

A Study on the Relationship between Employee Career Commitment and Employee Readiness for Organizational Change (Special reference to the Government schools in Trincomalee District)

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Abstract

Managing change effectively is a main challenge in the change management domain because of massive human involvement. Thus, leaders and change agents are eager to know how to encourage and effectively prepare employees for change situation. The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between employee career commitment and employee readiness for organizational change. The objectives were to investigate employee career commitment to the organization and identify the impact of employee commitment on readiness for organizational change in Government schools in Trincomalee District where various change reforms have been introduced recently. This empirical study proceeded by a systematic review of literature that led to development of a conceptual model. The data was collected from a sample of 100 graduate teachers from Government School in Trincomalee district by using a survey questionnaire. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results showed that independent variable (Career Commitment) was positively and significantly correlated to the dependent variable (readiness for

organizational change). This study provide empirical evidence for employee readiness predictor variables for organizational change. This study may contribute to the literature on change management, particularly for Sri Lanka, and may assist the management, change agents and practitioners of human resources management and development, and organizational behaviour in assessing, designing and evaluating new or existing programmes for organizational change.

Keywords: Organizational Change, Employee Readiness, Career Commitment.

1. Introduction

The existence of organizations is vital for the existence of living being in the globe. Every organization must continuously interact with other organizations and individuals – the consumers, suppliers, regulatory bodies, government and many more. Every organization has goals and objectives related to each other in the environment. The present environment is dynamic and will continue to be dynamic much more day by day.

Organizations operate in complex and changing environment. The environment is increasingly critical and dynamic in nature. Because of increasingly critical and dynamic environment, organizations are continuously confronted with the need to implement changes in strategy, structure, process, policies, operations, technology, and culture. They grow in productivity, and profitability, which pose greater challenges to them and require changes in the way they operate (Carnall 2007). The concept of globalization is everywhere. In addition, in today's economy, it is very difficult to have effective and efficient organization. The concept of globalization and economic instability has increased both the frequency and the magnitude of organizational change worldwide.

One of the concepts most frequently researched, discussed and written about in recent years has been change in organizations and ways of its management. It is no surprise, because change is inevitable for organizations that wish to stay competitive and be profitable.

Accordingly, researchers and practitioners need to know as much as possible about the factors that influence employee readiness as predictive variables, so that management can endeavour to understand an individual's attitudes, beliefs and behaviours towards the intended organizational change.

1.1. Background and scope

The General education of Sri Lanka is dominated by the public sector, consisting of four major levels; the earliest stage for the children of ages between 3-5 years which is almost handled by the private sector. The general education is the second stage which consisting of primary grades from grade 1 to grade 5. The junior secondary level consisting of grades 6 to grade 9 and the senior secondary grades include grades 10 -13. The third stage is the Vocational and Technical education is offered and the fourth stage is the tertiary education and training is offered.

In Sri Lanka, the state spends considerable amount of money to provide free education to all her citizens more than 50 years. During the early part of independence, the country produced many scholars, scientists, administrators and national figures of great ability and high distinction. The situation has changed in recent decades, and indicated a sharp decline in the standard and quality of education at all levels. The education system does not produce pupils with the knowledge, understanding, and the skills and attitudes appropriate for successful living. Total personality development such as creativity, initiative, discipline, team spirit, respect and tolerance for other people and other cultures is not achieved. The curriculum development impacts teachers, students, society as well as the government. The challenges for

government is that, when new curriculum is implemented, there would be a increased cost to government in the case of printing new books, preparing the new syllabus, train the teachers as well as other relevant people to implement the new curriculum. Government schools in the Trincomalee district were selected for this study.

1.2. Problem Justification

A number of scholars have identified organizational commitment as an essential pre-requisite to the successful implementation of organizational change (Bellou 2007). Change managers tend to rely on the career commitment of their employees when implementing organizational change (Bennet & Durkin 2000), but levels of career commitment, may, in fact, decrease in response to the change initiatives (Lau, Tse & Zhou 2002). A decrease in levels of career commitment during processes of change could lead to increased levels of absenteeism and higher turnover rates (Cotton & Tuttle 1986), further hampering the success of the change initiative. A number of researchers Hanpachern *et al.* (1998); Eby *et al.* (2000); Madsen *et al.* (2005); Rafferty and Simons (2006); and Elias (2009), have investigated the relative influence of employee readiness predictors to develop attitudes, beliefs and behaviors to organizational change. Although it is true that researchers have worked on micro level issues in change management, there is still a need to learn more.

