

# Employees' Resistance to Change: A Literature Review and Conceptual Models

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## Abstract

This paper analyzes the notion of employees' resistance against organizational change. Having first examined the notion and the types of organizational change, it explores the phenomenon of resistance in the course of time and how this phenomenon is regarded currently; not as a de facto “bad thing,” but as an action that, under correct management, can offer advantages to the organization. It analyzes the three dimensions of this resistance (behavioral, cognitive and affective) as well as the types with which resistance appears. It also explores the main factors that create resistance and how these factors can be limited or become managed. The notion of the employees' resistance is interwoven with the notion of organizational change, thus a series of models linking these two concepts over time are

analyzed, concluding how both of them can coexist harmonically, creatively, and usefully for the prosperity of the organization and the well-being of the employees.

**Keywords:** Employees' resistance, resistance dimensions, resistance types, resistance factors, organizational change, change types, change resistance models, change resistance management.

## 1. Introduction

Resistance is a socio-psychological phenomenon that we encounter every day in our lives and especially often in our professional life. Employee resistance to organizational change is a natural part of work life and an inevitable phenomenon in every organizational environment. Over time, resistance has been recognized as a factor that directly affects the success or failure of an organizational change. Many organizational changes fail because effective management of employee resistance is not implemented (Cooke, 2009). On the other hand, organizations are open systems that are in continuous and dynamic interaction with the environment and each organization must adapt to the changes that occur around it. The personification of this adaptation is the organizational change. Everything in an organization's life changes with the passage of time and an organization that does not change is doomed to fail (Bourantas, 2005).

However, by introducing change, a chain of competitive, even hostile, activities is activated, reinforced by a series of underlying factors of resistance: someone who introduces change has to overcome a kind of mass inertia on the other side. Programs that satisfy one working group often displease another, because the activation of a set of values and visions may be at the expense of another stakeholder group (Trader-Leigh, 2002). Resistance appears when the employees perceive that their status quo may be threatened by the consequences of the change, or because they are worried about their job security, their values, and habits, which an organizational change could disturb (Ford et al., 2002).

The earlier literature review used to describe resistance as something bad, which slowed down change. Earlier conceptual models presented a linear correlation between the bad resistance and the good change, sticking to a one-dimensional depiction of the subject (Ford & Ford, 2009). However, resistance appears as a natural defense mechanism against organizational change, but it is not only that. It does not only express the tendency of employees to avoid a change, but their inner anxiety to see the implementation of a successful change, which in the long run will benefit them and provide added value to the organization (Bovey & Hede Andrew, 2001). Thus, resistance is not necessarily a bad thing, it can also bring advantages to the organization. It can detect and correct the possible deficiencies in the change, prevent a bad result, and create new alternative proposals which may be better than the ones already proposed (Waddell & Sohal, 1998; Perren, 1996).

The main motivation for the authors of this research was twofold: on the one hand, the need to obtain a holistic picture of the phenomenon of resistance, detecting various and different approaches. On the other, to be able to unlock, as much as possible, the secrets of the complex mechanism of creation and manifestation of “resistance to change” in order to

interpret the high rate of failure in the implementation of organizational reforms. For this reason, the writing of a survey of previously published research on this topic, which would provide an overview of past and current thinking on the issue, was preferred at the expense of an original and targeted research article that would lead to specific experimental results.

The primary goal of this paper is to identify theories and models that depict the rather complex relationship between change and resistance over time, and describe the factors which create resistance, their direct or indirect interdependence, and examine how these factors are connected with methods of constructive resistance management. In the final analysis, it is the ultimate task of every manager to use all available information in order to achieve a harmonious coexistence and interaction between the forces of change and the reactive forces, maximizing the benefits of the change (O' Connor, 1993; Bennett, 1997).

To that end, the following research questions, as individual objectives, have been undertaken to examine in this study: a) What are the Concepts and Types of Organizational Change? b) What is the Concept of Employees' Resistance in Organizational Change? c) What are the Dimensions, Psychological Background, and Forms of Employees' Resistance? d) What are the Resistance Creatory Factors and Methods of Employees' Resistance Management? (with each question corresponding to a separate chapter of the study). Consequently, the methodology was simple: the detection of information through a wide range of research and literature sources, which could ensure us the study of the above-mentioned questions over time and from many different aspects, as well as the projection of conceptual models that could link parameters and factors regulating the complex mechanism of resistance development and management.

As a result of this effort, we have analyzed the concept of change, we have examined the concept of subsequent resistance from a natural, anthropological, cognitive, sociological, psychological, and emotional point of view, and we have identified the overall psychological background of this issue. The detection of theories and models that describe the effect of specific factors (individual, organizational, and socio-psychological factors) and antecedents (personality, job contextual, and change-process contextual antecedents) in the creation of resistance, via the mediating effect of new specific variables, constitute key findings of this study. Key findings are, also, the mapping of ways of connecting the above models with specific methods of constructive resistance management. By presenting these results, we contribute to literature in specific ways, while practically contributing to improving the chances of successful completion of potential reforms in organizations by the change agents.

## **2. The Concept and Types of Organizational Change**

### *2.1 Organizational Change*

If there is one thing that is constant for businesses and organizations, it is change. Businesses and organizations are forced to change in order to remain competitive. But the big problem with organizational changes is that they usually fail. It is estimated that approximately 70% of change programs, such as the introduction of new technology and know-how, the change of organizational culture, and the update of objectives, lead to failure (Washington & Hacker,

2005; Bennett, 1997). Many senior managers believe that change can be achieved through a company-wide program and that employee behavior can be controlled by altering the company's formal structure. Nothing is more untrue than this. By resisting, people try to preserve their perception of meaning and identity, and try to retain their familiar ways of action, fearing that they may otherwise lose their common sense of control, community, and structure (Washington & Hacker, 2005; Schalk et al., 1998).

Kotter (1995, as cited in Washington & Hacker, 2005) mentions that changes may fail because they lack either a well-crafted and communicated vision or the appropriate culture, structure, and reason for change. Attaran (2000, as cited in Washington & Hacker, 2005) refers that changes may also fail because they lack the proper training and abilities to cope with employee resistance. Washington & Hacker (2005) go a step further with their research and prove that resistance management fails because managers don't have the proper knowledge or cognitive and behavioral capacity for this. According to Macri et al. (2002), organizations, in order to be adapted to changes of various sorts in their environment, or to deal with their internal malfunctions and a decline in their performance, are forced to embrace uniform structures and practices, to replace their personnel, to alter procedures and improve their activities, to introduce new technology, to modify their goals and their relations with their environment. Macri et al. (2002) prove that there are strong and stable interdependencies among the characteristics of the organization's external environment, the dispositions of employees, and the patterning of their actions within the social network of the organization's internal environment. The same research reveals that all this interconnection plays a primary role in the course and final outcome of a change and the extent to which resistance to change appears.

But let's see what the change is and what external and internal environments are:

“**Change** is the transition from one state of affairs to another or, otherwise, the transition from a given set of conditions to a different one” (Chytiris 2001, p. 326). In order for an organization to make changes, there must be pressures either from the external or from the internal environment of the organization, which, according to Chytiris (2001) and Zavlanos (2002) may include:

#### **External environment:**

- a) **The Market:** The effect of the economy is an important factor. A period of crisis can create pressures for changes in the organizations, while customers and their wishes are always a driving force for organizational changes. The role of competitors and suppliers is also important, since any change in their policy creates pressure for change within the organizations.
- b) **The Technology:** Modern technology is constantly evolving. An organization must keep pace with the changes in technology. Any inaction in monitoring and anticipating the evolution of technology has disastrous consequences, even for the strongest organizations.
- c) **The State:** Changes are often created in legislation and regulations concerning work data or the wider work environment, as well as alterations in political data may appear, which force the organizations to proceed into adaptive changes.

d) **The Interest Groups:** They include social groups, associations, and communities within which businesses operate and which force organizations to demonstrate Corporate Social Responsibility as well as respect for local culture.

