

**BABEȘ BOLYAI UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS**  
**ADMINISTRATION**

**RESISTANCE TO CHANGE IN PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION ORGANIZATIONS**

**SUMMARY**

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## **Key concepts**

Organization, change, organizational change, organization development, resistance to change, goal, organizational structure, work, motivation, organizational communication, organization culture, leadership, conflict and conflict management.

## **Introduction**

The main purpose of this thesis is to study resistance to change within Romanina public institutions. In other words, our aim is to test a model that will allow us to evaluate/measure the level and type of resistance to change of any organization according to several organizational characteristics, model that will provide us with the information needed for the implementation of an organizational change or for designing an OD plan. The level of change clearly influences the way in which you plan for change – the resources involved, the preparation phases, the timeline, the expectations – all are affected by the level of resistance to change.

Our specific objectives refers to the interaction between resistance to change and nine organizational characteristics. These characteristics were selected based on the contemporary prevalent theories that postulates a clear connection between these organizational attributes and the phenomenon of resistance to change. Resistance to change can be augmented or reduced, its causes may vary, its manifestations may be altered by these organizational characteristics. In other words, our research aims at identifying the statistical relations (if any) between resistance to change and our theoretical model.

Chapter 1 refers to organizations – definitions, characteristics, evolution – in an attempt to create the general framework for our thesis. The definitions included in this chapter go from the classical weberian perspective to the present day systemic paradigm that considers organizations to be open systems, which engage in various exchanges with its environment and it possesses the capacity to adapt to and evolve with it. Under the umbrella of this paradigm we also discuss the organizational life cycle theory that underlines the organization's capacities to develop. The chapter also includes a comparative analysis of private and public organizations.

Chapter 2 refers to issues concerning organizational change and development. First we define organizational change and then we present the main theoretical constructs that focus on

this phenomenon. The next step presents the various types of organizational change (planned/unplanned, systemic/intra-systemic, long term/short term, incremental/revolutionary). The chapter ends with a discussion concerning the change's direction and goals or, in other words, how can we measure the success level of any organizational change.

The next analyzed topic is organizational development and its relation with organizational change. First the classic and modern definitions are analyzed. Then, the main theoretical models of organization development are presented. Within this framework we analyze the relation between organization change and organization development. Summarizing, OD is a strategic approach that places a lot of emphasis on progress, on the organization's continual improvement. It is also a pragmatic approach that strives to continually enhance the organization's performance level.

The majority of the literature talks about OD, organizational change and resistance to change (chapter 3) together and, usually, the focus is on the first two items. Our perspective reverses this tendency. The main question that originated our research is: how can one study organizational change? Traditionally, studies in this field were conducted either following a longitudinal approach (one analyzes the organization before and after the change) or a managerial one (focus on the implementation phase). This paper employs a third perspective – we analyze the outcome of the change process in a transversal approach. In other words, we study resistance to change (as an unavoidable consequence and companion of any change) through the prism of a nine-level theoretical model. These levels are organizational characteristics that will be discussed later on. As basis for this approach are the theoretical models of resistance to change presented at the beginning of chapter 3.

The latter part of this chapter consists of a detailed presentation of our theoretical model. First, the reason for choosing exactly these dimensions and not others are presented. A few words of clarification are needed here: the nine organizational characteristics are summarily discussed, our focus being on their relationship with the phenomenon of resistance to change.

The nine dimensions of our theoretical model are: 1. The organization's goal – how well do the employees know it, if it is well-defined and clear, if it is attainable; 2. The work process (type of activity, routine or not, specifics); 3. Organizational structure (we employ Robbins's model with its three concepts – complexity, formalization, centralization); 4. Organizational culture (Hofstede's model with its 5 dimensions: individualism vs.

collectivism, femininity vs. masculinity, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, long term vs. short term orientation); Leadership (Blake-Mouton's model); Conflicts and conflict management (focus on the most frequent types of conflicts and the way in which they are resolved); 7. The organization's size (exogenous factor that affects the organizations functioning, its internal processes, its prevalent mentality); Motivation (its level and type, what motivational policies are employed by the organization) and 9. Organizational communication (its speed, quality and effectiveness).

The results of our research are discussed in chapter 4, as is the methodology we used for data gathering. First we present the general and specific goals of our study, then the sample and the organizations we analyzed and then our data-gathering instrument – the questionnaire. The statistical analysis that follows included cross-tabulations, correlations, regression and cluster analysis. The results are then discussed within the theoretical framework built by the previous chapters, focusing on the similarities and divergences with/from the literature.

The last chapter of this thesis includes the conclusions of our research. Here our main goal was to present our findings and to discuss them in comparison with other similar studies of resistance to change.

