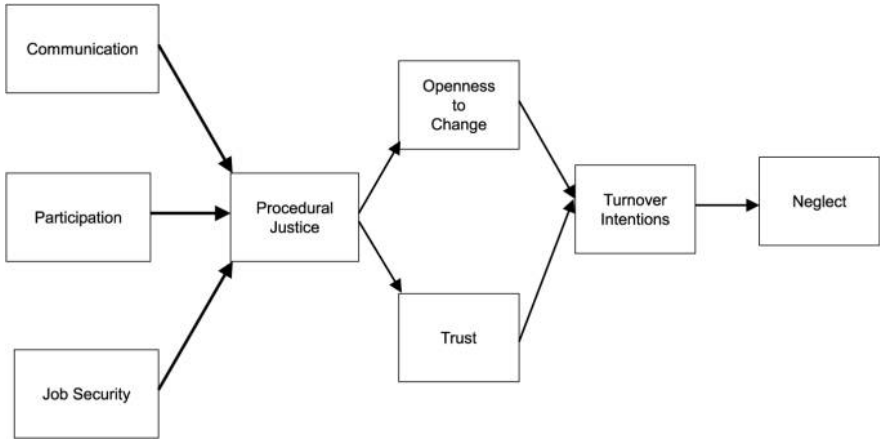


Figure 1.
Hypothesized
fully-mediated model 1 of
the influence of
communication,
participation and job
security in predicting trust
and attitudinal and
behavioural resistance to
change

“the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the truster, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (Mayer *et al.*, 1995, p. 712).

Though the two concepts of trust and openness to change are not synonymous they do both assume an implicit faith in management and both include a willingness to accept potentially risky ventures. Given the parallels in these concepts, trust was expected to correlate with openness to change in the current study. Trust was also hypothesized to be predicted by the same variables that predict openness to change. However, unlike trust, openness to change does not make interpersonal inferences about motives. Whereas trust considers the intent of the party in question, openness examines the legitimacy and rationale of the specific changes.

Although there are limited data on the conditions that enhance or violate trust during organizational change, theoretical postulations suggest that trust is supplanted by suspicion when employees report receiving decreasing amounts of communication once change occurs (Napier, 1989). Unless the organization can be entrusted to communicate honestly and consistently, attitudes towards change are likely to be antagonistic (Mayer *et al.*, 1995). Trust is also established by clearly defining and communicating the process and parameters of participation (Sachs, 1994).

Along the same lines, the literature also suggests that resistance to change is virtually inevitable if employees are afraid that they are going to lose something of value (e.g. autonomy, job loss), if they begin with misconceptions about the nature and implications of change (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979), if communication is infrequent or if early employee involvement in the change is discouraged. Therefore, early in the change implementation process, trust and cooperation with the change must be enlisted by:

- (1) communicating effectively;
- (2) encouraging participation; and
- (3) ensuring psychological safety (Antonioni, 1994; Carson and Griffeth, 1990).

Communication

Uncertainty about the future is found to be characteristic of organizational change (Schweiger and Walsh, 1990). Uncertainty is exacerbated when the primary source of information is the rumor mill or the media (Rentsch and Schneider, 1991) rather than the changing organization's management. Schweiger and DeNisi (1991) found that the use of a realistic preview about impending changes was very effective in enhancing trust, commitment and job satisfaction during a changeover. Similarly, Wanberg and Banas (2000) found that increased information dissemination about proposed changes was related to greater change acceptance. Thus, open communications can foster favourable attitudes towards change by allaying fears, educating employees and conveying a party's competence in making the change happen (Daly, 1995; Mayer *et al.*, 1995).

Participation

The change management literature unanimously declares that employee involvement during change is critical for success. If employees are encouraged to participate and their input is consistently and genuinely enlisted, it is supposed to increase

commitment and performance, reduce resistance to change (Cornell and Herman, 1989; Fiorelli and Margolis, 1993; Wanberg and Banas, 2000) and enhance the acceptance of even unfavourable decisions (Greenberg, 1987).

