

From Disruption to Adaptation: Drivers and Implications of Change Readiness in Changing Times

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Abstract

Change is the law of nature. The Covid-19 pandemic has called on firms and their organizations to adapt and manage in new ways. Organizations faced massive strain to adapt to business operations, prompting a rapid shift to remote work for most of employees. To ensure sustainability and continued growth, business has to swiftly configure their processes and embrace new operational models. Increased capacity for organizations to expand resources and preparedness for this new change is needed. As human resources executives, it is crucial to keep people prepared to adapt and effectively execute improvements. In this conceptual article, we review the notion of individual Readiness for organizational change. The literature review indicates that by engaging in decision-making and communicating explicit and regularly new improvements and giving learning or development opportunities, people are more inclined to improve their organizations (drivers to cultivate a readiness to change). The authors have also discussed the outcomes (building capabilities, change-supportive behavior, and increasing efficiency of the organization's individuals) of cultivating Readiness to change.

Keywords: Active Participation; Communication; Learning Culture; Organization Change; Readiness to Change.

1. Introduction

Change is the law of nature. The Covid-19 pandemic has called on firms and their organizations to adapt and manage in new ways. Change has been defined differently in the context of organization (Motwani & Kataria, 2024). For instance, scholars with a strategic leadership viewpoint, organizational transformation as a mechanism by which organizational leaders and decision-makers execute their business strategies (Neubert, 2022). However, those who hold the perspective of organizational growth see the move as an intentional effort to differentiate between a corporate work atmosphere in order to improve employee development and organizational performance (Vakola et al., 2013). These are the two primary viewpoints in organizational change studies (Beer & Nohria, 2000). COVID-19 is unleashing a new age of transformation for organizations and individuals as well. Companies have seen first-hand the effects of rising, low-profile threats. While corporate decision-makers cannot brace for any future danger, we have looked at how they should anticipate and prepare for exceptional risk and place themselves for improved resilience. Organizations face enormous, competing threats and unprecedented shifts as they seek to address covid-19 pandemic influence. Present researchers, in particular those who support complexity theories, started to see reform and change as a necessity for organizations (Burnes, 2015; Strauss et al., 2012). According to these researchers, change is not an exceptional effect, produced only under specific circumstances by certain people (Kotter et al., 2021). Instead, the shift in human behavior is inherent and inevitably in human social interaction (Hamedani et al., 2023).

Leaders and management executives are also constantly responsible for initiating and implementing many strategies to transform their organization. However, many attempts to reform do not necessarily accomplish their desired goals and promote positive change. Specifically, scholars like Beer and Nohria (2000a, 2000b) proposed in their findings that the rate of failure may be much higher. In addition, the failure is indeed induced by the inability of the enterprises to allow for an efficient unfreezing phase (Lewin, 1997b) before attempting to implementing the change successfully (Schlesinger & Kotter, 2008). Unfreezing in the light of organizational reform entails a phase in which the views and expectations of the members of the organization towards change are changed in such a way that they view change as both important and likely to succeed. Generally, most organization models understand the value of a unfreezing stage in such a process as momentum building and making employees capable for implementing the change successfully (Armenakis et al., 1993; Schlesinger & Kotter, 2008).

Enhancing the readiness for change is critical for successful implementation and execution of ESG Framework, by strengthening employee engagement, flexibility and strategic alignment (Giese et al., 2019; Lalhunthara et al., 2025). Empirical findings emphasized that organization who evolves and ready for change can successfully implement sustainable practices more effectively, complying regulatory frameworks and integrate ESG Strategies into core processes (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). Journal of Business Research, 136, 497–508). It helps to reduce resistance to change with the respect to green technologies and sustainable supply chain innovations. In the view of social

perspective, enhancing readiness for change significantly positively impact the employees' wellbeing, inclusive and responsiveness to stakeholder engagement. In the view of governance perspective, readiness for change strengthens ethical conduct, transparent decision-making and regulatory compliance (Liakh, 2021). Therefore, cultivating and enhancing the readiness for change is a strategic move for sustainable growth, stakeholder trust and competitive advantage.

In this review paper, we emphasis on importance of Readiness for organizational change in situation like Covid-19, which is based on the notion of unfreezing, given by Kurt Lewin (Eby et al., 2000; Vakola et al., 2013).