**Internal environment:** Pressure may be exerted by the Company's shareholders, depending on the interests they represent, by the Company's executives, or by the Technical Staff and employees, who demand, respectively, greater profitability, or better work conditions, forcing the organization to make changes.

## 2.2 Types of Organizational Change

Depending on how the organization reacts to the pressures it receives, either from its internal or external environment, the changes can be divided into (Chytiris, 2001):

a) **Forced or Unplanned:** The organization's reaction here is usually small-scale because the mandate of change operates from top to down, e.g. by State law or Ministerial decision.

b) **Normal or Scheduled:** This change is predictable and, usually, its effects are measurable in advance.

c) **Negotiable:** Here, not only the new behavior that the change may bring about, but also the nature of the change itself, constitute a field of discussion.

According to Bourantas (1992), changes may be **large-scale** and involve the entire organization, but on the other hand, they may be **small-scale** and focus on one part of it. Also, according to the extent and intensity of the changes, they can be classified as (Chytiris, 2001):

a) **Radical changes:** The change takes place in a short time and usually covers a wide range of the organization. Mainly unplanned changes fall under this.

b) **Gradual changes:** The change takes place over time, either in terms of its dynamics or its extent. This is mainly where the planned changes belong.

Similarly, Del Val & Fuentes (2003) describe two categories of organizational change: **The low-scope changes** (evolutionary, incremental, or first order changes) that are small changes looking for some small-scale improvements but keeping the general working framework intact, and, **the high-scope changes** (strategic, transformational, revolutionary, or second order changes) with which the organization totally changes its essential framework.

According to what was the reason that led the organization to change, the following classification can be made (Bourantas, 2005):

a) **Reactive changes:** The organization acts in response to some other changes that occurred in its environment.

b) **Proactive changes:** They are usually planned changes. Business plan and outcome prediction models are implemented for these changes.

Changes are also distinguished according to their direction of action (Schermerhorn, 2012):

- a) **Top-down change**, that occurs when high-level managers introduce the changes. But without the commitment of the employees, there are few chances of success of these changes.
- b) **Bottom-up change**, that occurs when change initiatives come from any part of the organization, except management. They are mainly aimed at creating innovations, but the commitment of the management is required for a positive result.

Organizational changes, according to their focus, may concern one or more of the following areas (Schermerhorn, 2012; Patrinos, 2005):

- a) **The structure of the organization**, i.e. the organization process, power and control systems, policies, interdepartmental relations, etc.
- b) **Technology**, i.e. the use of new equipment, automation, new modernized processes, new financial and accounting systems, etc.
- c) **The work and task of the organization**, i.e. new competitions, new work processes, new products and type of production, etc.
- d) **Human resources**, i.e. new models of recruitment, knowledge and training, new skills, attitudes and behaviors, new models of relationships and work groups, etc.

### 3. The Concept of Employees' Resistance in Organizational Change

In general terms, resistance is defined as a phenomenon that stops movement and development, while resistance to organizational change is perceived as an obstacle to change (Self & Schraeder, 2009). Examining the phenomenon of resistance over time, according to Waddell & Sohal (1998), in the first classical theories, this phenomenon is treated as a source of conflict, a source of hindering development and generally as something harmful to the organization. The appearance of any act of pluralism and deviant behavior was considered as a force that limited the performance and effectiveness of the organization. In the years that followed, it was realized that the phenomenon of resistance to change is a complex phenomenon, which should not be treated simply as an individual problem and misconduct or as an organizational conflict. Organizations are entities of social construction, based upon the experiences and interactions of their members, who construct complex social realities, therefore, every manifestation of reaction by the members should be studied through a more holistic framework (Mathews & Linski, 2016).

According to Macri et al. (2002), the organizational resistance to change constitutes a complex natural phenomenon, which must be studied from an **anthropological, sociological, and psychological/emotional** point of view. Regarding the first, the perceptions of individuals play an important role: when change is perceived as a threat to one's security, or as a potential loss of status and one's control of existing routines, traditions, and relationships, these perceptions constitute crucial motives for resisting change. About the second one, individuals within a social network, while they may claim to be open to new ideas, in practice they resist them when they perceive that their current relations would be modified. Regarding the third, the ability of employees to manage their own emotions, behaviors, and psychological oscillations, in combination with an individual's and organization's emotional

intelligence, operate as modulating factors of resistance.

According to Waddell & Sohal (1998), there is another set of factors leading to resistance, which are related to the individual's **cognitive** and **emotional** perceptions. These are:

**Rational factors:** Resistance manifests itself as a consequence of the employee's logical processing, estimating that the change may have no positive results, either for the organization or for the employee.

**Non-rational factors:** Resistance appears as a result of an employee's predispositions, personality, or behavior patterns.

**Political factors:** Resistance manifests itself as a reaction to phenomena of non-meritocracy, favoritism, and a bad workplace environment, directly identified with those who promote change.

**Management factors:** Resistance appears as a consequence of poor organizational behavior and lack of adequate management styles in the organization.

Resistance, as a multidimensional phenomenon, has ultimately begun to be perceived not as a harmful but as a manageable phenomenon that can contribute to the correct implementation of change (Mathews & Linski, 2016; Del Val & Fuentes, 2003). According to Ford & Ford (2009), there are three possible frameworks for interpreting the concept of “resistance”:

a) First, according to Lewin (1947, as cited in Ford & Ford, 2009), there is the **mechanistic view** of the concept. The mechanistic interpretation perceives "resistance" as a natural and neutral effect whenever a movement or action occurs, i.e. neither good nor bad, neither positive nor negative, neither beneficial nor harmful. According to this interpretation, resistance to organizational change is not necessarily a bad thing and can, under certain circumstances, lead to either positive or negative results. According to the mechanistic view, resistance is not a pre-existing property, but a product of interaction between the change agents and the change recipients.

b) According to Dent & Goldberg (1999, as cited in Ford & Ford, 2009), the **social view** of the concept describes resistance not as a product of interaction, but as an endogenous property of individuals or groups. It is an "exceptional" and at the same time detrimental phenomenon. As an "exceptional" phenomenon, it means that it does not happen continuously but emerges as a reaction whenever a change occurs. It is also a harmful phenomenon, in the sense that it is socially difficult and repulsive to deal with problems, disharmonies, disagreements and opposing behaviors. The weakness of this view lies in the fact that it interprets resistance on the part of the change agents, ignoring the view of the change recipients. The recipients of the change perceive resistance as a logical side effect and may interpret their actions not as "resistant," but as beneficial to change. So, the social view overlooks this interactive nature of resistance, it overlooks the fact that the behavior of change agents is also part of the change interaction that produces resistance and perceives resistance as simply a change recipients' property (Ford & Ford, 2009).

c) In organizations, changes take place within the context of continuous communication

networks and interactions. In this light, the resistance may be perceived through a new framework, the framework of the communication "language" (**conversational view**). According to Ford (1999, as cited in Ford & Ford, 2009), there is, everywhere in the organization, a continuous and dynamic interaction of communication, but not everyone speaks the same "language" and not everyone means the same things with the same words. Each side, depending on the role it holds within the organization, experiences a different work reality, which is expressed with a different "language" of communication. Actions, behaviors, and communication ways of those undergoing change are possibly recognized as concepts of resistance by the other side (those promoting change), without this being mutually acceptable.

In the light of this very view of the concept of "resistance" (**conversational view**), we can understand and assess the importance of having an objective and universally accepted communication system within the organization, which could integrate all individual communication practices. This communication system should not only be an expression of written and spoken consideration, but should incorporate values, actions, and behaviors universally recognizable by all parts of the organization. It should represent the convergence process toward a single communication code, it should be the "common language," the "commonplace" of perception for all parts of the organization (Matos et al., 2014).

However, according to Ford & Ford (2009), a rather relevant perception of the concept of "resistance" emerges through a variety of different frames of reference and communication codes that, inevitably, exist in different organizations. According to Rousseau (1995, as cited in Ford & Ford, 2009) and Axelrod (1984 & 1997, as cited in Ford & Ford, 2009), each organizational structure of relationships creates its own framework of "**agreement and code of perception**" among its members. Behaviors and modes of communication are perceived differently in a hierarchical organization, which applies strictly codified relationships among individuals, in comparison with an organization with a horizontal type of management and a framework of free and reciprocal relationships.

