

EAWOP Turin 2019
IFPOC symposium proposal

IFPOC¹ symposium: Enabling conditions and mechanisms for positive change

Chair: Karen van Dam & Joris van Ruysseveldt, Open University of the Netherlands

Discussant: Karina Nielsen, School of Management, Sheffield University

State of the art

Increased competition, changing markets and innovation are some of the forces requiring organisations to continuously change and develop. As a result, employees experience increased pressures to be adaptable and tolerant of uncertainty, and deal with new or changing work situations. In the past two decades, change researchers have started to investigate employees' responses to change. Recognizing the crucial role of these responses for successful change implementation, they focused on employees' resistance to change and the change process characteristics that might fuel these responses. Less attention has been given to positive outcomes of change and the conditions and mechanism that foster these positive outcomes.

New perspective / contributions

Our symposium takes a new and positive perspective toward change by investigating the conditions and mechanisms that may support positive change. The studies emphasize the role of organizational support, learning demands, job resources, affective commitment, and an intervention. As the world of work is constantly changing and employees need to sustain their careers for a longer period of time, it is of crucial importance to better understand the processes that enhance positive change outcomes, and contribute to employee well-being, learning, and performance.

Research / practical implications

This symposium aims to increase our understanding of the conditions and mechanisms involved in positive change processes. Moreover, the findings have practical implications for successful change implementation. Discussant, Karina Nielsen, will reflect on the studies and encourage discussion with the audience.

* International Forum on the Psychology of Organizational Change, has organized two EWAOP small group meetings and several symposia.

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¹ International Forum for Psychology of Organizational Change is an outcome of EAWOP sponsored small group meetings and co-operations

Need-Satisfaction is the Key: How Organizational Support Influences Positive Change Attitude during Information Technology Implementation

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Purpose

A lack of employee readiness for change is often viewed as the reason why technology implementation projects fail. Organizational support strategies (e.g. top management support, training, or participation) have been identified as ways to support employees during the implementation phase with the goal of rising acceptance levels. Although there is already literature on organizational support strategies, there is a lack of research into the mechanisms by which these strategies affect employees' attitude to the change process and system.

Method/Design

Via online survey 111 new system users whose workplaces have recently implemented new information technology were questioned about their experiences concerning the design of the implementation process, accessibility of organizational support (top management support, training, participation), self-determination needs fulfillment during the change process, and attitude toward the change and system.

Results

Need for autonomy proved to be the strongest mediator in mediation and structural equation analysis between organizational support strategies and attitude to change and system.

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Limitations

The evaluation of further possible mediators is needed to fully understand how information technology implementation projects should be designed to create a smooth transition to the new system.

Implications & Originality/value

For practitioners, the results deliver important insights into the design of a implementation project as the need for autonomy can be addressed in a multitude of organizational actions, e.g. free exploration time with the system, employee participation in the design of the system's interface or implementation timeline.

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Workplace Learning in Times of Organizational Change: The Mediating Role of Learning Demands

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Purpose

Organizational changes advance workplace learning by increasing learning demands, i.e. pressures in the work environment that create the need to develop new work-related competences (NWC). Our study's objective is, first, to establish which type of organizational change favors NWC development and whether this relationship is mediated by learning demands; and, second, to investigate the moderating role of learning climate and formal training arrangements.

Method

Dutch employees (N = 1711) participated in an online survey. NWC development was measured six months after the occurrence of change events. SEM and moderated hierarchical regression analyses were used.

Results

Workplace learning is most strongly related to 'qualitative' types of organizational change (e.g., process innovation), and unrelated to 'quantitative' types of change (e.g., restructuring). Learning demands partially mediated this relationship. While a strong learning climate and the presence of formal training arrangements advanced NWC development, only formal training participation moderated the relationship between learning demands and NWC development.

Limitations

Study variables were measured using self-reports.

Research/Practical Implications

Qualitative organizational change fosters workplace learning by creating pressures that encourages workers to continuously develop and improve their knowledge and skills in order to adapt to new work requirements, even in the absence of strong learning supportive arrangements.

Originality/Value

This study deepens our insight into why and how specific organizational change characteristics challenge workers to obtain new work related knowledge and skills. This study expands existing models and frameworks by integrating learning demands as an important driver of workplace learning processes in times of change.