1.1. Research questions

- 1) Does readiness for change play a significant role in implementing organizational change successfully?
- 2) Does participation, communication and learning culture support in inculcating a readiness for change among employees?

1.2. Theoretical model

The theoretical model of the current study can be drawn using Kurt Lewin's 3 step change model. This model offers consultants and change agents with a greater understanding of the processes essential to accomplishing change while effectively engaging individuals throughout the transition. Kurt Lewin's three- phase model offers a structured framework for helping individuals adapt to change. While leaders may roll out new processes and reassign duties, a long term and successful change can only occur when individuals involved enthusiastically accept and support the transformation, facilitating its smooth integration into the organization. Unfreeze is the first step of Kurt-lewin theory which talks about readiness for change.

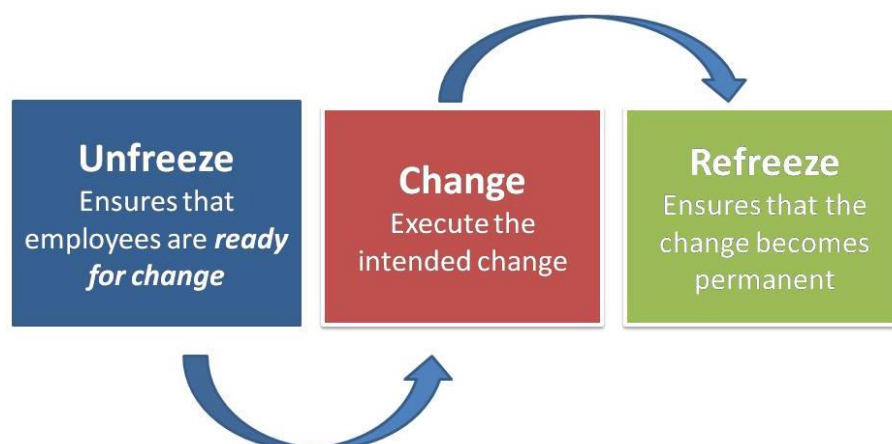


Fig. 1: Kurt-Lewin's Model (Lewin, 1951).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Organizational change

Armenakis & Bedeian (1999) identified four key trends in the literature on organizational change written in the 1990s: content, context, process and criterion issues. A number of researchers have followed a micro-level approach on change and have put more focus on the significance of the role of individual in embracing change (Armenakis et al., 1993). The core concept behind this concept is that "change in the organization employees' behavior is at the heart of organizational change" (Belias & Trihas, 2023). Researchers suggested that the system of the organization only changes and operates by its members, and meaningful changes can happen only in the long run as people change their work behavior (Hamedani et al., 2023). They claim that many attempts to reform stalls as leaders of change sometimes neglect the core role played by people in the process of change. To support the theory, they have empirically shown that people are not passive beneficiaries of organizational change but actors who consciously perceive the situation in their atmosphere and respond to it (Greenhalgh et al., 2004). Some recent findings have also shown that the behavior of individuals towards a change initiative impacts their actions (Cunningham et al., 2002; Jones et al., 2005). For instance, Jones et al. (2005) study found that those people who displayed greater preparation in the initial process of a transition are more adapt and engage to change actions and to help the post-implementation change process. In book *Leading Change* (Schlesinger & Kotter, 2008) the author has shared the process to bring a successful change of any magnitude in the organization. In this book, the author stressed leading the change instead of managing the change.

2.2. Individual readiness

At first, studies on Readiness for change was conducted in literature of psychology, media, and health (Block & Keller, 1998). These works concentrate on eliminating unhealthy habits, including smoking and substance addiction, and on improving healthy behaviors. In this sense, individual preparation for change is about the degree to which an individual is conscious of and has the potential to change as appropriate. In numerous ways, individual readiness for change has been conceptualized and described. The most widely quoted concept of readiness for change was given by Armenakis et al. (1993), who described this concept as an individual's values, behaviors, and intentions about the degree to which changes are required and the willingness of the company to make such changes effectively (Armenakis et al., 1993). Organizational transition is condition that obstructs the normal working routine of an organization. In attempt to solve the problems of the modern world and make assumptions and predictions about its future consequences, people are constantly involved and engaged in the search for knowledge, i.e. ascription, and observations about the process of transition (Constant et al., 2024).