This study examines employee readiness determinants for organizational change to support and strengthen the existing literature. Most studies on employee readiness for organizational change have focused individual, psychological, workplace, environmental, cultural and social factors. An important aspect of this is that career commitment and organizational change became antecedents of each other thus further research in the area is warranted (Madsen *et al.*, 2005).The research has largely neglected the link between employee career commitment and employee readiness for organizational change. This study seeks to fill this void and to examine the employee commitment to the organization and career predictor for change readiness.

Most research work has been done in developed or western cultural work settings. Less research work has been found so far in developing countries like Sri Lanka. This requires more attention by researchers and practitioners to establish employee readiness predictors in different work settings environments and cultures. In Sri Lanka, change methods adopted by western cultures should be used as a body of knowledge in the domestic situation (Fatima, 2002). In this study the variables have been chosen to justify the study in an underprivileged and developing economy where employee

expects only the satisfaction of their basic needs from their organizations.

According to Alvi and Ahmed (1987), Andrew and Kishokumar (2015), employee career commitment is enhanced by fulfilling the psychological and financial needs along with others in Sri Lanka. Attempts to fill this gap are considered vital as it helps researchers to understand employee attitudes, beliefs and behaviors in a less affluent country which may help to generalize the studies for all. Further, although most studies have been conducted in different organizations like health, financial, manufacturing and service oriented, there is a need to know employee attitudes, beliefs and behaviors in educational institutions.

1.3. Research Question This study examines Influence of Employee career commitment on Employee readiness for organizational change in government schools in Trincomalee District.

1. What is the level of Employee's career commitment in Government school in Trincomalee District?
2. What is the level of Employee readiness for Organizational change in Government school in Trincomalee District?
3. What is the relationship between Employee career commitment and Employee readiness for Organizational change

1.4. Objective of the Study

Given the importance of employee readiness for organizational change, it is important to investigate further readiness. The primary aim of this study is to develop a conceptual framework that explains how employees of government schools of Sri Lanka develop their positive attitudes and behaviors regarding organizational change.

This study has four main research objectives.

1. Analyze the level of Career Commitment in Government school in Trincomalee District
2. Analyze level of Employee's Employee readiness for Organizational change in Government school in Trincomalee District
3. Examine the relationship between Employee Career commitment and Employee readiness for Organizational change.

2. Literature Review

Change is concerned with the development of organization. It is used to solve the problems and challenges of the organization. In organization, most problems and challenges are generated by competition, advanced technology, mergers, expansion, product quality maintenance, or enhancing employee efficiency on the one hand and rapid growth, new business ventures, exciting opportunities, innovations, and new leadership and management approaches (Madsen *et al.*, 2005, p-213) on the other.

Potentially change in organization is referred to as chaotic and dramatic (Abrahamson, 2000), because transferring from a known to an unknown position can develop particular uncertainties, anxiety and ambiguities. In this position, employee can develop different thoughts, feelings and behaviours towards the situation which might involve painful learning and relearning and create a feeling of uneasiness and tension. It is important to remember that humans have different individual life experiences, motivational levels, socio-demographic characteristics, knowledge, attitudes, support systems, values, and behavioural patterns (Ilgen and Pulakos, 1999). Employees approach organizational change in different ways as some individuals perceive that it can provide opportunities for learning and growth, while others view it as a threat.

Successful adjustment to change can result in higher levels of enthusiasm providing opportunities for learning and growth, while poor adjustment to change is characterized by feelings of uncertainty, frustration, alienation, and anxiety, particularly in relation to issues of job security, status, work tasks, co-worker relations, and reporting relationships (Holt *et al.*, 2007). Before developing positive state of mind towards organizational change, employee needs to be able to visualize the current situation of the organization and environment by comparing past

and anticipated future perspectives.(1) Thus, researchers and practitioners need to know the maximum level of employee readiness predictors so that management can endeavor to understand the maximum level of individuals' beliefs, intentions and perceptions during implementation of change programmes.

2.1 Change Readiness

Readiness for change research suggests that a demonstrable need for change, a sense of one's ability to successfully accomplish change (self-efficacy) and an opportunity to participate in the change process contribute to readiness for organizational change (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993). Researchers believe that employee willingness and receptivity is essential for an organization to implement change successfully (Rafferty and Simon, 2006). Thus, it is necessary to know how to deal with employee before, during and after launching the organizational change programmes.