This relevant perception of resistance can better be understood through a similar, but considerably more targeted organizational context: **the context of organizational relations**. Each framework of operational structure and relationships, within an organization, creates its own code of values, which defines what behavior is right and what is not. In such a context, any behavior or action that "**breaks the rules**" and creates a **breach of "psychological contracts"** is characterized as "resistance" (Ford & Ford, 2009; Weber & Weber, 2001).

After all, as mentioned above, the concept of "resistance to change" should no longer be treated as a bad phenomenon. According to Wheatley (1996, as cited in Self & Schraeder, 2009), resistance to organizational change is nothing more than a side effect of bad change. Along the same lines, according to Piderit (2000, as cited in Self & Schraeder, 2009), successful change should be considered the change which motivates and activates employees' support and not the one that neutralizes resistance.

#### **4. The Dimensions, the Psychological Background and Forms of Employees' Resistance**



#### *4.1 The Dimensions and the Psychological Background of Employees' Resistance*

According to Piderit (2000, as cited in Erwin & Garman, 2010) and Coghlan (1993), the resistance to change manifests itself in three dimensions: the **behavioral, cognitive** and **affective** ones. With other words, the resistance to change is a multidimensional phenomenon and always manifests itself in all three dimensions at the same time:

a) **Behavioral dimension of resistance:** It expresses how employees behave toward change. When employees exhibit reactive behavior, it can be active or passive, overt or covert. They may refuse to participate in the change, downplay it, or negate it altogether.

b) **Cognitive dimension of resistance:** It expresses how employees think about the change. Employees may ask what the value of the change will be, and whether the change will harm (or benefit) them (or their department, or the whole organization). When thoughts are negative, they may be expressed through a lack of commitment to the change process and a poor evaluation of it.

c) **Affective dimension of resistance:** It expresses how employees feel about the change. When there are positive emotions, these are manifested through joy, enthusiasm, and jubilation. When negative emotions prevail, they include worry, agony, anger, fear, and anxiety.

In every manifestation of resistance, all three dimensions appear simultaneously, but not always to the same extent and not necessarily in the same direction. In other words, the employee may behave positively toward the change, but at the same time may show fear about whether he will succeed or not in the face of the new conditions (Erwin & Garman, 2010).

Another important element in planning organizational change is the individual's commitment to it. This has to do more with creating readiness for change and less with dealing with resistance to it. All this focuses on the following processes: **communication, support** and **participation**. Meaningful communication can inform people and remove some of the uncertainty. Employees tend to exhibit less defensive behavior when they enjoy understanding and support in their actions. By involving individual members of the organization in the planning and execution of the change process (participation), managers can more easily handle resistance and materialize changes (Schalk et al., 1998; Bovey & Hede Andy, 2001).

The relationship between employee and organization may change during organizational change. Changes affect the individual "believes" and "wants" of employees, and affect their relationship with the organization, that is, **affect their psychological contract with the organization**. The way in which the change is carried out (communication about the change, support during the change, participation in the planning and execution of it) affects this psychological contract of the employee with the organization (see Figure 1) (Schalk et al., 1998).

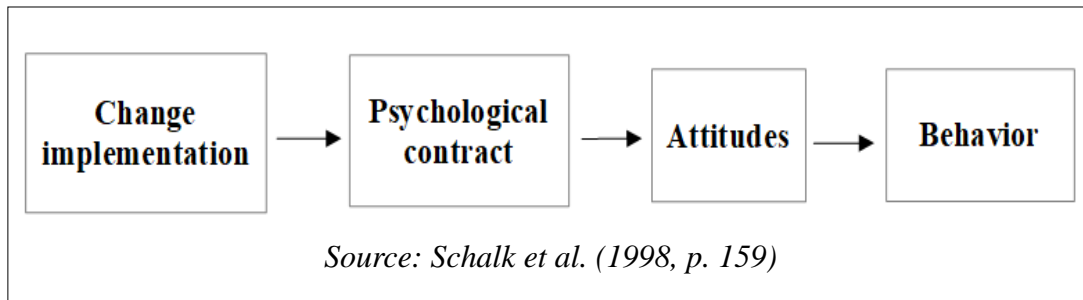


Figure 1. Change process and employee psychological work contract

When the psychological work contract is positive, it positively affects the attitudes of employees (such as organizational commitment) and, accordingly, the positive attitudes influence positively the behavior of employees. According to Schalk et al. (1998), the psychological work contract is the key element that makes a change in the organization's work for better or worse. Thus, it is important that the used communication, support, and participation procedures concerning the change keep up with the current psychological contracts of the employees, which act as a point of reference. As long as the redefinition of psychological contracts is done smoothly, the organization is led more easily to change.

Organizational change becomes positive when managers can balance organizational and individual needs and focalize, apart from technical data, on individual/personal change. Many studies have shown that human factors, including cognitive and emotional processes, regulate the individual's level of resistance to organizational change. The four basic human psychological functions (see Figure 2) are: **perception**, **cognition**, **affect**, and **resistance** (Bovey & Hede Andy, 2001).

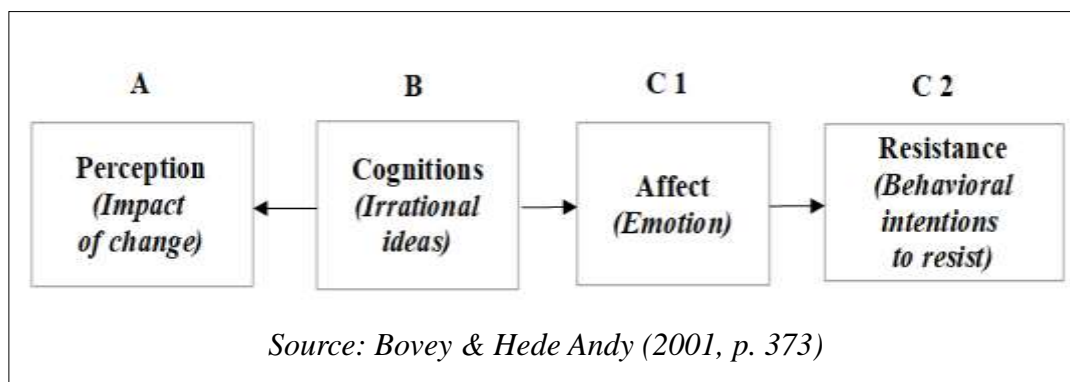


Figure 2. Change process and employee psychological functions

According to Figure 2: «A»= Impact of change, «B»= Irrational ideas, «C1»= Emotion, «C2»= Behavioral intentions to resist. The event "A" of the action (in this case, the impact of change) does not directly create "C" (feelings and behavior in the individual). It is the intervening "B" (an idea/tendency of the individual) that ultimately leads to "C" (Bovey & Hede Andy, 2001).

Regarding **operationalizing perception** and putting the above variables into operation, resistance is related to two factors: a) the individual degree of control over change (as individual control increases, resistance decreases) and b) the degree to which the change affects the individual (as the effect of the change increases, so does the resistance) (Bovey & Hede Andy, 2001).

Regarding **operationalizing cognitions** during changes, individuals tend, more or less, to have automatic thoughts that have been described as *irrational*. Research results show that these irrational ideas influence individual resistance to change. Individuals who display a higher percentage of irrational ideas and who generally tend to use **maladaptive defense mechanisms** are more likely to resist organizational change, compared to those who display a lower percentage of irrational ideas and tend to unconsciously adopt **adaptive defense mechanisms**, such as humor. It is what Chris Argyris (1994, as cited in Trader-Leigh, 2002) describes as “cognitive impairment,” that results in defensive reasoning. The irrational ideas/tendencies most closely associated with the functions of reacting to change are: blaming oneself and others, avoiding responsibility/difficulties, being inert and passive, and accepting that someone has no control over his development and destiny. These situations often lead to feelings of anger and frustration, similar to those that occur during organizational confusion. By gaining self-discipline, a person will feel safe to face unusual situations, such as during major organizational changes (Bovey & Hede Andrew, 2001).

