The influence of communication adequacy on resistance to change: Case study of selected dealership companies in the Durban metropolitan region

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to assess the impact of communication adequacy on resistance to change at selected dealership companies in the Durban Metropolitan Region. Recent studies suggest that there could be various other factors that influence resistance including leadership skills, demographic factors and theoretical components of resistance to change. The study uses the non-random purposive sampling collected from 270 staff at selected dealership companies in the Durban Metropolitan Region using questionnaires administered to employees. The structural equation model was also applied in analyzing the data. The findings of the study show that there is a significant relationship between communication adequacy based on structure and channel efficiency in relation to resistance communication based on channel efficiency positively influencing resistance to change. The study further provides practical implications for the employees at the selected dealership companies to consider more strategic and appropriate communication tools.

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Introduction

In today’s fast-paced and ever-changing world where change seems to be the only constant variable, organisations undergoing change encounter countless factors which hinder resistance to change. The most significant factor, which is the major focus of this paper, is communication adequacy. Communication adequacy plays a vital role in the adaptation to change because it involves how people think, their belief systems and their perception of the world’s view (Men, 2014; Sutherland, 2020; Mirbabaie, Strieglitz and Brunker, 2021).

By so doing, the compliance and dedication of employees are based on how employees are treated and communicated to. This implies that fair treatment and positive means of communication seem to improve the right attitudes and behaviours for successful change. In other words, managers must resolve to learn the appropriate communication skills with their employees as this can also improve better relationships and creates a more conducive working environment. It is believed by many scholars that communication is key to successful change (Price, 1999, Muscalu, Todericiu, and Fraticiu, 2013, Hameed, Khan, Sabharwal, Arain and Hameed, 2019). The South African automotive sector has been a major contributor to the South African economy and as such, can only prosper in the country’s economic growth if modern skills and technical know-how are continuously adapted. However, research investigations have pointed out the insufficient skills obtained due to the failure of workers’ poor knowledge acquisition (Sutherland, 2020, Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss, 2011).
The ultimate challenge faced by the automotive sector is the implementation and maintenance of technical changes which requires sufficient information dissemination, effective involvement of workers and rigorous training. Unfortunately, inadequate communication and lack of expertise have hindered the development of the potential of the South African automotive sector (Pillai, Sivathanu, Mariani, Rana, Yang and Dwivedi, 2021, MacDuffie and Pil, 2018; Shumba, 2018). To this end, a large number of empirical studies have demonstrated the impact of communication adequacy on resistance to change To this end, a large number of empirical studies have demonstrated the impact of communication adequacy on resistance to change and these scholars that have obtained similar results with the communication theory (Elving, 2005, Men, 2014), Elving (2005) realised the distinction between informative function of communication and communication as a means to create a community increased communication adequacy. Whereas Men (2014) realised that transformational leaders by means of applying face to face channels of communication positively affected employees’ satisfaction. Based on these previous findings from existing literatures, communication adequacy is streamlined in this study to measure how communication adequacy based on structure and channel efficiency affects resistance to change. Changes are constantly made for the success of every organization and this can be conducted by accomplishing certain projects or learning to adapt to certain programs. In recent decades, organisations have been faced with several significant and volatile changes both in the external and internal environment. This has left organisations with no choice but to adapt to and anticipate such change by reinventing themselves (Self, 2016). Since the change in organisations is complicated, unpredictable, and needs continuous improvement, advanced technology, new distribution methodologies and an endless list of expectations could serve as major hindrances in change implementation (Maltz, 2008). Scholars have mentioned several factors that cause resistance to change which affects communication adequacy (Kozak Akoglan and Gen, 2014; Spaho, 2013). In every organization today, communication adequacy plays a vital role in effective information dissemination as well as ideas exchange (Suh, Harrington and Good man, 2018). This implies that communication is essential for organizational change among workers. Employee resistance to change, on the other hand, can be a result of failed communication (Danwanan and Azizah, 2020). From a deeper understanding of the relationship between communication adequacy and employee resistance to change, it is important to recognize the impact of communication adequacy in the selected dealership companies with respect to employee resistance to change.

