

Corporate Resistance to Change and Employee Performance: A Study of Gran-Crux Global Resources, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between corporate resistance to change (CRC) and employee performance in Gran-Crux Global Resources, Nigeria. Three (3) measures of employee performance were used, namely productivity, quality of service and commitment. Descriptive survey research design was used and questionnaire was the major instrument of data collection, which was administered on eighty-four (84) employees of Gran-Crux Global Resources on a face-to-face basis. Data obtained were tested for reliability via Cronbach Alpha and the relevant hypotheses of the study were tested using both descriptive (simple percentages, mean, standard deviation, and Karl Pearson correlation) and inferential (Lawley correlation) statistical techniques. Findings indicated that while there is a significant relationship between corporate resistance to change and employee performance, the link is negative. The negativity may be due to the fact that management has not been able to clearly communicate and reinforce employees to support the change process in the organization. Given the findings, it was recommended among others that management of organization should organize strategic training programmes for employees in order for them to be educated more on organizational change and current changes; they should be oriented in the training programme that no one remains competitive in a changing world and adequately motivated to support the change process. Besides, since employees resist change that can jeopardize their interests, management should facilitate the process of change by providing the required preparations and positively steer employees to accept changes via motivational incentives.

Keywords: Corporate resistance to change; Employee performance; Productivity; Quality of service; Employee commitment

JEL Classification: O15; M12; M10

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the nature of change within the organization has increased in degree and pace due to the advancements in technologies, transformations in the workplace (e.g. COVID19 pandemic, new legislations governing business operations, etc.), and prominently, as a result of the desire by organizations to gain competitive advantage and become innovative in the marketplace (Dagogo & Akpan, 2021). Management of organizations has thus strive towards identifying factors necessitating these changes, their characteristics and how these changes can be implemented in the most efficient manner in order to improve performance (Karaxha, 2019; and Coch & French, 2018). Furxhi (2021); Rehman, Mahmood, Ibtasam, Murtaza, Iqbal and Molnár (2021) observed that the factors necessitating organizational change consists of but not limited to costs reduction, redundancy, technological, cultural and performance improvement.

Organizational change is construed on power/control, dominance and supremacy, irrespective of the factual outcomes for the organization (Staw & Epstein, 2017). For instance, senior managers are aware that initiating a new change programme can, irrespective of the factual outcome; increase the organization's credibility, and performance (inside changes) and their market value and reputation (outside changes). Jick (2013); and Dagogo and Akpan (2021) see organizational change in its broadest sense as a planned or unplanned reactions to internal and external

forces, in particular technological, economical, social, competitiveness, efficient management, regulatory, political, amid others.

Predominantly, the forces initiating change in the organization often creates a situation which engenders high level of worry for the employee; thus, employees tend to show either positive attitudes (readiness to change) or negative attitudes (resistance to change) to the proposed change programme (Furxhi, 2021; Sabino, Neto, Morais & dos-Santos, 2021; Karaxha, 2019; Coch & French, 2018; Okenda, Thuo & Kithinji, 2017; Jones & Ven, 2016; Nebo, Nwankwo & Okonkwo, 2015; and Olajide, 2014); this study is rooted on the negative attitudes to change (corporate resistance to change - CRC). CRC in the view of Sabino *et al.*, (2021); and Dagogo and Akpan (2021), reflect negative attitude expressed by employees during times of organizational change.

Employees' role in organizational change is vital since they form major part of the change process and implementation. For instance, employees who are confronted with a change in the organization may face an inevitable choice of whether they should support or resist such change to still (or best) realize their personal goals and objectives. Prior studies advocate that most organizational change initiatives fail simply due to inability of managers to have a comprehensive understanding of the process of change management as well as the attitudes of employees to resist change. Thus, CRC is a fundamental

dynamic to be well thought-out in change process since resistance is a key for failure.

