

## **Assessing Impediments and Facilitators to Employee Adaptive Performance and Openness to Change.**

Changing times make organizations change in order to sustain and develop, often affecting the employees. The present research attempts to gain insight in what impedes and facilitates employee's attitude to change. In this study, a model is assessed for predicting employee adaptive performance and openness to change. Respondents worked at a large Dutch university, 158 employees took part in the study by completing an online questionnaire. Multiple hierarchical regression analysis emphasized the importance of fairness perception and participation in organizational change. Designing organizational change programs that maximize fairness perception and employee participation will eventually minimize resistance to change and reduce the amount stress experienced, boosting employee performance in times of change.

The changing markets, technological improvements and political shifts from the last decennia created tremendous opportunities for organizations. However, changing times bring about one of the biggest challenges organizations have to face: adapt to changing demands. Most of the times, whether radical or minor, organizational change affects employees. How 'open' the employee is to organizational change and how well he or she can adapt to the new working situation is important for any successful organizational transition (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993; Stanley, Meyer, & Topolnytsky, 2005).

The employee might show resistance to change when organizational change is likely to result in a loss of outcome, comfort or status (Dent, 1999). A changing organization often gives the employee the feeling of losing territory, raises uncertainty about the future and creates a fear of failing at new tasks (Coch & French, 1948). Kotter (1995) observed 100 companies and concluded that employees often understand why change has to occur, and they are willing to cooperate in realizing the targets, but somehow there are obstacles that prevent execution. In some cases the obstacle might be situated within the individual, but most of the time the obstacles lay within the

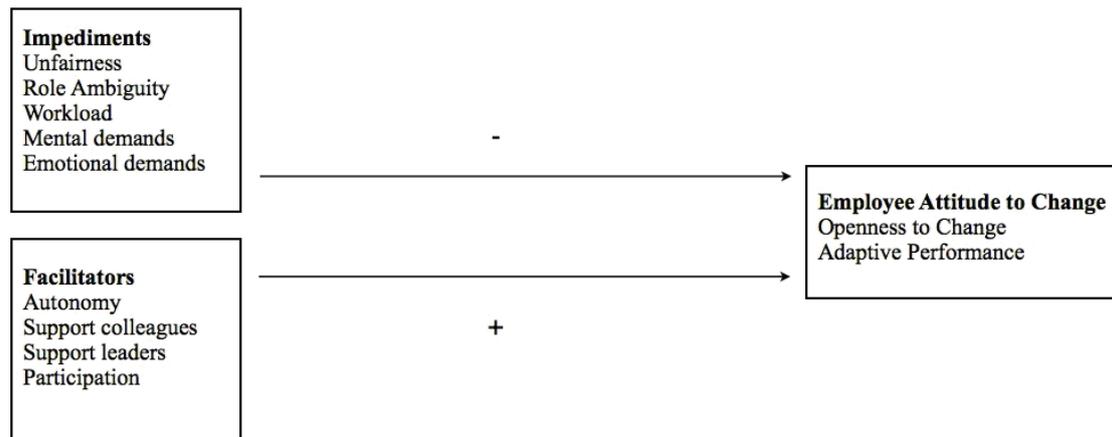
structures of the organization. Downsizing, for instance, can seriously undermine efforts to increase productivity as well as performance appraisal systems that make people choose between the organization and their own interest (Kotter, 1995).

From the perspective of the employee, organizational change can seriously affect one's life, and therefore be a stressful event (Begley, 1998). Next to stress, the most common psychological state resulting from organizational change is uncertainty (Callan, 1993). Empirical research in a large, public organization in Australia, undergoing organizational changes, suggests that uncertainty is negatively related to job satisfaction and positively related to turnover intentions (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). Next to uncertainty, the employee might experience organizational change also to be a threat to his job security, personal career path, financial situation, and work related benefits like status, power and a sense of community at work (Ashford, 1988; Callan, 1993). Employees who experience a transition to be minimally stressful, will exert effort in performing their job duties, rather than resist a change implementation (Noer, 1993).