This paper aims to address the way communication adequacy in organisations could impact employees’ resistance to change. The study presents a case study of selected dealership companies in the Durban Metropolitan Region. The study focuses on the two constructs of communication adequacy in relationship to employees’ resistance to change. The study further offers a model to manage resistance to change.

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical and Conceptual Background**

**Communication Adequacy**

Scholars of organizational management have identified the significance of communication adequacy in organizational practices (Stouten, Rousseau and De Cremer, 2018; Ford and Ford 1995). Some of these scholars explained the dire role of information acquisition as an integrative factor for proper management planning. In the context of change, communication adequacy is regarded as a device for announcing and explaining information, preparing people for the positive and negative consequences of change and reducing anxiety and stress (Kuzior and Lobanovo, 2020). This indicates that communication plays a role in any transformational process as information transported from the external environment is necessary to organize the internal mechanism needed for the ease of change (Mirbabaie, Strieglitz and Brunker, 2021; Lai and Mahapatra, 2014). Goldhaber, Yates, Porter and Lesniak (1978) add that the communication of internal roles and adjustments to changes in the external environment relies on information competence.

**Resistance to Change**

The multidimensional interpretation of change opposition which is also referred to as “resistance” speculates that undesirable responses to change are conveyed through three distinctive channels which are: emotional, cognitive and behavioural (Luminei, Nielson and Ridout, 2021; Piderit, 2010). Piderit (2015) added that uncertainty can arise in the cognitive and behavioural spheres when a worker trusts that change introduced in an organization is vital, but the intent or desire to embrace change is inadequate which eventually results in resistance. Based on this school of thought, the following factors were identified to define an individual’s tendency to resist change: routine seeking, emotional reaction, short-term focus, and cognitive rigidity.

However, the paper focuses on cognitive rigidity as a factor that is outstandingly responsible for resistance to change. Cognitive rigidity refers to the worker’s opinion and principles regarding the change (Stephen, Byars and Stanberry, 2018). This aspect centres on the ease and occurrence of a person’s ability to conform to the expected change in actions and behaviour. This is because consistencies in psychological personalities can be addressed through concerns such as intellectual complication, dictatorship and rigidity (Malka, Soto, Inzlicht and Lelkes, 2014). Rigid persons are usually closed-minded and less likely to embrace innovative conditions and resistance to change and this is the reason why some scholars mention that when a worker faces an undesirable reaction because of the change, there are chances that such a person will resist change (Fugate and Soenen, 2018; Cinite and Duxbury, 2018; Vos and Rupert, 2018; Topino, 2020).
Empirical Review and Hypothesis Development

The conceptual framework for this paper has been hypothesised based on the major concepts of the study which are communication and resistance to change. This is generated from linking relationships existing between both conceptual theories.

