Resistance To Organizational Change: Barrier Or Opportunity?

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ABSTRACT:
The purpose of this study was to explore how organizations define the organizational change and resistance including its management. This study also aimed to explore how organizations deal with resistance to organizational change when an organization considers it as an opportunity or a barrier. This study was conducted to evaluate resistance to organizational change at two banks in Pakistan i.e. United Bank Limited and Standard Chartered Bank. Data was collected by using qualitative methodology, in the form of the case study. Five individual interviews and three focus groups were conducted from each bank. In total 14 individual interviews and 11 focus group interviews were conducted for this study. Interviews were conducted from managerial level and focus groups were conducted from the teller and other front-line staff. This finding showed that resistance is a part of the change. Every organization experiences some level of resistance as a result of change. Some organizations take resistance positively and deal with it as an opportunity as compared to other organizations which take resistance as a negative thing and deal with it as a barrier. Resistance is considered as a barrier until organizations do not know how to deal with it. The study has theoretical and managerial implications.

Keywords: Organizational Change, Resistance, Opportunity and Barrier.

1. Introduction
In the 21st century, organizations are operating in a very dynamic environment that demands continuous change to remain competitive (Pieterse, Caniëls, & Homan, 2012). Similarly, organizations have become adaptive to change for the sake of their survival and growth (Greenwood & Hinings, 1988). Whether by responding toward external affairs or by eagerly improving businesses, organizations must consistently remain aligned with the environment. Due to fast-changing technology, economics, consumer preferences, government, demographics and competition, a significant question rises which is not about
embracing a change or not, rather it is about how and in which direction organizations should change.

Organizational change occurs when an organization makes some transition from its current state to the desired future state (Greenwood & Hinings, 1988). The possible factors that can work as a simulator for organizational change are political, social, economic and technological (Boojihawon & Segal-Horn, 2006). Many authors demonstrate that successful change management is very important for the organizations if they are surviving in an unpredictable and rapidly changing environment (including Pieterse et al., 2012). Regardless of well-planned change policies, there are around 70% changes which fail at the initial stage and lead towards disappointed expectations (Pieterse et al., 2012).

Seemingly, it is very problematic to implement successful change in organizations. Although change is executed for positive reasons like adaptive to changing conditions of the environment and maintain competitive advantage, employees often respond negatively toward change and resist it (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Most authors claimed that resistance to accepting the change is the main hurdle in its implementation (e.g., Waddell & Sohal, 1998). This negative response is obvious because change brings stress, as well as it increases pressure and uncertainty for employees (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999).

Resistance to change from the employee’s side is most recognized due to the low success rate of change programs (Ford, Ford, & D’Amelio, 2008). However, it would be more appropriate to view resistance to change with different perspectives (Piderit, 2000). Scholars on resistance to change highlight that there is a need for further research in organizational change efforts. For example, researches should pay attention to organizational change process (including Dibella, 2007) as well as, add value to the understanding of resistance to change. Resistance to organizational change is considered as one of the key reasons for excessive rate of failure of change programs (R. W. Quinn & Dutton, 2005).

There are two main dominant approaches to resistance in literature: demonizing it and celebrating it. Many authors believe that resistance to change is an unfavorable reaction, opposing behavior or a force that prevents change. In this way, the resistance elaborates the demonizing side and ultimately it is needed to overcome and eliminate it (Mabin, Forgeson, & Green, 2001). Although conflict arouses from resistance, it has been established to refine the decision’s quality as well as the commitment of employees to implement those decisions (Amason, 1996). Celebrating side of resistance considers resistance to change as a resource because it highlights many positive aspects and intentions. For example, if organizations resolve resistance properly, it helps them to refine necessary plans and actions and improve decision making quality (Lines*, 2004;).

The objective of this study is to figure out how organizations understand the meaning of change and how they deal with resistance to change. Qualitative research was conducted in the banking sector of Pakistan to find out how organizations understand the meaning of
change and how they deal with resistance to change. This chapter of the study will explain the research problem, research objective, and research question.

2. Literature Review

The aim of this study was to explore how organizations understand the meaning of change and how they deal with resistance. This section will cover the recent and significant literature on organizational change, resistance to change and two main approaches to resistance i.e. demonizing resistance and celebrating resistance.

2.1. Organizational change

Change is generally a response that is generated as a result of threat or opportunity arises outside the organization. According to Pettigrew (1987), changes within an organization take place both in response to business and economic events and to processes of managerial perception, choice, and actions. Managers in this sense see events that are taking place in their environment and give signals the need for change.

In order to deal with developing changes in organizational environment, change refers to doing things in a different way. The whole organization gets disturbed if change happens in any part of the organization. There are two ways to accept and embrace change; proactive or reactive manner. Change that is implemented according to an appropriate plan or preparation considering and estimating the future challenges, refers to a proactive change. Usually, management inducts it. The change taking place in surroundings needs an involuntary response, this refers to the reactive change (Johnston, 1993).