In order to successfully implement a transition, managers have to minimize resistance to change, in other words, the attitude of the employee has to be favorable towards the change. What can be understood as an attitude that favors organizational change? On the one hand, there is the employee's level of openness to change. Openness to change is conceptualized as the willingness to support the change and have a positive affect about the outcomes of the change (Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994). A high level of openness to change is regarded as a necessary, initial condition for successful planned change. On the other hand, there is organization member adaptivity, showing the degree to which an employee copes with and responds to changes that affects their roles as organization member (Griffin, Neal and Parker, 2007).

A model (Figure 1) has been designed to outline several factors that might influence employee openness to change and adaptive performance . An existing framework, the Job Demands-Resource (JDR) model (Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004; Demerouti, Nachreiner, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2001), will serve as a basis for linking facilitators and impediments to adaptive performance and openness to change. The model distinguishes between two broad categories of working conditions that are

related to specific outcomes, job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of a job that require physiological and/or psychological effort, or costs. Job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of the job that are functional in achieving work goals, reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, or stimulate personal growth and development. Whereas the field of interest of the JDR model lays more in organizational outcomes as work engagement and burnout, this study is more oriented towards organizational change. Therefore the interest is not so much in general demands and resources, but more in what facilitates and impedes organizational change. Nevertheless, the mechanism of the JDR is still relevant to apply to organizational change. The facilitators in this study function like job resources, by inducing motivation and having a positive effect on organizational outcomes. Job demands are replaced by impediments to organizational change and have a negative effect on organizational outcomes.



*Figure 1: Impediments and facilitators to employee attitude towards change with individual regulatory focus as a moderator.*

Literature review supports the rationale that there are factors influencing employee’s openness to change and adaptive performance. These factors can indeed be divided in two categories: those who impede and those who facilitate.

**Impediments**

According to literature, several factors impede the employee’s openness to change and adaptive performance in organizational change. For instance, a transition being

perceived as unfair is likely to result in stress and reduced performance (Brotheridge, 2003). As a consequence, employees might resist implementation. Perceptions of fairness, on the other hand, have a positive influence on the employee's evaluation of the appropriateness and favorableness of the transition (Kim & Mauborgne, 1993). Moreover, if organizational members perceive that the decisions being made are on fair grounds, they are less likely to experience stress in response to it (Vermunt & Steensma, 2001). According to the equity theory of Adams (1965), employees tend to compare their ratio of input and outcomes in a job with others and strive for maintaining a fair equilibrium. Distributive justice is established when there is a balance between one's input/outcome ratio and another's. Procedural justice indicates how the allocation processes are established, rather than what the outcomes are. Brotheridge (2003) concluded that both the level of participation and justification in organizational transition were positively related to perceptions of fairness surrounding the change. Employees experiencing a change implementation as minimally stressful, exert effort in performing their job duties, rather than resist the change implementation (Noer, 1993). Because the absence of fairness results in negative outcomes, like stress, unfairness will impede a successful change rather than fairness facilitating change. Fairness can be seen as a precondition for successful change, and therefore doesn't necessarily facilitate change when present, but impedes change when absent. Or, as Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959, p113) stated in their book, "Improvement in these factors of hygiene will serve to remove the impediments to positive job attitudes."

Another impediment to employee attitude to change following the same rules is 'workload'. A high level of workload results in dissatisfaction, whereas a low level of workload does not necessarily facilitate job satisfaction. In their study, Vakola and Nikolaou (2005) used ASSET, an organizational screening tool which measured, among other things, workplace stress, organizational commitment and a measure assessing attitudes towards organizational change. They found that when the change would result in extra workload, employees may create negative attitudes to change and, as a result, be reluctant to contribute to the transition. A field study at two merging airline organizations pointed out that work stressors like workload, but also role ambiguity, have a negative effect on employee adjustment to change (Terry & Jimmieson, 2003). High levels of change-related information had a positive effect on employee adjustment, reducing the level of uncertainty surrounding the change.

