
Barriers to change implementation process by public and private organisations in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract: The objective of this study is to examine the barriers to change implementation process in a rapidly changing economy. The study validates the resistance to change scale, which comprises four dimensions, short-term focus, routine seeking, emotional reaction and cognitive rigidity. The purpose of the study is to analyse the resistance to change, as an obstacle in change implementation processes in the context of Saudi Arabia. 179 respondents in public and private organisations provided data for the study. The dimensions were first tested to assess reliability and validity of the measures. Among the four dimensions, the most influential barrier to change implementation is routine seeking followed by emotional reaction. Cognitive rigidity comes next with short-time focus being the last dimension. The findings of this study will help managers in Saudi Arabia to overcome practically the potential barriers to change.

Keywords: barriers to change; change implementation; change management; organisational change; resistance to change; short-term focus; routine seeking; emotional reaction; cognitive rigidity; Saudi Arabia.

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1 Introduction

Several factors such as globalisation and its reversal in recent times, increasing pace of technological developments, emergence of digital workplace, and rise in diversity within organisations have been putting pressure on organisations to introduce changes. Changes require continual adaptation to be relevant and competitive in the market. Whatever be the nature of changes – be they technological, new products and services, strategy and structure, or culture changes – expecting employees to resist changes is natural. On the other hand, change implementation is met with employee resistance, which is time consuming and creates delay in change processes (Ansoff, 1990). These are difficult to predict, but have to be taken into consideration. Several researchers have pointed that the reasons for the failure of many change initiatives can be traced to resistance to change (Waddell and Sohal, 1998). Resistance to change (RTC) in organisations has become a persistent challenge for managers in the current dynamic scenario and complex economic and business environment worldwide, in which organisations face continual and sometimes unnerving changes to survive. Despite the efforts made in organisations to overcome resistance, this issue continues to create difficulties in practice, and the success rate of the change processes is still low (Fuioaga and Rusu, 2018).

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the RTC by organisations in Saudi Arabia, as a barrier to change implementation processes. We adopt the RTC scale to measure employees' inclination to resist changes as proposed by Oreg (2003). The RTC scale was designed to measure an individual's dispositional inclination to resist changes. The exploratory analyses indicated four reliable factors: routine seeking (RS), emotional

reaction to imposed change (ER), cognitive rigidity (CR), and short-term focus (STF). The resistance to change (RTC) scale used in this study was further validated in another larger study, which drew samples from 17 nations having 13 different languages and spreading four continents representing undertaken (Oreg et al., 2008). We adopt this scale in the Saudi Arabian context to further test the generalisability of the RTC scale. The four dimensions and 10 values used in the present research study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 The four dimensions and 10 values used in the research study

Routine seeking dimension is the magnitude to which one enjoys and seeks out stable and routine environments	Emotional reaction dimension reflects the extent to which individuals feel stressed and uncomfortable in response to imposed change
Short-term focus dimension involves the degree to which individuals are preoccupied with the short-term inconveniences vs. the potential long-term benefits of the change	Cognitive rigidity dimension represents a form of dogged persistence and reluctance to consider alternative ideas and perspectives.
Schwartz's (1992, 2005) identifies 10 values each of which can be categorised into one of four broad value dimensions as below. These dimensions are represented in two primary contrasts.	
The first contrast involves self-enhancement Vs. self-transcendence values and describes the tension between an individual's emphasis on his or her own success and dominance vs. an emphasis on the welfare of others.	The second contrast involves the tension between openness to change values and conservation values. Openness values represent an emphasis on the proactive and voluntary search for stimulation, novelty, and change and on free and autonomous thinking and behavior. Conversely, conservation values prescribe the status quo

Sources: Schwartz (1992, 2005) and Oreg *et al.* (2008)

The choice of Saudi Arabia for this study arose from several factors. First, the Kingdom is presently undergoing a major economic transformation initiative under the 'Saudi Vision 2030'. The initiative is pushing organisations to change in order to cope with the unsettling business environment. Second, the importance of Saudi Arabia as the setting for the study also arises from its position as a global economic player and its membership in the G20 economies. This economic shift triggers the need for organisation-wide change, which is a large-scale transformation that affects the overall structure of the company. This typically tends to entail resizing of any form, restructuring or collaboration – basically, a step towards changing the nature of the company. If things are left to change voluntarily, they tend to do it in unfavourable manner and change could be chaotic if uncontrolled. Third, cultural and socioeconomic factors are different in Saudi Arabia may have a different impact of employee resistance to organisational changes. Fourth, there is a paucity of research examining these issues in the organisation behaviour and business development literature in the context of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, in order to help managers understand the employees' resistance in Saudi companies, this paper illustrates the different dimensions of resistance to change those managers need to

consider and then prioritise them based on their affect according to the sample responses. The paper also highlights the correlations between the specific dimensions of resistance to change in Saudi Arabia. Finally, a set of recommendations and good practices for managers to overcome this phenomenon proactively are presented and discussed.