In this sense, it is important for the organization to remain active and considers what is happening around it. It is the responsibility of an organization’s management to ruminate about the needs of change at all levels (Alkaya & Hepaktan, 2003).

Organizational change is a difficult process which involves different actors of organization, especially managers and employees (Cornescu & Adam, 2016). In one of the study by McKinsey & Company, only 30% of managers claimed that the change process was successful for long term goals. To make organizational change successful, managerial capabilities are essentially required (Isern & Pung, 2007). According to Van de Ven and Poole (1995), one of the following theories could explain the causes of organizational change: technological theory, dialectical theory, evolutionary theory, and life-cycle theory.

The technological theory states that “organizational change is an endeavor to attain an ideal state through a continuous process of goal setting, execution, evaluation, and restructuring. "The dialectical theory claimed that “organization is like a multicultural society that has opposing values”. According to evolutionary theory, the set of changes accumulated in the structural form of organization, communities, societies or business in general. Change comes from the cycle of variation, selection, and retention. Life-cycle perspective theory states that “organization is an entity that depending on the external environment and
undergoes the stages of birth, growth, maturation, and declination”. Whenever one particular force overlooks other, a new value is recognized as a result of the organizational change (Masunda, 2015).

2.2. Demonizing Resistance

Whenever organizations bring any change, it influences on employees of that organization. Although change involves going from known to unknown, it is rational to expect from employees to react (Wittig, 2012). It is realized that employees react differently as a result of the change, some react positively and some react negatively. Not only individuals experience a change in a different way but they have different abilities and willingness to adopt change in different ways (including Darling, 1993). Employees who show resistance to organizational change creates a problem for the organization to implement change successfully.

Resistance to organizational change means behaviors of change recipients occur in order to create problems (like dismiss or delay) in proposed organizational change (Hughes, 2006). Therefore, it can be assumed that resistance is a barrier to organizational change because the successful planning of organizational change is influenced by resistance. Resistance to change can be a reason for the failure of many change initiatives. Resistance can cause of cost and slowdown the process of change (Cawsey & Deszca, 2007).

There is extensive and diverse literature about managing the organizational change that is starting from organizational development approach (Cummings & Worley, 1997) through more processual and political approach (for instance Pettigrew, 1987). A bulk of literature acknowledges that resistance to change is likely to happen and managers who are interested to bring organizational change should know how to avoid or defeat it.

It is proved that the Cognitive Dissonance Theory is really effective for understanding why and how resistance originates (Gawronski, 2012). According to cognitive dissonance, people want consistency in their behavior and attitude. People show dissonance when they feel a contradiction in their two or more than two attitudes or between their behavior and attitude. That is why, they become disappointed and uneasy with the circumstances (Jones, 1990). Peters (2012) named as “paradoxes” to that type of change situations where employees are become stressed.

Communication is an important key to the process of change and its objective is to prepare employees for the change (Husain, 2013). Effective communication related to change is important for successful implementation. On the other hand, failure of effective communication or any other communication gap can cause many fluctuated result like job stress, a decrease in organizational commitment, absences, etc. (Pietersen, 2017).

Supports of managers is also important to minimize resistance to organizational change. Supportive leadership provides a positive attitude and self-confidence. This type of leadership enhances employee’s creativity, job satisfaction, proactive response, employee’s
well-being and reduce job stress of employees. Employee's involvement is important for employee's satisfaction in an organization. Employees who involve in decision making with the organization are 43% more productive as compared to others (Pietersen, 2017). In fact, these employees are more loyal to the organization. According to studies of Furst and Cable (2008), communication, employer’s support and participation of employees are important dimensions to resolve resistance to organizational change.

However, if employees still create problems in change initiatives by resisting it, the managers are justified in using more intimidating methods to implement change. Accordingly, this literature of problematizing and demonizing resistance frame this concept of resistance as negative and harmful for the organization; a pathology that obstructs the change attempts and needs to be eliminated (Hon, Bloom, & Crant, 2014).

2.3. Celebrating Resistance

Some authors have elaborated that demonizing resistance may not contribute to carrying out successful change. Still, engagement in change is becoming the need of organizations; they suggest that resistance might have a role to play in ensuring successful change. Resistance may be encouraging by reasonable concerns that existing change plans are problematic in some way and, by resisting them, more effective manners can be put in place (Furst & Cable, 2008). Thus, resistance can be the aid of successful change initiatives (Ford et al., 2008). Particularly, middle managers can make a vital contribution to successful change by listening claims, communicating and understanding of others (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). Similarly, change initiatives can be improved by the participation of employees and stakeholders. That challenges which are taken for granted can make change initiatives more effective (Van Dam, Oreg, & Schyns, 2008). Another study also demonstrates that employee’s involvement, motivation to adapt new change and correct information related to particular change are required for effective change implementation and reduce resistance. Managers should know about their employee’s behavior and try to motivate them by providing emotional support. Good relationship among managers and employees can reduce resistance and manage change effectively (Cornescu & Adam, 2016).

