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The Effect of Employee Engagement and Employee Willingness on Success of Change Projects in an Organization

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the influence of employee engagement and employee willingness on the success of organizational change projects within Pakistan's software industry. By focusing on key elements; employee engagement and employee willingness the research identified critical drivers to effective change initiatives supporting by the Dynamic Capabilities Theory. Using a quantitative approach, data was collected from 280 employees of private software firms. The findings revealed that employee engagement is the most significant factor positively impacting change project outcomes. Engaged employees are more likely to embrace organizational transitions, adopt new processes, and contribute actively to project goals. Whereas employee willingness, showed minimal or negative effects. The research highlighted potential challenges, including the misalignment of customer insights with organizational objectives during change initiatives, leading to inefficiencies and resistance. This study contributed to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the complex interplay of human factors in change management. It offered practical recommendations for practitioners, including fostering a supportive work environment, aligning customer insights with strategic goals, and redefining management's role in driving organizational change. This research underscored the centrality of human dynamics in achieving successful change management, offering valuable insights for both academics and practitioners.

Keywords: Change Project, Human factors, Employee engagement, Employee Willingness, Customer satisfaction, Dynamic Capabilities theory

INTRODUCTION

Human factors significantly influence the success of change projects within

organizations. These factors encompass the attitudes, behaviors, and interactions of individuals that can either facilitate or hinder the change process. Understanding these dynamics is essential for effective change management, as they directly impact overall project outcomes (Khaw et al., 2022). This research was intended to explore the human factors affecting change projects. Understanding how these elements interact can significantly influence the effectiveness of change initiatives and ultimately determine their success or failure (Imran & Akhtar, 2023).

For a firm to achieve success, employee willingness to embrace change is a critical factor for successful implementation. A recent study found that individuals who exhibit higher levels of resourcefulness and confidence are more likely to be change-ready (Koning, 2023). Employee engagement is closely linked to successful change initiatives.

The literature suggests that employees who are engaged are more likely to adopt new processes and make a positive contribution toward organizational change (Oreg et al., 2011). In an organization, the changing process can be complex and difficult (Raja, et al., 2024). This is the reason a lot of organizations that start change projects or such initiatives don't end up where they want to be, and occasionally the cost of change in an organization, outweigh the advantages (Noor, et al., 2024; Ali, et al., 2024). Nonetheless, given the dynamic and quickly shifting business environment, caused mostly by technological innovation, it is becoming vital for firms to embrace change in order to survive and prosper (Musaigwa, 2023). Furthermore, management must actively engage employees in the change process to mitigate resistance and promote a culture of adaptability (Flanagan, 2023).

Understanding these dynamics is essential for effective change management, as they directly influence employee engagement and overall project outcomes. In the context of an increasingly dynamic business environment characterized by rapid technological advancements and shifting market demands, organizations must adapt to survive. This aligns with the broader theoretical framework of Dynamic Capabilities Theory, which emphasizes the need for organizations to integrate and reconfigure their resources to respond effectively to environmental changes (Teece et al., 1997).

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the impact of human factors on the success of change management initiatives within organizations. Specifically, the study sought to identify and analyze key human factors; employee willingness, and employee engagement, that influence the effectiveness of change projects.

Research Objective

The primary research objective is to explore the impact of human factors on change projects in the organizations that operates in Pakistan. Following are the set of research objectives that pointed towards each human factor that is employed for the current research

Research Objective 1

To find if the employee engagement has an impact on change project.

Research Objective 2

To find our if employee willingness has an impact on change project.

Research Question 1

Does employee engagement has an effect on change projects?

Research Question 2

Does employee willingness has an effect on change projects?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dynamic capabilities theory states that “the firm’s ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments depends on its dynamic capabilities” (Teece et al., 1997). This definition emphasizes the proactive nature of dynamic capabilities, highlighting their role in helping firms respond effectively to environmental shifts (Azhar, 2024; Azhar, et al., 2022). While an organization is working on change projects or introducing them to the market, they are relying on these abilities to introduce a change in the market or rebrand or reimagine themselves. During this process, the role of management and how other stakeholders (both internal and external) perceive it, act upon it, and how much all this benefits the change process is extremely important, as this might impact the success of change projects implemented by organizations that is explained in various studies (Barrales-Molina et al., 2015; Lee & Chen, 2019).

