

The cultural dimensions causing high resistance to change management in high power
distance cultures.

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Introduction

Culture is a collection of beliefs, values, and attitudes that are common within a given group of people and defines their rate of interaction and participation in the group (Scarborough, 2009). Hofstede identifies six significant cultural aspects that may affect the orientation of the organization. Power distance, as illustrated by Geert Hofstede, indicates an individual's view and understanding of how power is shared in a society or an organization. Some countries, such as china, exhibit high power culture while other countries, like the United States of America, exhibit low power cultures (Torelli & Shavitt, 2010). High power culture creates inequity and power differences, which then leads to bureaucracy and high respect for rank or authority. Hofstede also described individualism and collectivism, which refer to the extent by which societies are interlinked into groups and their perceived allegiance and dependence on such groups. Masculinity vs. Femininity is another cultural element described by Hofstede and emphasizes on the motives of people said to be the most unsurpassed or like things they do and focuses on the gender roles between men and women. (Helpap, 2016). An uncertainty avoidance index is an aspect that entails the rate at which the members of society get comfortable with indecision and vagueness. Another point of cultural orientation is long-term orientation versus short-term normative orientation, which describes maintaining some relations with the past while struggling with the present and future challenges. The final cultural orientation illustrated by Hofstede is Indulgence vs. Restraint, where indulgence describes a society that permits free satisfaction of human drives linked to having fun. In contrast, self-disciplined societies have strict norms that prohibit free enjoyment of natural human drives (Hofstedeinsights.com). Change resistance refers to a situation where individual members of the community or organization oppose modification or transformations, which change the status quo. People have the freedom to either accept or reject change for various reasons. The natural fear of change among certain societies and people is among the critical reasons as to why changes are discarded. The other factor is the fear of the unknown circumstances that can be affected by the change. Poor timing can also lead to change resistance, especially when how and when the change aspect is delivered. Moreover, the lack of trust, which is caused by poor communication, can impede change.

Background

Culture plays a significant role in promoting the performance of an organization, particularly in response to organizational change. 90% of participants participated in the survey by Best Practices in Change Management 2016 edition portrayed cultural awareness to be a vital aspect of change management scheme in a business (Best Practices in Change Management, 2016). Change management is critical in all organizations. As illustrated by Gilaninia, Rankouth, and Gildeh (2013), change is initially difficult, chaotic in the midst of progress, but lovely at last. Organizational change is a mandatory requirement for any organization Golkar (2013). Despite differences being a necessity, it is perceived differently due to cultures and what people think is right or wrong concerning the change. While researchers have come up with various ways of reducing change resistance, little research has been done on how to manage certain cultural dimensions such as the collectivism and individualism aspects of the organization. Research shows that individualism relates to human resource practices in an organization such as compensation, competitiveness, and performances, while collectivism relates the shared interest of people in an organization. While certain conditions are not met, then change is inhibited. Power distance also has a significant impact on managerial communication and workers' maintenance for the business revolution. The study by Helpap (2015) revealed that high power distance cultures inhibit employee participation in change management decisions, which can then result in resistance to change. Cultural orientation has become a subject of attention among many academic researchers. Most employees would resist change due to the fear of the negative impacts it can cause on them or the feeling that it does not add value to them. In the United States of America, scholars identified that children born from a minority group in the country performed poorly when compared to those from majority groups. In a similar case, immigrant students from African countries and Mexico have been found to have high school dropout rates and achieve lower grades than whites under identical learning environments. Similar incidences have been reported in Europe where immigrant and asylum workers have been found to have low productivity compared to the indigenous population. The study by Helpap (2015) further found out that workers were very likely to consign to adjustment when their senior bosses' method of communication was within their anticipations in terms of cultural beliefs and personal attitudes (Helpap, 2015).

Objectives of the Study

The primary reason for carrying out this research is to investigate the potential of business sector engagement in transforming engagement, especially with people from high power distance cultures. This will help in the improvement and realization of different cultures within organizations and use them to enhance idea generation and problem-solving activities rather than leaving the employee to their class. By investigating the influence of Middle Eastern immigrants on various organizations in the Netherlands, the research will be able to find ways of engaging refugee and asylum workers, especially when influencing change organizations where they are highly concentrated. This will help organizations in the region to appreciate cultural diversity and come up with ways of controlling strong cultural influences during change management.

Problem Statement

The process of improving and realizing different cultures within organizations and using them to enhance the generation of ideas and problem-solving activities rather than leaving the employee to their class is essential.

Research Questions

1. Which cultural orientation aspects (dimensions) affect organizations in the Netherlands?
2. Specifically, what is the impact of power distance and collectivism vs. individualism among Asylum workers in the Netherlands towards organizational changes?
3. What is the effect of the fear of the unknown and the fear of change brought about by a change in an organization, especially among immigrants and Asylum workers?
4. What are the consequent impacts on the relationship between the aspects of cultural orientation and change resistance?