2 Literature review

2.1 Organisational change

Identifying ways to make meaningful and sustainable planned organisational change is a challenge. Organisational change is variations in shape, quality or state over time based on empirical observation in an organisational entity (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). Such variations arise subsequent to the introduction of new ways of thinking, acting and operating (Schalk et al., 1998). The purpose of bringing change in an organisation is to adapt to the new environment (Leana and Barry, 2000; Barr et al., 1992; Child and Smith, 1987) or to improve organisational performance (Keck and Tushman, 1993; Boeker, 1997).

Kurt Lewin (1951) is credited with developing the ideas about organisational change based on considering the perspective of the organisation as an organism. The model of organisational change is popular and applied by managers today. Lewin introduced force field analysis, which examines the driving and resisting forces in any change situation. Bullock and Batten's (1985) phases of planned change are based on project management. Beckhard and Harris (1987) founded their change based on, and quoting, the empirical work of David Gleicher. That change formula is an attempt at capturing the process of change, and identifying the factors needed change to happen. Kotter's (1995) 'eight steps to transforming your organisation' derives from the analysis of his consulting practice with several organisations that underwent change. Based on that experience, Kotter developed the eight-step model. This model considers the issue of power around making organisational change happen. It highlights the felt need for organisational change and focuses on the need to communicate the vision and maintain the level of communication as the change proceeds.

The literature mentions several typologies of organisational changes. Of these, the popular classification is of the first-order and second-order changes. The first-order changes are evolutionary and incremental in nature. These are small enough to alter some aspects looking to minor changes keeping the general framework in place. The second-order changes are strategic in nature being transformational and revolutionary. These affect the basic capabilities of the organisation and look for a novel competitive advantage in the environment. (Blumenthal and Haspeslagh, 1994; Goodstein and Burke, 1991; Nadler and Tushman, 1989, 1990; Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1996)

2.2 Barriers / resistance to change

A major reason for the failure of change implementation is resistance to change. Despite its importance, there is still limited knowledge concerning the factors that trigger such resistance within organisations. Resistance is a phenomenon that influences the change process. It delays or slows down its beginning or obstructs or hinders its implementation, thus increasing the cost of implementing change. (Ansoff, 1990) Resistance is also seen as an attempt to maintain status quo, inertia and avoidance of change. (Rumelt, 1995;

Maurer, 1996). Literature offers many studies with sources of resistance to change (for instance, Pardo Del Val and Martínez Fuentes, 2003).

Organisation-level resistance because of differences in functional orientation, the conflict due to power, mechanistic structure and organisational culture (George and Jones, 2012). There is also group level resistance, which is due to cohesiveness of groups, group norms, groupthink, and increasing commitment (Singh et al., 2012). At the individual level, resistance arises due to insecurity, uncertainty, selective perception, retention and habit (Ansoff, 1985).

Resistance to change may be considered as consisting of three components according to works by Piderit (2000) and Oreg (2006). These scholars opine that, first, disposition towards change is reflected by how one feels about the expected change, that is, whether one feels excited, stressed, anxious or angry as a reaction to change. Second, attitude toward change consists of acts of complaining, protesting or agreeing as a response to the expected change, such as protesting against the change or speaking favourably about the change. Third, anticipated impact of change comprises perceptions about the benefits or losses of the change such as the whether the change could be harmful or beneficial. These three components of resistance to change, according to the scholars, are distinct from each other, and each of them highlights a different aspect of the resistance phenomenon. At some level, these three components could also be interrelated such that what the employees feel about one component of change may affect their action towards change and their belief about the outcomes achieved.

2.3 Change management / implementation

The literature on change management is rich with prescriptive models that are mainly targeted at senior level managers and executives, exhorting them how to best implement planned organisational change and manage the change process. The classic outcomes focused upon in extant literature on organisational change mainly emphasise two factors. First, is the employee commitment to change (Oreg et al., 2011), which is related to the support managers provide to employees during change implementation. Second, the acceptance and use of organisational practices for achieving desired organisational goals (Wensing et al., 2006).