Employee Engagement

Kahn (1990) introduced the concept of personal engagement which describes the psychological state or condition in which employees completely invest and focus physical, cognitive, and emotional energies in their tasks and affective outcomes. Going further from Kahn’s idea of passion for work, in the line of the job engagement construct (Schaufeli et al., 2002) defined as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption”. Employee engagement essentially pertains to the full investment of physical cognitive and emotional resources in addition to the state of working with commitment and enthusiasm where individuals transcend personal interest for organizational goals (Mackay, Allen, & Landis 2017).

Employee Willingness

Employee willingness, often conceptualized as the readiness and motivation of employees to engage in their work and contribute to organizational goals, is a crucial aspect of organizational behaviour. Employee willingness can be defined as the extent to which employees are motivated to exert effort toward their tasks and the organization’s objectives (Chughtai & Lateef, 2015). Research indicates that higher levels of employee willingness correlate with increased job satisfaction, productivity, and overall organizational performance (Chughtai & Lateef, 2015).

Employee Engagement and Change Projects

It has long been believed that employee involvement is a key factor in the success of organizations, especially when it comes to transformation projects. Personal involvement was first defined by Kahn (1990) as the psychological condition in which workers devote all of their mental, emotional, and physical energy to their work. Engagement was further described by Schaufeli et al. (2002) as a “positive, rewarding, work-related state of mind characterized by vitality, dedication, and immersion.”

Employee engagement increases the likelihood that they will embrace new procedures, favorably impact company objectives, and display actions that support change initiatives.

According to research by Mackay, Allen, and Landis (2017), employee engagement cultivates a sense of organizational commitment and goes beyond personal interests. Employee engagement reduces resistance because engaged workers are more inclined to welcome change. The importance of participation in fostering organizational adaptability and resilience, particularly in times of transition, was highlighted by Oreg et al. (2011). Their results highlight how crucial it is to create an atmosphere at work that values open communication, teamwork, and trust (Mir, Rana, & Waqas, 2021).

According to the ul Haq (2019) survey, employee engagement is essential to the success of change projects in the Pakistani software sector. Businesses that place a high value on open communication and give employees resources are better able to handle changes with ease (Shah, et al., 2025; Imran, et al., 2023). This is consistent with the larger body of research that shows enhanced adaptability and project results are associated with high levels of engagement. Therefore, encouraging employee participation is a practical tactic as well as a theoretical requirement for successful change management.

H1: Employee Engagement has a significant positive effect on Change-project Success.

Employee Willingness and Change Projects

For organizational transformation projects to be successful, employee willingness is a crucial component. Willingness is a positive attitude toward change and is defined as the drive and preparedness of employees to engage in their work and support company objectives. Employee willingness was found to be strongly correlated with total organizational performance by Chughtai and Lateef (2015), who also highlighted the role that willingness plays in lowering resistance and increasing productivity. According to Miller, Johnson, and Grau (1994), company culture, perceived advantages of change, and leadership trust all have an impact on willingness. Workers are more likely to be more adaptable if they feel that changes would further their professional and personal objectives. On the other hand, a lack of communication or clarity might cause resistance and decrease willingness.

According to the study, employee willingness had a moderate effect on change initiatives in the software sector of Pakistan (Chughtai & Lateef, 2015). Willingness is the cornerstone of effective involvement and flexibility, even though it does not ensure success on its own. Clear communication, collaborative decision-making, and acknowledging employees' efforts are ways that organizations can increase willingness.

H2: Employee willingness has a significant positive effect on Change-project Success.

Koning (2023), provide quantitative understanding of human factors influencing change projects, however there is limited actual broad-banding across human factor exposures and change projects in a manner which can be generalized. This study has furthered the understanding of the interplay between different human

factors and their impact across multiple but related change initiatives (Ali, et al., 2023; Ali, et al., 2020). Though it lacked broad applicability across various contexts, the current research offered insights into certain human aspects impacting change programs (Zafar, et al., 2023). According to the Azhar, Iqbal and Imran (2025) more extensive research is required to generalize these results and guarantee that change project management techniques may be used globally, there is limited generalizability. Also, the ways in which many human elements interact and affect change initiatives collectively are not well understood. To create all-encompassing strategies for managing change projects, research should concentrate on the interactions between different human variables.