The literature on employee participation makes a distinction between decision-versus process-control (Tyler, 1987). Decision-control is the control over actual decisions made whereas process-control is the opportunity to simply state one's case (Tyler, 1987). Meta-analytic findings have supported the superiority of process-control participation in predicting positive employee reactions such as motivation, satisfaction and perceptions of justice in various decision-making contexts (Cawley *et al.*, 1998). Process-control has a strong positive effect even when people's opinions are disregarded or when the decision-maker is seen as biased (Tyler and Lind, 1992). Therefore, in the current study the role of process-control participation was isolated and investigated to determine whether it is successful at facilitating positive reactions to change.

Job insecurity

Job insecurity has become virtually synonymous with the fears awakened by change. Indeed, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) have named large-scale change as the major source of threat to employees' sense of control in their jobs. Issues pertaining to job security maintain relevance whether or not an objective threat to the job exists (Rosenblatt and Ruvio, 1996). Even when layoffs are not a factor, changing structures within the company threaten employees' prestige, power, autonomy and careers (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979; Renstch and Schneider, 1991). Job insecurity is defined as "a powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation" (Ashford *et al.*, 1989, p. 438).

The consequences of job insecurity can be seriously debilitating. Threats to work flow; work roles, organizational structure and power relationships typically result in an increase in withdrawal behaviours (e.g. reduced commitment, engaging in negative work behaviours, higher turnover intentions) and threaten organizational stability while engendering mistrust and inhibiting communication (Fiorelli and Margolis, 1993; Robinson and Rousseau, 1994). Therefore, the current study examined the role of subjective perceptions of job security in enhancing trust, change acceptance and commitment.

Procedural justice

Issues regarding fair treatment do inevitably arise during change (Kilbourne *et al.*, 1996). Findings outside of the organizational change literature attest to how fair treatment can facilitate trust and commitment or increase engagement in citizenship behaviours (Folger and Konovsky, 1989) all of which are important for change success. Conversely, unfair treatment is found to violate employee sense of ownership (Kilbourne *et al.*, 1996) possibly resulting in resistance.

Change management strategies such as communication and participation parallel the two major facilitators of organizational justice; information sharing and employee participation/control (Kilbourne *et al.*, 1996). Though research on the relationship between change strategies and justice is sparse, one study does suggest that the positive effects of communication on acceptance of and commitment to change are mediated by perceptions of fairness (Daly and Geyer, 1994).

Although employee participation in change does encourage change acceptance and commitment in and of itself (Wanberg and Banas, 2000), perceptions of justice have

been hypothesized to augment these effects (Beugre, 1998). Korsgaard *et al.* (1995) suggest that a participation process must be just and must instill perceptions that management is genuine in its desire for employee participation. The present study integrated justice and organizational change theory by investigating whether justice mediates and augments the positive impact of change management strategies.

Openness and
commitment to
change

The current study

In the current study a model is proposed and tested (Figure 1). The model consolidates the existing literature on effective change management practices and tests whether and how these practices are successful at enhancing trust, openness and commitment to change. The model posits that successful change is characterized by high quality communication and the early involvement of employees in the change process that would facilitate trust and openness to change. The model also hypothesized that, to the extent that job insecurity was perceived as being high, employees would be less open to change and would be more mistrustful of management. It was also proposed that the relationship between communication, participation or job security and the outcomes of openness to change and trust would be fully mediated by perceptions of justice.

Finally, note that the two-component definition of resistance incorporates attitudinal and behavioural components. In this model, openness to change served as the attitudinal indicator of resistance. Trust was the second attitude measured. Behaviours that typically impede organizational goals during change are a lack of commitment, high turnover intentions or poor job performance (Coch and French, 1948). Turnover intentions were measured as an indicator of commitment to the changed organization and as a proxy for actual turnover. Self-report of negligence was used as a measure of poor job performance. In keeping with the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Azjen, 1975), which suggests that attitudes predict intentions, which, in turn, predict behaviours, openness and trust were hypothesized to be negatively predictive of turnover intentions, which were expected to be positively related to higher negligence.

Method

Participants

Five hundred and forty one surveys were distributed to employees from two organizations that had recently undergone a merger. The merger was a large-scale change requiring the restructuring of governance structures, management services, program strategies, physical and information technology facilities and human resources and labour relations. Reductions in the budget necessitated job losses and compromises to job specifications.