Oreg et al. (2011) point out those empirical studies that have focused considerable attention on understanding the individual differences, which serve as antecedents to employee commitment and change acceptance. Individual differences as contributors to change commitment highlight two important dynamics: an individual's self-perceived ability or potential to engage successfully in change, and his or her personal preference for change experiences. Dispositional factors are hard to change even though organisations might select employees with certain traits and characteristics. Change recipients and other stakeholders need to believe that the reasons for change are legitimate and its direction rational (Stouten et al., 2018). The dispositional resistance, defined as a tendency to reject change, has been found to be negatively related to attitudes toward change (Soenen et al., 2017).

2.4 Theoretical background

The definition of resistance to change was developed over time since the 1950s. Zander (1950) defined resistance to change as "behaviour intended to protect individuals from

the effects of a real or imagined change". Zaltman and Duncan (1977) described the term 'resistance to change' as any action that serves to maintain the status, under pressure of alteration of the status quo. Piderit (2000) argued that the definition of resistance to change is much more complex, so we should be examining three distinct phases in the conceptualisation of resistance: a cognitive state, an emotional one and behavioural aspects. Committed activities and processes accompany implementation of change in an organisation. The process of change implementation initiated with insufficient seriousness and implemented in an inadequate manner, it is likely to fail (Agboola and Salawu, 2012).

Fuioaga and Rusu (2018) stated that organisational change efforts often fall into a form of human resistance. Experienced change managers are aware about this fact. Yet only a few of them assess thoroughly and systematically the reasons for resistance to change initiatives. Several researchers have stressed on the reasons for the failure of change initiatives and resistance to change (Waddell and Sohal, 1998). Resistance to change has cost implications and delays in change processes, which are difficult to predict but should be taken into consideration (Ansoff, 1990). Oreg (2003) observed that resistance to change is a common feature at all organisational level and is manifested among employees, managers and organisations. He explained that the reasons behind the employees' resistance include lack of vision, fear of the unknown, strategy misunderstanding, fear of new technologies and cultural considerations. Managers' resistance to change, on the other hand, might be due to the threat of losing power and control, overloading of tasks, limited resources and the lack of skills (Michel et al., 2013). Oreg (2003) further added that organisational resistance could be driven by conservatism, fear of the unknown, predominance of the traditions and admiration for the status quo. Further, the most common reason for failed organisational change is the failure of employees' participation (Karanges et al., 2014; García-Cabrera and García-Barba, 2014). Therefore, to ensure success in change implementation process, it is essential to involve employees, understand their expectations and motivate them to participate in change process (Caruth and Caruth, 2018; Kotter, 2012; Tanasoai, 2008).

Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) identified four common reasons for employees to resist. Change managers should be aware of these reasons, which are, misunderstanding change and its implications; a low tolerance for change; the desire not to lose something that has a certain value; and belief that change does not make sense for the organisation. These issues create obstacles in the change implementation process. Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) further stated that correct assessments are not obvious intuitively, but require careful attention because individuals and groups can react differently to change and the change-affected individuals may experience some emotional disorders. Even changes that seem to be "positive" and "rational" imply losses and uncertainties. However, for various reasons, individuals and groups can react very differently to change – from passive resistance or aggressive attempts to prevent it from sincere embracing the change.

In the process of implementing change, most managers adopt a top-down approach whereby decisions from the senior executives are planned to be implemented. Such an approach might not work, as employees might resist the change, they may consider the implementation program to be faulty and not meeting their needs (Uvhagen et al., 2018).

The drawback of the top-down approach evidently is that the employees' views are not taken into consideration, although they are an indispensable part of the change process (Uvhagen et al., 2018; Do, 2018). The evaluation of the possible resistance occurrence becomes an essential factor to help managers choose the appropriate way to overcome resistance and avoid facing costly problems during change implementation.

2.5 Framework for study

The benchmark study by Oreg et al. (2008) adopted the framework for individual differences of Schwartz (1992). The framework has been validated in more than 200 samples from more than 70 cultural groups. It identified 10 values that individually can be grouped into four broad value dimensions represented by two primary contrasts. The first contrast involved self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence values, which describes the tension between the emphasis that an individual lays on one's own success and dominance as compared to the emphasis on other's welfare. The other contrast consists of the tension between openness to change values and conservation values. The value of openness emphasises the proactive and voluntary search for stimulation, novelty and change. It also focuses on the free and autonomous thinking and behaviour. Understandably, conservation values concentrate on the status quo, maintenance of security and social order, and self-restriction based on submissiveness.