In the management literature, most studies on organizational change had focused on the role of employees in change management (see Dagogo & Akpan, 2021; Furxhi, 2021; Sabino, *et al*, 2019; Kotter & Cohen, 2012; Avey, Wernsing & Luthans, 2008; Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph & DePalma, 2006; and Kiefer, 2005). However, few studies have shown that CRC relates with employee performance (Nebo, *et al*, 2015; and Gondal & Shahbaz, 2012); the rationale being that for organizations to become visible, they must embrace innovative ways of doing things in order to stimulate inside and outside change (i.e. performance, market value, reputation, employee commitment, turnover, growth etc.).

Furthermore, while there are abundant empirical studies on the place of employees in change management, to the researcher's knowledge, there is limited body of literature about what is known on CRC and employee performance, particularly for Gran-Crux Global Resources (oil servicing firm), which is always open to change process due to the dynamic nature of the oil and gas industry. Therefore, the key interest of management will be to appropriately deal with resistance to change to achieve employee performance-related measures like productivity, service quality, turnover, and commitment of employees, among others.

In the light of the above, this study contributes to management literature by examining the relationship

between CRC and employee performance in Gran-Crux Global Resources. More so, this study contributes to literature by discussing the results from a theoretical and a practical standpoint in order to widen the knowledge base of organization's management and future researchers on CRC and employee performance.

Problem Statement

In reality, employees' resistance to change determines whether the organization will succeed or fail in its change processes (Karaxha, 2019). Studies on CRC (Furxhi, 2021; Sabino, *et al*, 2019; and Kotter, 2015) revealed that a proper communication from management tends to aid employees in discerning a need for change, thus facilitating the change process and lessening employees' resistance to change. From the employees' standpoint, the milieu in which change takes place in the organization has a propensity of deciding whether the employees will resist the change.

Karaxha (2019) contends that employees are most probable to show resistance to change by striving to stick to the idea that they do not need the change. The study by Ahmad and Cheng (2018) showed that the success of organizational change mainly depends on the attitudes and responses of the employees as well as management's capability to manage the change. In Nigeria, most organizations had implemented diverse change programmes which saw a number of the employees leave their organizations, resulting to poor survival rate of organizations, hence raising questions on how change is

managed within the organization in order to promote performance.

The inability of employees to survival, and employees turnover portend a fundamental lack of a robust framework on how to implement and manage organizational change (Dagogo & Akpan, 2021; and Bartunek, *et al*, 2006); this means that much is to be understood about CRC and employee performance. When change is improperly managed, there is the inclination that it may affect employee performance negatively which may result in poor quality of service, decreased productivity, employee turnover, total closures, loss of treasured staff, and lack of employee commitment towards realizing the organization's goals and objectives. It is on the heart of unassuming organizational changes in Nigeria that this study was done to uncover the unknown facts about how CRC is affecting employee performance.

Research Hypotheses

- H₁: There is no significant relationship between corporate resistance to change and the productivity of employees in Gran-Crux Global Resources
- H₂: Corporate resistance to change has no significant link with quality of employee service in Gran-Crux Global Resources
- H₃: There is no significant link between corporate resistance to change and employees' commitment in Gran-Crux Global Resources

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Change and Change Management

Broadly speaking, change involves the introduction of new procedures and ways of realizing the goals of the organization which have a direct impact on the various stakeholders within an organization. The initiation of change brings a lot of resistance with the employees; this is because any change in 'status quo' results in apprehension as no one knows what the outcome maybe. The key to successful change management thus lies in understanding the probable effects of a change initiative on these stakeholders (Diefenbach, 2016).

Change management is a set of processes used to ensure that significant changes are realized in systematic, orderly, and controlled manner (Mullins, 2009; and Diefenbach, 2016). Jeff (2017) sees change management as the process and techniques for managing the people side of business change to achieve the required business goals. Chapman (2015) sees change management as a thoughtful planning and sensitive implementation and above all consultation with, and involvement of the people affected by the change.

Prior studies had offered numerous means of evaluating change management. For instance, Armenakis and Bedeian (2009) identified four themes: content (focuses on substance of contemporary organizational changes); contextual (primarily deals with forces in the external and

internal environments of the organization); process (addresses actions undertaken during the enactment of an intended change; and criterion (focuses on outcomes commonly assessed in organizational change. Given the diverse change management themes, management must therefore prepare and anticipate the likely reactions of employees and determine how to deal with them.