One hundred and eighty eight completed questionnaires were returned, equivalent to a response rate of 34.75 percent. After elimination of missing data, the final sample size equalled 164. The sample displayed a relatively equal gender-split (47.70 percent males; 52.30 percent females); the age range of the respondents was from 18-65 years ($M = 43.93$; $SD = 8.66$); employees from all employment positions of the organization were represented (28.5 percent managers/professionals; 15.50 percent college instructors/academics; 22.20 percent laboratory technicians; 16.50 percent office staff) (93.20 percent full-time; 6.8 percent part-time and contract positions). Differences in proportions of all demographic classifications were proportional to the composition within the organization.

Procedures

All potential participants were first notified about the study via e-mail. A week later, survey packages were mailed to employees directly. They were given one and a half weeks from the receipt of the survey to complete the surveys. A reminder notice was mailed to them a few weeks later. Participants were informed that the study was an investigation of their attitudes and reactions towards the changes that had occurred as part of the merger. They were asked to complete a package of questionnaires and were assured that their responses would remain anonymous. The inclusion criteria for participation necessitated that all respondents have been employed by either of the merged organizations for at least one year prior to the merger.

Individuals choosing not to participate were asked to at least respond to a question that asked them to disclose the reason for their non-response. This question meant to gauge whether survey non-response was actually a means of resistance in itself. Finally, survey respondents who held management positions were asked to verify the scope of the change by matching their perception of the scope of changes to a definition of large-scale change (*Measures* section) and by rating the extent to which various sub-systems in the organization were impacted by the change.

Measures

The final survey package contained eight measures and a demographics page. With the exception of the neglect and turnover intentions scales, the wording of some of the items in all other scales were modified slightly to better accommodate the context of the change.

Communication was measured using a 12-item self-report instrument devised for the purposes of this study. Items enquired about the quality and content of communications not the quantity of communications (e.g. "the benefits of the change for my job have been clearly communicated"). The response format was a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The scale was highly reliable ($\alpha = 0.95$), with greater scores indicating more effective communication.

Process-control participation (e.g. "my opinion had been solicited regarding problems involving the change process") was measured using a four-item self-report instrument devised for the purposes of this study. The response format was a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). This scale was reliable ($\alpha = 0.82$) with higher scores indicating greater participation.

Job security was measured using a 16-item scale combining Lahey and Kuhnert's (1988) 13-item self-report instrument (e.g. "I can be sure of my present job as long as I do good work") and the three items from Ashford *et al.* (1989) job insecurity subscale for "powerlessness" (e.g. "I can prevent negative things from affecting my work situation"). The response format was a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). This 16-item scale was reliable ($\alpha = 0.81$), with higher scores indicating greater job security.

Procedural justice (e.g. "if I laid a complaint about a work issue, the (organization) would follow policies so that decisions could be made consistently") was measured using Moorman (1991) seven-item procedural justice sub-scale. The response format was a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The scale demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = 0.95$). Higher scores on this scale indicated stronger perceptions of procedural justice.

Trust in management (e.g. “the (organization) would be quite prepared to gain advantage by deceiving the workers”) was measured using Cook and Wall (1980) six-item trust in management sub-scale. The response format was a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The scale was reliable ($\alpha = 0.87$). Higher scores on the scale indicated greater trust in management.

Susskind *et al.* (1998) eight-item openness to change scale was used to assess attitudinal acceptance of the merger (e.g. “I am quite reluctant to consider changing the way I now do my work”). The response format was a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). This eight-item scale demonstrated adequate reliability ($\alpha = 0.83$) and higher scores indicated greater openness to the change.

Turnover intentions (e.g. “I expect to leave my job in the near future”) were measured using a seven-item scale with items from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Seashore *et al.*, 1982) and items from Barling *et al.* (2001) scale. The response format was a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Higher scores on this scale were reflective of a higher intent to leave the organization. This scale also demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = 0.93$).

Finally, neglect (e.g. “followed rules to the letter of the law of work to rule”) was measured by using a 12-item scale with items from Withey and Cooper (1989) neglect scale, items from Hepburn and Barling’s (1996) partial absenteeism scale and items from Barling *et al.* (2001) scale. The response format was a five-point Likert scale ranging from never considered this action (1) to engaged in action frequently (5). Higher scores on this scale represented a greater tendency to be neglectful on the job. This scale had a minimally acceptable α -reliability of 68.