The concept of readiness for change emphasized that employees' concerns and uncertainty about change are natural, highlighting the significance of resolving these concerns in order to ensure a smoother transition. Furthermore, it is widely recognized that change initiatives

are more likely to succeed if the needs and expectations of individuals affected by change are appropriately considered. The concept of readiness for change provides a more relevant and practical framework for analysing employees' responses to organizational change. Earlier research has confirmed the importance and validity of individual readiness in the context of organizational change. As scholars have observed, the concept of individual Readiness for organizational change is conceptually close to Lewin (1947) the concept of unfreezing stage (Armenakis et al., 1993; Eby et al., 2000). During the unfreezing phase, organizational members' mindset is altered to recognize the need for change and perceive it as a pathway to success. In this context, when individuals are willing to change in a situation like Covid-19, this means that the unfreezing phase has been successful.

Research Objective

- 1) To find out drivers to cultivate readiness for change in the organization.
- 2) To comprehend the importance of Readiness for change to overcome unprecedented times successfully.
- 3) To propose a conceptual framework to comprehend and implement readiness for change behavior among employees.

3. Conceptual Framework

The outcome of our literature review is a conceptual construct that describes the drivers and results of Readiness for change (Figure 2). Our focus is on determining the drivers in individuals to foster readiness for change and also on specifying the effects of readiness for change, as results are among the least theoretical and least researched facets of organizational change (Weiner, 2009). Through this research, we have observed that individuals and members would be more likely to be ready for the change in the organization if learning and development opportunities, concise and clear communication and employees are involved in change decision-making in the organization.

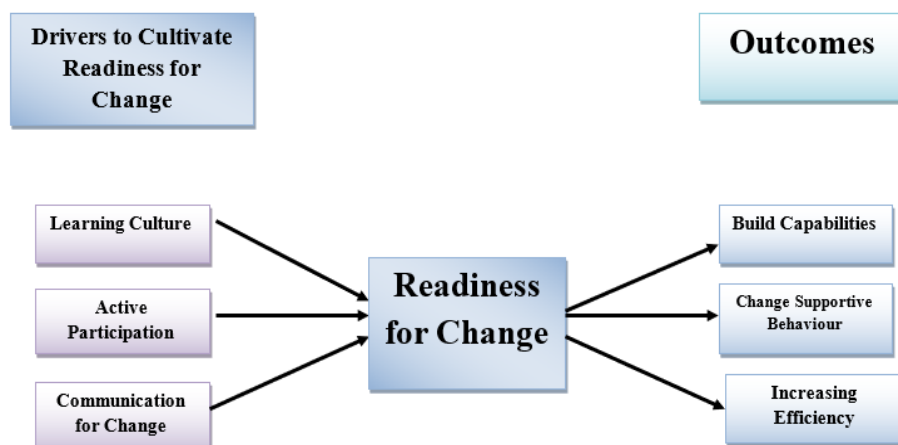


Fig. 2: Drives and Outcomes of Readiness for Change.

4. Methodology

In this review article, a qualitative evaluation approach for evaluating literature was adopted. Data is collected from journals, books, and publications on organization change, Readiness for change, individual Readiness. In order to identify and extract relevant studies, the authors performed an extensive search of numerous electronic databases, including web of science, science direct, and Scopus. We employed search strings in the SCOPUS database "readiness for change" OR "Change Readiness" OR Change Ready" OR "Ready to Change" as seen in the Figure 3.

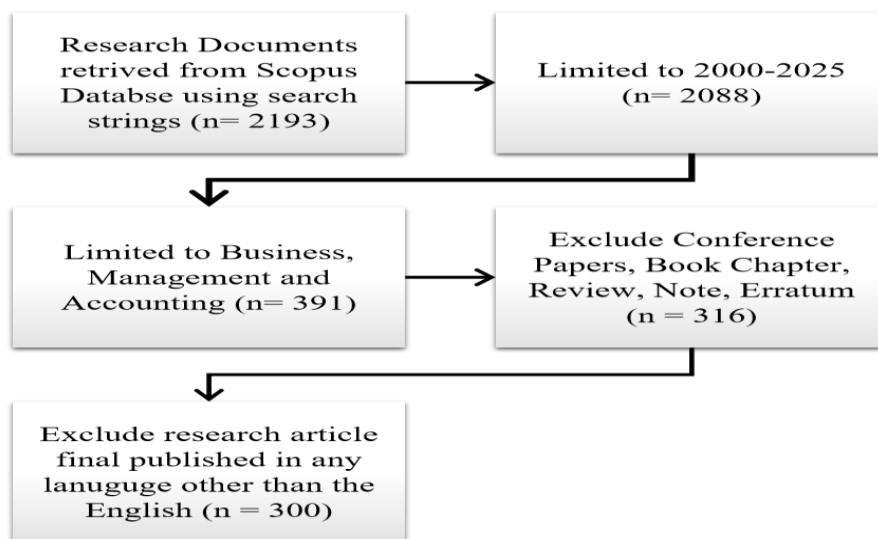


Fig. 3: Stepwise Details of the Data Retrieval Process.