The value dimensions are found to have comparable meanings across cultures and thus could be used as the fulcrum around which the cross-cultural comparability in the meaning of dispositional resistance to change exists. When the dispositional resistance to change, measured by the RTC scale, apportion its meaning across cultures, it is expected that openness to change would show negative correlation. The conservation values are likely to show positive correlation with RTC scores. Based on the assumption that the dispositional resistance as measured by the RTC scale shares its meaning across cultures, the value of openness to change should a negative correlation, while the value of conservatism should positively correlate with RTC scores across all nations studied. The proposition for the present study could be that the dispositional resistance to change is expected to yield negative correlations with openness to change values and positive correlations with conservation values.

3 Research methodology

3.1 Measurement

A widely used questionnaire for measuring the resistance to change was developed by Oreg (2003) and Oreg et al. (2008) and was validated with data from 17 countries was adapted for the present study. These studies were designed to measure resistance to change using the RTC scale. The authors argued that the validity of its transnationality was established by a replica of the questionnaire structure and with the partial proof of equivalence measurements. The scale had the same structure in all countries. Except for those two items, consist of negatives, all items presented tasks invariant in different countries. The study results suggest that dispositional resistance to change bears equivalent meanings among nations, so that the scale can be used successfully in any

country. The RTC scale measures dispositional inclinations of individuals to oppose an organisational change. The scale also can be used to centralise the component to the change in resistance, which varies from individual to individual, as well as to predict certain specific reaction to certain changes.

A total of four constructs and measurement items from Oreg's (2003) study were adapted for the present study. Minor modifications were made to suit the Saudi context. The details of the constructs and measurement items are provided in Appendix 1. Overall, the questionnaire comprised 17 questions across the four constructs. The constructs relied on a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 ('strongly disagree') to five ('strongly agree'). The questionnaire also included questions to record respondents' demographics, which included respondents' position in the organisation, type of organisation and others. A pre-test of the questionnaire was carried out on 15 working MBA students of the authors' university to ensure that respondents in Saudi Arabia understand the questions in a consistent way. The wording of a few questions was then adjusted and modified after the pre-test.

3.2 Data collection and sample characteristics

Given the geographical vastness of Saudi Arabia, the present study was confined to the eastern province. The choice of this region was mainly because this region is representative of the country. This region is one of the most internationally oriented region of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Aramco, the largest oil producing company and a number of industries are located in this region. The nonprobability technique of convenience sampling was used, due to the difficulties of obtaining probabilistic sampling. Such a method has often been used and notwithstanding the limitation, is considered as 'a necessary evil' for data collection in Saudi Arabia (Sohail et al., 2012). Moreover, this methodology is consistent with the earlier study undertaken by Oreg (2003).

In the first stage of data collection, executives and working part-time MBA students from the authors' university were requested to participate voluntarily in the survey. The initial recruits were then asked to distribute randomly questionnaires to their contacts who met the requirements of holding middle or senior level positions in the targeted region. The eastern province region is represented by the tri-cities of Khobar, Dammam and Dhahran. The target respondents included all those individuals who were willing to participate in the survey. Five hundred questionnaires were distributed. Of these 203 completed responses were received. The returned questionnaires were checked for completeness and consistency. This process resulted in discarding 24 questionnaires. The final usable responses were 179, which compares favourably with response rates from previous studies in Saudi Arabia.

The profile of respondents show that 37.4% of the respondents were in managerial positions, while the remaining 62.6% were individual contributors. Furthermore, 72.6% of the total respondents worked in the private sector and the remaining in the public sector. A general question, "I generally consider changes to be a negative thing" was posed to capture the respondents overall impression towards change. Overall, 59.7% disagreed either strongly or moderately with this statement, indicating a positivity towards change. Of these, 72.9% of them were from the private sector, implying that employees in private sector are more open to embrace changes.