Method of data analyses

Observed variable path analysis was used to assess the fit of the theoretically derived model and to obtain parameter estimates. Considering that the strongest test of a proposed model is to identify and evaluate competing models (Kelloway, 1998), an alternate model was evaluated as well. Specifically the proposed model (Figure 1) was contrasted with a partially mediated model (Figure 2) wherein communication, participation and job security were hypothesized to positively predict openness to change and trust directly as well as indirectly, through procedural justice.

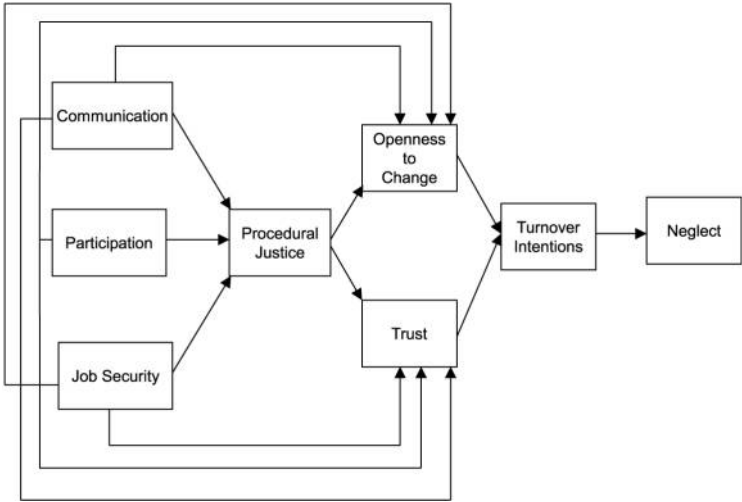
Results

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for all study variables are presented in Table I.

The nature of the change

In order to verify that the merger did qualify as a large-scale change, managers were asked to match their perception of the scope of merger to the following definition of large-scale change: “(the merger) can be described as a long-term, comprehensive intervention focussed on the realignment of multiple sub-systems (e.g. rewards, management style, structure, strategy, etc.) to enable the organization to actively adapt to its external environment” (Fiorelli and Margolis, 1993, p. 1). The managers were also asked to rate the degree to which the following four organizational sub-systems were impacted: organizational strategy, organizational structure, organizational processes, and organizational culture. The majority (70.30 percent) of managers ($n = 41$) did feel

Figure 2.
Alternate
partially-mediated model 2
of the influence of
communication,
participation and job
security in predicting trust
and attitudinal and
behavioural resistance to
change



Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age	43.93	8.66								
Tenure	4.1	3.63								
1 Turnover Intentions	3.25	1.63	0.93	–						
2 Neglect	1.48	0.36	0.68	0.15	–					
3 Openness to change	3.55	0.73	0.83	–0.39**	–0.12	–				
4 Trust	4.16	1.2	0.87	–0.51**	–0.18*	0.47**	–			
5 Procedural justice	4.42	1.2	0.95	–0.40**	–0.15	0.39**	0.69**	–		
6 Job security	2.93	0.57	0.81	–0.16	–0.09	0.45**	0.36**	0.33**	–	
7 Participation	2.84	1.46	0.82	–0.14	–0.20**	0.25**	0.44**	0.38**	0.25**	–
8 Communication	4.26	1.29	0.95	–0.27**	–0.24**	0.38**	0.52**	0.47**	0.25**	0.51**

Notes: * $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.001$

Table I.
Descriptives, reliabilities
and inter-correlations of
all study variables

that the change was representative of a large-scale change and that all organizational sub-systems were at least moderately impacted. Frequency distributions for perceived changes to the organizational sub-systems are presented in Table II.

Model estimation

An observed variable path analysis was conducted in LISERL VIII (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1992) using GLS estimation and based on the covariance matrix. Table III presents the fit indices for the two models under consideration. The original model (Model 1) provided an adequate but not ideal fit to the data. However, the, partially mediated Model 2 provided a better fit to the data. The standardized residuals for the partially mediated model were centred on zero and symmetrically distributed, further verifying the adequacy of the fit to the data. This suggests that most of the direct links from communication, participation, and job security to openness to change and trust were necessary components of the model.

Standardized parameter estimates for the partially mediated model are presented in Figure 3. As hypothesized, neglect was predicted by turnover intentions and turnover intentions were predicted by both openness to change and trust. In turn, trust was predicted by the presence of procedural justice and directly by communication, by participation and by job security. Similarly, openness to change was predicted by procedural justice and directly by communication and by job security. Contrary to our hypothesis, openness to change was not directly predicted by participation. Finally, procedural justice was predicted by all three exogenous variables.