Change can be studied in terms of its effects at the individual, group, and organizational, and society, national or international level (Mullins, 2009); however, in this study, it was evaluated on the basis of individual level (employee). More so, in evaluating change management, the study considered both internal (inside) and external (outside) change. This would provide an understanding of the approaches an organization should adopt when effecting both inside and outside change.

Corporate Resistance to Change (CRC)

Change is intended to be of benefit to the organization or employees; however, employees' behaviour is not always for the change. CRC is the employees' natural response to the change process. According to Ahmad and Cheng (2018); and Eseroghene and Balbuena (2016), when a change is initiated in the organization, it engenders a variety of reactions due to the fact that it may alter employees' behavioural patterns. Sabino, *et al*, (2021) see CRC as the reaction of employees against undesired outcomes of change. Similarly, Karaxha (2019)

sees CRC as an obstacle to any change initiatives.

CRC occurs because it endangers the *status quo* of the employees, or raises fear and concerns of the actual or unimagined outcomes like job security and inability to perform assigned (Coch & French, 2018). CRC is a normal event in the change process; however, it is not essentially targeted at the change itself, but towards the outcomes of the change. The process of transiting from known to unknown implies uncertainty, thus employee perceived organizational change as a threat and discomfort; hence they dislike or resist change.

A fascinating approach to the study of CRC is that offered by Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) – the individual's resistance to change. Kotter and Schlesinger's (2008) findings indicating that individuals resist change for many reasons, but the most widespread reasons are individual interests, a misinterpretation of the change and its consequences, belief that the change may not make sense and the low forbearance for change. Studies have identified individual factors such as fear, resentment, frustration, lack of motivation, insecurity, loss of freedom as factors affecting the individual's resistance to change (Coch & French, 2018; Hareli & Rafaeli 2008; Liu & Perrewe, 2005; and Gravenhorst, 2003). These studies indicated that individual's factors to CRC are related with organizational performance. Likewise, the studies of Wittig (2012); and Vakola, Tsaousis and Nikolaou (2004) concurred with the results of these sets of studies.

Employee Performance

A widespread axiom underpinning much of the employee performance researches are that increasing employee performance will result to improved activities and functions within the organization. Employee performance according to Gondal and Shahbaz (2012) entails recurring metrics and activities aimed at realizing organizational goals in the most effective and efficient manner. Okenda, *et al.*, (2017) noted that one of the fundamental aims of top management in any given organization is to maximize operational performance or efficiency by all means in order to sustain competitive advantage, growth in market share and enhanced performance.

In this study, the operational efficiency paradigm was used in measuring employee performance.

The operational efficiency paradigm captures employee performance to include employee productivity, turnover, commitment, service quality, effectiveness, timeliness, and flexibility; however, three measures were used in this study, namely employee productivity, commitment and quality of service.

Quality of service implies the processes of developing products/services in the most efficient way and thereby reducing costs throughout the organization; productivity refers to output of efficiency of products/services and commitment is the ability of the organization and/or the employees to remain steadfast in meeting the needs of consumers timely. These measures of employee performance (quality of service, productivity and commitment) according to Staw and Epstein (2017) create value for the organization.

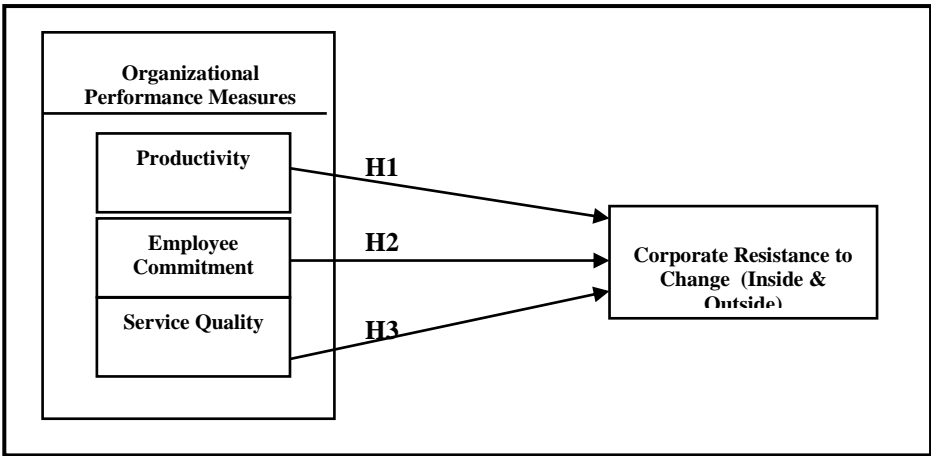


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Study
Source: Conceptualized by the Researcher (2021)