Role-ambiguity is considered as another impeder, since the uncertainty associated with organizational change is likely to result in role-ambiguity and role-stress (Shaw, Fields, Thacker, & Fisher, 1993), which has its impact on the employee's adaptive performance. Psychological demanding aspects of work, like role-ambiguity and work overload, have a negative impact on the employee's health, well being and performance (Gaillard, 2001; Veldhuizen, Gaillard, & de Vries, 2003). Normally, people become tired of their everyday working activities, and their energetic resources take care of complete recovery after work or during breaks (Gaillard, 2001; Hockey, 1997). However, when the employee is not completely recovered, is undergoing a stressful life event (organizational change) or under a high workload, incomplete recovery might take place, of which the effects, might sum up (Frankenhaeuser & Johansson, 1986; Gaillard, 2001), which could eventually lead to reduced performance, exhaustion and burnout (Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004). Conditions of work that lead to emotional and mental demands (e.g. workload, time pressure) can lead to negative outcomes like job burnout, health impairments and sick leave (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Bakker, Demerouti, de Boer, 2003). For that reason, these factors are expected to have a negative effect on attitude to change. Mental and emotional demands are therefore classified as impeder to adaptive performance and openness to change. This resulted in the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Perception of unfairness, workload, role ambiguity, mental and emotional demands at the workplace have a negative effect on employee openness to change.

Hypothesis 2: Perception of unfairness, workload, role ambiguity, mental and emotional demands at the workplace have a negative effect on employee adaptive performance.

### Facilitators

One way of gaining commitment to organizational change is by getting the employee involved in the change process. Employee participation in decision making helps the employee to deal with organizational change (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979) and increases productivity and satisfaction levels (Miller & Monge, 1986). Participation is generally seen as a key factor in successful organizational change (Dunphy & Stace,

1990). Korunka, Weiss, Huemer, and Karetta (1995) concluded that employees who perceived high levels of participation when new technologies were about to be implemented, reported lower levels of psychosomatic health complaints and job dissatisfaction than those who perceived low levels of participation. Above that, the employee's understanding of the rationale and reasoning behind the transition increases since more information is available, which results in justification for the organizational change (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) and reduces uncertainty (Kahn, 1986). Therefore, the manager can facilitate the change process by letting employees participate in the decision making process.

Another way the manager can facilitate the transition is by showing supportive behavior to his or her employees (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). This includes the training of new skills, giving some time off after demanding periods and simply listening and providing emotional support. Schweiger, Ivancevich, and Power (1987) noted that employee's perceptions of effective leadership during periods of organizational change plays an important role in reducing levels of stress and have a positive impact on adjustment to change. If a leader is capable of showing a clear vision of the nature and destiny of a changed organization, employees will regard the change as low in threat and high in control (Yukl, 1989). A supportive relationship between an employee and his or her supervisor is particularly important in organizational change because the position of the supervisor creates opportunities to provide relevant instrumental assistance and emotional support in the form of empathy and understanding (Schweiger et al., 1987). Likewise, support from colleagues is important because co-workers form a reference point for social comparison and evaluation of one's own reaction to the event (Terry, Rawle, Callan, 1995). Socially supportive relationships seem to affect stressful life events, like major organizational change, and a variety of physical and psychological illnesses, either directly or by buffering the relationship between stress and health (Callan, Terry & Schweitzer, 1994; Gore, 1978; Gottlieb, 1981; Holahan & Moos, 1981). Finally, the impact of autonomy on employee openness to change and adaptive performance will be assessed. In a meta-analysis, Spector (1986) concluded that high levels of perceived control, including autonomy, was associated with high levels of job satisfaction, commitment, involvement, performance and motivation and low levels of emotional distress, role stress and absenteeism. With autonomy, being the final facilitator of attitude to change, the following hypotheses are created:

Hypothesis 3: Perception of participation, support from supervisors and colleagues and autonomy at the workplace have a positive effect on employee openness to change.

Hypothesis 4: Perception of participation, support from supervisors and colleagues and autonomy at the workplace have a positive effect on employee adaptive performance.

## **Method**

### Context

The participants in this study were employees at a large Dutch University, working in the areas of human resource, legal, student-service, finance & control, research & education, ICT and secretary. There were several organizational change programs ongoing at the time of this research. From institutions this size, it can be expected that there are lot's of change programs, either radical of minor, are ongoing. Therefore, all participants were asked if they were experiencing change, what the nature and the effects of the change were and how long it has been, and will be, ongoing.

### Participants and Procedure

A total of 158 employees (72 men and 86 women) voluntarily participated in this study. Participants average years of working experience was 21.2 years (SD = 12.0) and their mean age was 46.0 years (SD = 11.4).

Employees were sent an email in which they were asked if they would voluntarily participate in a study about the effects of organizational change on employee wellbeing. The email contained an URL which brought them to the multiple choice questionnaire. They had to base their answers on the experiences they had with the present organizational change at the university, or, when not applicable, significant changes they experienced in the past. Five Kiva Gift Certificates of \$25,- each were raffled among the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of 85 questions.