Amount of change	Strategy	Culture	Processes	Structure
No change (percent)	0.00	12.20	7.30	2.40
Small degree of change (percent)	19.00	24.40	19.50	23.80
Moderate degree of change (percent)	21.40	17.10	26.80	26.20
High degree of change (percent)	38.10	22.00	26.80	28.60
Completely changed (percent)	21.40	24.40	19.50	19.00
<i>M</i>	3.62	3.22	3.32	3.38
<i>SD</i>	1.04	1.39	1.21	1.13

Table II.
Frequency and
descriptive statistics for
management's perception
of the degree of EPP
change

Model	χ^2	df	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	Std. RMR	PNFI	NFI	CFI	χ^2_{diff}
Fully-mediated	55.75*	17	0.9	0.82	0.12	0.1	0.58	0.9	1	
Partially-mediated	19.26	11	1	0.9	0.07	0.1	0.39	1	1	36.49*

Notes: GFI=goodness of fit index; AGFI = adjusted goodness of fit index; NFI = normed fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; Std. RMR = standardized root mean square residual; PNFI = parsimonious normed fit index; * $p < 0.001$

Table III.
Fit indices for nested
sequence of hypothesized
models

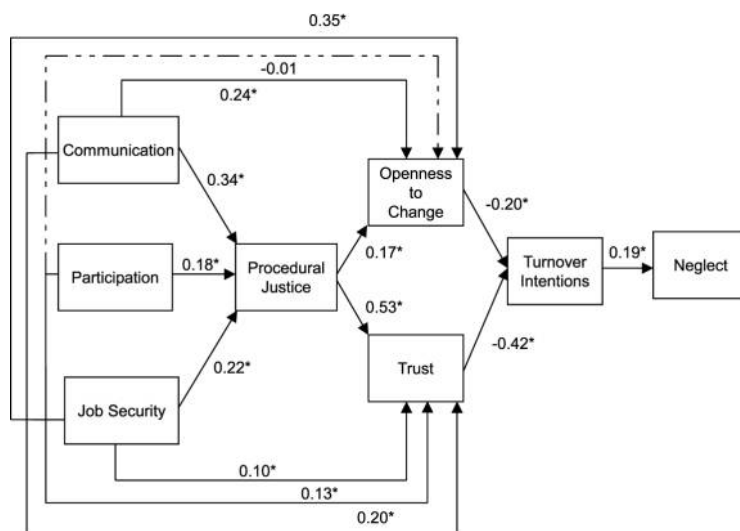


Figure 3.
Standardized parameter
estimates for final
partially-mediated model

Discussion

This study focussed on the direct effects of communication, participation, and job security on trust and openness to change and their indirect effects on turnover intentions and neglect. The study also investigated the mediating role of perceptions of procedural justice during organizational change.

Virtually all hypothesized paths were confirmed. Consistent with the partially mediated model (i.e. Model 2) communication, participation, and job security all positively predicted trust directly and indirectly via procedural justice. Similarly, communication and job security positively predicted openness to change both directly and indirectly via procedural justice. However, contrary to the hypothesis, participation only predicted openness indirectly, through justice. Direct prediction between participation and openness was disconfirmed. Finally, as hypothesized, openness and trust directly negatively predicted turnover intentions, which, in turn, directly and positively predicted neglect.

The findings that openness and trust were positively and directly predicted by communication are consistent with research affirming communication's capacity to enhance management credibility and employee receptivity to change (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993; Mayer *et al.*, 1995; Wanberg and Banas, 2000; Young and Post, 1993) particularly when the communication message provides compelling justification for the change, enhances a sense of efficacy, and clarifies the changes to employee roles (Young and Post, 1993).

As hypothesized, process-control participation had an impact on openness to change via procedural justice. Support for the positive role of process-control participation during change corroborates previous findings noting its success (Cawley *et al.*, 1998) and advances the organizational change research that has, to date, failed to distinguish between process vs decisional-control participation in its research (e.g. Wanberg and Banas, 2000). Also, support was obtained for the role of justice as a mediator suggesting that the quality of the strategy (not just the presence/absence of it) might determine successful change outcomes.