Literature suggests that employee readiness may be through workplace factors or employee perception factors. Both factors may be effective for implementation of organizational change as to develop employee readiness. Lot of literature has been focused on the employees' readiness for organizational change i.e. influence strategies, change agent role individual attitudes and preference, work groups and job attitudes

and contextual variables, Eby, et al., 2000, active job, risk and benefit, job change self-efficacy Cumming *et al*, 2002;; organizational commitment, social relationships in the workplace Madsen, et al., 2005, management and leader relationship, Job knowledge and skills, Job demands trust in peers, trust in senior leaders, logistic and system support, self-efficacy.

The literature generally distinguishes between two employees responses in a change situation: readiness for, and resistance to. Change starts with a new beginning, which may increase the satisfactions as desired and can also increase the disturbances if it failed because change initiatives either success or fail uniformly across the organization. According to Madsen, (2003) employee readiness for change refers to employees' mental and physical preparedness for immediate action that aim to improve, alter, vary, or modify something. Armenakis et al (1993) defined readiness term as organization members' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions.

2.2 Employee Career Commitment A career is an evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time. It relates to the individual's perceived sequence of vocation, occupation or profession that person occupies over time (Hall, 1976). An individual's attitude towards his or her career is described as career

commitment (Chang, 1999). It is recognized as a form of work commitment (Morrow, 1993). The conceptual definition of career commitment is one's attitude towards one's vocation or profession (Blau, 1985). It can be characterized by the development of personal career goals and the individual's attachment to, identification with and involvement in those goals (Colarelli and Bishop, 1990).

Indeed, a career involves tradeoffs between security and risk and between individual success and family, and peoples' career behaviour may interact with culture. The literature shows that employee attachment, identification and involvement depend upon extrinsic and intrinsic outcomes such as pay, promotion, appraisal, and satisfaction that can refer to one's motivation to work in a chosen vocation (Hall, 1971). According to Poon (2004) career commitment is predicated on objective career success in form of salary level and subjective career success in the form of career satisfaction.

After reviewing the literature, it was found that no research has been found which relates to employee career commitment and employee readiness for organizational change. Although, career commitment is related with individual's attitudes and behaviours towards his or her career, thus it was proposed that employee may be developed their positive attitudes and

behaviours on the basis of commitment to the organization as well as career. Thus, this study focused on employee career commitment to career predictors such that job satisfaction, job involvement, supervisors and peers relations, training and skills development, and promotion factors to examine employee attitudes and behaviours for organizational change.

2.3 Employee Career commitment and Employee readiness for organizational change

A number of scholars have identified Career commitment as an essential pre-requisite to the successful implementation of organizational change (Bellou 2007). Change managers tend to rely on the commitment of their employees when implementing organizational change (Bennet & Durkin 2000), but levels of Career commitment, may, in fact, decrease in response to the change initiatives (Lau, Tse & Zhou 2002). A decrease in levels of Career commitment during processes of change could lead to increased levels of absenteeism and higher turnover rates (Cotton & Tuttle 1986), further hampering the success of the change initiative.

The success of organizational change is often determined by employee attitudes and beliefs towards the change (Beer and Walton, 1990). According to Arnold *et al.* (1995, p-167)

“Attitudes reflect a person’s tendency to feel, think or behave in a positive or negative manner towards the object of the attitude”. Many researchers like Eby *et al.* (2000) focused on positive attitudes and behaviours to promote effective change programmes. Vakola *et al.* (2003) argue that employee can be happy or excited or angry and fearful when confronted by change. It shows that the individual’s perceptions towards the new situation primarily affect organizational change goals and objectives. The literature further points out that a positive employee response can be obtained by fulfilling basic needs such that financial and psychological (Alvi and Ahmed, 1987).

3. Conceptualization and Methodology

Conceptualization This research examines employee readiness determinant to build up employee positive beliefs, intentions, behaviours, attitudes, and expectations during organizational change. In literature review the researcher proposes that employee can develop positive attitudes and behaviours on the basis of their career commitment to the organization and career along with social relationships in the workplace factors. The conceptual approach for this research study is based on a broad theoretical framework and the study examines employee readiness for organizational change in government schools in Trincomalee District.