The perceived role of Communication adequacy on Resistance to Change

Researchers on organisational management have recognised the significance of communication sufficiency to organisational change practices (Ford and Ford, 1995; Lewis, 1999; Miller and Monge, 1985). Ford and Ford (1995) elucidated that “communication displays a dire role for acquiring information”. In a changing context, communication is regarded as a tool for announcing and explaining information about the change, preparing people for the positive and negative consequences of change and reducing anxiety and stress (Lai and Mahapatra, 2014). The need for organisational communication is important for any change management practice as it involves the exchange of information. As a result, information also plays a significant part in any transformational process. Concerning the external environs, the need for imported information is to organise the internal mechanisms needed to ease change in a way that is well-suited to a change strategy. Goldhaber, Yates, Porter, and Lesniak (2014) add that communication of internal roles and adjustment to changes in the external environment depends on information competence. Goldhaber et al. (2014) further recommended two vital mechanisms that impact the efficiency of information distribution based on communication adequacy; (i) The structure of the communication system, (ii) The channels and messages employed by the organization. Resistance to Change, on the other hand, denotes a worker’s opinions and principles around change (Oreg, 2003). Oreg emphasised on a person’s thoughts and principles bring about change, once the individual is able to adjust his or her beliefs and principles in order to accept change. This aspect refers to the easiness and occurrence of a person’s conformation to change of actions and behaviour expected. Consistencies in psychological personalisations can be addressed through concerns such as intellectual complication, dictatorship and rigidity, and sensitivity (Daly, 2002). Relative to the resistance to change, rigid persons are naturally closed-minded and less likely to embrace innovative conditions. Oreg (2006) settles with Piderit (2000) as to the incompatibility among cognitive, emotional, and behavioural reactions to change. The results from Oreg’s (2006) study disclosed that out of the three afro-mentioned constituents, the effective constituent and the behavioural had a strong connection. Fundamentally, when a worker faces an undesirable reaction because of change, there are chances that he or she will resist change. Based on Oreg’s study, it was discovered that there was also a link between management and workers’ disposition to resist change. Particularly, a lower level of trust in management was connected to a higher level of affective, cognitive, and behavioural resistance. Regarding the amount of information about the change, a relationship was established between communication adequacy and cognitive resistance, but not effective resistance. On the other hand, Wamberg and Banas (2001) stated that additional information regarding change led to a poor assessment of it, which triggered the disposition to resist it. Oreg buttressed this finding by arguing that resistance to change happens without any reasonable explanations and is due to a worker’s inexperience with the novel conditions of work.

Effect of communication structure on resistance to change

The structure of the communication system is based on the arrangement of relationships in the communication set up which affects the dissemination of information among employees, the opinions of and acknowledgements of participants and the steady process of managerial change (Nadler and Tushman, 2011). Laurer (2021) further pointed out the clear role of top to bottom management communication in being responsible for transparency in communication, thereby motivating the change process and removing any underlying ambiguities. This simply implies that an effective communication structure has a significant influence in reducing employees’ resistance to change since information and opinions between the components and structures of the organization are responsible for implementing organizational goals and carrying out daily activities within the organization (Tinaztepe, 2012). As such, it becomes critical to establish communication structure as a factor that influences resistance to change particularly among the selected dealership companies in Durban Metropolitan Region. Thus, in light of the existing literature, it is therefore hypothesized in this study that:

**H1:** There is a significant relationship between communication-based on structure and resistance to change.

Effect of communication-based on channel efficiency on resistance to change

Communication-based on channel efficiency describes the flow of communication channels and messages which recognizes how management establishes the flow of information (Goldhaber et al., 1978; Haefner, Wincent, Parida and Gassman, 2021). The flow of communication influences the distribution of information and allows for effective communication in organizations. The South African automotive industry understands fully the frail competitive situation it has been faced with and pressure from the OEMs to increase their indigenous components (Slabbert, 2021; Murphy and Anderson, 2020). This evidently proves that integrated communications establish communication adequacy and teamwork in business procedures which results in an upsurge in workplace productivity and efficiency (Okutan and Okutan, 2013). The implication of communication-based on channel efficiency indicates the crucial need for managers to consider the significance of the appropriate channels for the successful implementation of change. This is because the successful implementation of planned changes is always difficult if there is a disruption in the communication channels as this could result in inadequate feedback, misunderstanding and potential mistakes (Yang, 2014). This will eventually result in employees’ resistance to change. Thus, in light of the existing literature, it is therefore hypothesized that:
H2: There is a significant relationship between communication-based on channel efficiency and resistance to change.

Figure 1 depicts the hypothetical change communication adequacy model derived from the literature review. It indicates the impact of the communication adequacy variables on resistance to change (Goldhaber, Yates, Porter, and Lesniak, 2014).