For this research, we systematically analysis of 300 papers to collect vital information, which was then processed and refined to effectively identify and suggest critical factors for building readiness for change in uncertain times. Articles were retrieved from electronic databases, online journal archives, physical repositories, and author's own collection.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Initially, the research papers were retrieved using Search String ("readiness for change" OR "Change Readiness" OR Change Ready" OR "Ready to Change") using SCOPUS Database, yielding a sum total of 2193 research papers. To refine the results, research papers were restricted using inclusion criteria publication period from 2000 to 2025, reducing the number of research documents to 2088. Followed by documents being narrowed down to particular subject area i.e., Business, Management and accounting resulting in 391 documents. Furthermore, we applied exclusion criteria to exclude book chapters, unpublished papers, notes, reviews, conference papers and errata, resulting in 316 documents. In the final stage, we exclude articles published in other language other than the English, resulting in final review articles i.e., 300 in the subject area of Business, Management and Accounting.

Figure 4: Most Relevant Sources in the Field of Readiness for Change diagram presents a bibliometric analysis of the most influential academic journals contributing to the field of change and organizational management. The x-axis indicates the number of documents published, while the y-axis lists the source titles (journals). The analysis reveals that the Journal of Change Management and the Journal of Organizational Change Management are the leading sources, contributing 23 and 19 documents respectively, indicating their centrality and scholarly impact in the domain. A cluster of journals including Benchmarking, Development and Learning in Organizations, Journal of Health Organization and Management, and Leadership and Organization Development Journal each contributed 5 documents, signifying consistent academic interest across interdisciplinary themes. Additional journals such as Educational Administration: Theory and Practice, Health Care Management Review, International Journal of Supply Chain Management, and Quality - Access to Success each contributed 4 documents, highlighting the diverse application of change management research in educational, healthcare, and supply chain contexts. The size of the bubbles represents the volume of documents, providing a visual emphasis on publication density across sources.

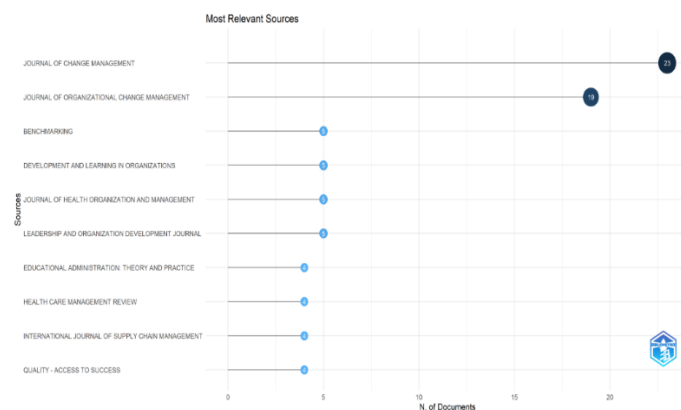


Fig. 4: Most Relevant Sources in the Field of Readiness for Change.

Figure 5 graph presents the year-wise trend of average citations per article, capturing the evolution of scholarly impact from the late 1990s to 2024.

The x-axis represents the publication year, while the y-axis shows the average number of citations received by articles published in that year. Initial Volatility (1999–2004): The early years show high variability in citation averages, with prominent peaks in 2000 and 2003 (exceeding 7 citations), reflecting the presence of seminal works or highly referenced publications during this phase. Mid-Period Stabilization (2005–2015):

The period demonstrates moderate citation performance, with average citations fluctuating between 2.5 and 5.5, indicating a consistent academic contribution but fewer breakthrough studies. Citation dips in 2010 and 2012 may reflect either a drop in research visibility or time-lag effects. Recent Trends (2016–2023): A relatively stable trend with minor fluctuations suggests sustained scholarly attention across these years. A notable consistency in citation averages (ranging between 2.5 to 3.5) may imply a maturing field with incremental contributions. Sharp Decline in 2024: The sudden dip in 2024 can be attributed to citation latency, as newly published articles typically require time to accumulate citations.