Regarding **operationalizing affect** during change, states of affect usually function as feelings and emotions associated with actions. Psychological researchers have identified a group of basic emotions, including fear, anger, anxiety, sadness, etc., during organizational changes. Changes and losses are likely to create feelings of low self-esteem and a general inability for someone to be adapted to new circumstances. When individuals are unable emotionally to be adapted to change, they are driven to resistance. Research has also shown that emotion increases the link between irrational ideas and resistance to change (Bovey & Hede Andy, 2001).

Regarding the behavior of resistance to change (**operationalizing resistance**), it constitutes a concept based on a table of behavioral trends (see Figure 3) in accordance with the two operational dimensions of active-passive and overt-covert behavior (Bovey & Hede Andy, 2001).

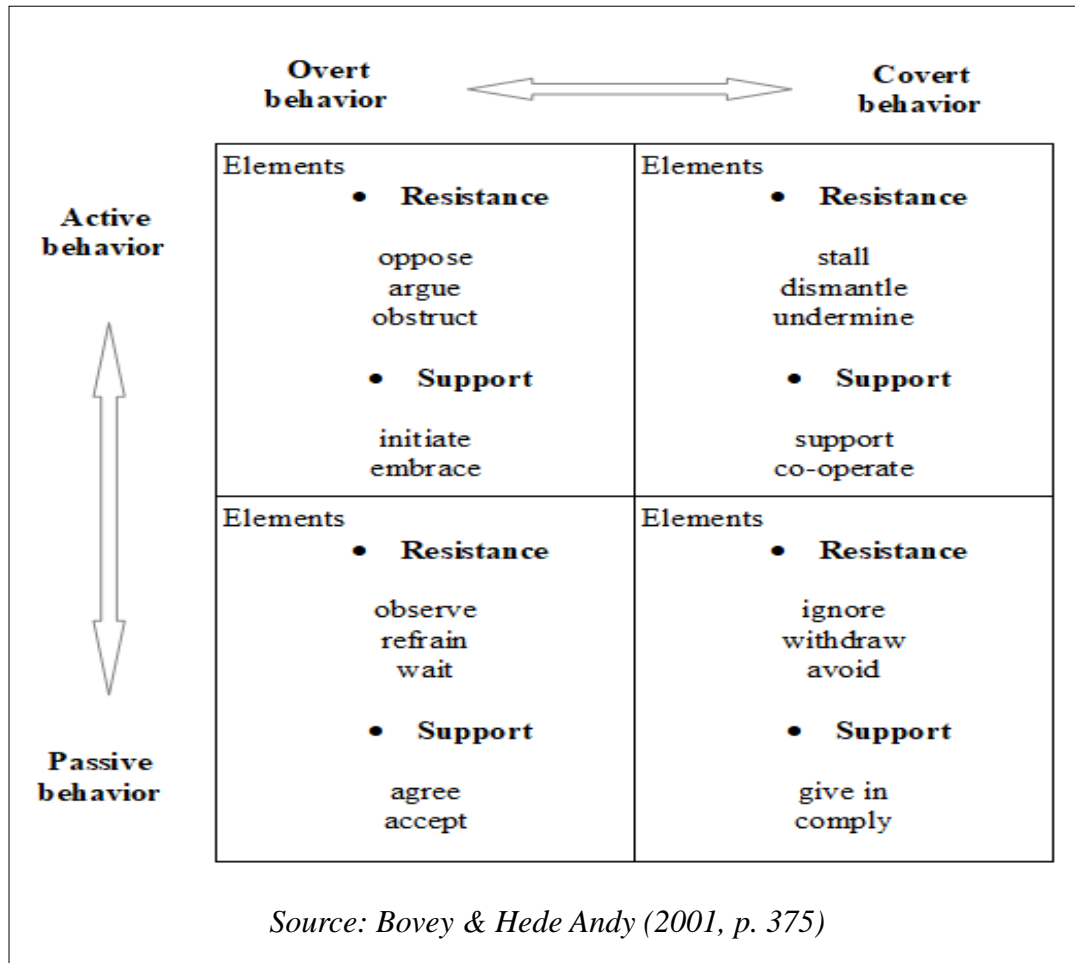


Figure 3. Table of behavioral trends

When implementing change, it is important for managers to know the process of manifestation of the resistance dimensions and people's psychological function. Managers need to focus on using intervention strategies that create self-awareness and strengthen the adaptive defense mechanisms of employees. Two types of intervention strategies are proposed: the **information-based intervention** and the **counseling intervention** (Bovey & Hede Andrew, 2001; Calabrese, 2003). Information-based interventions provide information to individuals, in order for them to understand behavior in an environment of change. Counseling interventions focus on actions designed to strengthen individuals to be able to analyze and become aware of how their own defense mechanisms influence their perceptions of change. The personal growth and development of the individual are likely to change his perceptions of change and thereby reduce his resistance to it (Bovey & Hede Andrew, 2001; Calabrese, 2003).

#### 4.2 Forms of Employees' Resistance

A remarkable model describing forms of employee resistance to change is analyzed by O'Connor (1993). According to this, resistance can be **covert** or **overt**. In covert resistance, its carriers are difficult to be detected and usually, this is done when it is already too late. The

covert resistance is manifested mainly by ambitious workers, who believe that their interests are affected by the change, while those of their opponents are strengthened. Overt resistance is immediately detectable, it leads to dialogue or conflict, and in any case, is more easily managed. Also, resistance can be **conscious** or **unconscious**. Conscious resistance is manifested by employees who have first studied and evaluated the content and effects of the change. Their point of view should be heard, otherwise their resistance may increase. Through an honest dialogue, the actors of conscious resistance could serve the implementation of the change. When resistance is unconscious, employees are unaware that their behavior undermines change. Their actions usually stem from bad information or lack of knowledge and skills, or from sticking to old work habits. Unconscious resistance is difficult to be managed because its bearers see themselves as non-reactive and usually their reaction increases when they are accused of resistance (O'Connor, 1993).

Based on these two axes (covert or overt resistance, conscious or unconscious resistance) the following picture (see Figure 4) of four edges of resistance is created:

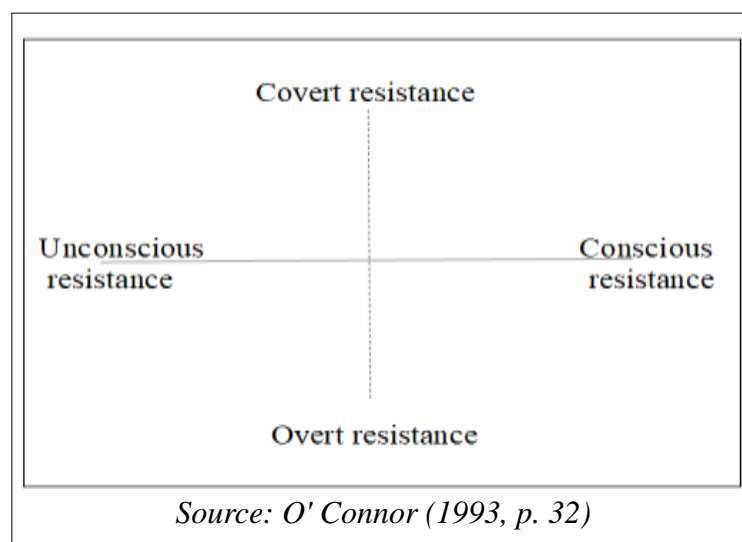


Figure 4. Four marginal categories of Resistance

The above-mentioned construction creates four types of resistance, described in the diagram below (see Figure 5):