Fig. 1 depicts the conceptual frame work developed for this study based on the extensive literature review.

Conceptual Framework

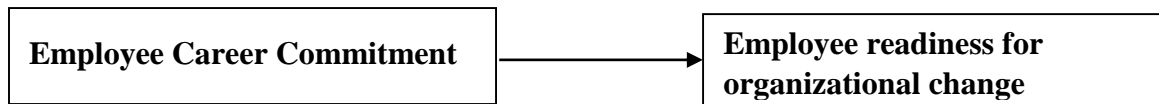


Figure:1 Conceptual Framework

(Source; Naimatullah Shah, 2009)

3.1 Employee Career Commitment

In the organizational behaviour domain, the term commitment has been adopted to understand employee attitudes and behaviours regarding his or her work organization or work. Employee develops positive attitudes and behaviours towards organization or work via a supportive organizational environment and psychological and financial satisfaction. These factors are related to understanding the employee feelings and thoughts. Researchers and practitioners have conceptualized the term career commitment to develop positive attitudes and behaviours of employee by career.

3.2 Employee Readiness for Organizational Change

A large amount of literature is available on the employee readiness domain relating to individual and workplace factors (Weber and Weber, 2001; Madsen *et al.*, 2005; Rafferty and

Simon, 2006; Holt *et al.*, 2007; Elias, 2009). However, the impact of both factors can be envisaged by employee attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions. Indeed, individual factors are associated with personal and social aspects of individuals such as an active problem solving approach, beliefs, autonomy, depression, emotional exhaustion, demography, self-efficacy, locus of control (Weber and Weber, 2001; Cunningham *et al.*, 2002; Peach *et al.*, 2005; Madsen *et al.*, 2005).

3.3 Population and sampling

Sampling is important for an empirical study that uses a positivistic approach (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). It is a fraction of subjects drawn from a population. Sekaran (2006) reveals that sampling offers detailed information that deal with small number of units. This study was conducted in Government Schools in Trincomalee District. Only 100 graduate

teachers, those who teaching in the Government schools were selected for this Study. Where, recently, the government has announced changes and reforms for Government school in Sri Lanka. The survey questionnaire to participants, the researcher contacted them for any queries regarding the instrument and privacy. Then the survey questionnaire was handed over by personal visits. The targeted participants of the main survey were graduate teachers of government school in Batticaloa District

4. Data collection methods and instruments

This study was carried out based on primary data. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The Questioner comprised of statements on two independent variables of Employee’s Commitment; and Dependent variable; Employee readiness for organizational change. The Questioner was given to the graduate teachers of Government school in Trincomalee district. Researcher was developed the Questioner, which was contain Part I, and Part II. Part I related with research information and Part II related with personal information

Table 4.1 Evaluation criteria for mean values

Range	Degree
$1 \leq X \leq 2.5$	Low level
$2.5 < X \leq 3.5$	Moderate level
$3.5 < X \leq 5.0$	High level

Source- Formed for this research

regarding the respondents. Likert scale of 1-5 which ranges from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” were applied in the SET I and SET II of the questionnaire to identify responses. The numerical values were given for the purpose of quantification of quantitative variable as follows:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

4.1 Data presentation, analysis and evaluation

Data has been presented using tables, bar charts and pie charts. Meanwhile Inferential and descriptive analysis were used for data analysis. Hence under the descriptive analysis, mean and standard deviation were derived from the analysis of samples. In inferential analysis, correlation and multiple linear regressions have been applied. Statistical package of SPSS 16.0 has been used for this purpose. Furthermore criteria shown in table were adopted to evaluate mean values.

4.2 Analysis and Findings

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics

This section presents mean and standard deviation for the variables of Employee Commitment and Employee Readiness for Organizational Change. It further gives the same

details to the individual statements of each variable. Mean values have been distributed based on Likert's scale of between 1-5 which represent "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Meanwhile mean values were evaluated based on already established evaluative criteria which range from "Low level" to "High level".

Table 4.2 Mean and standard deviation for the variables of Employee Commitment

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Employee Career Commitment	4.11	0.519

As presented in Table 4.2, all Employee Commitment variables have taken mean values of more than 3.5 which fall under the evaluative category of high level. Ultimately construct of

Employee Commitment is with the mean value of 4.11 that shows the high level of Employee Commitment.