Theoretical Framework

The study is hinged on Kotter's (1996, 1998) models of organizational change management. Kotter developed eight phases of organizational change management. Studies (Kotter & Schlensinger, 2008; and Kotter & Cohen, 2012) that used this model indicated that change processes goes through a set of phases; however, four (4) phases are relevant in the context of this study. The first phase is how employees prefer *status quo*. In the view of Kotter(1996, 1998), because change brings uncertainty, uncertainty makes employees uncomfortable (one of the reasons employees resists change).

Phase two(2) is characterized by creating counteract resistance; one way of creating a counteract resistance is to form a powerful coalition. In phase three(3), ones employees are able to form a powerful coalition they strive to revert to the most comfortable *status quo*, by going back to the former ways of doing things. The fact is employees prefer the *status quo* and are nervous about new methods and experiences. Thus, if management must get them to flow with the change, the employees must be empowered by way of teaching them how they can cope with the change; basically, it is all about positive reinforcement towards supporting the new change process.

Kotter (1996, 1998) believed that when the employees perceive positive reinforcements on the part of management, they tend to progressively support the change process, leading to a phase (phase

four) where resistance to change is likely to diminish. Quite a number of studies (see Furxhi, 2021; Nebo, *et al*, 2015; and Olajide, 2014) have used Kotter's model in assessing the relationship between CRC and organizational performance. Consequent upon this, to make the change more enduring or permanent and to improve the performance of the organization, management must explicitly communicate the change process to the employees.

Empirical Studies

This section presents some recent empirical studies on corporate resistance to change. Furxhi (2021) assessed the relationship between employee's resistance and organizational change factors. The study indicated that internal (organizational structure and process) and external (economic, technology, social changes and consumers) dynamics affecting organizational change. More so, the reasons why employees resist change are connected with fear of failure, mistrust and lack of confidence, poor communication, emotional response and time.

Dagogo and Akpan (2021) examined the dynamics that create employee resistance to change and the diverse organizational strategies for managing employee resistance to change. The study showed that a significant challenge for management is that most organizations are afraid of employee resistance to change and do not use resistance as an avenue to engage and learn. Similarly, Rehman, *et al*,

(2021) investigated the use of organizational justice in managing resistance to change via the intervening role of perceived organizational support, readiness for change, and leader-member exchange. The study finds evidence that distributive, procedural, and interactional justices play vital roles in reducing resistance to change.

Ahmad and Cheng (2018) assessed the role of change content, context, process and leadership in employees' commitment to change and found that change content, context, process and the style of leadership significantly affects the commitment of employees to corporate change. Similarly, Okenda, *et al* (2017) study on the effects of corporate change on organizational performance found that corporate change significantly and positively affects the performance of the organization.

Eseroghene and Balbuena(2016) evaluated the obstacles, corporate resistance and their effects on the organization and found that employees' resistance to change diverse depending on their individual personality. Factors identified as obstacles to corporate resistance to change among others are individuals' personality, employee gender. More so, the study revealed that corporate resistance to change affects the organization significantly. Nebo, *et al* (2015) evaluated the role of change communication effectiveness on performance organization and finds that in order to promote organizational performance in era of change, management needs to effective communicate the change process.

Olajide (2014) evaluated the effects of change management on organizational performance and found that change management has a significant effect on organizational performance, particularly in customers' taste, and patronage. Again, Wittig (2012) study on employees' reactions to organizational change showed that employees negatively react to organizational change due to fear of job loss, control, loss of freedom, among others. In the same vein, Avey, *et al*, (2008) study showed that positive employees enhance positive organizational change.