Figure 1: Change Communication Adequacy Model

Research and Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative research approach following a descriptive research design was adopted in the study. Shuka (2008) noted that the quantitative research approach is associated with a cross-sectional survey and uses a descriptive research design.

Research Population and Sampling Process

According to Wellman and Kruger (2013), “the target population are several possible respondents that could be included in the research study. Hence, results obtained from the sample of the population can be used for a generalization of results”. Similarly, O’Leary (2014) defines a population as “the total membership of a defined class of people, objects, or events.” It is the full set of elements from which a sample is selected (Fox and Bayat, 2007). The National Automobile Car Dealership Association (NADA) in South Africa reported about 660 automobile companies in South Africa, with 278 in KwaZulu-Natal province and 35 companies in the Durban Metropolitan Region (NADA, 2015). However, further investigation by the researcher revealed the minimum number of employees found in any of these companies to be about 50 employees. Therefore, the number of employees in all the automobile dealership companies in the Durban metropolitan region would be approximately 1,750. The sample of the research is composed of selected dealership companies in the Durban Metropolitan Region in KwaZulu-Natal. The participants of the study consist of 270 employees. The returned response rate of questionnaires was approximately 60%. The study considered the questionnaire method and the convenience sampling method. The questionnaire form contains two measurement tools related to communication adequacy and resistance to change. The selected automotive dealership companies considered for this paper are located in the Durban Metropolitan Region in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. They comprise the following areas; Pinetown; Durban North; Hillcrest; Amanzitoti; Bluff; Umhlanga; Balito; Durban Central.

Questionnaire Development

The quantitative questionnaire comprised of sections. First, the demographic data and the next section consisted of 12 items measuring communication adequacy employing the receiving information scale and the final section consisted of 17 items measuring resistance to change through the behaviour of respondents using the resistance to change scale questionnaire. The selection of the sample size was non-random (purposive sampling) in order to fit the criteria used to identify the selected companies for research investigation. The unit of analysis comprised workers (managers and staff members) at the selected automobile dealership companies which were presently undergoing transformational changes. The workers were recruited due to their experiences in describing the internal information dissemination and communication between managers and subordinates.

Research Instrument Measures

The sample of the research is composed of selected dealership companies in the Durban Metropolitan Region in KwaZulu-Natal. The participants of the study consist of 270 employees. The returned response rate of questionnaires was approximately 60%. The study considered the questionnaire method and the convenience sampling method. The questionnaire form contains two measurement tools related to communication adequacy and resistance to change.

Receiving information scale (RIS)

Information adequacy was operationalized in this study as the difference between an individual’s self-reports of the amount of information he or she wanted to receive and the amount of information he or she received (Daniel and Spiker, 1987). One of the subscales from the ICA Communication Audit Questionnaire, ‘Receiving Information from Others’, was used to measure this construct (Goldhaber, Rogers, Lesniak, and Porter, 1978). The RI scale is composed of 12 items. Applying the receiving information scale as an instrument, the table presented above reveals that communication adequacy based on the organizational structure of the
organization resulted in a Cronbach-alpha of 0.934, communication adequacy based on organizational members resulted in 0.733, while communication adequacy based on communication channel efficacy results in 0.862. This simply implies that the reliability for all three is above 0.7.

**Resistance to change scale (RTC)**

Resistance to change was conceptualized and operationalized in this study as an employee multidimensional disposition that comprises a “tridimensional” negative attitude towards change, including affective, behavioural, and cognitive components (Oreg, 2006:76). In this study, the RTC scale (Oreg, 2003) will be used to examine an employee’s tendency to resist or avoid making change, with attention to sources of resistance that appeared to derive from an individual’s personality. The RTC scale contains 17 items.