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The Role of Job Demands and Resources for Employees' Health in the Context of Organizational Change.

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Purpose

Based on the Healthy Organizational Change Model (HOC, Michel & González-Morales, 2013) this study aims to evaluate how job demands, i.e. organizational restructuring and work intensity, and job resources, i.e. team climate, may affect employees' health. In addition, the moderating role of self-efficacy as a personal resource will be examined.

Design and Methodology

To test our hypothesis, we use data from approximately 17.000 participants from the Working Time Surveys 2015 (time 1) and 2017 (time 2) of the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Germany. Data were collected via computer assisted telephone interviews. The sample consists of employees across all branches and manifold occupations.

Results

We conducted structural equation modelling with Mplus (Maximum likelihood estimation). In line with our hypotheses we find a significant negative relation between organizational restructuring at time 1 and team climate at Time 1 which in turn negatively influences health problems at Time 2. In addition, we find a significant positive relation between organizational restructuring at time 1 and work intensity at Time 1 which in turn positively influences health problems at Time 2. Moreover, the moderating role of self-efficacy will be discussed.

Limitations

Although, the sample is representative for the German working population, it might not be representative for other countries.

Research/Practical Implications

To minimize the detrimental effects of change on health organizations and leaders should give their employees guidance during such a demanding time by reducing workload and promoting team climate.

Originality / Value

This longitudinal study evaluates the role of job demands and resources in the context of organizational with as large sample that is representative for the German working population.

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Entrepreneurial Exit as Change: The Psychological Foundations of Exit Processes

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Purpose

This study investigates the psychological mechanisms of entrepreneurial exit as an organizational change process, more specifically a work-role change. We investigate the relations among dispositional resistance to change, construal level of exit, and exit capability, hypothesizing that a high level of dispositional resistance will be associated with exit capability – both directly and indirectly as mediated through the construal level of exit.

Design/Methodology/Approach/Intervention

With the intention of increasing owner-managers' perceived exit capabilities, we develop a tool targeting our mediator, the owner-managers' construal levels of exit. The assumption is that lower construal levels of exit represent more actionable change. Our tool operates via two mechanisms: (1) to use low level construals as stepping stones for action related to higher level construals, and (2) to lower construal levels for certain aspects of exit, thereby making them more actionable.

Results

During the fall of 2018, the tool will be tested through process and effect evaluation.

Limitations

The self-reported outcome measures represent a potential common source bias. We address this limitation by collecting data from secondary sources.

Research/Practical Implications

Exit is an important and costly change process for all types of entrepreneurs. Little is, however, known about the psychological mechanisms characterizing this particular type of change. Our study will provide both a practical tool and theoretical advances for managing and understanding exit as change.

Originality/Value

The entrepreneurial literature has largely overlooked the psychological mechanisms associated with exit processes. Linking the literature on organizational change with construal level theory offers new theoretical and practical perspectives.

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The Mediating Role of Readiness to Change in the Affective Commitment – Effort Intention Relationship: A Three Countries Study.

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Purpose

This study hypothesizes a positive relation between affective commitment and employees' effort intention, considered as a job performance's precursor. It also takes into account readiness to change as a stable attribute of employees. The study investigates: 1) the level of readiness to change of employees working in a multinational company, in three plants located in Italy, Slovakia and Mexico; and 2) if readiness to change mediates the relationship between affective commitment and effort intention. The plants are in countries that differ for legislation, social and economic conditions and we expect differences also in level of the examined variables.

Method

A routinely organizational climate survey was conducted among all the employees of the company, following multiple minor organizational changes. Survey average return rate was 51%, for a total amount of 567 respondents (Italy = 206; Mexico = 252; Slovakia = 109).

We used the 12 items of the Italian version of the Affective Commitment (AC) scale (Meyer & Allen, 1991); the nine items of the Readiness to Change (RtC) dimension of the OCQ (Bouckennooghe et al., 2009) and the three items of Effort Intention (EI) (WOSY, 1992).

Results

AC, RtC and EI were higher in Mexico and lowest in Slovakia, with Italian respondents in the middle. Emotional readiness to change has a stronger partial mediator effect than Intentional and Cognitive RtC, at whole sample and at country level.

Limitations

Cross-sectional study; different response-rates in the three countries.

Originality

Considers EI as a precursor of job performance, and cross-country comparison.

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