The gap noticeable in the literature is that while there are abundant of studies on CRC, there is little on what is known about the relationship between CRC and employee performance, particularly in Nigeria. In view of the review, a conceptual model (fig. 1) was established in assessing the link between CRC (inside & outside change) and employee performance. Within this framework, the independent variable is CRC while the dependent variable is employees' performance measures (productivity, commitment and quality of service).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts descriptive survey research design. According to Nachmias and Nachmias (2009), descriptive survey research design is concerned with recording, describing, analyzing and interpreting issues relating to perceptions of a given phenomenon. Thus, this design allows the researcher to describe the relationship between corporate resistance to change and employees' performance. In addition, the study

described common characteristics among the sample population of the study.

The study population was made up of the entire workforce of Gran-Crux Global Resources, Nigeria. As at 31st December 2021, the entire workforce in Gran-Crux Global Resources is about eighty-four (84). Given the small nature of the study population, the entire workforce was used; hence there was no need for sampling. The major instrument of data collection was the questionnaire. The instrument was chosen because it is a firsthand source of information and gives the researcher the opportunity of accessing a wide-range of participants with diverse views on the research theme. The questionnaire contained questions on corporate resistance to change and employees' performance dimensions (productivity, commitment and service quality). Variables of corporate resistance to change and employee performance are similar to those used in the studies of Furxhi (2021); Sabino, *et al*, (2021); Karaxha (2019); and Coch and French (2018).

The questionnaire was divided into two (2) sections; section A was based on the demographic information of respondents while section B addressed the research theme. The questionnaire was designed on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (A), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) and administered on a face-to-face basis on the respondents by the researcher to ensure all the questionnaire were fully completed and retrieved. To ensure that the research instrument measures exactly what it is intended to measure, the instrument was validated by the research supervisor.

The research supervisor approved the questionnaire after some modification. Furthermore, the Cronbach Alpha reliability test was carried out to determine the internal consistency of the research instrument. The instrument yielded a Cronbach Alpha above the recommended threshold of 0.5 in all sections; this being within the range recommended by Cronbach as a reliable instrument. The Cronbach Alpha reliability results for each of the sections of the instrument are presented below:

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha Reliability Results

Questions	Cronbach Alpha Index
Corporate resistance to change (CRC)	0.9012
Employee Productivity	0.8298
Employee Service Quality	0.7042
Employee Commitment	0.8301

Source: Researcher's Computation (2021) via STATA 13.0

The study employed both descriptive (mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values and Karl Pearson correlation) and inferential

(Lawley's correlation) statistical tools. The benchmark for the research question was based on outcome of the mean values; a mean

below 2.00 invalidates the research questions of the study.

Besides, the choice of Lawley's correlation statistical technique was to assess the relationship between corporate resistance to change and employee performance. The decision

rule of Lawley's statistics is that if $\chi^2 > \text{prob.}$, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted vice-versa. The Microsoft Excel software was used in performing data entry while STATA 13.0 statistical software was employed in the analysis of data.

RESULTS

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviation and Karl Pearson Correlation Results

Variables	Mea n	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Corporate Resistance to Change(IV)	2.53	0.68	1			
2. Employee Service Quality (DV)	2.41	0.61	-0.14	1		
3. Employee Commitment (DV)	2.73	0.64	-0.15	0.4	1	
4. Employee Productivity (DV)	2.53	0.72	-0.11	0.1	0.05	0.5
				1		3

Source: Researcher's Computation (2021) via STATA 13.0

The mean and standard deviation values (Table 2) revealed that the respondents' perception on corporate resistance to change and employee performance (service quality, commitment and productivity) are similar; highest mean (employee commitment =2.73) and minimum (employee service quality = 2.41) are below the standard deviation values, however, beat the mean benchmark of 2.00.