4 Results

4.1 Survey validation

For data analysis, SPSS-20 and AMOS-24 software were employed. To test normality of distribution, the values of skewness and kurtosis were examined. All values of skewness and kurtosis, these were found to be less than 0.4, meeting the recommendation of less than 1 (Hair et al., 2010). Thus, the assumptions of multivariate normality are not violated. Next, to test for common method variance (CMV) two tests were undertaken. Harman's one-factor test suggests that (CMV) possess a serious threat if an unrotated single factor test resulted in one factor that accounts for more than 50% of the variance (Podsakoff et al., 2012). In the present study, Harman's single factor test results showed that the first factor accounted for 23.37% (i.e., <50%) of the variance and indicated that CMV is unlikely to be a major issue in this study. Further, to confirm this, marker variable test was conducted as suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2012). Marker variable results showed that all the adjusted variables and items correlations are below the 0.30 threshold, which indicates that CMV is unlikely to be present in this study (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Lages and Piercy, 2012; Lindell and Whitney, 2001).

4.2 Factor analysis

The items identified as measure for the four variables (i.e., routine seeking (RS), emotional reaction to imposed change (ER), cognitive rigidity (CR), and STF) were subjected to a factor analysis in order to group them to verify their unidimensionality. The factor analysis was conducted via principal component analysis with orthogonal varimax rotation. The Bartlett Test of Sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy were used to validate the use of factor analysis. The results indicated that KMO at 0.834 is meritorious (i.e., between 0.80–0.89) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant ($p < 0.05$) confirming that factor analysis can be conducted (Kaiser, 1974).

As for the factor loadings, different authors have suggested various cutoff values of items to be retained for factor loadings. These have ranged from 0.35 to 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010). In this study, loadings of 0.50 or more were considered practically significant. However, the authors, as an exception, retained two items. Four items were deleted, as they did not meet the desired loading. These were one item under the construct 'short-term focus that is, *Often, I feel a bit uncomfortable even about changes that may potentially improve my life*. A second item under routine seeking construct, *whenever my life forms a stable routine, I look for ways to change it*, a third emotional reaction construct, *if I were to be informed that there's going to be a significant change regarding the way things are done at the company, I would probably feel stressed*. Finally another item in the construct of cognitive rigidity, *I often change my mind*. The remaining items grouped in four factors explained 65.91% of the total variance. The results of the factor analysis are summarised in Table 2.

Factor 1 contained three items measuring short-term focus with a variance of 19.86%. Factor 2 had four items measuring routine seeking with variance of 17.53%. Factor 3 comprised three items to measure emotional reaction with variance of 15.36%. Finally, factor 4 had three items to measure cognitive rigidity with variance of 10.99%. Factor 5 had three items measuring perceived risk with variance of 13.63%.

Table 2 Factors, loadings, means and reliability

<i>Latent Construct</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Factor loading</i>	<i>Cr.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>CR</i>
			<i>Alpha</i>				
Short term focus			0.783	2.641			
	STF2	0.684					
	STF3	0.793					
	STF4	0.784					
Routine seeking			0.817	3.223	0.957	0.545	0.826
	RS1	0.762					
	RS2	0.797					
	RS3	0.771					
	RS5	0.608					
Emotional reaction			0.762	3.105	1.060	0.638	0.841
	ER1	0.786					
	ER2	0.835					
	ER3	0.773					
Cognitive rigidity			0.673	2.832	0.984	0.505	0.753
	CR2	0.745					
	CR3	0.660					
	CR4	0.724					

Loadings > 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010) AVE > 0.5; CR > 0.7; (Fornell and Larcker, 1981); Cronbach's alpha > 0.6 (Nunnally, 1978).

4.3 Convergent validity, discriminant validity and reliability of scales

Convergent validity was tested by using average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR). The minimum threshold values for AVE is 0.50 and for CR is 0.70 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Both these criteria were met, as values exceeded the threshold limit (Table 2). For the reliability of the measurement scale, the Cronbach's alpha score met the values of 0.70 as suggested by (Nunnally, 1978). (See Table 2).

In order to assess the discriminant validity, a comparison of the square root of AVE with each of the construct and correlations with all constructs was undertaken, as suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). This method compares the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) with the correlation of latent constructs. A latent construct should explain better the variance of its own indicator rather than the variance of other latent constructs, therefore, the square root of each construct's AVE should have a greater value than the correlations with other latent constructs (Hair et al., 2014). These conditions were met in the present study. Further, to ensure that there was no multicollinearity among the variables, tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) were produced. If the value of tolerance is usually, less than 0.1 and simultaneously the value of VIF is 10 and above, then the multicollinearity is problematic (Hair et al., 2010). In our tests, the independent variables met these threshold limits and passed the multicollinearity test. As for the adequacy of sample size, Anderson and Gerbing (1988)

propose a threshold of approximately 150 respondents, for SEM models having three or four constructs.