Social constructivism theory supports this side of resistance. Everyone lives in a socially constructed reality. Resistance is a function of these realities and depends on its nature. Although, constructed realities accommodate such circumstances where people act and interact with each other. Nature of these realities creates opportunities for action about how people make the meaning of things and see the world and how they take actions towards these. So, people interact with each other to resolve their problems and overcome resistance (Ford, Ford, & McNamara, 2002).

The concepts of demonizing or celebrating resistance adds ambiguity to organizational change rather than clarity. This study aims to explore these arguments about resistance to change; either organization take resistance as a barrier or opportunity during their change
program and how organizations deal with resistance to organizational change if organizations take it as an opportunity or barrier.

3. Research Methodology

The main objective of this study was to answer the research question “How do organizations define organizational change and resistance to change? Further aim of this study was to explore “How do organizations manage the resistance to change when they take it as an opportunity or barrier?” By using different sources of evidence, qualitative case study was best suitable approach to investigate contemporary phenomenon within its real life context (Yin, 2003). “Qualitative case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a real life”(Simons, 2009).

Study of Georgalis, Samaratunge, Kimberley, and Lu (2015) also demonstrated that there is need to do further investigation specifically for a qualitative approach to convey a deep understanding of change process and resistance to organizational change.

Within qualitative research design, the interviews were used to collect data from research participants through different types of unstructured questions (Marshall et al., 2007). Individual interviews helped to explore different perspectives of individuals and gain insights into their experiences, about the given topic, in more detail (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). On the other hand, a focus group was another method for data gathering in qualitative research design which was used in this study. Participants interact with each other in groups and get more involves in the research study and generate different ideas (Kitzinger, 2013).

Collection of data through individual interviews and focus groups helped us to triangulate the data which showed validity and reliability of the data in qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003). The data collection tool used in this study was a semi-structured interview template consisting of 10 and 7 open-ended questions respectively. After thorough literature review and complete understanding, questions were established. Individual interviews were carried out from key staff like managers because they provided rich data and important information related to process of change and its results. Focus groups were conducted from lower staff who were employees and change recipients to find out how were they engaged in change process with organization. Through this, we were in a position to explore out how organizations understand the meaning of change and resistance to change and how they deal with resistance to change when the organization takes resistance as an opportunity or a barrier. Purposive sampling was used to collect data.

In this study, two banks were selected to provide in-depth analysis; United Bank Limited and Standard Chartered Bank. Those banks have chosen for the study that have gone through any general change. Banks are considered as a backbone of global economy because it provides capital for innovation, infrastructure and overall prosperity. In this
study, United Bank Limited referred as a case study organization I and Standard Chartered Bank labelled as a case study organization II.

Since 2016, it was observed that case study I organization introduced many technological changes and many other changes to facilitate their customers and employees. For instance, e-learning program which provided facilitation to their employees. The organization also started work over branchless banking to facilitate their customers. The organization struggled to focus on digitizing its operations and became leading bank in innovative solutions to their customers.

Standard Chartered bank limited was taken as a case study organization II. It is the oldest and largest international bank in Pakistan which head office is located in UK. It was the first bank which was awarded as Islamic banking license and was first which open Islamic bank branch. Case study organization II also provided many technological changes like branchless banking. It was awarded with best “digital bank” in 2015. It expended its branchless banking service by providing facility of transactions via online and over mobile phones. They also started to save data online instead of manual to facilitate its employees and to maintain its records. Case study organization II tried to adapt change according to changing environment.

The purpose of this research study was explained to participants before conducting interviews and focus groups. Further, they were informed that their participation is voluntary and that they can quit any time during the interview/focus group. Total six focus groups were conducted, three focus groups from each bank. Each focus group contained five employees, making a total of 30 employees. While a total of 10 interviews were conducted, five from each bank. Each interview took approximately half an hour, while each focus group took 45 to 60 minutes. They also play as a key role in supporting the successful change implementation and communicating information of desire change to all employees (Ionescu, Meruţă, & Dragomiroiu, 2014).