The trend highlights the episodic nature of research impact, shaped by breakthrough studies, evolving academic interest, and citation dynamics. Citation patterns emphasize the importance of early influential works and the challenge for recent publications to gain immediate traction.

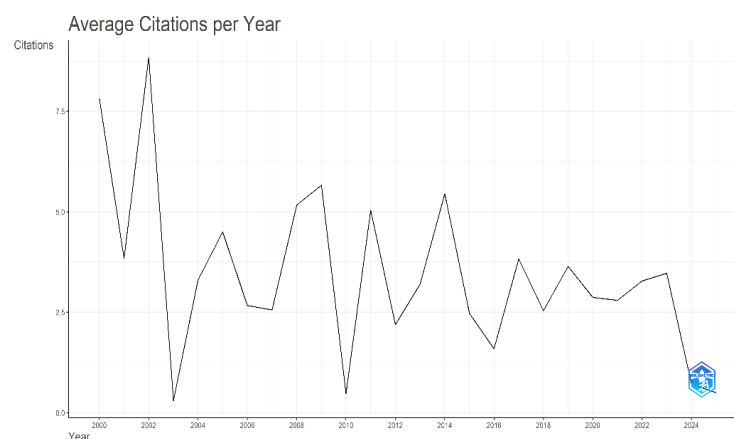


Fig. 5: Average Citation Per Year.

Figure 6 Annual Scientific Production from 2000 to 2024, The line chart illustrates the year-wise volume of scientific articles published, reflecting trends in research output over a 25-year span. The x-axis indicates the publication year, while the y-axis represents the total number of articles produced annually. Early Development Phase (2000–2009): Research output during this period remained relatively modest, with article counts ranging from 1 to 9. The data reflects the foundational stage of scientific contributions in the examined domain. Early Development Phase (2000–2009): Research output during this period remained relatively modest, with article counts ranging from 1 to 9. The data reflects the foundational stage of scientific contributions in the examined domain. Peak Productivity (2020–2022): The highest number of publications occurred in 2021, reaching over 33 articles, marking the pinnacle of research activity. Consistent high output in 2020 and 2022 also suggests institutional or collaborative momentum. Recent Decline (2023–2024): A sharp drop is observed in 2023 and 2024, likely due to publication lag, incomplete indexing, or ongoing review cycles for recently submitted works. This decline may not accurately reflect a reduction in productivity but rather a temporal delay in data availability. The graph underscores the evolving trajectory of scientific output, with significant acceleration in the last decade. It offers insight into periods of strategic research growth, potentially influenced by policy shifts, funding patterns, or academic collaboration.

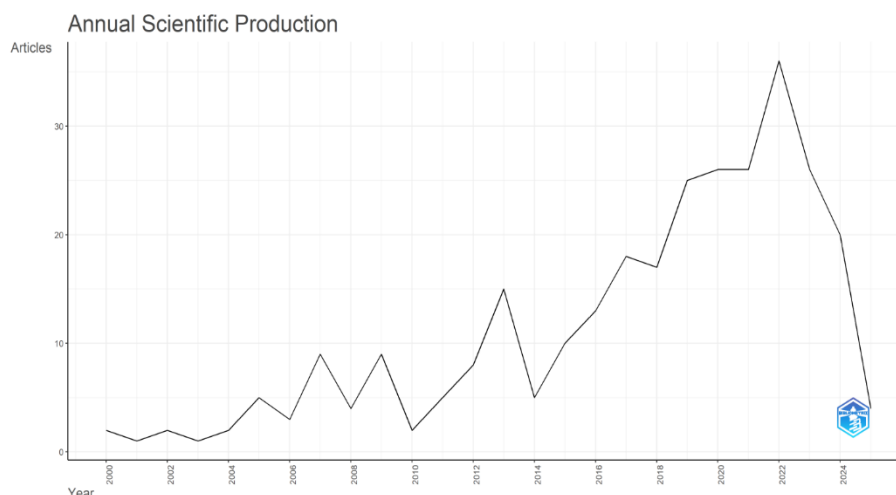


Fig. 6: Annual Scientific Production from 2000 to 2024.

