

# Resistance to Change: Causes and Strategies as an Organizational Challenge

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**Abstract:** *This literature review is structured to examine more closely what factors can cause resistance to change and what strategies can overcome resistance to change, through the research results of several journals that have been collected. There are twenty international journals sourced from several websites such as EBSCOhost, emerald insight, google scholar, and so forth. The results of the discussion revealed that there are individual factors such as little motivation and situational factors such as increased job security; Besides, there are seven strategies to overcome resistance to change, such as increasing participation.*

**Keywords:** *change, resistance to change*

## Introduction

In this modern era, everything will change because change is everywhere, including in an organization. Changes are made so that the organization remains dynamic, while at the same time to improve organizational progress and employee's performance, adapt to the environment, and change behavior patterns in the workplace (Leana & Barry, 2000). This confirms that organizations that make changes are organizations that want to survive. Change is defined as a process that changes the direction of history or development and can influence the system or functionality of an organization (Abraham, 2000). However, not all planned changes can be successful and can be accepted by all employees. In fact, the rate of failure of organizational change turns out to be up to 70% (Balogun & Hailey, 2004). It explains that success in change depends on how employees respond to these changes because, in essence, each employee must have a different perspective with other employees in responding to a change (Lines, 2005). Not all employees react positively to change; some even react negatively, and one of the employees' negative attitudes to change is called resistance to change (Piderit, 2000).

Resistance to change can be interpreted as an attitude or behavior of an individual who can frustrate the purpose of change goals (Chawla & Kelloway, 2004). Employee adverse reactions to changes will have enormous consequences; this is because they will inhibit the success of the planned changes (Fugate et al., 2012). The facts show that one of the factors that cause the failure of organizational change is employees who resistance to change (Regar et al., 1994). From the previous explanation about resistance to change which is a negative reaction of employees in inhibiting change, and by considering that the importance of change in an organization, then there is no doubt that resistance to change is the main topic to help the organization, especially for managers and human

resource division to achieve the advantage of effective transformation.

## Literature Review

In the 1940s, someone who initiated the resistance to change emerged and discussed it for the first time. He was Kurt Lewin, who, at the beginning of his thinking, was focused on handling aspects of employee behavior so that organizational change could work effectively (Kurt, 1945). After that, the first research that was inspired by the concept of resistance to change entitled "Overcoming Resistance to Change" in a study conducted by Coch and French (1948) in Virginia. One important finding that Coch and French have examined, and to date has been useful in overcoming problems in an organization, is that participation is the most effective method of overcoming resistance to change (Coch & French, 1948).

Generally, resistance is an individual reaction that arises from opposition to change (Folger & Skarlicki, 1999). Meanwhile, Oreg (2003) in his research, states that resistance to change is an individual characteristic that shows a negative attitude to change, and there is a tendency to avoid and even fight against it. Employees who have resistance to change must have specific goals and objectives for management; therefore, resistance to change is an essential factor for consideration of organizational change programs. Forms of resistance carried out by employees, include: boycotting, reduced interest, blocking, opposing views, strikes, to negative perceptions and attitudes (Coetsee, 1999).

So many forms of adverse reactions that arise by individuals related to the scope of resistance to change, making understanding of the responses that are raised are still too broad. To that end, in understanding the logic of resistance to change that occurs in an organization, Davis (1977) divides resistance to change into two types, namely: first, resistance to change based on logical analysis shows that the costs required for the change program are greater than the benefits of

the change, and second, resistance to change based on selfish hopes and emotions that do not care about the benefits of change widely or for others and therefore become less necessary for an organization. On the other hand, Piderit (2000) classifies resistance to change into three parts, including: first, emotional (frustration and aggression, which can influence attitudes), second, behavior (commission, intentional, inaction), and third, cognitive (unwillingness and negative thoughts about change).