Research Hypothesis

1. The relationship between the cultural dimensions of "power distance" and "collectivism" in cultural orientations versus "individualism" have an impact on change resistance effecting change resistance factors "fear for change" and "fear for unknown".
2. Cultural dimensions hinder change management in high power distance culture

Literature Review

Change Management Resistance

According to Prosci (2019), change management refers to the way organizations prepare, equip, and support people and processes to effectively respond to changes geared towards enhancing

organizational success and outcomes. Cultural diversity is one of the significant factors which necessitate a difference in the modern-day organization. However, successful change in organizations is not easy since most of them would face resistance, majorly during the first phases of change implementation. Resistance to change is the worker's natural response to the change procedure. Strength is a natural phenomenon and is not necessarily towards the change itself, but the implications of the change. Two significant factors result in change management resistance, fear of the unknown, and the fear of change.

Fear for the Unknown

Even though anxiety can be useful to people primarily in motivating them to put more emphasis on a given agenda, high levels of stress can result in crippling the organization when the outcome of the change is not known. Employees at lower levels of management have minimal job security; therefore, they would always feel insecure when a change is initiated in the organization. Even though people might not resist change directly, the impact of fear caused by substitution is a primary concern. For instance, many workers would not be productive enough under high levels of anxiety, which can impede the change process. Farah, Hackett did research, and Liang (2007) on Chinese organizations found out fear of the unknown is a hindrance to organizational change as it reduces employee's performance and productivity. Research by Peri, (2010) found out immigrants in Europe, and the United States of America is slow in responding to change due to fear of what can come alongside the change. Immigrants who have been protected under the Asylum worker's protection laws in some parts of Europe were found to exhibit different perceptions to change compared to those in countries like China, where they are not protected.

Fear for Change

According to Ogbu & Simons (2009), the fear of changes in an organization might lead to a unique culture called the oppositional culture. The oppositional culture in change theory majorly used with immigrants or low-class employees and illustrates that marginalized diversities such as the dark-skinned in Europe and the United States have been misused and subjugated. Due to this notion, members of the minority groups oppose significant changes in the institutions they work, claiming that such changes are meant to oppress them. The minority groups, therefore, develop a separate system of beliefs and behaviors which they term appropriate for themselves. The most common practice is resistance to change. The members of these groups would often compare

their condition and status to those of their colleagues, which is not a favorable comparison resulting in an oppositional culture. The effect of culture on change management is, therefore, critical in any organization. The other aspect resulting in fear of change is a failure to recognize the need for the difference. When change is not effectively communicated to the members of the organization, most of them will presume that such change is meant to oppress them. Fear for change can also be connected to socio-cultural, political, and economic issues in the society, such as restrictions on illegal workers, controlling immigration, and emphasis on job qualifications. The fear of change is always there, and managers must acknowledge that it exists. According to Gleeson (2015), the best way to reduce this fear is by communicating it throughout the organization, making employees part of the change.

Cultural Orientations and Change Management

Hofstede illustrates that people are raised in different environments, ways, and languages which shape their personality. The most affected individuals are expatriates who are faced with difficulties in adjusting to the host country's cultures. Hofstede identifies culture as the combined mental programming, which makes a distinction on the members of the group from others. The cultural dimensions illustrated by Hofstede include power distance, masculinity versus femininity, long versus short term orientation, individualism versus collectivism, indulgence versus restraint, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2012). This study shall examine two dimensions; power distance and collectivism versus individualism to demonstrate and describe the effect of culture on resistance to change.

Impact of Power Distance on Organizations

Chiu & Hong (2012) outlined that power plays a central role in influencing the way culturally natured goals are achieved in an organization. Research done by Chiu and Hong established that cultural frameworks have little influence on the sense and rationale of supremacy in an organization. However, what matters most is the stress that has been put on a cultural model of disparity in the sharing of authority within the members of society or organization. The aspect of power inequality was first addressed by Hofstede, who referred to it as power distance (Hofstede, 2012). In many of his articles, Hofstede defined power distance as a situation where the minority members of the society or organization acknowledge that rule or authority is shared unequally and accepts to be victims of such supremacy inequality. Power distance refers to a shared social belief among a section of members of the organization that the power distribution is not fair.

These members of the society would then derive methods of resistance to various activities within the organization. According to the research done by Torelli and Shavitt (2010) on the Hispanic group of people living in the United States of America, it was found that they exhibit high resistance to change than majority groups (Torelli & Shavitt, 2010). In an explanation of this phenomenon, the author illustrates that minority groups always feel that the changes oppress them. Understanding the relationship between power's beliefs and cultural orientations is, therefore, crucial in formulating a strategy of convincing the power minority that a given move is helpful and beneficial to them.