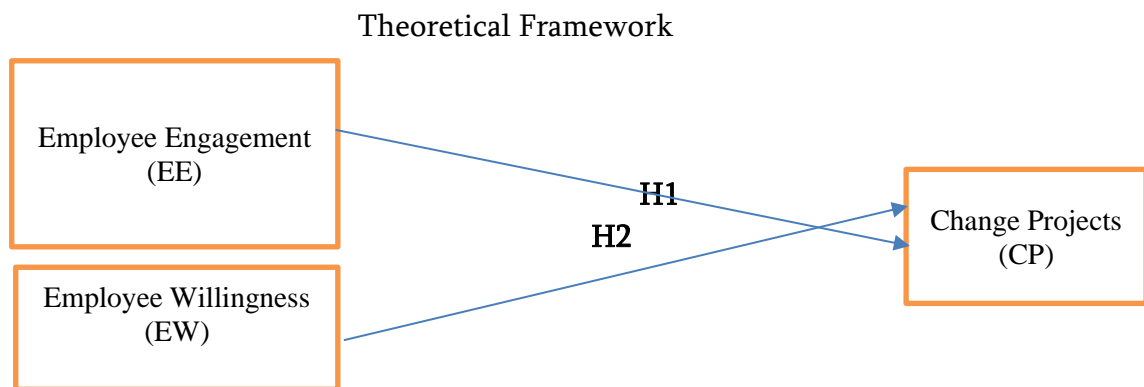


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Instruments

The current study employed established instruments to measure the key variables of interest. Employee Engagement was assessed using a 21-item scale adapted from the work of Vorina, Simoncic, and Valasova (2017). Employee Willingness was measured using an 8-item scale based on the instrument developed by Miller, Johnson, and Garu (1994). Finally, perceptions of Change Projects were evaluated using a 5-item scale informed by the frameworks of Kotter (1996) and Hiatt (2006). These instruments were selected for their established reliability and validity in assessing the respective constructs.

Data Analysis

This data describes a sample of 280 individuals with a near-equal gender distribution. The sample is predominantly composed of younger individuals, with the largest age group being 26-30 years. Educationally, the sample is heavily weighted towards those with Masters degrees and above. In terms of work experience, a large portion has between 1-5 years of experience, indicating a workforce that is still developing in their careers.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

| | Mean | SD |
|----------------------|--------|---------|
| Employee Engagement | 3.5621 | 0.77133 |
| Employee Willingness | 3.3464 | 0.58846 |
| Change Projects | 3.5593 | 0.71154 |

Employee Engagement and perceptions of Change Projects have similar and moderately positive average scores. Employee Willingness has a slightly lower average score compared to Engagement and Change Projects. Employee Willingness also shows the least amount of variability among the employees, while Employee Engagement has the highest variability. This implies that while the general level of willingness is somewhat consistent, there's a wider range of engagement levels and perceptions of change projects within the employee population.

Reliability Analysis of Scales

A measurement tool or object is said to be reliable if it consistently produces the same results across time. To evaluate the reliability of the scales Cronbach's alpha test was employed. Greater reliability in measuring the intended notion is indicated by higher Cronbach's alpha values, which range from 0 to 1. While readings below 0.6 indicate lesser reliability, values above 0.6 are typically regarded as reliable.

Table 2: Reliability

| | Cronbach's Alpha | Items |
|----------------------|------------------|-------|
| Employee Management | 0.95 | 21 |
| Employee Willingness | 0.74 | 8 |
| Change Projects | 0.79 | 5 |

Table 2 displays the reliability test findings, which demonstrate that every scale utilized in this investigation had a Cronbach's alpha value higher than 0.6. The Employee Engagement scale received a score of 0.95 stating exceptional reliability. The Employee Willingness scale showed moderate reliability with a score of 0.74, and the Change Projects scale showed moderate reliability with a score of 0.79. These findings demonstrate the scales' thorough design and appropriateness for this study, especially given the Pakistani setting.