With the resistance to change that occurs in an organization, it will bring a negative impact on the sustainability of the organization's growth, because resistance to change is a negative reaction of employees that inhibit change. The negative effects of resistance to change in an organization include reducing job satisfaction (Wanberg & Banas, 2002; Burke et al., 2009), reducing perceived organizational effectiveness (Jones & Ven, 2016), and minimizing creative performance (Hon et al., 2011). In addition, as a result of employee resistance to change turned out to be referred to as one of the main obstacles to organizational change initiatives (Lippert & Davis, 2006), and cause negative impacts such as reducing employee motivation (Ude & Diala, 2015), less than optimal results of failure change programs (Giangreco & Peccei, 2005), reducing employees' adaptability to work and causing organizational setbacks (Greenhalgh, 1983), and ultimately increasing turnover (Oreg, 2006). On the other hand, not all consequences of resistance to change have a negative impact, but there are also positive effects. Piderit (2000) has found that resistance to change is also able to provide a useful source of information for learning how to develop a more successful change process.

### **Discussion**

Twenty journals and several research results on resistance to change have been collected. This review aims to explain the understanding of the factors that cause resistance to change, and the discussion will be explained in each report. For convenience, the factors that influence resistance to change will be categorized into two, namely individual factors and situational factors.

Individual factors that cause resistance to change, first starting from lack of confidence (Kanter, 1985). It is because employees do not have confidence in themselves, whether they are confident that change will have a positive effect on him and the organization. Second is low self-stability (Steptoe et al., 1993). The low self-stability makes employees unable to consciously control themselves, resulting in behaviors that harm others and the organization, one of which is resistance to change. The third is increased stress (Dent & Goldberg, 1999). It is basically due to organizational changes that will bring pressure on employees. Besides, resistance to change is not only for the organization but also for its consequences, for example, losing comfort, salary, or status. Therefore, increasing

stress will tend to affect employees in accepting changes in an organization negatively. The fourth is uncertain feelings (Ashford et al., 1989). This uncertain feeling refers to the lack of information about the change to be carried out so that it causes employees to worry about the demands of the change itself, which results in rejection of the change. The fifth is the lack of need for achievement (Mabin et al., 2001). Employees who do not need achievement will work improperly or are not oriented to make their abilities increase so that employees will tend to resist change because they feel the change will improve their performance and that is not their need.

Still on the same factor, the sixth is a weak disposition towards change (Amarantou et al., 2016). This is because basically, employees do have a problematic nature to accept a novelty, one of which is change because disposition is innate from birth. Seventh is little motivation (Hultman, 1998). Employees with low encouragement to meet their needs will also receive a profound organizational change. By understanding motivation, it will be able to understand why employees reject the change. The eighth is a fear of failure (Kuyatt, 2011). This fear is already present in pessimistic employees because this feared failure is oriented toward personal consequences if the change fails. Ninth is low self-efficacy and autonomy job (Jaramillo et al., 2012). The low self-efficacy refers to experiences that are oriented to change cannot be applied directly; in other words, employees who have low self-efficacy will not be maximized if included in the implementation of the change. And employees with low autonomy jobs will have difficulty in planning and determining the methods used to carry out work, including change programs. The tenth is too little affective commitment (Mckay et al., 2013). Employees with low commitment mean not having psychological attachment and work orientation for an extended period. Moreover, employees with low affective commitments lack the conformity they believe in and do not have the voluntary attitude to remain in the organization, in other words, employees do not care about the future of the organization and tend to resist changes, so they do not accept new demands to make work to be maximized.

Whereas situational factors that cause resistance to change include, first, high information ambiguity (Greenhalgh, 1983). The high level of uncertainty in information makes it difficult for employees to accept information that is not certain in the truth. This causes employees to trust the issues that exist within the organization so that employees find it difficult to believe information about organizational change programs that lead to resistance to change. Second, the lack of participation in change (Coch & French, 1948; Lines, 2004). The low participation in these changes will make employees feel unnecessary in the organization because the lack of participation and suddenly asked by managers to make changes will

make employees confused and tend to reject changes. Third, low work comfort (Dent & Goldberg, 1999). Employees will work under pressure if the comfort in the workplace is low; this makes it difficult for employees to accept changes because they do not work in good conditions. Fourth, high cynicism and organizational silence (Reichers et al., 1997; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). The increased cynicism makes the work environment uncomfortable, because this cynicism will affect other employees who have been positively oriented to accept change. Besides, the presence of organizational silence will make concealment and diversion of information, so employees tend to resist change because they do not know the problems facing the organization. This is due to the existence of norms that employees have so that it prevents them from stating what questions they see because they are forced to be silent on specific problems. Fifth, the lack of employee support (Kanter, 1985). This low level of support occurs because employees are lack work integrity, so they work merely to meet their needs without supporting the needs of the organization. It causes the organizational change program will not run if it is not accompanied by employee support, because they are the most members of the organization.