5. Drivers of Readiness for Change

5.1. Learning culture

Scholars have explored the undeniable contributions of external influences such as advancement of new technology, culture and leadership in managing the transformation change in the organization (Pawar & Dhumal, 2024). In addition, some organizational academics have stressed the importance of a culture of learning (Djunaedi et al., 2024) in enhancing the readiness of human resource (Rahmi et al., 2025). For instances, Kotter et al. (2021) argues that companies need to learn faster in an environment of tumultuous transition. Some other scholars have emphasized on the significance of learning and empowering climate in promoting organizational learning and improvement (Djunaedi et al., 2024; Viera Trevisan et al., 2024). Recent findings also emphasized that organization that nurture and support learning environment stimulates systematic thinking, consequently, reduces duplication, streamline processes and enhances efficiency (Mehar et al., 2024 and Tripathi, A., & Kalia, P. 2024).

The notion that change often requires learning (Shet, 2024) is one of the core values discussed by HR executives and Organizational Development experts Change has been defined as "a cyclical process of creating knowledge (change or innovation), disseminating it, implementing change, and then institutionalizing what is learned by making it part of the organization's routine (Chughtai et al., 2023). In a situation like Covid-19, it is imperative for organizations to create a conducive culture of learning and reinforcing and supporting employee professional development activities.

An organization that encourages, enhances and rewards learning, in such an organization, people have more chances to participate in organizational analysis and to imbibe and communicate what others have learned. By having this kind of atmosphere, people are motivated to continually update their own image of the organization, to restructure their operations, to implement new methods and, eventually, to improve the work-environment processes (Abdul Sahid et al., 2023). Through this way, having culture of supporting learning in the organization encourages people to be advocates of learning (Yuaha et al., 2025) and to be ready for systemic transformation. Individuals with a high emphasis on learning culture might have noticed that interpersonal interactions may also lead to a higher degree of individual organizational change readiness. Businesses are undergoing relentless and unprecedented shifts. In order to help workers to be empowered and prepared for transition, it is important that administrators, executives and corporate leadership practitioners consider influences that can affect the individual's willingness to change.

5.2. Communicating the change vision

Great vision and change will serve as a valuable function even though it is known by a few key individuals. But the true force of perception is activated only when most of those participating in an organization or operation have a shared sense of its intent and course. The rational thinking of a desirable future will help to inspire and organize the kinds of transformation-creating behavior.

Attaining understanding about change vision is never a quick thing, particularly in large companies. Managers communicate, and often not by a small amount. Or, unintentionally, they send contradictory messages. In any case, the end result is the same thing: a stalled transition. Communicating the change vision and strategies can be especially challenging for people who have learned only to be a boss. Managers tend to see from the point of view of their immediate subordinate and supervisor, not the wider circles who ought to buy into a vision. They

seem to be the most relaxed with dreams. They can learn, of course. But it takes time, attention, and perhaps most of all, a good understanding of what the problem is and how it can be overcome.

The time and resources used to communicate efficiently are strongly aligned to the consistency and simplicity of communication. Communication tends to work well when it's so straightforward and clear that it has a kind of simplicity.

The limitation of accurate and simple communication is that tremendous accuracy of purpose plus more than a little courage is needed. Core elements for efficient communication of vision are simplicity, leading by examples, metaphor or analogy, and repetition of the message. Through communicating change vision effectively and involving others in major transformation situations like Covid-19, they will feel more confident, empowered, and ready to bring change for the better. Leading by example plays a pivotal role in inducing change. Communication is not about transferring information and data. You need to reveal and demonstrate to people something that provides an answer to their anxieties that recognizes their anger and evokes belief and hope in the organization's change vision. Great companies almost seamlessly do this process.

Through candid and transparent communication, fear, anger, distrust, and pessimism shrunk. A feeling of relief grows. Optimism that the changes are good and faith in the future grows (Kotter & Cohen, 2008).