4.4 Results of the structural model

The model fit of the constructs was assessed (Hair et al., 2010). The model fit indices of the constructs should reach the desired standard before they can be judged for model fitness. χ^2/df (CMIN/DF), GFI, AGFI, CFI, and RMSEA are some of the subset indices of model fit which are well-established and suggested by the SEM researchers (Lee and Jeong, 2014; Mahrous and Abdelmaaboud, 2017). Table 3 shows that every model-fit index met the recommended value requirement, exhibiting an adequate fit to the collected data.

Table 3 Fit indices for the measurement models

<i>Fit indices</i>	<i>Suggested value</i>	<i>Recommended by author</i>	<i>Measurement model (present study)</i>
χ^2/df	<3	Fox and Hayduk (1989)	2.376
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	>0.9	Byrne (2001)	0.913
Adjusted for degrees of freedom (AGFI)	>0.8	Byrne (2001)	0.833
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	>0.9	Bentler and Bonett (1980)	0.902
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	>0.9	Bagozzi and Yi (1988)	0.900
Root mean square error estimation (RMSEA)	<0.08	Bagozzi and Yi (1988)	0.078

5 Discussion and implications

Following the analysis, we assess the four dimensions based on the average scores obtained. The most influential barrier to change implementation is routine seeking ($M = 3.223$).

Employees in Saudi Arabia generally prefer a routine in the environment they operate. Rather than a day of unexpected events, the change leaders should take people's natural preference for a typical day into account. Such preference might be caused by the settlement-oriented mentality (Kressel et al., 1994). Saudis get used to this due to the welfare and their appreciated lifestyle. Change managers will have to take this natural preference of Saudis, although change process might involve bringing behavioural changes. Change managers must attempt to clarify to employees the necessity to initiate change, the change strategy, the new behaviours anticipated of them, the expected outcomes, in order to make the procedure of change foreseeable for employees.

Emotional reaction is the second factor that causes resistance to change among employees of Saudi Arabia companies. Emotional reactions leads to stress and encourages resistance to change process. Change managers must be aware of these and consider implementing change strategies that will overcome the negative emotion reaction of Saudi employees.

Cognitive rigidity is the third significant factor in assessing the cause of resistance to change among employee in Saudi Arabia. Snider and Drakeford (1968) stated that

cognitive rigidity is the propensity to reply in absolute terms of language or excessive generalisations, in other words the tendency to choose the usage of terms such as ‘all’, ‘always’, or ‘never’. This implies that once an employee has formed an opinion on an issue, it tends to remain unchanged. Thus, change managers must be aware of employees’ initial refusal to change, expect rejection of change and use appropriate tools to overcome the resistance to change.

The short-time focus is the last of the four dimensions whose influence on the resistance to change were investigated. The result implies that individuals are more concerned with short-term inconveniences that change can bring rather than the medium or long-term benefits. The research participants’ responses highlighted the fact that people perceived change as a disagreement.

Employees perceive change initiative as causing discomfort and bringing a feeling of uneasiness, although they may acknowledge that it can bring organisational benefit in the long term. Change managers must understand the mood and reactions of employees and find a way of leveraging these obstacles to complete successfully the change effort. Long term benefits to the employees and organisation must be emphasised.

In the second step, Pearson’s correlation coefficient were used to measure the strength and the effect of relations between the studied constructs. Pearson’s correlation coefficient is a statistical measure of the strength of a linear relationship between paired data. Table 4 shows the results of calculations for the correlation coefficients. As for the direction, all correlations are positively with varying degree of strength.

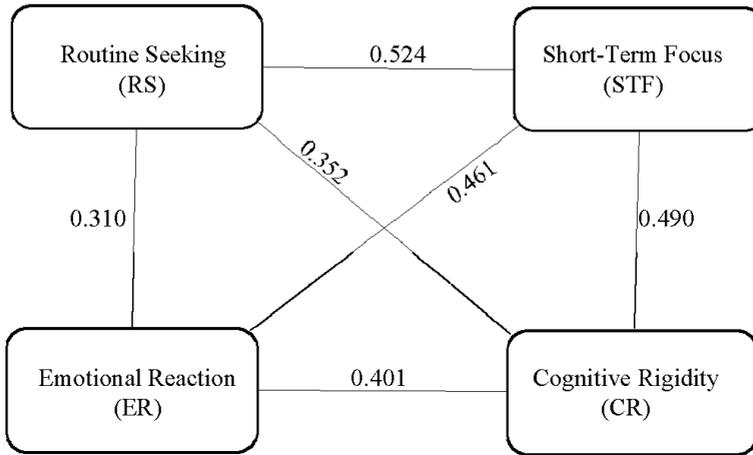
In analysing the strength of the relation, the guidelines prescribed by Evans (1996) for interpreting the absolute values of correlation are followed. According to Evans, absolute values of 0.00–0.19 is considered ‘very weak’; between 0.20–0.39 as ‘weak’; between 0.40–0.59 as ‘moderate’; between 0.60–0.79 as ‘strong’; and finally between 0.80–1.0 as ‘very strong’.