**Data Collection and Sample Characteristics**

According to Kumar (1999), data collection techniques enable researchers to systematically collect information to answer questions conclusively. Sharma (2010) highlights the criteria, together with the different methods and procedures for data collection indicating the three main types of data collection methods, namely: the personal method, telephone interview, and mail surveys, each with their own constraints and their pros and cons. The personal method of data collection has many advantages. According to Sharma (2010), the highest response rate can be obtained from the personal method of data collection and this is the most accurate method. For this study, the researcher hand-delivered the questionnaires. According to Welman (2015), the personal method of administration ensures a high response rate compared to other methods. The selected sample respondents were requested, in the covering letter, to return the completed questionnaire within two weeks; and the researcher personally collected the completed questionnaires from the selected respondents.

**Ethical Consideration**

Ethical clearance and permission to conduct the research were obtained from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee. The purpose and aims of the study were communicated to all participating respondents. Moreso, all respondents were informed of the option to withdraw their input at any stage if they wish to do so.

**Findings**

**Socio-Demographic Characteristics**

The respondents’ socio-demographic characteristics are given in Table 1. The result shows that most were male (57.6%), within the age group 25-34 years (47.1%), Indians (45.3%), had between 0-5 years of work experience (60.6%), mostly from New car sales (40%), and hold Matric level of education (84.7%).

**Table 1: Respondents socio-demographic characteristics**

| Variable       | Categories    | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|---------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender         | Male          | 98        | 57.6           |
|                | Female        | 72        | 42.4           |
| Age (years)    | 18-24         | 17        | 10             |
|                | 25-34         | 80        | 47.1           |
|                | 35-44         | 40        | 23.5           |
|                | 45-54         | 20        | 11.8           |
|                | 55-64         | 13        | 7.6            |
| Race           | African       | 43        | 25.3           |
|                | Coloured      | 14        | 8.2            |
|                | Indian        | 77        | 45.3           |
|                | White         | 36        | 21.2           |
| Experience     | 0-5 years     | 103       | 60.6           |
|                | 6-10 years    | 33        | 19.4           |
|                | 11-15 years   | 18        | 10.6           |
|                | 16-20 years   | 4         | 2.4            |
|                | 21+           | 12        | 7.1            |
| Department     | New car sales | 68        | 40             |
|                | Old car sales | 42        | 24.7           |
|                | Services      | 27        | 15.9           |
|                | Motor parts   | 8         | 4.7            |
|                | Finance       | 25        | 14.7           |
| Education      | Below matric  | 1         | 0.6            |
|                | Matric        | 144       | 84.7           |
|                | Diploma       | 12.4      | 12.4           |
|                | Degree        | 4         | 2.4            |
Measurement Model

The proposed measurement model was tested using structural equation modelling (SEM). This was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, the validity and reliability of the MM were established. The second phase entails testing the structural path model. At both stages, the model fit indices are found to test the adequacy of the models (measurement and structural).

Scale reliability and construct validity of the measurement model

Using Statistical Package for Social Science (IBM statistical software, AMOS 27) both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were performed to assess the dimensionality, reliability and validity of the constructs while the scale reliability of the constructs was tested using Cronbach’s alpha. The Cronbach’s alpha measured for the constructs ranged from 0.893 for the construct “communication adequacy based on structure” to 0.911 for the construct “communication adequacy based on channel efficiency” (Table 2). According to the scale reliability proposed by Hair et al., (2015), the reliability measured for the three constructs meets the condition for internal consistency of the scale reliability. In addition, the mean value measured for the items in each of the constructs was above 3. The mean value measured for communication adequacy based on structure ranged from 3.64-3.81, with the statement “How technological changes affect my job” having the strongest level of agreement (M=3.81; SD=1.116). The mean value measured for communication adequacy based on channel efficiency ranged from 3.76-3.97, with the statement “How my job relates to the total operation of” having the strongest level of agreement (M=3.97; SD=1.029). The mean value measured for resistance ranged from 2.36-2.82, with the statement “I generally consider change to be a negative thing” having the lowest level of disagreement (M=2.36; SD=1.262).