5.3. Participation in change success

Participation has been conceptualized in terms that illustrate the complex essence of the phenomena induced by the experimenting of organizations with various modes and systems for the general purpose of increasing employee participation in work. In this research, the definition of Glew et al. (1995) is used as a theoretical point of departure. According to these scholars, 'the nature of participation in a deliberate and intended initiative by individuals at a higher level in the organization to have observable extra tasks or positions to improve opportunities for individuals or groups at a lower level in the organization to have a greater voice in one or more areas of organizational growth' (p.402). It was hoped that successful involvement by employees of the company in the workplace would lead to a variety of fruitful results. The widespread certainty has been that workers tend to respond favourably to an increase in the degree of engagement in existing and new fields of organizational performance. Srivastava (1983), in his finding of an organizational learning culture, argued that: By promoting participatory decision-making and increasing collaboration with decision-makers, organizational learning skills may also be strengthened. It was discovered that involvement was closely related to motivation (Huang, 2022). In essence, creativity should be desired instead of endeavoring to resolve challenges by triggering stored routines to encourage the search for a new solution. By removing, reducing, or modifying existing values, successful pursuit of potential alternatives to the difficulties inherent in strategic change will contribute to the creation of new facts.

Participation refers to a working style in which corporate members come together to establish and implement a solution to the organizational problem from diverse functions and hierarchical ranks. Participation allows for communication with organizational partners, and learning is expected to be affected in a number of ways by this interaction. The use of engagement provides arenas that facilitate dialogue between people and groups with various values and backgrounds of understanding (Albrecht et al., 2023).

6. Discussion

One objective of this study was to identify drivers to cultivate Readiness for change in a situation like Covid-19 Pandemic. At the individual stages of research, our analysis proposes that the successful use of change management practices, including collaboration, leadership, and teamwork would be closely related to constructive aspirations of change and a substantive impact on change, resulting in a positive internal decision-making environment that is ready for change. Furthermore, as the rate of change rises, there is evidence that workers can report fewer positive attitudes about change and less positive affective reactions to change, resulting in a lower positive overall appraisal decision that the worker is prepared to change. Our review finds that companies that provide workers with a learning atmosphere, effectively articulate the expectations of change and engage consistently in the decision-making process can report more optimistic beliefs and change the organization's supportive actions towards transformation, which will lead to a favourable overall evaluative judgement that a person is ready for change. Empirical evidence has found that feelings of empowerment are created as members of the group are actively engaged and engage in change-related decisions, giving them a sense of agency and authority (Matsuo, 2019). Earlier research has demonstrated that, high quality change communication, improves employee's acceptance, openness, and commitment to organizational change. Organizations providing learning and development opportunities to their employees will be useful to build competence capabilities to bring change successfully in the organization. For instance, some studies reflect on the value of workforce engagement and, specifically, offers resources for speech and self-discovery as a proof that one element of workers' openness to change is appropriate to employees (Wanberg et al., 2020).

7. Conclusion

Few topics have gained so much attention in the organizational change literature, such as individual Readiness for change. Even after having myriads of literatures, we have noted that our knowledge of readiness for change is limited. First, the significance and concept of readiness for change is described. Secondly, the authors also presented a conceptual framework regarding drivers for cultivating Readiness for change. This framework was developed as an outcome of the literature review study and might be expanded for more comprehensive or empirical research. Thirdly, we have outlined drivers cultivating Readiness for change among employees to cope with situations like the Covid-19 pandemic. An organization can help employees to cultivate Readiness for change by providing learning opportunities, communicating effectively change vision and strategies, and actively involved in decision making. A culture supporting learning and initiative activities in the organization will have change supportive behavior among members of the organizations. A clear communication channel in the organization in a situation like Covid-19 is imperative for the organization to bring successful transformation to the organization.

7.1. Implication

Our research on readiness for change has a number of realistic significances. Communicating the change vision and strategies is one of the step organizations need to follow for bringing change, surviving, and thriving in a situation like Covid-19. Organizations have been imposing change without communicating the reason for the change and not involving them in the change process. It is one of the reasons that the failure rate is much higher. Secondly, organizations having a learning culture in place will have more change in supportive behavior

among employees. Learning and development opportunities will be useful to build the capabilities of employees to react and implement the change positively.

Firms who are ready for change are more likely to integrate and adapt ESG Framework reporting requirements into operational processes without disruption. Implementing readiness strategies at the workplace are found to strengthen the culture of continuous improvement and learning, enabling organizations to meet evolving human capital regulations efficiently. Our findings emphasized that readiness for change helps to reduce legal and operational risk by minimizing the lag time between policy announcement and implementation. Further supported long-term strategic planning by incorporating regulatory foresight into organizational culture and processes.

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