Employees gave their ratings on pre-existing scales measuring each variable of the model.

## Measurements

### Impediments

*Unfairness.* Procedural unfairness was measured using seven items developed by Moorman (1991). Respondents answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). An example item is: “If someone laid a complaint, my organization would follow standards or policies so that decisions could be made consistently.” High scores indicate a high degree of perceived unfairness. This scale was internally consistent ( $\alpha = .91$ ). Distributive unfairness was measured using seven items developed by Price and Mueller (1986). Respondents answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). An example item is: “I am fairly rewarded for the amount of effort I put forth.” High scores indicate a high degree of perceived unfairness. This scale was internally consistent ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

*Workload.* A 3-item Dutch adaptation of Karasek’s (1985) Job Content Questionnaire was used (Furda, 1995). Questions were as follows: “Do you have a lot of work to do?” Respondents answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Higher scores indicate a high degree of workload. The internal consistency of the scale was good ( $\alpha = .83$ ).

*Role ambiguity.* A 7-item questionnaire was used to measure role ambiguity (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970). A reversed example item is: “It is clear to me what goals my organization has set for the proximate future.” Respondents answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Lower scores indicate a high degree of role ambiguity. This scale had acceptable internal consistency ( $\alpha = .83$ ).

*Mental Demands.* Mental demands were measured using 5 items developed by van Veldhoven & Meijman (1994). Respondents answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Questions were as follows: “Does your work require constant attention?” High scores indicate a high degree of perceived mental demands. This scale was internally consistent ( $\alpha = .80$ ).

*Emotional Demands.* Emotional demands were measured using 5 items, also developed by van Veldhoven & Meijman (1994). Respondents answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). An example item is: “Is your work emotionally demanding?” High scores indicate a high degree of perceived emotional demands. This scale was internally consistent ( $\alpha = .79$ ).

## Facilitators

*Participation.* A 3-item scale from Wanberg & Banas (2000) was used. Statements were as follows: “I have had any influence on the proposed change.” Respondents answered on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Lower scores indicate a higher degree of participation. The internal consistency of the scale was satisfactory ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

*Leader support.* Leader support was measured with an 8-item scale from Hoogh, Hartog & Koopman (2004). Statements were as follows: “My leader talks with employees about matters that are important for them.” Respondents answered on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate a higher degree of leader support. The internal consistency of the scale was satisfactory ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

*Colleague support.* Colleague support was measured using 4 items developed by van Veldhoven and Meijman (1994). Respondents answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). An example item is: “If in need, I can ask colleagues for assistance.” High scores indicate a high degree of perceived colleague support. This scale was internally consistent ( $\alpha = .86$ ).

*Autonomy.* A 3-item Dutch adaptation of Karasek’s (1985) Job Content Questionnaire was used to measure autonomy (Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004). Statements were as follows: “I can decide for myself how I carry out my tasks.” Respondents answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Higher scores indicate a high degree of autonomy. The internal consistency of the scale was good ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

## Dependent variables

*Adaptive Performance.* Adaptive performance was measured using a 3 item scale from Griffin, Neal and Parker (2007). Statements were as follows: “In general I adapt well to changes in my tasks.” Respondents answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Higher scores indicate a high degree of adaptive performance. This scale was internally consistent ( $\alpha = .86$ ).

*Openness to Change.* Openness to change was measured with a 4 item scale (Metselaar, 1997). An example item is: “I am willing to commit myself in reaching to goals of the proposed change.” Respondents answered on a 6-point scale ranging from

1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate a high degree of openness to change. The internal consistency of the scale was good ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

Control variables

Control variables were measured in the form of age, sex and educational level.

**Results**

Pearson’s correlations of the impeding and facilitating effects on openness to change and adaptive performance is shown in table 1. Both procedural ( $r = -.2, p < .01$ ) and distributive fairness ( $r = -.26, p < .01$ ) share a significant, negative correlation with adaptive performance, and distributive fairness also has a negative, significant correlation with openness to change ( $r = -.16, p < .05$ ). Role ambiguity seems to correlate negatively to both openness to change ( $-.20, p < .05$ ) and adaptive performance ( $r = -.25, p < .05$ ). Workload shares a positive correlation with adaptive performance ( $r = .18, p < .01$ ).