Data were recorded with the consent of the participant, and complete confidentiality was ensured. Open-ended questions were developed, including general to specific questions to find out themes related to change and how they deal with resistance to change. Questions include e.g., “How do you explain the change and share about any change that you were experienced?” “Why does an organization need to change?” “How do your employees respond to change?” These questions helped to understand the value and need of change for an organization. Other set of questions were focused on process and response of the employees e.g., “How is change communicated to the employees in your organization?”, “How does organization respond if employees show resistance towards change?” “Does your organization give the opportunity to take employee’s suggestions when change is planned to be implemented? Further to this employees were asked to share their good or bad experiences and feelings regarding the particular change. If required questions were also raised to develop better understanding of the issue. Written notes and audio recording interview protocol were taken to facilitate analysis. At the end of each interview and focus
group, they were asked to share further important information related to the study which may have not been explored or overlooked by the researcher.

3.1. Analyzing data
Thematic analysis as data analysis technique was used to theorize from data as it has been widely used in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method which helps to analyze, organize, describe and report the themes of the given data set (ibid).

Data analysis was started from an English translation of the data which was collected through interviews and focus groups. After that, it required to read and re-read the entire data several times for better understanding. In this phase, the data was organized in a meaningful way to identify descriptive codes; this reduced a large number of data into small meaningful chunks (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Hence, unstructured data was converted into meaningful descriptive codes that told what actually data was talking about (Morse & Richards, 2002). Similarly, an equal focus was given to each data item for identifying relevant codes which contributed to the basis of themes of study. So, first-order codes were generated which highlight the area of interest of this study; the possible dimensions to deal with resistance whether organizations take resistance as an opportunity or as a barrier.

A backward and forward method was used to arrange data into a proper shape and linked it with relevant literature to refine the descriptive codes and connect it with emerging concepts of the study. This process was revised until no new concept emerged from the study. These concepts were named as second-order themes. Second-order themes were deeply analyzing for more accurate representatives of descriptive codes. For example, descriptive code that is “Workshops and training are conducted to explain more about change if it is more complicated” was labeled with second order themes of “Explanation of change”. Similarly, descriptive code of “Proactive response by new generation due to motivation/energy to try new things but show resistance at the beginning” guided that young employees of case study organization I shows positive response towards change because they have the energy to try new things. This was categorized into “proactive response by new generation” in second-order themes. This process was repeated until no concept emerged.

In the next phase of data analysis, the data was again revisited and tried to refine second-order themes. Researchers repetitively discussed the second-order themes and tried to create new themes which were more relevant to descriptive codes. After refining and recreation of second-order themes, it was ensured that these themes accurately reflected descriptive codes. As an illustration, descriptive code “surveys are conducted, on that bases seniors make decisions’ directed the researcher towards a temporary second-order theme that was “employees suggestion”. But later after the process of revisiting and refining, researcher labeled it with “employee’s input” that was more suitable and refined second-order theme. By doing this, the researcher added more precision in this category, simultaneously allowed the researcher to do better analysis and added new emerging themes that provided more information.
In the final phase of thematic analysis most interrelated concepts of second-order themes were encompassed into the same theoretical dimension. Theoretical dimension is a broader concept and identified by gathering the more relevant fragment of experiences that came out from data and have no meaning when viewed alone (Aronson, 1995). It can be believed that analysis of data description to underlying theoretical dimensions were opinions of research participants related to organizational change and resistance to organizational change. Table 1 offers a glimpse of development of second order themes from the first order codes.

**Table 1 Supporting data for each second order theme – An illustration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second-Order Themes</th>
<th>First -Order Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding of change</strong></td>
<td>We help those employees who show resistance. We sit with them and listen to their issue and convince them that new technology can make things easier and facilitate you. We provide guidance to those employees who show resistance. We also guide them to simplifying change initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explanation of change</strong></td>
<td>Our seniors communicate with us through emails/circular. They also conduct workshops and training to elaborate things in more detail. Sometimes, they provide a trainer in our branch who experts in that particular change. That trainer facilitates us to learn new things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal communication</strong></td>
<td>Sometimes a manager tells us informally if they are planning to bring any new thing. Manager communicates it to us by talking about change. They also communicate physically by sitting with us. It is effective for us and an easy way to communicate. Manager communicates us just to prepare our mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cooperation with employees</strong></td>
<td>We take resistance sometimes lightly and sometimes seriously. It all depends upon the type of resistance. If a particular change is important and employees show resistance, then we take it seriously. We give weight to resistance according to its type. Employers take action and listen to the problem of employees and solve that problem. If an employee has a problem during change implementation, they provide help by giving time to learn new things.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effectiveness in change through resistance

If any employee has any better and interesting idea, then we listen to him and make our change implementation more effective. Sometimes, employees have good suggestions about a particular change. That’s why they show resisting behavior.

Idea generation

We take suggestion according to the need of change. Resistance is helpful to explore things related to new change deeply and provide an opportunity to see things with a different mindset of employees. Sometimes, it provides a lot of different ideas to do things in a better way.