Correlation Analysis

To investigate the connection between Human Factors and Change Projects, correlation analysis was performed. With a correlation coefficient that ranges from -1.0 to 1.0, Pearson correlation analysis is specifically used to gauge the nature and strength of the association. The strength of the association is indicated by the correlation coefficient's magnitude. A value that is closer to zero denotes a weaker or no association between the variables, whereas a value that is farther from zero shows a stronger relationship. There is little to no association between the variables if the correlation coefficient is near 0.

Table 3: Correlation

| | | | |
|----------------------|--------|-------|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Employee Engagement | 1 | | |
| Employee Willingness | .548** | 1 | |
| Change Projects | .186** | -.005 | 1 |

Employee engagement and employee willingness are strongly linked – engaged employees are much more likely to be willing. Employee engagement has a small but significant positive relationship with how employee view change projects. Employee willingness and how employees view change projects appear to be unrelated in this data.

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is a statistical method used to examine the relationship between dependent and independent variables, providing insights into how changes in predictor variables influence an outcome.

Table 4: Regression

| Path | R-Square | F | Beta | T | Sig(P) |
|-------|----------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 0.22 | 4.258 | | | |
| EE-CP | | | 0.369 | 3.777 | .000 |
| EW-CP | | | -0.106 | -1.172 | 0.242 |

The results of the regression analysis, where **Change Projects (CP)** is the dependent variable and the independent variables are **Employee Engagement (EE)**, and **Employee Willingness (EW)**, are $R^2 = 0.22$ This indicates that **22% of the variance in Change Projects (CP)** is explained by the combined effects of the predictors (EE, EW). This is a strong explanatory power of the model. **F = 4.258, p < .05** The overall regression model is **statistically significant**, meaning that the predictors collectively explain a significant proportion of the variance in CP.

Employee Engagement has a **positive and significant effect** on Change Projects. For every one-unit increase in EE, CP increases by 0.369 units. The result is highly statistically significant ($p < .001$), meaning this is a reliable predictor of CP. Employee Willingness has a **negative but non-significant effect** on Change Projects. The p-value (0.242) indicates this predictor is not significant.

Hypothesis Analysis

Employee Engagement (EE) has a **positive and significant effect** on Change Projects ($\beta = 0.369, t = 3.777, p < 0.001$), therefore the hypothesis is accepted.

Employee Willingness (EW) has a **negative and non-significant effect** on Change Projects ($\beta = -0.106, t = -1.172, p = 0.242$) therefore the hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION

The study of human factors in change projects represents a critical intersection of organizational behavior, psychology, and strategic management. Change projects, which are structured initiatives aimed at transforming organizations, often involve

complex processes that are influenced by both technical and human dynamics (Sloot et al., 2024). While technological advancements and financial resources are vital for project success, the human elements attitudes, behaviors, and interactions of individuals within the organization play an equally significant, if not greater, role in determining outcomes (Errida & Lofti, 2021). This discussion delves deeper into the findings of the study, situating them within broader theoretical and practical contexts. The effectiveness of organizational change initiatives depends heavily on human elements including employee engagement (Logan, 2011; Mackay, Allen, & Landis, 2017), and employee willingness (Chughtai & Lateef, 2015). These elements affect how employees view, react to, and participate in change projects. The study's conclusions demonstrate that the most important element affecting the effectiveness of change initiatives is employee engagement (Azhar, 2024; Azhar, et al., 2022).

Employee engagement increases the likelihood that they will welcome change, support company objectives, and actively participate in achieving project goals. The substantial benefits that employee engagement has for change initiatives highlight how crucial it is to create an atmosphere at work that encourages motivation, trust, and teamwork. Workers are more inclined to support organizational change, pick up new skills, and adjust to new procedures when they feel appreciated and supported (Chakraborty & Ganguly, 2019). Similarly, Slosberg, Nejati, and Evans (2018) have discovered a strong link between employee satisfaction, adaptability, and readiness to transfer the positive impact of change initiatives which emphasized how crucial it is to maintain employee expectations and perceptions during the planning, building, and activation stages of the project to enhance readiness and satisfaction during the change initiatives. This finding is consistent with a larger body of research that finds that employee engagement is a critical facilitator of organizational resilience and agility (Oreg et al., 2011).