Table 4 Correlation coefficients

	<i>RS</i>	<i>ER</i>	<i>STF</i>	<i>CR</i>
Routine seeking	1			
Emotional reaction	0.310**	1		
Short term focus	0.524**	0.461**	1	
Cognitive rigidity	0.352**	0.401**	0.490**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Figure 1, there are moderate correlations when these constructs are examined pairwise. The highest correlation are between routine seeking and short-term focus, 0.524, which is in the moderate range [0.40–0.59]. There is also a moderate correlation between short-term focus and cognitive rigidity 0.490 as well as short-term focus and emotional reactions 0.461 within the range [0.3–0.5]. The r-value of emotional reactions and cognitive rigidity of 0.401 is also just about moderate. The correlation between routine seeking and cognitive rigidity can be considered to be on the weaker side (0.352). Likewise, there is a weaker relationship between emotional reactions and routine seeking (0.310).

Figure 1 Summary of the Spearman correlation coefficients

5.1 Theoretical implications

The mainstay of the present study is idea of Oreg (2003) that proposed the resistance to change scale to measure the employees' tendency or dispositional inclination to resist changes. That study was limited to participants from United States. A follow-up, confirmatory study covering 17 nations was reported in Oreg et al. (2008). That study established equivalent patterns of relationships between personal values and resistance to change across samples. It provided further evidence that dispositional resistance to change holds nearly equivalent meanings across nations. Notwithstanding some exceptions, the cross-national validity of the construct of dispositional inclination to resist change was established by replicating the study. The application of the resistance to change scale across the cross-national samples yielded the same structure with minor exceptions. In line with Oreg's (2003) findings, the later study of Oreg et al. (2008) found significant correlations among the subscales of resistance to change. Among these, the highest correlation was found between the emotional reaction and short-term focus subscales and the lowest involving the cognitive rigidity subscale. However, these nations covered in Oreg et al. (2008) study included mostly European countries and other Anglo-Saxon cultures with the exception of Turkey and Israel. The present study in the context of Saudi Arabia offers fresh insights into a different context and culture. The prior analyses led to identification of four factors on which such dispositional inclination depends: routine seeking; emotional reaction to imposed change; cognitive rigidity and short-term focus. The most influential barrier to change implementation in the context of Saudi Arabia is routine seeking followed by emotional reaction. Cognitive rigidity is the third significant factor and short-time focus is the final barrier to change implementation. The present study in the Saudi Arabian context has taken up the inter se pairwise comparison of the four factors of dispositional inclination to resistance to change. The highest correlation are between routine seeking and short-term focus with moderate correlation between short-term focus and cognitive rigidity. However, the study finds weaker correlation between the sets of routine seeking and cognitive rigidity, and between emotional reactions and routine seeking. The next sub-section takes up the implications of the findings of the present study for managers.

5.2 Managerial implications

Saudi change managers can increase their chances of success in an organisational change effort by adopting the model proposed by Kotter and Schlesinger (2008). This model highlighted six aspects or tactics to overcome the resistance including education and communication, participation and engagement, facilitation and support, negotiation and agreement, manipulation and cooptation, explicit and implicit coercion.

5.2.1 Education and communication

Managers can reduce the resistance through communicating change with employees to help them see the logic of the change. This tactic assumes that the source of resistance lies in misinformation or poor communication. If employees are made aware of facts and any misunderstandings cleared, resistance will subside. Communication may be through one-on-one discussions, memos, group presentation or report.

5.2.2 Participation and engagement

As employees will find it difficult to oppose a change when they participate in the process, employees' participation must be sought in the change process. However, they must be briefed about the need for change and provided with information. Employees' involvement will reduce resistance to change. The downside of this might be that it is time consuming.

5.2.3 Facilitation and support

When employees have high fear and anxiety, it is wise to apply counselling, offer new skills training or simply a short paid leave. Again, the drawback of this might be more time.