4. Findings & Discussion

4.1. Phase one: identification of the meaning of change and resistance to change

After conducting data from two case study organizations, this study figured out the answer to the first research question i.e., identification of the meaning of change and resistance to change that the two organizations experience. Further explanation of each case study organization is given below.

By analyzing data, this study figured out that case study organization I defined change, doing something different as compared to other organizations to improve performance and to achieve organizational goal. Case study organization I introduced many technological changes like online training, changes in their premises and also started work over branchless banking to facilitate their customers. On the other side, this organization defined resistance was responsibility of organization’s management. If organization had good planning related to the new change and had good communication with their employees, then there were chances of low resistance. It is illustrated by following statements:

    Change is compulsory to do something different and we are introducing different changes like technological changes and internal environmental changes. (Interviewee 2)

Similarly, case study organization II defined change as an important thing for remaining competitive in such a fluctuated environment. It also introduced different changes like online data saving and started branchless banking since 2015. On the other side, it defined resistance as a part of the change. Employees reaction towards change linked with their past experiences. If they had bad past experiences, they might show resist the behavior. In contrast, if they had positive past experiences, they might accept change favorably. It is illustrated by the following statements.

    Change is important to remain competitive. We are introducing branchless banking to remain competitive. (Interview 3)
4.2. Phase two: Identifying different dimensions of dealing with resistance

By using thematic analysis, it provided the answer to the second question of how do organizations manage the resistance to change when they take it as an opportunity or a barrier. This study proposed six theoretical dimensions from case study I. In which four theoretical dimensions named as (1) Effective communication, (2) Employee’s involvement, (3) Response to change, and (4) Managing resistance, are linked with previous literature in the context of resistance to organizational change. While the two theoretical dimensions such as (1) Design of change, and (2) Innovation through resistance are emerged. Similarly, five theoretical dimensions from case study II were proposed, i.e., (1) Directive leadership, (2) Communication of change, (3) Response to change, (4) Centralized decision making, and (5) Enforcement of change. All theoretical dimensions of case study organization II are convergent with previous literature. The explanation of these theoretical dimensions is given below:

4.2.1. Design of change

Design of change referred to planning of change process that was going to implement. Employees play an important role in successful change implementations. Whether it is good or bad, change creates a period of anxiety and stress in an employee’s life. They have no control over the situation. So, a clear understanding of organizational change can shorten the period of stress and help employees to adjust with new changes. Case study organization I provided a clear understanding of new change to their employees. Their contents of change were well articulated. If employees felt stress and had ambiguity in their mind, managers hold meetings with them and solved their problems. Case study organization I tried to initiate new changes smoothly that is why managers provided their full guidance and shared details with their employees. This can be illustrated by the following statements.

We sit with them and listen to their issue and convince them that new technology can make things easier and facilitate you. We try to make change initiatives smoothly. (Interviewee 1)

Whenever a change is decided, organizations should communicate it effectively to their employees. According to case study I, managers communicated about benefits related to a new change to create motivation among employees. They convinced and tried to prepare the mind of their employees by telling them that new technology would provide easiness in their work. If employees accepted new changes happily and tried to learn new technology, then it might be because of their future growth. Employees who learned skills and tried to do better work, they might be promoted to the better designation in the organization. By using these strategies and communicate benefits, case study organization I motivated their employees to accept change happily. It is demonstrated by the following statements of participants.
We tell employees that use new technology and learn about it. It will help them to do things easily. (Interviewee 3)

Furthermore, case study organization I arranged many workshops and training where more details related to particular change were given.

Sometimes, they provide a trainer in our branch who experts in that particular change. That trainer facilitates us to learn new things. (Focus Group 2 - Respondent 4)

4.2.2. Effective communication

Organizational communication is a process whereby members of the organization sit together and give information related to the organization or changes that are happening in it (Kreps, 1990). Employees of every organization meet with change at some level of resistance. So, employee's behavior and successful change implementation depend on the effectiveness of change communication. Case study organization I communicated about change effectively. Because they had two ways of communication: (1) informal communication (2) formal communication.

Managers communicated informally before dispatching of formal order because they wanted to know about the reaction of their employees related to particular change. Communicating informally played an important role in implementing change successfully. For example, it can be inferred from the excerpts below:

Sometimes a manager tells us informally if they are planning to bring any new thing. (Focus Group 2 - Respondent 3)

This organization also communicated formally with its employees. A formal email or circular had been sent from head office to each employee about a new change that was planned to be implemented. They also arranged meetings with managers to communicate about new things. It was an effective way because employees already know from informal chats about things that are going to happen. The findings of this study demonstrated that formal communication was effective because each and every detail related to particular change had been mentioned in that.

According to the study of Husain (2013), Communication plays an important role in the successful implementation of change. Poorly planned communication can foster resistance in employees and lack of motivation to try new things among employees (Williams, 2015).