## **The theoretical model**

Our model intends to appraise the phenomenon of organizational resistance to change by analyzing its relation with certain organizational characteristics. Andrew Leigh considers there are 13 causes that can generate resistance to change. Carefully analyzing them one can observe that they can be grouped in two main categories: objective/rational causes and subjective/non-rational causes. Therefore, we considered that resistance to change (ORC – overall resistance to change) is comprised of two processes: SRS (subjective resistance to change) and RRC (rational resistance to change). In a previous research it was proved that Leigh's 13 factors are not clear for the respondents and there was an overlap among several of them so, in order to reduce the confusion, we employed only 10 questions (5 per each type of resistance).

A few words about our model. All its factors are endogenous, within the organizational field. But it is obvious that resistance to change is influenced by other factors too, factors outside the organization. One of the problems we encountered was how to identify and isolate these exogenous factors. What we did was to include in the model some cultural, social and demographic characteristics and to choose our public institutions from three counties (Cluj, Satu-Mare, Covasna) that have different ethnic and cultural traits, the assumption being that there will be significant differences in accordance to this criteria.

Another factor we studied in an indirect manner is the organization's size.

Shortly, this is our theoretical model:

$$\text{ORC} = f(\text{G, W, OS, OC, L, C, Sz., M, Com., Ex.})$$

(where

ORC – overall resistance to change (comprised of Subjective and Rational resistance to change)

G – Goal

W – work

OS – organizational structure (with its components formalization, complexity and centralization)

OC – Organizational culture (with its 5 components)

L – leadership

C – conflicts (mediu conflictual)

Sz. – size

M – Motivation

Com. – communication

Ex – exogenous factors – social, economic and demographic variables )

## **General objectives and hypothesis**

General objective of our research: measuring the level and establishing the type of resistance to change an organization exhibits through the nine organizational characteristics that comprise our theoretical model.

Specific objectives:

1. Measuring the level of resistance to change in various public institutions (town-halls and county councils)
2. Measuring the nine organizational characteristics in the above-mentioned public institutions
3. Testing the theoretical model – identifying the statistically significant relation (if any) between it and ORC

### **Hypothesis**

Hypothesis 1. ORC is negatively correlated with organizational goals

Hypothesis 2. ORC is positively correlated with work

Hypothesis 3. ORC is positively correlated with an organizational structure that has a high degree of complexity, formalization and centralization

Hypothesis 4. ORC is positively correlated with an organizational culture that is collectivistic, masculine, has a high power distance and uncertainty avoidance index and has a long term orientation.

Hypothesis 5. ORC is positively correlated with the 9,1 leadership style

Hypothesis 6. ORC is positively correlated with an highly conflictual organizational internal environment and authoritarian conflict management techniques

Hypothesis 7. ORC does not have any connection with organization's size

Hypothesis 8. ORC is negatively correlated with motivation

Hypothesis 9. ORC is negatively correlated with communication

### **Methodology**

The method we employed was the survey, with a questionnaire as its instrument.

Sample: six public institutions (3 city-halls and 3 county councils) from 3 counties (Cluj, Satu-Mare, Covasna). 100 questionnaires were distributed to each institution and we received 294 back. Timeline: 2012-2013

## CONCLUSIONS AND PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

First, based on the data we analyzed, there are very few (and small) differences between the 6 organizations we studied. This means that the region's ethic, cultural and social composition does not affect the functioning of these public institutions – thus, the exogenous factors from our model seem to have little effect upon ORC.

The level of ORC for all our organizations is around the mathematical mean which tells us that organization size is not having an effect on ORC, either.

Another important conclusion: we registered quite homogenous results for all our organizational characteristics (including ORC). The data suggests very little difference between the public institutions we studied, the similarities being greater than the differences which can suggest that we are faced with a common organizational behavior, specific to the sector (public administration). In this context the particular organizational characteristics do not count for much.

Regarding our postulated influence of the 9 organizational dimensions on the resistance to change we found out that the factors that exerts the most influence are goals, organizational culture, organizational structure, communication and leadership. The factors with the least influence – the exogenous factors and the organization's size.

Hypothesis:

1. Hypothesis 1 is confirmed.
2. Hypothesis 2 is not confirmed (there is no statistically significant correlation between ORC and work)
3. Hypothesis 3 is confirmed
4. Hypothesis 4 is confirmed but only partially. There is a correlation between ORC and organizational culture but the data support the direction of this correlation only for uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation and individualism/collectivism.
5. Hypothesis 5 is confirmed.
6. Hypothesis 6 is not confirmed

7. Hypothesis 7 is confirmed
8. Hypothesis 8 is not confirmed
9. Hypothesis 9 is confirmed.

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