Table 2: Scale reliability and constructs validity of MM

| CONSTRUCT                          | Measured variables                                                                 | Factor Loadings | Mean (SD)       | Cronbach’s alpha |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Communication adequacy based on structure | CBS1 Changes in organizational rules and policies                                   | .662            | 3.80 (1.165)    | 0.893            |
|                                    | CBS2 Changes in pay benefits                                                        | .762            | 3.64 (1.277)    |                  |
|                                    | CBS3 How technological changes affect my job                                       | .865            | 3.81 (1.116)    |                  |
|                                    | CBS4 How organization decisions affect my job                                      | .856            | 3.79 (1.089)    |                  |
|                                    | CBS5 How organization communicate change implementation                             | .724            | 3.69 (1.110)    |                  |
|                                    | CBS6 How I am being judged                                                         | .594            | 3.64 (1.174)    |                  |
| Communication adequacy based on channel efficiency | CBC1 Changes in my job duties                                                     | .626            | 3.89 (1.152)    | 0.911            |
|                                    | CBC2 How well I am doing my job                                                     | .660            | 3.92 (0.971)    |                  |
|                                    | CBC3 Promotion and advancement opportunities in my organization                   | .821            | 3.76 (1.091)    |                  |
|                                    | CBC4 Important new products, services or program development in my organization   | .877            | 3.94 (1.086)    |                  |
|                                    | CBC5 How my job relates to the total operation of                                 | .878            | 3.97 (1.029)    |                  |
|                                    | CBC6 Specific problems faced by management                                          | .683            | 3.78 (1.048)    |                  |
| Resistance to change                | RC1 I generally consider change to be a negative thing                              | .870            | 2.36 (1.262)    | 0.907            |
|                                    | RC2 Changing plans seems like a hassle to me                                        | .914            | 2.45 (1.315)    |                  |
|                                    | RC3 Often, I feel a bit uncomfortable even about changes that may potentially improve my life | .891            | 2.46 (1.376)    |                  |
|                                    | RC4 When someone pressures me to change something, I tend to resist it even if think the change. | .883 | 2.42 (1.267) | |
|                                    | RC5 Whenever my life forms a stable routine, I look for ways to change it           | .691            | 2.82 (1.270)    |                  |

The construct validity of the MM is reported in Table 3. This was tested by estimating the measures of convergent and discriminant validity. This includes all measurement items and latent variables, the items' loadings, composite reliability, average variance
extracted (AVE), and maximum shared square variance (MSV). Convergent validity is attained when composite reliability is greater than the average variance extracted (AVE) and when the AVE is greater than 0.5 (Mimouni-Chaabane & Volle, 2010) while discriminant validity is attained when AVE is greater than maximum shared square variance (MSV). All latent variables have AVE values in the range of 0.590-0.676 range, which is above the threshold of 0.5 (Mimouni-Chaabane & Volle, 2010). This suggests that all latent variables have an acceptable level of convergent validity. Since the value of the AVE for each construct is greater than MSV values, it can be said that the latent variables have adequate discriminant validity. The composite reliability of all constructs is greater than the 0.70 threshold, thus suggesting acceptable reliability (Alalwan et al., 2018).

Table 3: Composite reliability, average variance extracted, and maximum shared square values

| Source: Primary data |
|----------------------|

The overall fitness of the MM was assessed by multiple fit criteria. The normed chi-square (cmindf) is an absolute fit index that is obtained by dividing $\chi^2$ by df. It is recommended that a cmindf be acceptable, the value should be greater than 1 but less than 5 (Hair et al., 2015). Another fit index used is the Comparative fit index (CFI). Alalwan et al. (2018) recommended the acceptable value to be $\geq 0.9$. The Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) was also used to assess the fitness of the model. Hair et al., (2015) recommended a cut off value for the TLI to be $\geq 0.9$. The incremental fit index (IFI) which compares the chi-square value ratios for the tested MM to the baseline was also to assess the fitness of the model. The final fit index used is the Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The RMSEA value is recommended to be between 0.05 and 0.08 (Mimouni-Chaabane & Volle, 2010). The model fit indices are as follows: chi-square = 299.004; df = 114; cmindf=2.623; CFI = 0.918; TLI = 0.903; IFI = 0.919; RMSEA =0.098, which suggests that the measurement model is acceptable.

