

EAWOP 2017 ABSTRACT BOOK

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Organizational Change and Development

Organizational change processes

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Thoughts and feelings about change: The role of emotion regulation, change appraisal and affect

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Main Abstract Content: Purpose

This study investigated the antecedents and consequences of employees' appraisal of organizational change. Based on appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1982), we expected that communication and self-efficacy would help employees to positively reappraise the change situation, which would result in more challenge appraisal and less threat appraisal. In turn, change appraisal would impact employees' affective responses, rumination and resistance to the change.

Design

A two-wave survey with a one-month interval was conducted with employees who were involved in a large-scale organizational change (T1: N=328; T2: N=108).

Results

The findings supported the predictions to a large degree. Communication and self-efficacy predicted reappraisal which in turn predicted both challenge and threat appraisal, and consequently rumination and employee affect. Employees' resistance to the change was predicted by negative affect (and communication) but not by positive affect.

Limitations

Self-reports might be accompanied by more objective measures, such as peers' evaluations of resistance and communication.

Research/practical implications

The findings clearly show that thoughts and feelings about the change play an important yet complex role in employees' responses to change. Emotion regulation and change appraisal should be taken into account when addressing employee responses to large scale changes. Organizations can affect these responses through change communication and by increasing employees' confidence in their ability to deal with the change.

Originality/value

Focusing on employees' emotions and emotion regulation during change advances our understanding of the complex processes that occur during change.

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