The Karl Pearson correlation result showed that the relationship between corporate resistance to change and employee performance (service quality: $r = -0.14$; commitment: $r = -0.15$; productivity: $r = -0.11$) were negative. Impliedly, there is a negative link between corporate resistance to change and employee performance

Table 3: Lawley Statistics for Corporate Resistance to Change & Employee Productivity

Test that correlation matrix is compound symmetric (all correlations equal)	
Lawley $\chi^2(44)$	= 132.17
Prob. > χ^2	= 0.0000

Source: Researcher's Computation (2021) via STATA 13.0

Table 3 showed Lawley statistics for hypothesis I, which is between corporate resistance to change and employee productivity. Lawley's statistics($\chi^2=132.87$ >

Prob.=0.0000), hence, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was accepted, showing that there is significant relationship between corporate

resistance to change and employee productivity.

Table 4: Lawley Statistics for Corporate Resistance to Change & Employee Service Quality

Test that correlation matrix is compound symmetric (all correlations equal)	
Lawley chi2(44)	= 142.19
Prob. > chi2	= 0.0000

Source: Researcher’s Computation (2021) via STATA 13.0

Table 4 showed Lawley statistics for hypothesis II, which is between corporate resistance to change and employee service quality. Lawley statistic(chi2=142.19 > Prob.=0.0000), thus, the null hypothesis was rejected while alternate hypothesis was accepted, suggesting that there is significant relationship between corporate resistance to change and employee service quality.

Table 5: Lawley Statistics for Corporate Resistance to Change & Employee Commitment

Test that correlation matrix is compound symmetric (all correlations equal)	
Lawley chi2(44)	= 146.22
Prob. > chi2	= 0.0000

Source: Researcher’s Computation (2021) via STATA 13.0

Table 5 showed Lawley statistics for hypothesis III, which is between corporate resistance to change and employee commitment. Lawley statistics (chi2=146.22 > Prob.=0.0000), thus, the null hypothesis was rejected while alternate hypothesis was accepted, implying a significant link between corporate resistance to change and employees’ commitment.

DISCUSSION

Change is an inevitable occurrence for organizations that desire to grow, realize their mission, vision and goals. Organizational change(s) arises due to the dynamic nature of the business environment predominantly in areas of advancements in technologies, social and cultural changes, economic condition, organizational structure and process. Impliedly, to achieve

improved performance and sustainable competitive advantage, organizations must monitor and respond quickly and efficiently to employee resistance to change.

In this study, it emphasis was based on how CRC relates with organizational performance; the study finds evidence that CRC significantly and negatively affect organizational performance, especially those of Gran-Crux Global Resources, Nigeria. The study findings in part corroborates with the views of Furxhi (2021); Dagogo and Akpan (2021); Rehman, *et al*, (2021); Nebo, *et al* (2015); Olajide (2014) that CRC has the propensity to affect organizational performance and strategies.

The negative relationship between CRC and organizational performance

may be connected with the views shared by the Kotter's model that in order to make change more enduring and to improve organizational performance, management must persistently reinforce and clearly communicate the change process to the employees. We may adduce the negativity to the fact that management have not been able to clearly communicate and reinforce employees to support the change process; this results thus call for some policy recommendations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the most important issues in change management is involving workforce in the process of change, since change cannot be realized without the support of employees. Notably, not every change process is a success, as a large number of organizations fail in this process. In this study, the relationship between corporate resistance to change and the performance of employee was assessed in Gran-Crux Global Resources.

On the basis of the analysis, it was found that corporate resistance to change significantly and negatively affects organizational employee (productivity, quality of service, commitment). The implication is that though corporate resistance to change significantly relates with employees' performance, the link is negative. Given the findings, the following useful recommendations were made:

1. Management should organize strategic training programmes for staff in order for them to be educated more on

organizational change and current changes; they should be oriented in the training programme that no one remains competitive in a changing world and adequately motivated to support the change process.

2. To have proper performance, employees must have a positive attitude towards change and should support it, since resistance to change can affect employees' motivation and efforts, which then reduces performance.
3. Employees resist change that can jeopardize their interest, hence management should facilitate the process of changes by providing the required preparations and positively steer employees to accept changes via motivational incentives.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This study established empirically that while employees resist corporate change, the effect is negatively felt on employees' performance (productivity, service quality and commitment). Again, this study contributes to knowledge by enriching and filling the gap in the literature on what is known about corporate resistance to change and employees' performance in Nigeria.

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