Although theoretically crucial, employee willingness had no discernible impact on change programs in this study. Contextual elements like organizational culture and restructuring of initiatives being performed may be reflected in this outcome which are discussed by Albrecht, Connaughton, and Leiter (2022). For example, willingness may already be ingrained in the workforce at companies with high levels of involvement and communication, making its extra impact less noticeable (Skerritt et al., 2024). On the other hand, willingness might be more noticeable in certain kinds of change projects, such as those that include a lot of innovation or disruption (Jalonen, 2011). According to this research, willingness might not be enough to bring about change on its own. Organizations should instead concentrate on developing individuals' willingness, engagement, and capability. This is consistent with models such as the ADKAR model (Hiatt, 2006), which highlights how awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement interact to create effective change management.

Theoretical Implications

By emphasizing how employee engagement promotes flexibility and responsiveness during change initiatives, the findings provide some support for the dynamic capabilities theory and improve an organization's capacity to manage change.

The study highlights the necessity of reevaluating the functions of important human elements in change initiatives, including the role of management and customer knowledge management. They seem to have varying effects in different contexts and are influenced by organizational culture. As a key facilitator of organizational change, employee engagement supports theories that emphasize employee-centric strategies. Since engaged workers are more likely to support change initiatives favorably, cultivating engagement is crucial for transformation to be successful.

Practical Implications

Strategies to improve employee engagement, such as open and honest communication, recognition efforts, and active participation in decision-making during transformation projects, should be given top priority by organizations. These tactics can greatly increase levels of participation and enhance the results of transformation. The study shows that transformational leadership is a key factor in determining how prepared employees are for change. Leaders can successfully reduce resistance and advance an adaptable culture by creating an atmosphere of empowerment and encouragement (Cimini et al., 2022). Management can promote corporate culture toward change and increase project outcomes by incorporating employees in the change process.

Limitations

The study's conclusions have limited generalizability due to its exclusive emphasis on software companies in Pakistan. To validate the findings, more industries and geographical locations should be investigated in future studies. Because of the cross-sectional design of the study, data was only gathered once, making it impossible to examine how the associations between variables might change over time. Deeper understanding of these dynamics would be possible with longitudinal research. The study excluded other potentially significant variables like organizational culture, communication tactics, or external market conditions, and only examined a small subset of factors driving change programs. These variables should be included in future studies to create a more complete model.

Future Directions

To improve the findings' generalizability and test their suitability in other circumstances, future research should try to incorporate a wider variety of industries and geographical areas. Longitudinal studies may yield important information about how human factors' impact on change initiatives changes over time. With this method, researchers might see changes and patterns that cross-sectional studies could miss. Future studies should examine other mediating elements, such as communication tactics or corporate culture, to gain a deeper understanding of how human factors influence change attempts.

Future research should look at how digital tools and innovations affect human variables in change processes and how they might either enhance or complicate conventional change management tactics, given the growing role of technology in organizational change.

CONCLUSION

The success of organizational change initiatives is largely dependent on human factors. This study emphasizes some crucial human factors that might have impact well on change initiatives work in organizations in Pakistan, these factors of study were include employee engagement and employee willingness. The results highlight the significance of employee engagement in proactively management required to better achieve successful change project outcomes in the context of Pakistan Software houses. It has become clear that good communication is essential to helping both employees comprehend and embrace change within the organization. The negative impact of employee willingness indicates the unsupportive organization culture, inadequate skills and training of employees to support change projects despite their willingness, and absence of strong leadership.

This study advances our theoretical and applied knowledge of how human factors impact change initiatives. Organizations can improve their capacity to successfully manage change by acknowledging the significance of these components and putting plans in place that take them into account. The results support a thorough method of change management that incorporates human dynamics into the processes of planning and carrying out projects, which eventually increases project success rates.

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