4.2.3. Employee's Involvement

Employee's involvement is direct participation of employees with the organization to help in fulfilling the organizational goal. It is a leadership philosophy on how employees are showing more concern toward organizational improvement and ongoing success of the organization (Susan, 2019).
According to participants of this study, top management of the case study organization I took the input of employees during the planning of specific change; that is as followed.

We give suggestions. If new change creates any problem, then senior manages conducts surveys and find out a solution. (Focus Group 1 - Respondent 1)

Communication is a key to bring clarity about a new change that's implementation is important for an organization. Well planned communication about change help to feel employees positive about new things (Williams, 2015). Managers arranged meetings and discussed the new change with employees, they tried to do things implement smoothly by a conversation with employees. This organization brought effectiveness by talking with employees in desired change; as illustrated by the excerpts below:

Most of the time, we take suggestions from employees during the planning of change. Having a conversation with employees feel them special and they give more loyal suggests related to change. (Interviewee 4)

Employee’s involvement in the planning of change plays a vital role because if an organization invites suggestions then employees feel valued and included. According to Pietersen (2017), although it takes time it is much effective and provides successful change implementations. Sometimes, employees have good suggestions related to change based on their experiences.

4.2.4. Response to change

Leader of an organization knows that employees must have a reaction to the organizational change in different ways, such as positive or negative. Whenever change happens in an organization it creates stress and panic especially for employees (Bowen, 2019). It generates a disturbance in every organization because employees give a response as a result of the change. Some employees become happy to try new things and some show resistance towards it. It all depends on the organization how they plan to implement new change.

4.2.4.1. Case study organization I

This study demonstrated that case study organization I was facing two types of the reaction of employees as a result of organizational change: (1) Proactive response by new generation (2) Reactive response by old employees.

When case study organization I had introduced technological changes, young employees had shown a positive response towards it and showed interest to learn new things which are as illustrated by the excerpts below.

It depends on the employees. If change is favorable for any employee, he will give a positive response. But the young generation has energy and motivation to try new things. (Interviewee 3)
This organization also had some old staff who showed a reactive response to new changes. They still preferred manual system over technology. They showed resistance to organizational change because they didn’t want to leave their comfort zone. They created difficulties for the organization by becoming a hurdle in change implementation. New changes in organization disturbed attitude and performance of old employees because they didn’t want to adopt new things which are demonstrated by the following statements:

Young employees understand the situation and accept changes as compared to old employees. They face more problems and give a negative response if things are changed. (Interviewee 4).

4.2.4.2. Case study organization II

Whenever a change happens in this organization, employees show their response towards it. According to the case study organization II, some employees showed a positive response and embraced change happily. They showed their loyalty to the organization and understood the situation. Employees who accepted change happily, had spirit and motivation to try new things. This is demonstrated by some statements of participants as follows:

Some employees react positively and cooperate with the organization. They understand things and situations. (Interviewee 1)

In contrast, some employees behaved negatively and became a hurdle in the successful implementation of the new change. They didn’t want to leave their comfort zone because change created tension among employees. This is elaborated by given statements of participants:

Employees show their tensed behavior because they don’t want to leave their comfort zone and create problems for the organization. (Interviewee 5)

Change is compulsory for every organization and it brings disturbance in its environment. Every change has a response to those who are affected by it positively or negatively (Agboola & Salawu, 2011).

4.2.5. Managing Resistance

Resistance to change is a normal reaction of human in a time of changes and good management try to resolve it instead of ignoring (Hackman, 1999). According to the findings of this study, case study organization I tried to manage resistance in all possible ways. They considered it as a challenge and faced it instead of ignoring it completely.

This organization took resistance very seriously and provided support to its employees in difficulty. Managers helped their employees in difficulty. They listened to their quarries and made an effort to know where employees found more difficulty and offered full
guidance. If any employee required more understanding of new change, managers assigned duties to the senior employees to help their colleagues. They took resistance as an opportunity because they knew that resistance was normal and could not stop to happen but could manage properly to implement change properly. Managers of every branch hold meetings and motivated their employees to try new things in the organization. This can be demonstrated by followings statements of participants:

Managers held a meeting and help us during the change. Sometimes, they provide senior employees who facilitate others. If resistance happens then the manager takes it very seriously. (Focus Group 3- Respondent 5)

Cooperation is a process of working together at the same time. Management of case study organization I cooperated with their employees by doing work with their staff to motivate them. They recognized the situation of their staff and their problem and cooperated with them by giving time to learn new thing. Managers didn’t force their staff to give the immediate result of desired changes but they gave some time for an adjustment in a new environment.

According to a study by Hackman (1999), Resistance is a healthy part of the change, if it manages effectively, it can make stronger change initiatives. Resistance will not reduce by ignoring it, it will quite foster and grow by ignorance. If managers deal with resistance effectively, it can cause of successful change initiatives (Ford et al., 2008).