5.2.4 Negotiation and agreement

Another tactic in dealing with potential resistance is exchanging something of a value to lessen resistance. This tactic has particular importance if resistance is coming from powerful source in the organisation. It has some drawbacks like potentially high cost and the possibility of being subject to blackmail.

5.2.5 Manipulation and cooptation

Manipulation refers to covert influence attempts that include, first, twisting and distorting facts to make them appear more attractive. Second, withholding undesirable information and finally, creating and spreading false rumours. Cooptation aims to buy-off the leaders of a resistance group, by giving them a key role in the change process and to get them to endorse it. Both tactics are easy to apply and relatively inexpensive, however they might backfire if employees discover they are being misled, thus diminishing the credibility of the organisation.

5.2.6 *Explicit and implicit coercion*

Coercion refers to the application of direct threat or force on those resisting. This includes threats of transfer, loss of promotions, negative performance evaluation rating and/or other measures. This tactic represents a last resort that has a drawback of lack of buy-in by affected employees.

In general, we recommend the following steps to help managers develop a proactive and plan to overcome practically the potential barriers to change. First, develop a sense of urgency around the need for change. This can be ensured by identifying the potential threats and show their harmful consequences as well as examining opportunities that should be exploited. Second, build a coalition of change leaders by conveying the sense of urgency and convince the change leaders to get their commitment. True leaders in the organisation, having an emotional commitment are the key resource to successful change implementation. Third, collectively along with the committed change leaders, a clear vision must be shaped, comprehended, and communicated to different teams. The message to employees must be clear and consistent. A positive perspective of change will enhance the ability to make change work in managers' favour and expand employees' vision to see beyond the short-term focus. Fourth, it is essential to build a clear structure for change and continually check for barriers occurrence. Removing obstacles can empower the employees and managers needing to execute the vision and help the change move forward. Finally, short-term targets and milestones must be created. Achievements like meeting targets must be celebrated and employees must be appreciated for accomplishments.

6 **Conclusion and limitations**

We attempt to contribute to the service management literature. To our knowledge, this study is the first of its kind to examine change management in Saudi Arabia. This study helps in having a better understanding of change effects on employees in Saudi Arabia. This study contributes to the organisation development literature, as research from Saudi Arabia has been largely under-represented. Findings for this study further validate the RTC scale and give an endorsement for its further use in larger empirical studies across diverse cultures. The results of the study have important implications for managers implementing change process, thereby making significant contribution to body of knowledge. The main barriers to implementation of changes in Saudi organisations include the dimensions of routine seeking, short-term focus, routine seeking, cognitive rigidity and emotional reaction. Recognising the main barriers to change process is a significant step for managing the change process. Change managers in Saudi organisations must take a proactive approach in overcoming resistance to change.

Like with most empirical studies, this study too has some limitations. First, the mode of data collection and limited regional representation. Future studies must consider probability-sampling methods with samples drawn from across the nation for further generalisability of findings. Second, this study utilises cross-sectional data, which can

make inferences tenuous. Future studies should have a longitudinal design to examine the effects of the specified variables over a period. These future studies will make valuable additions to the body of knowledge.

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Appendix 1: Measurement items

Construct	Label	Description
<i>Short-term focus</i>		
	STF1	Often, I feel a bit uncomfortable even about changes that may potentially improve my life
	STF2	When someone pressures me to change something, I tend to resist it even if I think the change may ultimately benefit me, and
	STF3	I sometimes find myself avoiding changes that I know will be good for me.
	ST4	Changing plans seems like a real hassle to me
<i>Routine seeking</i>		
	RS1	I generally consider changes to be a negative thing
	RS2	I'll take a routine day over a day full of unexpected events anytime
	RS3	I like to do the same old things rather than try new and different ones
	RS4	Whenever my life forms a stable routine, I look for ways to change it
	RS5	I would rather be bored than surprised.

Emotional reaction

- If I were to be informed that there's going to be a significant change regarding the way things are done at the company, I
- ER1 would probably feel stressed
- ER2 When I am informed of a change of plans
- I tense up a bit; When things don't go according to plans, it
- ER3 stresses me out, and
- If one of my managers changed the annual evaluation criteria, it would probably make me feel uncomfortable even if I thought I would do just as well without having to do any extra
- ER4 work.
-

Cognitive rigidity

- CR1 I often change my mind
- CR2 I don't change my mind easily
- Once I've come to a conclusion, I'm not likely to change my
- CR3 mind, and
- CR4 My views are very consistent over time.
-