The role of justice might also explain why, contrary to the hypothesis, there was no direct effect of participation on openness to change. If participation initiatives are evaluated for their reflection of management's trustworthiness then, unless participation in the change process promotes feelings of fairness and value, employees might not be willing to accept or commit to the changes. They might need to first evaluate what the participation suggests about their worth to the organization and whether management genuinely values and considers their suggestions (especially in a context where organizational downsizing might promote the misconception that employees are dispensable). If true, this perspective suggests that cursory and disingenuous solicitations of participation are likely to fail – the success of a participative change management strategy will instead, rest on its quality. Future research manipulating and comparing the quantity and quality of process-control participation might help clarify why process-control participation is successful during change.

As with communication, direct and indirect relationships were confirmed between job security and trust and openness and were in line with findings that suggest that job security first predicts work-related expectations (e.g. justice) and attitudes, which in turn predict withdrawal intentions (Davy *et al.*, 1997). The direct relationship between

job security and trust and openness is informative. It implies that assurances of job security can curb visceral reactions of resistance that tend to ensue in the presence of the fear of a loss of power or security. Indeed, Dubrin and Ireland (1993) propose that “fear” is the common denominator and powerful motivator behind resistance.

As hypothesized, trust and openness to change did predict employee intentions to withdraw from the job. A possible explanation for this is that during periods of organizational instability employees re-examine their role in the organization and try to understand the organization in terms of its relational significance for them (i.e. the extent of loyalty and support felt for the organization) (Davy *et al.*, 1997; Rousseau, 1989). If employees feel that the organization has violated the psychological contract, they will retreat from their relationship with the organization (e.g. become mistrustful and prepare to exit – i.e. higher turnover intentions) (Shore and Tetrick, 1994). Such serious outcomes (i.e. the mistrust, lack of openness and withdrawal intentions, apparent even in the current study) are in fact, reflective of perceptions of serious encroachments upon employee rights (Shore and Tetrick, 1994).

Confirmation that turnover intentions predicted withdrawal behaviours such as neglect does not augur well for organizations in transition. Most change models now concede that organizational outcomes are contingent upon the organizational members’ altering their dysfunctional or now-defunct behaviours (Porras and Robertson, 1991). If the employees do indeed continue to partake in dysfunctional behaviours, organizational performance will suffer immensely. Most troublesome is the fact that these disaffected employees are no longer committed to staying with the organization. So now, the organization has a group of poor performers who want to leave and yet are not leaving. Instead, they are neglecting their jobs. McEvoy and Cascio (1987) have corroborated that once the will to leave occurs, employee performance may decline. In addition, poor performers are likely to be afraid of changes that might disrupt their jobs and so, are less likely to be open to changes to their job role and less receptive towards management (i.e. lack of trust in management) (McEvoy and Cascio, 1987).

Potential limitations

At least two potential limitations of this study should be noted. First, self-report research is typically prone to cautions against mono-method bias. However, the reliability of the measures, the non-significant correlations between study variables and the fact that the variables were not strongly interrelated suggests that mono-method bias was not a serious threat in the current study. Of course, future research on change that uses non-self report data (e.g. actual performance ratings) would be desirable.

Second, attitudes towards the change were measured using a cross-sectional design limiting interpretation about how reactions to change unfold over time. Instead, the current study focussed on the final outcomes of change. The practical significance of this methodology cannot be entirely discounted. Considering the volatility of attitudes during change, their measurement in the midst of the change is less likely to provide accurate assessments of the long-lasting attitudes towards change. Also, considering that this study is one of only a few empirical investigations examining individual reactions to change, its results provide direction for future research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is interesting to recognize that employees in the current sample were harboring counter-productive sentiments even one year after the change had taken place suggesting that resistance to change can survive for a long-time and commitment does not necessarily solidify with time. Such evidence points organizations towards the importance of managing change perceptions at the early stages whilst cautioning them against becoming lackadaisical after “go-live” festivities. The current study’s findings on the predictors of and mediators to trust, openness and commitment to change suggest that employee-focussed change management initiatives can help organizations maintain equilibrium during the aftermath of a large-scale change. It is then not entirely surprising that, for changing organizations that concentrate exclusively on economic, financial or strategic factors, success has remained elusive.

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