Collectivism and Individualism

Collectivist culture entails the valuation of the needs of the group or community compared to that of an individual. Collectivist cultures emphasize the loyalty of the group other than self. Collective cultures include those in Asia and the Middle East. Individualist culture, on the other, is putting individual interests first before those of an organization, group, or society and is also called self-orientation. The culture puts more interest in personal identity in aspects such as personal autonomy, self-realization, independence, and individual decision making. Examples of Individualist cultures are Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. Most people appreciate change only if they feel it will help them directly. Many theories have been formulated to relate socioeconomic status and stronger orientation towards the self rather than an orientation towards others or organizations at large. Self-orientation and other direction are vital psychological dimensions. Self-orientation refers to a perception where a given condition is likely to affect either self or support and promote others at the expense of the person. For instance, responding to changes, caring, and helping others and cherishing ones promotes others' orientation. Conversely, self-orientation is the situation referencing to individual's aspects such as meeting personal goals and improving on skills and expertise among people. In research done on Turkey Asylum workers in the Netherlands, it was found out that one's relationship with the management is optimistically connected to organizational citizenship behavior within both the blue-collar and white-collar workers. People who possess collectivist value orientation tend to have a self-concept that is geared towards others, which may make them build up strong relationships (Cem - Ersoy, Born, Derous & Molen, 2011). Understanding the cultural orientations and perceptions of people towards the change, specifically on whether it benefits them or others, is very important in managing high resistance to change management. Consider

an organization where the top management comes from a particular culture, for example low power-distant culture, and the lower employees who are the majority comes from another culture. These employees would always perceive that any change benefits the top management. The research done by Church (2012) identified that such culture could be changed by appreciating the disadvantaged groups primarily through awards and promotions (Church, 2012). However, similar research done by Conger & Kanungo (2013) challenged the result. Claiming that appreciating people with the behavior of self-versus others cannot effectively solve the problem of resistance to change since they will accept the gifts but still hold the resistance notion (Conger & Kanungo, 2019). This was implied in research done on Turkish white-collar job employees.

Theoretical Perspective

Various scholars have addressed employee resistance to change. Kurt Lewin described the situation as an individual reaction to work due to unaddressed issues. Lester Coach researched employee resistance to change management and found out that employee participation was the primary factor resulting in employee resistance to change. Huddy and Mason (2015), on the other hand, regards employee resistance to lack of interest in an organization, negative perception and attitude as well as opposing views (Huddy, Mason, & Aaroe, 2015). New research done by Val and Fuentes identified that opposition to change is majorly brought about by mental, psychosomatic, money-oriented, workers' regular capabilities, and workers' worries about the organization (Val & Fuentes, 2013). The goal conflict between the firm and the employee can also be a significant hindrance to change. In a nutshell, many of the identified factors to resistance are related to cultural beliefs and personal attitudes. Culture, therefore, plays a big part in any change within an organization.

Conclusion

Culture has a significant impact on resistance to change in organizations. This culture can be inherited or build within the organization. Inherited culture is where members of the organization found it in existence and therefore embrace it. A good example is Saudi Arabia, which scores 95% on the Hofstede power distance scale. In this context, most Arab cultures have a set of norms, behaviors, and actions that guide employees on what to do, making it difficult for organizational changes to be made (Outfail, 2015). A build-in culture is where members of the organization associate themselves with certain practices based on their orientations. This culture

is difficult to control, mainly where the majority of the members or decision-makers are associated with it. An example of this cultural orientation is developed by Asylum workers in the Netherlands who feel that the organization is not treating them fairly. Such a group of people will form a social group which can be a hindrance to the various changes within an organization, especially those touching on the social and economic wellbeing.

Cultural orientations directly result in change management resistance. Power distant cultures are characterized by inequalities among employees and management and reduced flow of information within the organization. Most of the employees will, therefore, presume that any change initiated by the organization is meant to benefit those in high levels of power and oppressor have no positive impact on lower-level employees. This can, therefore, lead to fear of any change taking place in the organization. The bureaucratic nature of power distant cultures where people in power immense a lot of wealth at the expense of the low-level employees and also practice inhumane practices like forced labor, long working hours, poor working conditions, and low incomes. Is another factor that can result in fear for change. This aspect is carried by the immigrants when immigrating to low power distance cultures such as the Netherlands. Lack of effective communication tailored for certain cultural groups brought about by bureaucratic procedures makes it difficult for employees to know the anticipated benefits of a given shift, making them resistant to avoid any unforeseeable negative consequences?

Collectivism vs. Individualism is another cultural orientation practice that affects organizational change management. A collective culture will care more about the prosperity of a group or an organization, while an individualistic culture is based on caring about self-interests. Individualist cultures are dangerous and can result in high resistance to change. For instance, an individual who perceives that a given change will not benefit them is likely to resist it even if it helps the organization at large. Some people will fear to associate with any difference if they perceive that such changes will not benefit them or will benefit other individuals at their own expense. An oppressive culture can also result in a lack of support from employees resulting in an individualist culture where employees only care about their self-interest and any change that does not guarantee them the first-hand advantage is rejected.

An understanding of the cultural orientation of an organization, especially power distance and collectivism vs. Individualism and its impact on change management in aspects of fear for

change and fear of the unknown circumstances brought about by the difference, is essential for any organization wishing to make some changes effectively. With a dynamic environment, change management is inevitable. An organization that does not embrace change is likely to lack a competitive advantage and eventually collapse. Investigating the cultural dimensions causing high resistance to change management in high power distance cultures is, therefore, very important in helping an organization to adequately plan on how to manage various cultural orientations in the organization.

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