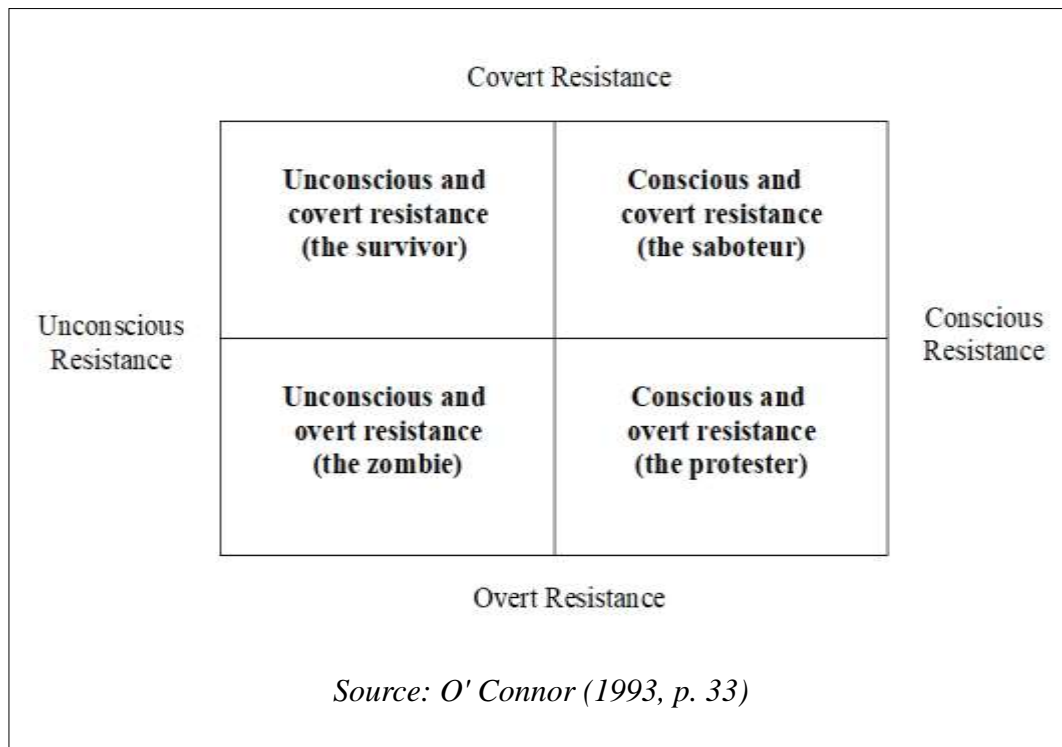


Figure 5. Forms of Resistance

a) **Conscious and covert resistance (the saboteur):** Employees with this form of resistance undermine change while they seem to support it. Some believe that change does not lead to positive results, while they appear condescending in words. Others have more ulterior motives. They sabotage change expecting to reap benefits. This case usually occurs in competitive work environments (O'Connor, 1993).

b) **Unconscious and covert resistance (the survivor):** These employees do not realize that they are undermining the change. They do not realize that they are harming the change and usually their role is realized late. They do their work normally, but they do not adapt to the demands of change. When they are noticed, they usually show surprise, they think they did a good job, which was unfairly wasted (O'Connor, 1993).

c) **Unconscious and overt resistance (the zombie):** These workers have an extreme sense of survival. While in words they seem to agree to the change, in practice they have neither the will nor the ability to implement it. They are used to working in a very specific way, which they are unable to alter. They are attached to old habits, and they avoid any concept of change, although they themselves do not perceive this attitude as resistance (O'Connor, 1993).

d) **Conscious and overt resistance (the protester):** These employees believe that by refusing change, they provide benefits at work. They are not only limited to pointing out the deficiencies of the change, but also display proactive behavior. Their resistance to change is open and they act thinking that this attitude serves the traditions and culture of the organization. However, it is the most manageable form of resistance, since they are willing to

be engaged in dialogue, stating their arguments openly and logically (O'Connor, 1993).

According to Stensaker & Meyer (2011), resistance to change can be distinguished into **active** or **passive**, depending on whether the resistance is accompanied by action or not. It can also be distinguished into **constructive resistance** (resistance that ultimately contributes to the implementation of change), or **destructive resistance** (resistance that ultimately does not contribute to the implementation of change).

It is worth noting that Perren (1996) lists a set of cases where the resistance to change has benefited the organization, in the sense that the resistance was exercised constructively by the middle managers. These middle managers were able to filter and improve the instructions of the senior change leaders, based on the fact that, due to their position, they could better interpret the goals and integrate them into the framework of the rich complexity of their departments. Thus, Perren (1996) defines resistance as a natural survival mechanism within the organization, which tests, adapts, improves, and sometimes stops decisions made by ill-informed or fallible senior managers. The same positive side of resistance is also analyzed by Coghlan (1993), according to whom it is a common phenomenon in an organizational change that only the systemic voice of the change agents is heard, putting aside the role of autonomous individuals in an organization and ignoring the fact that pluralism in management and development of human resources gives always an added value to the organization.

Finally, according to the study of Amarantou et al. (2018), resistance to change can be divided into three more categories:

**Organization-level resistance**, which includes resistance emanating from conflicts and differences in structure, functional orientation, and organizational culture (George & Jones, 2012, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018).

**Group-level resistance**, which includes resistance which is due to group norms, group thinking, group cohesiveness, and commitment (Singh et al., 2012, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018).

**Individual-level resistance**, which includes resistance originated from employees' uncertainty, insecurity, and selective perception, retention, and habit (Ansoff, 1985, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018).

## **5. Resistance Creatory Factors and Methods of Employees' Resistance Management**

### *5.1 Resistance Creatory Factors*

A large body of studies and research on individual and organizational behavior has documented the crucial role of resistance to change. Every organizational change, whether planned or not, which may be referred to either to the structure of the organization, to technology, or to human resources, triggers reactions. The research of Audia & Brion (2007, as cited in Robbins & Judge, 2011) informs us that employees insist on maintaining their existing work status quo even if they have been presented with all the evidence proving that the change is necessary. People often perceive change as a threat and react by aiming at maintaining the benefits they feel they already have from the existing situation. When

individuals resist change, they are defending what they consider important and appear to be under threat.

The underlying factors that cause resistance to change are categorized into **individual, organizational, sociological**, and factors that are **due to the change itself**:

a) As **individual factors of resistance**, according to Erwin & Garman (2010), are mentioned:

**Responses to change:** These factors are referred to the assessment of personal gain or loss from the change, to the individual's concern for his safety, job position, financial rewards, his role and power as well as his prestige in the organization. Individuals express stress, anger, fear, or frustration as well as anxiety about the possible effect of change on their personal norms and values.

**Competence assessment:** Employees experience insecurity about their competence, skills, and knowledge against change.

Among the individual factors/sources of resistance, Robbins & Judge (2011) note the power of habit and the selective processing of information. People rely on programmed reactions and habits to simplify their lives. When these habits have to change, then people show resistance. Selective information processing is characterized by the tendency of individuals to listen to information that confirms their perceptions, while, on the contrary, they overlook everything which challenges them. According to Trader-Leigh (2002), individual resistance factors include the lack of self-interest that gives way to mutual interests, limited flexibility, the threat to the social status of interested groups in the organization, as well as the threat to job security and professional expertise. In the set of individual factors of resistance to change, we could include the lack of discipline and persistence, the lack of motivation, the lack of self-confidence, the lack of time, the arrogance over the need for change, and the rejection of criticism (Bourantas, 2005).

According to Mathews & Linski (2016), individuals' fear of the unknown and unexpected change outcomes that may impact them personally (more work, less reward, etc.) plays a primary role in the appearance of resistance to change. Along the same lines, Zwick (2002) proves that the implementation of innovative changes in a firm (such as investment in new technology) can cause significant fear of job loss (and therefore resistance) among employees and especially among lower qualified employees. On the other hand, this kind of fear and resistance tends to decrease in times of social or political instability or higher unemployment rate.

b) The **organizational factors of resistance** to change are due to the structural context of the organizations themselves and, according to Robbins & Judge (2011) and Trader-Leigh (2002), as such are:

**The limited range of the change:** Every organization consists of subsystems which are interdependent. That is, changing one of them brings about a change in all the others (technology, structure, etc.). Therefore, the change in a subsystem is canceled because it usually brings about a chain of undesired changes in the entire organization.