Table 4.3 Mean and standard deviation for the variable of Employee Readiness for Organizational Change.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Employee Career Commitment	4.02	.690

As highlighted in Table 4.3, the variable of EROC has taken the mean values of more than 3.5 which fall in high level category. Total EROC construct has taken a mean value of 4.02 therefore it comes under high level.

4.2.2 Correlation analysis Correlation values were found to determine relationship between variables of Employee Commitment and Employee Readiness for Organizational Change. It has been presented in the table.

Table 4.4 Correlation between the variables of Employee Commitment and Employee Readiness for Organizational Change (EROC).

Variables	Correlation with EROC
Employee Career Commitment	0.789*

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)



As in table all correlation values are positive and these values have been significant at 5% significant level ($P < 0.05$). This reveals that all Employee Career Commitment variables are positively correlated with EROC. Hence there is a positive relationship between Employee Career Commitment and EROC. The statistical mean of Employee Commitment to the Organization scale showed employee openness and readiness for organizational change. Thus, the scale can be applied to ascertain employee attitudes and behaviours regarding readiness for change. Madsen *et al.* (2005), Gaertner and Nollen (1989) and Gautam *et al.* (2001) reported that employee attitudes and behaviours can be examined by his or her commitment to the organization. The results of this study also show that employee commitment to the organization scale is significantly and positively correlated with other scale of employee readiness for organizational change.

In addition, the statistical mean of this Employee Career Commitment to the Career scale also showed that employee of organizations can be ready and open to change when they are committed to their career. In this scale participant's response to the factors are related to situational and individual commitments. According to Judges *et al.* (1995); Goulet and Singh (2002) and Poon (2004) employee can

develop positive attitudes and behaviours for an organization on the basis of the situational factor. In addition, the literature also shows that employee can develop positive attitudes on the basis of individual commitment. This was confirmed in this study, which shows that employee career commitment has a positive relationship to the readiness for organizational change.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

Research on the determinants of employee readiness for organizational change was stimulated by new interest evinces due to recent change reforms in the government schools in Sri Lanka. Increased attention on competition, advanced technology, mergers, expansion, product quality maintenance, enhancing employee efficiency rapid growth, new business ventures, exciting opportunities, innovations, and new leadership and management approaches led to number of countries knowing employee attitudes and behaviours of organization change. This study is concerned with examining employee attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours to readiness for organizational change. Overall, employee commitment to the organization predictors has a statistically significant and positive relationship with readiness for organizational change. The relationship between

each element of employee commitment to the organization is also found to be statistically significant. This suggests that, other things being equal, the more commitment to the organization that is perceived, the more open and ready for the organizational change. Providing an environment that encourages emotional attachment, a feeling of pride and good pay/wages/rewards can help organizations to effectively influence employee attitudes and behaviours. The above results indicate that all organizational commitment constructs applied in this study had positive and significant relationships with the readiness for change construct. That means, in public sector schools of Sri Lanka, when employees are committed to the organization, they are more likely to be open or readiness for organizational change. This conceptualization suggests that committed employees have a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, show a willingness to exert considerable efforts on behalf of the organization and have a strong desire to maintain membership of the organization (Mathews and Shepherd, 2002, p-369). Employee of organization can develop attitudes and behaviours on the basis of career commitment which is reflected by individual and situational factors (London, 1983; Blau, 1985; McGinnis and Morrow, 1990; Goulet and Singh, 2002). In this study, individual and situational factors have been applied to examine

employee attitudes and behaviours in government schools in Trincomalee district during organisational change programmes. In the individual scale, career commitment, job satisfaction, job involvement, supervisor and peer relations, and training and skills development were applied and for situational only one factor such that promotion was applied. The findings of this study suggest that employees of public sector schools in Trincomalee Trincomalee district can develop their attitudes and behaviours as a result of institutional and individual predictors the more career commitment that is perceived, the more openness and readiness for organizational change will be noted in the public sector schools of Sri Lanka.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for the enhancement of Employee commitment and Employee readiness for organizational change.

1. Systematic and timely introduction reinforcement is necessary for successful implementation of Organizational change
2. The views of the employee should be taken into account when introducing Organizational changes



3. The content and the process of the organizational change should be relevant to the level of expectation from the employee
4. Due recognition should be extended to the teaching task to enhance Employee commitment and through increasing Employee readiness for organizational change
5. A systematic approach should be practiced to enhance the moral of teachers or whenever their Performance is being reviewed by reviewers.

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