Hypotheses testing

The second phase of the data analysis involved converting the measurement model found in phase 1 into a path model that shows the relationships between the latent variables (Figure 2). This path model was used to test the effect of the independent variables (IVs) on the dependent variables (DVs). An SEM was also employed to test all the hypothesized relationships that exist among the latent variables. According to Hair et al. (2009), SEM allows simultaneous evaluation of multiple related independent and dependent relationships and considers measurement estimates among the constructs. The resulting SEM with estimated standardized relationships is given in Figure 2. The goodness-of fit indices are as follows: chi-square = 299.004; df = 144; cmindf=2.623; CFI = 0.918; TLI = 0.903; IFI=0.919; RMSEA =0.098, which suggests that the measurement model is acceptable.

Figure 2: SEM model showing the relationship among the constructs in the proposed model
As shown in Table 4, the path between both communication adequacy (based on structure and channel efficiency) and resistance to change was not significant (P>0.05).

| Dependent variable | Independent variable | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P | Label       |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------|------|------|---|------------|
| Resistance to change | Communication based on Structure | 0.200 | 0.183 | 1.091 | 0.275 | Not significant |
| Resistance to change | Communication based on Channel efficiency | 0.072 | 0.159 | 0.452 | 0.651 | Not significant |

**Discussion**

The purpose of this paper is to address the effect of communication adequacy on employees’ response to change management implementations. To this effect, two major themes were considered to determine the effect of communication adequacy on employee resistance to change. First, is the structure of the communication system which is based on the arrangement of relationships in the communication structure and how this affects the dissemination of information among employees (Nadler and Tushman, 2011). Next, is communication-based on channel efficiency, which describes the flow of communication channels and messages, which recognizes how management establishes the flow of information (Goldhaber et al., 1978; Haefner, Wincent, Parida and Gassman, 2021).

**Structure of the communication**

Nadler and Tushman (2011) suggest that the flow of information should shape and create new behaviours to support employees’ participation in change plans. Findings from the quantitative study indicate that three-quarters of the staff agreed that they received adequate information about changes in their jobs, and more than half of the staff confirmed that they received adequate information about changes in the organisation’s rules and policies. Also, half of the staff agreed that they received adequate information about their pay and benefits. These above-average percentages suggest that the structured systems of the organisations, which are in place, promote effective communication.

**Communication channel efficiency**

This focuses on the application of appropriate communication channels for effective and efficient communication at every point in time, within and outside the organisation. Other research findings suggest that continual inventions and technology will lead to the proper communication of change and also could be responsible for alleviating or overcoming resistance during change (Huotari, 2020). Findings from the quantitative study revealed that more than half of the staff were informed about promotion and advancement opportunities, while three-quarters of them agreed that they were informed about new products, services and programme developments. At the same time, three-quarters of the staff agreed that they were well appraised of how their jobs related to the organisation. These above-average percentages reveal that communication channels employed in the organisations are very efficient. In summary, the channels of communication are efficient. However, the need for continual training and coaching of staff could assist with curbing resistance to change.

**The influence of Communication Adequacy on Employee resistance to change**

Duneva’s (2021) research findings indicate that adequate organisational communication is vital for an effective change process because the essence of an organisation is the exchange of information and the transmission of meaning. Information plays an important role in any process of transformation, as it is the main vehicle medium for learning, adjusting, and developing. As a result, adequate communication alleviates anxiety and fear, and other symptoms of resistance to change in an organisation (Hsu and Goldsmith, 2021). Findings from other studies indicate that communication leads to transparency and, as a result, reduces resistance (Parall, 2021; Balog-Way, McComas and Besley, 2020).