**Structural inertia:** Organizations have standardized regulations which seek stability. In every change within the organization, this structural inertia resists the change, aiming for the balance of the organization through stability.

**Threat to expertise:** Specialized teams with expertise feel threatened by changes in organizational patterns.

**Threat to established power relations:** Any change can be perceived as a threat to the established power relations and hierarchy of the organization.

**Threat to established resource allocation:** People who manage large amounts of the organization's resources resist any change that would disrupt the status quo.

According to Trader-Leigh (2002) and Chytiris (2001), the organizational factors/variables include:

**The group reaction:** Even if every individual would accept the change, group norms, i.e. group behavior patterns, act negatively toward the change (e.g. trade union's reaction).

**The lack of resources:** The lack, mainly, of financial resources is a cause that slows down changes and leads to operational constraints.

**The organizational commitments and agreements:** Barriers to change may often arise from the organization's agreements with specific groups, such as with customers for discounts or payment arrangements, or with the workers' union on layoffs, or obligations to partners concerning time commitments and clauses.

**The lack of cultural support for change:** The extent to which managers support employees to handle the change and the extent to which employees participate in decision-making, catalytically affect the amount of resistance exerted by employees to change.

**The lack of vision and goal agreement:** Employees' participation in decision-making of the change process presupposes the existence of a shared vision and goal plan between the change carriers and their subordinates, the lack of which may lead the intended change to failure.

According to Erwin & Garman (2010), organizational resistance factors may also include:

**Communication:** The level of reliable and continuous employee information about the change.

**Understanding:** The level of understanding of the change content and process by the employees.

**Management consistency:** The level to which change managers demonstrate consistency in their projects and arguments concerning the change.

**Participation:** The level of active participation of employees in the process of change.

c) The **sociological factors of resistance** are based on group interests and values, such as political alliances, vested interests, and opposing team values (Bourantas, 2005). Resistance may arise due to the display of behaviors based on some established norms of the

organization's social system. Every organization operates with standards of behavior that empower the cooperation of its members. Therefore, such standards could hardly undergo changes (Zavlanos, 2002).

d) According to O'Connor (1993), the factors which could create resistance may include **factors related to the change itself**, such as:

**Lack of belief** by employees that there is a real need to make a change.

**Different approaches** concerning the process and implementation of change and lack of a "clear landscape" regarding the new situation.

**Diversity** in employees' interpretation of change goals.

**Lack of self-confidence** from the employees concerning the successful implementation of the goals. They may consider either the goals difficult or that the resources are quite insufficient.

**Employees' lack of trust** in the managers' abilities to implement and promote change.

The empirical study of Del Val & Fuentes (2003) describes two categories of sources of "resistance to change": Sources of resistance appearing **during the formulation stage** of change (such as a distorted perception of change by the employees, a low motivation for change, and the lack of a creative response by the change managers) and sources of resistance appearing **during the implementation stage** of change (such as political and cultural deadlocks to change, a bad work climate, the lack of training and capabilities necessary for change, and, above all, the existence of deep-rooted values within the organization that hinder the process of change). The same empirical study proves that resistance to change is generally higher in strategic or high-scope changes than in evolutionary or low-scope ones, as well as that the resistance sources related to the implementation stage of change are the ones that bear the greatest responsibility for the strength of the resistance.

Moreover, according to Cooke (2009), an important factor creating (or not) resistance to change is the accumulated experience of organizational members from previously attempted changes. If employees have experienced past change efforts that either didn't work or weren't completed properly, they have one more reason to be hesitant about the current change efforts. According to Cutcher (2009), this kind of workplace experience, accumulated across time and space, builds solid and permanent workplace identities, behaviors, practices, and roles, which are difficult to adapt to new organizational changes.

A new conceptual model proposed by Amarantou et al. (2018) is of great interest. In the vast majority of the available empirical studies, the concept of "organizational change" has been examined and managed from a technical viewpoint, leaving aside an in-depth examination of how the human element can influence the success or failure of change plans. In their study, Amarantou et al. (2018) go beyond the classical approach, according to which the personality-related, job-related, and change process-related characteristics affect employee resistance to change via a direct causal relationship. In the model they propose, the above-mentioned characteristics and antecedents of resistance to change are integrated and

interact in a more exuberant way. More specifically, according to Amarantou et al. (2018), the factors and antecedents of resistance to change can be categorized into the following categories:

a) **The personality factors related to resistance**, where we can meet some important personality traits and characteristics that predict employee resistance to change, such as self-esteem (Wanberg & Banas, 2000, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018), risk tolerance (Judge et al., 1999, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018), need for achievement (Miller et al., 1994, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018), and locus of control (Lau & Woodman, 1995, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018).

The personality characteristics can also be divided into three other subcategories: **the cognitive rigidity and shorter thinking** (Oreg, 2003, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018), **the employees' disposition toward cynicism**, which means someone's negative perception of human behavior and inability to create interpersonal relationships (Stanley et al., 2005, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018), and **the employees emotions and knowledge**, including the irrational thoughts and use of maladaptive defense mechanisms, emerged when fear appears (Bovey & Hede Andrew, 2001).

b) **The job contextual factors related to resistance**, suggesting that personal and organizational stress, job insecurity, anxiety, loss of control, and employees' perception of justice are the primary sources affecting resistance to change (these very factors had been first mentioned by Armenakis et al., 1999 and Trader-Leigh, 2002). This second category, according to the model proposed by Amarantou et al. (2018), is also differentiated into two new subcategories:

b1) **The outcome factors that are related to resistance**, which are antecedents concerning the outcome of change. Two important parameters that belong to this subcategory, the lack of which increases organizational resistance to change, are: **the job perception** (related to employees' intrinsic rewards and satisfaction from their job and their interactions within the organization) and **job security** (fear of losing job or power and prestige).

b2) **The process factors that are related to resistance**, which are antecedents focusing on the way that change is being implemented. Three important parameters that belong to this subcategory, the lack of which also increases organizational resistance to change, are:

**The communication quality**, which means the quality of information about change which is provided to employees before and during change implementation: the provided information must be timely, adequate, and valid, while a vertical and cross-functional communication leads employees to be negative to change (Lewis, 2006, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018).

**Employee participation in decision-making**, which means the extent to which the change process, planning, and implementation are shared between managers and their subordinates (Sagie et al., 1995, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018; Bordia et al., 2004, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018).

**The employee-management relationship**, which means the trust or cynicism that employees express toward management, depending on the extent to which employees question the real motives of change (Oreg, 2006, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018; Stanley et al., 2005, as

cited in Amarantou et al., 2018).

The innovation of the study of Amarantou et al. (2018) lies in the fact that it does not only examine the linear and direct causal relationship between the above-mentioned factors and resistance to change, as the majority of the previous empirical works do, but it extends its conceptual model to include the indirect influence of the above-mentioned factors and antecedents to resistance. In other words, their study focuses not only on the direct influence of these factors to resistance, but it also examines their influence via the mediating effect of three new factors. Amarantou et al. (2018) study organizational resistance to change as a manifestation of employee behavior, introducing an integrated model with a multi-faceted definition of resistance, where resistance to change is conceptualized as a three-component construct and these very three components play the role of the mediating factors (see Figure 6). These components/mediating factors are:

**Disposition toward change**, which reflects someone's feelings toward change (e.g. stressed, anxious, angry, receptive or excited, etc) (Oreg, 2006, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018).

**Attitude toward change**, which reflects actions or intentions of complaint, protest or agreement toward change and change agents (Oreg, 2006, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018).

**Anticipated impact of change**, which reflects perceptions concerning the potential benefits or losses from the change and its possible consequences (Oreg, 2006, as cited in Amarantou et al., 2018).