Still on the same factor, the sixth factor is poor organizational culture (Leigh, 2002). Poor culture in an organization makes employees will also be accustomed to working with a poor orientation as well, so to run an organizational change program must first change the organizational culture to be better. The seventh factor is increasing job insecurity (Swanson & Holton, 2001). Employees with high levels of job insecurity will potentially resist change; this is caused by the concern that employees feel about job loss or insecurity about the future of their work that raises resistance to change. The eighth factor is the lack of information adequacy (Stanley et al., 2005; Oreg, 2006). Lack of understanding of information, especially about changes, can also be caused by a lack of employees' ability to interpret information. In other words, resistance to change occurs because employees are not sufficiently comprehensive in receiving information. The ninth factor is the lack of communication adequacy (Mckay et al., 2013). The low level of communication adequacy is the same as the low level of information adequacy. Rejection of change occurs because, within the organization, managers are not able to apply open communication to all employees. Finally, decreased organizational support and organizational justice (Jones & Ven, 2016). It can be caused by conflicts between leaders and employees; in other words, if there are problems within the working relationship between managers and employees, resistance to change will occur. Besides, when managers are unfair to all employees, employees with less fair treatment will tend to resist change than employees with appropriate treatment.

In general, the dangers of adverse employee reactions that can inhibit changes in an organization, it is necessary to discuss how to overcome resistance to change. There are seven strategies to overcome resistance to change. The first is introducing the changes slowly. It allows all employees to be involved with the time of change, to find information, determine whether further training is needed to accept it, to adjust to change (White, 1998). The second is participation; participation is the most effective solution to overcome or reduce resistance to change (Griffin, 1993). It explains that all employees who are concerned with change can help or take an active part in the implementation or planning of change (Schermerhorn, 1999). Although this strategy can take a lot of time, the success rate in this strategy is quite high. The third strategy is psychological ownership which refers to feel attached to an organization (Dirks et al., 1996). There are three basic needs of self which are strong supporters of behavior and attitudes, among others: self-continuity, self-improvement, and control and efficacy. These three basic needs will affect how employees resist change, but will also depend on what type of change the organization has planned and whether the change is considered attractive or not by the employee. The fourth strategies are facilitation and education. Educating employees about the importance of the potential benefits of significant change, it can reduce resistance to change (Griffin, 1993). Some facilitation procedures must be sufficiently available for planning changes. For example, human resource division or change initiating agents must notify that any changes that are carried out before the real implementation will occur and sufficient time is given by employees to adjust to doing something related to the change program in various ways, even new ways that are not yet controlled by employees (Griffin, 1993).

The fifth strategy is the development of trust, with a strategy of minimizing misunderstandings and uncertainties that will ensure that all employees involved during the change process will receive the same information. Clarification during the change process will provide an opportunity for all members to seek their understanding of what problems they may face or have (Griffin, 1993; White, 1998). The sixth strategy is additional support. This support can facilitate change by reducing fear and anxiety in the change program itself. For example, active in understanding the problem and listening to all suggestions are forms of additional support (Schermerhorn, 1999). Also, training and the addition of employees during the training period, to minimize the workload during the change process, were considered good enough to reduce resistance to change (White, 1998). The seventh strategy is changing agents. The latter strategy can be used to reduce resistance to change when the initiator of change is deemed to be less than optimal and needs to be changed both programmatically and even in his position. Having

people with objective thinking from outside the organization is responsible for helping to introduce organizational change (White, 1998). The initiating agent for change begins with assessing the situation before implementing the change. However, the employee's initial involvement with the agent who will be affected by the change is significant for his success in this strategy.

### Conclusion

From the previous discussion, it can be concluded that the factors that cause resistance to change have been categorized into individual factors and situational factors. In addition to improving organizational quality through change, seven strategies have been identified to overcome resistance to change. Suggestions for further researchers is to conduct a meta-analysis in research on resistance to change.

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