4.2.6. Innovation through resistance

Resistance is a part of any new change. Organizations who have effective management, try to resolve resistant. Case study organization I also considered resistance very seriously. Employees who showed resistance, had some quarries related to new changes. They must have something in their minds to implement change in an effective way. Every employee had his own experience related to things and may be he has some better ideas based on his experience. According to the findings of this study, it could be said that innovation might be a part of resistant. Employees who showed negative behavior has some better ideas related to the new change.

Managers of the case study organization I listened to employee’s quarries and find out the reasons for resisting. Case study organization I made its change implementation more effective by taking ideas from employees who showed resistance. Managers or organization asked employees about how things could be better. They took the viewpoint of employees, as illustrated by the following description:

Sometimes, employees have good suggestions about a particular change. That’s why they show resisting behavior. (Interviewee 5)

Resistance is good if it adds values to your organization instead of becoming hurdles in organizational goals. Case study organization I had a majority of young employees who
might have a lot of new ideas to implement change in a better way. Employees who show resistance, have a pool of innovating ideas related to change that is going to implement.

4.2.7. Directive leadership
Directive leadership is a style of leadership where managers take decision by themselves and just assign tasks to employees and take the result. According to the findings of this study, case study organization II had a directive leadership style. Case study II had an environment where managers had command and control on everything. This is illustrated as following statements of participants:

Managers do not provide any support. They just allocate tasks to their employees and give orders to complete it. (Focus Group 1- Respondent 2)

Mullins (2007) demonstrated that directive leadership involves letting employees know what is expected from them. Managers give order and tell employees how to do. This type of leadership is result-oriented not people-oriented. Organizations just want to achieve its desired results instead of achieving their employee’s satisfaction.

4.2.8. Communication of change
Poor communication between employees and employers can cause failure in desired change implementations. Case study organization II also communicated about change in two ways that are formal communication and informal communication. Firstly, Formal communication was done by top managers, they made decisions related to change and communicated formally to their employees either by sending a circular or only by verbalizing. If change is complicated, then managers hold meetings with their employees and informed them about the new change that was planned to implement in their organization. They answer the questions and quarries of employees simultaneously. It can be illustrated by following statements of employees:

If change is complicated, they held meeting with us, that meeting covers all details of a particular change which is going to implement. (Focus group 1- Respondent 4)

Secondly, Managers of case study organization II also told about change informally but they communicated informally after formal communication. They explained about change in detail after formal orders and tried to convince employees by preparing their mind. For instance:

After formal orders, branch manager assembles all employees of his branch and tell them informally about specific change that is going to implement.” (Focus group 3- Respondent 1)

According to a study of Husain (2013), communication is an important factor in successful change implementation.
4.2.9. Centralized decision making

Centralized means planning and decision making in an organization determined by a leader. According to the findings of this study, the case study organization II is an international organization and has a strong HR department. Case study II is a centralized organization and its head office has all powers of planning and decision making.

Whenever a change planned to implement, decisions were taken by HR. There was no involvement of employees, they had to follow orders of higher authorities. During the implementation of change, if employees faced any difficulties, top authorities did not understand the situation and enabled to do any help because they acted as a decision maker not implemeneter of the desired change. As a result, the performance of employees decreased due to lack of motivation and they faced uncomfortable with the new change.

Our HR is the best and the strongest. They take a decision after proper thinking and analysis. HR has different employees who are experts in each area. They take decisions after discussing with each other. (Interviewee 4)

Case study II is an international organization. So, it was not possible to discuss new things with employees. Employees did not give any type of suggestion during the planning of change. It is demonstrated by given statements.

No, we don’t give suggestions. Our seniors take decisions and give orders to follow them. (Focus Group 3 - Respondent 2)

According to Surbhi (2015), the role of subordinate employees is neglected due to the centralization of authorities and all the rights of decision making by the head office.

4.2.10. Enforcement of change

Law of enforcement organizations has strict hierarchy and rules where the role of subordinates is mostly ignored. If these type of organizations face resistance toward any change, organization use different negative methods to overcome resistance, such as punishment or enforcement of regulation (Erciyes, 2018). According to the findings of this study, the case study organization II used this type of methods to resolve resistance. Whenever a change was implemented in organization and employees showed resistance towards that change. Managers didn’t show any type of seriousness in case of resistance. They ignored it and didn’t listen to the problems of any employee. Managers of case study II forced employees to accept new change. This type of change created a lack of interest among employees. It is demonstrated by following statements of participants:

Managers don’t show seriousness. They take resistance to normal thing and force employees to follow orders. (Focus group 3 – Respondent 3)
Top managers showed their indifferent behavior. Managers tried to convince their employees to accept new change but at a certain level. If any employee was still showing resistance then they forced them to adopt new change, otherwise, they were open to leave this organization. It can be illustrated by the following statements of participants.