According to the model that Amarantou et al. (2018) propose, **disposition toward change**, **attitude toward change**, and **anticipated impact of change**, act as mediators, mediating the impact of the above-mentioned job and personality factors and antecedents on resistance to change. Moreover, according to their findings, different mediator components are being influenced by different factors and antecedents, or, in other words, each component plays a specialized mediating role in explaining the impact of the above-mentioned factors and antecedents of resistance on the actual phenomenon of resistance to change (see Figure 6). This innovative conceptual framework of Amarantou et al. (2018) offers a more detailed and thorough examination of the “resistance to change,” enabling future carriers of change to propose to managers a more specialized spectrum of different practices and measures in order to deal more successfully with the different types/forms of resistance.

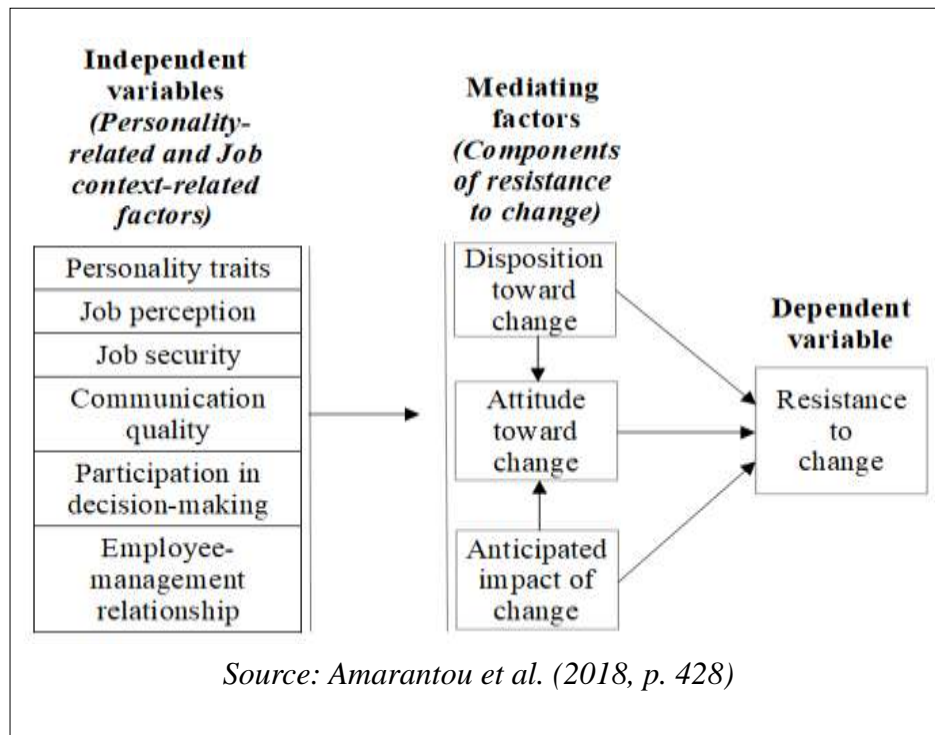


Figure 6. Conceptual framework of Amarantou et al. (2018)

### 5.2 Methods of Employees' Resistance Management

As complex as it is to interpret organizational resistance to change, so too is the detection of ways in which resistance can be made manageable. Numerous studies have proven that concepts and patterns of linear causality are insufficient to explain the phenomenon of resistance to change. On the contrary, they have verified the fact that there are strong and stable interdependencies among a multitude of variables and factors involved in this phenomenon, making the task of change agents to manage resistance to change even more difficult (Macri et al., 2002). Cooke (2009) comes to propose a wise baseline for managing resistance to change. According to him, managers should not be led into the trap of dealing with resistance with warlike means, because conflict leads to new, greater resistance and reaction. The resistance must be fought from within, eliminating the reasons that fuel it and above all alleviating the phobias of the employees about the change.

According to Coghlan (1993), resistance, as a completely natural phenomenon, could never be successfully dealt with by coercive or patronizing behavior on the part of change managers. The creation of a human-centered approach with mutual empathic understanding is the first step for all parties involved to feel safe and an important factor in order to exist a social harmony among them within a more facilitative organizational climate. Inevitably change is a journey from the known to the unknown, and as such it is natural to be accompanied by mixed feelings on the part of the parties involved. Anxiety, anger, threat, misunderstanding, lack of trust, and different assessments and positions, are some of these mixed feelings, which may be multiplied according to the degree of ambiguity of the change and the degree of control over the change and environment. All these emotions can be more successfully

managed through a carefully studied facilitative process of a person-centered approach leading to an equally successful and mutually acceptable change (Coghlan, 1993).

Along the same lines, Mathews & Linski (2016) suggest the cultivation of a humanistic framework that when applied to organizational change can better manage employee resistance through the development of an employee-centered motivation system which, as a result, can ensure the best possible conditions for human welfare. Erwin & Garman (2010), after citing many research studies concerning the complexity of the forms and factors of employee resistance, conclude on specific guidance practices for managers in order to understand and successfully deal with reactions to organizational change. The practices they recommend have been formulated based on **individual factors**, **organizational factors**, and **factors related to the change itself**.

a) Regarding **individual factors**, Erwin & Garman (2010) suggest the following management practices:

The **understanding** and **response** of the organization to the fears and reservations of the employees as well as the **provision** of psychological support.

The **active participation** of employees in the programs of change and **utilization** of the reactions in order for managers to detect the elements that could contribute to a better realization of the change.

b) Regarding **organizational factors**, Erwin & Garman (2010) suggest:

Qualitative, honest, continuous, and clear **information** from the agents of the change to the employees as well as **feedback**.

**Empowerment** of employees to make decisions about change.

**Decisive behavior** on the part of managers to implement the change.

In the same context, Trader-Leigh (2002) suggests **clarity** of goals and procedures, **validity** of change implementation, and **adequacy** of human and financial resources, while according to Calabrese (2003) the role of leadership that knows how to **negotiate** is catalytic: negotiating is a cooperative venture which gives each side the opportunity to discover the opposite side, to detect the true interests of the change resisters and the possibility to integrate them into the process of change as mutual interests.

c) Regarding the **factors related to the change itself**, the behavior of change managers must converge toward a "voice" that could transmit to everyone the message of a common and clear vision of the change, so that the employees can be convinced that they are moving in the right direction and can feel that their endeavor will prosper (Erwin & Garman, 2010). Managers who not only correctly communicate the message of change but at the same time have open ears to listen to the concerns, fears, and positions of the employees have the highest chances of correctly completing the attempted change (Cooke, 2009). Considering all factors that influence and deal with individuals' motivations, we can strengthen employees' willingness toward change and reduce their resistance to it (Macri et al., 2002).

Armenakis et al. (1999) propose five more elements leading to a climate favorable to change:

**The need for change:** Change leaders must provide the necessary information that justifies the necessity of a change in the organization.

**The right change:** The change leaders must convince that the proposed change is the right one in order to cover the gap between the current and ideal state.

**Key people support the change:** Organizational members, in the face of change, tend to consider the position of both the formal and informal leaders of the organization toward the change. If the change leader has won the support of those formal and informal leaders, he has also won the support of the organizational members.

**Members have the confidence they can succeed:** Change leaders must focus on bolstering the confidence of organizational members by emphasizing that members have the knowledge and skills to implement change and that the organization also has the necessary structure, technology, policies, procedures, and management talent to complete the change.

**“What are the benefits for me/us?”:** The organizational members always tend to estimate the necessity of a change in relation to the values that each member embraces within the organization, such as personal benefits, ethics, social position, gains in title, role, and pay. A smart management that could bridge these two parts would be a key factor for a successful change.

Along the same argumentation and operating in a context of human-centered organizational relations, Weber & Weber (2001) suggest “**trust in management**” as the ultimate key for a successful change. This trust, which managers can achieve by creating an **organizational culture and climate conducive to change**, leads to two great effects that reduce “resistance to change”: **readiness for change** and **less defensive mechanisms against change** by the employees. All this construction that Weber & Weber (2001) propose is framed and supported by some indispensable elements during the change process: mutually acceptable **goals**, clear **communication** and **feedback**, **participation/involvement** of employees in every stage of the change process, appropriate **training**, continuous **support**, and satisfactory **rewards** for employees.