The hypotheses suggest that there was no significant relationship was observed between organisational structure and communication channel efficacy, and employee resistance to change (P>0.05). There was also no significant relationship between the structure of the organisation and efficient communication channels. This implies that different communication instruments ought to be identified and understood by the management and staff, especially to help overcome or resolve conflict issues, as well as to alleviate resistance to change (Lauer 2021; Novak, Breznik and Natek, 2020).

**Implications**

**Practical Implications**

Findings from the study suggest that adequate communication is based on the structure of the organisation, which was indicated by a positive level of agreement in all the statements. This high positive response suggests that there are structural systems in the
organisations which promote effective communication. It is reasonable to assume that communication is adequate, but could be improved through coaching and training. Monyooe (2013) emphasises the value of an effective communication system that will enable middle management at the automobile dealership companies to plan, acquire, develop, assess and retain the structure of the communication system.

In other words, systematic planning, implementation, monitoring and revision of communication within an organisation, and between organisations, is key to a successful working environment as it creates an opportunity for professional and personal development; boosts morale and loyalty; and also provides insights into how the businesses operate (Howe, Chauhan, Soderberg, 2020). It is suggested that appropriate communication skills should involve peaceful negotiation with employees, persuading them positively, which is preferably done face-to-face or at regular meetings (Scriven, Gill and Conway, 2020). It is also suggested that top management introduces a unified communication system that integrates the various forms of communication (Wang, Locatelli, Wan, Li and Le, 2021).

The following measures, presented below, are suggested for effective communication management.

**Initiating mentorship programmes**

Initiating a strong mentorship programme to develop employees may address the concerns of the respondents (staff and managers) who disagreed with the communication structure of the organization (Turesky and Warner, 2020). In other words, initiating a strong mentorship programme assists with the adjustment to a mindset which is positive about change. Many studies have proven the need to embrace the right mindset, or behaviour, for change. Such behaviours should involve aligning goals and achievements and provide the basis for motivation and interactive relationships (Kim and Leach, 2020). Creating an environment where staff is allowed to communicate freely paves the way for innovative behaviour and increases creativity. Numerous researchers have recommended that transformational leaders are more likely to mentor, initiate and communicate a smooth organisational change mindset if presented with the right vision (Setia, Leng, Mauliate, Ekowati and Ratmawati, 2021; Insights and Anil, 2021).

**Developing a formal coaching programme**

Bezuidenhout (2011) highlights that coaching not only allows employees to achieve specific goals but also carries them along when there are change adjustments made. It is recommended that formal coaching programmes encourage employees to adapt easily to changes, or concerns raised, as findings revealed that certain of the respondents disagreed with the communication system (top-to-bottom communication management), which offered few opportunities for effective feedback from employees and did not necessarily address employee concerns. Coaching and training improve the knowledge and skills of the staff, enabling them to adjust more easily to any change through participative communication (Lalani, Bussu & Marshall, 2020). Participative communication between managers and staff has a huge impact on every successful organisation. In a situation where this is limited, or does not occur, change management goals will become difficult to achieve.

**Conclusions**

In conclusion, the study exhaustively examined the application of the communication adequacy theory through which the proposed model was developed and tested on the stipulated sample for the study. The data indicates that communication adequacy has no significant influence on resistance to change, however, the resistance management strategies which include the following communication tools: sponsoring a road map; negotiating; coaching and training are means to reduce resistance to change.

To this end, the first management strategy, which is to sponsor a road map, is achieved through the creation of awareness, which is followed by negotiating and agreeing with the staff to increase their desire for the change. The third step is coaching the staff to improve their knowledge of innovative ideas for the change process (Gosling & Groderick 2020; Malaza 2020; Simmons McCall & Clegorne, 2020). Nevertheless, employees at the selected dealership companies must understand the fact these strategies are essential in achieving effective change management implementation.

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