They listen to issues and try to solve the problem but at a certain limit. If employees do not want to understand, they stop convincing them and just give the order to do a particular thing. (Focus Group 1- Respondent 1)

Enforcement of change creates negative behavior in employees and they cannot give their maximum output. Because the employee’s participation is important for effective change implementation. Therefore, organizations who just give orders and force employees to adapt change create negative behavior in employees and they show resistance toward desired change.

This can be summarized that case study organization I defined resistance as a part of management. They said that it all depended on management of the organization, if management made their instruction clear and communicated it properly, there is less chance of resistance. In contrast, case study organization II defined that change is important for remaining competitive in such a fluctuated environment. As discussed in literature that organizations are operating in a very dynamic environment that demands continuous change to remain competitive (Pieterse, Caniels, & Homan, 2012).

Case study organization II also defined that employee’s attitude regarding change always influenced by their past experiences. If employees had good experiences, they accepted change happily. In contrast, if they had bad past experiences related to change, they would show resistance towards change. They considered resistance as a part of change and depend on employees past experiences (Bovey & Hede, 2001).

In the second phase, this study identified theoretical dimensions to deals with resistance to change which are, design of change, effective communication, employee’s involvement, response to change, managing resistance and innovation through resistance are major theoretical dimensions of Case study organization I. Four theoretical dimensions, effective communication, employee’s involvement, response to change and managing resistance are convergent from existing literature and two theoretical dimensions design of change and innovation through resistance emerged with literature. These dimensions of dealing with resistance showed that case study organization I took resistance as a positive thing and dealt with it as an opportunity. This organization considered employees as an important part of the organization and involved them during the planning of change. As study of Hyo-Sook (2003) demonstrated that excellent organizational management involve employees in decision making. According to literature, Employee's involvement is important for employee's satisfaction in an organization. Employees who involve in decision making with the organization are 43% more productive as compared to others (Pietersen 2017). Top management of this organization took suggestions from employees related to desired
change before dispatching of formal orders of implementation. If still, employees showed resistance then they dealt with it happily and provided guidance.

According to the case study organization I, the change should be implemented smoothly in the beginning. Content of change should be well expressed. Managers should explain about importance and benefits of change at the initial stage. If employees got a clear understanding of new change then there might be a chance of low resistance. Findings of this study elaborated this as “design of change”. Employees who still showed resistance towards new change, there was a possibility that they might have some better idea to implement change successfully because a new generation had a more creative mind and had the ability to handle things in a better way. This was elaborated as an “innovation from resistance” in the findings. Both theoretical dimension “design of change” and innovation through resistance” were emerged and considered as a significant contribution of this study.

On the other side, findings of this study also showed that directive leadership, communication of change, response to change, centralized decision making and enforcement of change are theoretical dimensions of case study organization II and convergent with existing literature. These dimensions of dealing with resistance to organizational change showed that case study organization II took resistance as a negative thing and considered it as a barrier. According to the top management of this organization, they communicated each and everything related to change that was going to implement but it was difficult to take suggestions from employees and involved them in the planning of change. Effective communicated means every employee of organization should know about need of particular change, what the change is and how it is going to implement. Therefore, effective communication is important for successful change implementation (Husain, 2013). Decisions were always made in head office and employees had to follow them. If employees were not ready to cooperate with the organization and showed resistance towards change, managers tried to convince them by providing some direction. If still, any employees showed negative behavior, he/she was free to leave the organization. This organization supported traditional literature by taking resistance as a negative (Giangreco & Peccei, 2005). Resistance is part of organizational change and it depends on organization how they deal with it. If they know how to deal with resistance effectively, they will be able to implement change successfully.

5. Conclusion

The study offers theoretical, practical contribution. This study had a significant contribution to developing the concept of resistance to organizational change. This study explored how an organization deals with resistance to organizational change in the Pakistani context. The study offers two important theoretical contribution. First theoretical contribution of this study is, how organizations take meaning of change and resistance in Pakistan. Two, the study suggested two themes i.e., (1) design of change and (2) innovation through resistance. Concepts with similar meanings couldn’t be identified in the existing literature before.
Practically, this study demonstrated that sufficient provision of information and other opportunities should be provided to minimize the negative responses of employees during change programs. Secondly, this study could help the organizational management by an in-depth understanding of the basic issue behind the resistance of employees.

Nevertheless, this study covered only two case study organizations. The similar study must be checked from different organizations and find out which approach of resistance is largely used from demonizing resistance and celebrating resistance in Pakistan. Further, this study talked about general changes that have been done in the organizations, future researchers can conduct research on those organizations that have undergone through major changes like mergers and acquisitions.

REFERENCES