## 6. Practical and Theoretical Implications

### 6.1 Implications for Practice

Understanding the complexity of the mechanism by which resistance appears during changes constitutes for managers and organizations the most crucial element that can ensure the prosperity of the companies and the well-being of the employees. Understanding in depth the mechanism by which a variety of factors and antecedents influence the emergence of resistance during changes, something to which this paper aspires to contribute, constitutes a key priority for managers and organizations in order to successfully complete the necessary reforms within the organization.

Taking into account all the above-mentioned theoretical elements and conceptual models, change leaders, in order to be successful, should clarify the impacts of every proposed change by offering the maximum possible help to the vulnerable groups of employees who may be harmed by it. At the same time, they should take into account all of the members' concerns and see the change from their perspective. Only then, the possibility of resistance that may lead to a failed change, will be avoided or minimized (Self, 2007). According to Cooke (2009), a successful combination of an organizational vision, projected by the manager, with a perspective of possible personal benefits, which may arise from the change, is the greatest motivation that can activate employees in the direction of cooperation.

Implementing a successful change strategy requires the knowledge of all the aforementioned networks of factors causing resistance. It also requires the early detection of operational constraints, competing views, and vested interests that enter into the change process (Perren, 1996). According to Trader-Leigh (2002), a type of risk management is inevitably required during changes, that will define the necessary framework of ethical behavior and values, will ensure the necessary cultural support in the whole process, and will recommend those rewards and benefits that can ensure the goal agreement and the organizational commitment of all parties involved.

According to Calabrese (2003) and Pihlak & Alas (2012), implementing a successful change strategy, especially in multinational companies, is intertwined with the existence of a well-informed transformational leadership, that will outline and recommend the vision, values, motives, and goals of all parties involved in the change, through the appropriate teaching and ethical role of leadership. Existing norms, forms, and paradigms in an organization may constitute a brake and a force of inertia in the desired change and it is the catalytic role of the transformational leadership that is able to transform these defensive mechanisms into supportive factors for the change.

A wise path that could create a supportive and change-nurturing environment is to confront outdated belief systems, a path that requires a change of organizational culture. The transformational leader knows that change resisters are not the real enemy and that no change can be accepted by the parties involved if their structure, social support system, and organizational culture do not change first. It is a set of updated beliefs, values, ethics, and visions that can create a culture of change, can commit to it all the parties involved, can reconcile the opposing interests, and create a constructive environment for the change process (Calabrese, 2003; Pihlak & Alas, 2012).

### *6.2 Implications for Theory*

The sequence of a number of important theories and conceptual models concerning the crucial concept of “resistance to change,” which are developed in this paper, aspires to constitute an enhanced and updated contribution to the existing literature focusing on this very crucial topic. Understanding the complex network of factors and antecedents entering into the phenomenon of “resistance to change” and the complex relationship among them, could shed more light on difficult aspects of this very complicated issue.



More specifically, this study contributes to the literature by reviewing a wide range of research over time and analyzing innovative conceptual models capable of accurately capturing the interaction among different factors, antecedents, and variables which lead to resistance, such as the model proposed by Amarantou et al. (2018). It also contributes by detecting ways of connecting the above factors with specific constructive resistance management methods. This makes it possible to detect new research trends in the study of the “resistance to change” phenomenon, as well as to synthesize different theories, frameworks, and models, thereby offering more targeted approaches to this issue, more effective solutions toward the constructive management of it, and a more successful implementation of reforms within organizations.

## 7. Conclusion

Employees' resistance is an inherent element in any organizational change. Employees react to change for a variety of reasons, but in every manifestation of resistance there are advantages, as long as the organization manages them properly in order to improve the change. We can never conclude that a change is de facto beneficial if we do not see the results it will bring and even after a reasonable period of time. The challenge for every organization is to be able to balance change and resistance in a way that benefits all the parties involved (Schalk et al., 1998; Del Val & Fuentes, 2003).

Resistance to change is a multidimensional phenomenon that manifests itself in a variety of forms, which usually express the behavior, the way of thinking, the emotions, but also the psyche of the employees. The forms of resistance may differ in terms of the employees' intentions or even in terms of the results that these intentions may bring about. The intensity with which each form of resistance appears is multi-layered, as is also the way of expression adopted by the employees in order to declare their reaction to the change (Amarantou et al., 2018; Stensaker & Meyer, 2011).

However, employees do not react without a reason, they react because they care about the possible results that the change may produce. In the face of an impending change, an organization's members do not necessarily develop an automatic defensive attitude (Bovey & Hede Andrew, 2001). According to Self (2007), some members will face the change with anticipation and readiness, others will fear the thought of what the future may bring, while seeking more information and clarification, and others will be ambivalent, considering the change necessary, but at the same time fearing what their role may be, what they may gain, and what they may lose from the impending change.

Resistance is not the dominant problem to be solved, it is the symptom, the warning that something in the change is not working right. As such, resistance plays a critical role in drawing our attention to potential weak points of change. We need to identify the reasons that give rise to resistance and we need to diagnose how these reasons are related to potential errors in the change process and implementation so that the organization's benefits from the change can be maximized (Perren, 1996; Self & Schraeder, 2009).

The multidimensional character of resistance is recorded in the literature by the existence of a variety of different factors that affect the attitude of employees, both during the process and during the implementation of the change. These factors may be related to employees' fears and insecurities, to the change management by the organization, or even to reasons arising from the nature of the change itself (Erwin & Garman, 2010; Amarantou et al., 2018).

In the present work, having analyzed the concept of “resistance to change” through a wide range of perspectives and having identified the overall background (natural, anthropological, cognitive, sociological, psychological, and emotional) of this crucial issue and gaining a holistic picture of it, we have arrived at very specific findings. The identification of specific models that encode the effect of specific factors (such as individual, socio-psychological, job contextual, or change-process contextual factors) on the development of “resistance to change” via the mediating effect of more specific variables, such as those proposed by Amarantou et al. (2018), and the subsequent interconnection of these factors with specific constructive resistance management methods, constitute key findings of this study.

More specifically, among such findings, we can include the conclusion that a humanistic, employee-centered organizational culture and motivation system, as Mathews & Linski (2016) propose, are quite compatible with constructive resistance management. We can also include the finding that the transformational style of leadership constitutes a style that can most effectively contribute to the development of a supportive and change-nurturing environment capable of creating a constructive resistance management framework and guaranteeing the greatest possible successful implementation of reforms in an organization, as Calabrese (2003) and Pihlak & Alas (2012) propose.

But what the experience of this study teaches us is the finding that resistance can contribute to change as a source of energy and motivation for the actors involved. The outcome of a change is much more precarious when it takes place in an apathetic organizational environment because no diagnosis can be made of any defects of the change. Also, resistance encourages the search for possible alternative methods and ways of implementing change, which may not have been detected earlier by the change agents. Thus, resistance can act as a force that creates innovation in a change process, since more possibilities and alternative practices can be sought (Perren, 1996; Waddell & Sohal, 1998).

We must be wary of the perception that success is the change that meets no resistance or the change that neutralizes resistance. The truth is that success is the change that constructively manages the resistance and receives from it the positive elements that can provide additional value to the organization (Mathews & Linski, 2016; Erwin & Garman, 2010).

## **8. Future Direction of the Research**

Future research must focus on how the complex network of factors, antecedents, and variables, which directly and indirectly lead to resistance, can be more effectively connected to ways and solutions of constructive resistance management. We suggest future researchers delve even deeper into this very subject by discovering new relationships among these variables and factors creating resistance and identifying new links with specific resistance

management methods that could provide managers and organizations with better knowledge concerning the management of employees' resistance to change.

In particular, we suggest that future research should focus on how the emergence of the resistance and its constructive management are linked to organizational culture, as well as to specific leadership styles. There is valid research data that a supportive and employee-centered organizational culture, as well as a transformational style of leadership, are more compatible with the constructive management of resistance and with the achievement of more effective implementation of reforms within organizations.

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