Participation seems to be the strongest facilitating predictor for adaptive performance ( $r = .25, p < .01$ ) and openness to change ( $r = .38, p < .01$ ). Leadership support correlates significantly with adaptive performance ( $r = .21, p < .05$ ).

*Table 1: Pearson correlations of the impeding and facilitating variables*

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Gender	4.63	.73	-												
2 Education	3.34	.57	.01												
3 Openness to change	2.49	.76	.03	.17*											
4 Adaptive performance	2.47	.63	.17*	.01	.35**										
5 Distributive fairness	2.81	.72	.03	-.09	-.16*	-.26**									
6 Procedural fairness	3.50	.76	-.03	.12	-.11	-.20**	.37**								
7 Role ambiguity	3.61	.62	.00	.04	-.20**	-.25**	.37*	.47**							
8 Workload	2.14	.59	.13	.11	.10	.18*	-.12	-.07	-.07						
9 Mental demands	3.99	.26	-.10	.04	.07	.13	-.02	.08	.11	.52**					
10 Emotional demands	3.99	.79	-.15*	.08	-.02	-.12	-.22**	-.21**	-.24**	.44**	.43**				
11 Autonomy	4.51	1.44	.02	.23**	.15	.13	.11	.11	.08	-.16	.05	-.06			
12 Support Colleagues	3.31	1.29	-.08	.03	.12	.11	.13	.24**	.16*	-.08	.03	-.07	.05		
13 Leadership	1.54	.50	.07	-.04	.02	.21**	.39**	.71**	.52**	-.02	.19**	-.17*	.12	.183*	
14 Participation	5.37	1.09	.03	.05	.38**	.25**	.24**	.25**	.34**	.04	.10	.04	-.02	.07	.27**

\*  $p < .01$  (1-tailed)

\*\*  $p < .05$  (1-tailed)

Multiple, hierarchical regression analyses has been applied to assess the four hypotheses. That implies that four separate regression analysis were performed; the assessment of impeters to openness to change, impeters to adaptive performance, facilitators to openness to change and facilitators to adaptive performance. As control variables, the educational level of the participant was used when impeters and facilitators to openness to change were assessed. When the impeters and facilitators of adaptive performance were measured, the control variable gender was used.

*Table 2 Regression Results of Impediments Predicting Openness to Change*

Model	Variables	Openness to Change (β)
1	Control variable	
	Education	.16
2	Control variable	
	Education	.14
	Impediments	
	Distributive unfairness	-.11
	Procedural unfairness	-.01
	Role ambiguity	.17
	Workload	.13
	Mental demands	-.02
	Emotional demands	.02
	Multiple R	.31
R <sup>2</sup>	.09	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.04	

In hypothesis 1 it was anticipated that the independent variables unfairness, workload, role ambiguity, mental and emotional demands would have an impeding effect on the dependent variable employee openness to change. Educational level of the participant is used as a control variable. The hypothesis is rejected since hierarchical regression analyses showed that none of the predictors were significant (2-tailed; Sig > .05) (table 2). The value of the R<sup>2</sup> in model 1 is .03, which indicates that the control variable can account for 3% of the variation of the dependent variable. The value of the R<sup>2</sup> in model 2 is .09, which indicates that the independent variables including the control variable can account for 9% of the variation of the dependent variable. The change in R<sup>2</sup> is a way to evaluate how much predictive power was added to the model by adding the independent variables in step 2 (model 2).

*Table 3 Regression Results of Impediments Predicting Adaptive Performance*

Model	Variables	Openness to Change ( $\beta$ )
1	Control variable	
	Gender	<b>.18**</b>
2	Control variable	
	Gender	<b>.14*</b>
	Impediments	
	Distributive unfairness	<b>-.18**</b>
	Procedural unfairness	-.06
	Role ambiguity	.11
	Workload	<b>.22**</b>
	Mental demands	.10
	Emotional demands	<b>-.17*</b>
	Multiple R	.42
R <sup>2</sup>	.18	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.14	

\* p &lt; .05 (1-tailed)

\*\* p &lt; .05 (2-tailed)

Hypothesis 2 stated that the independent variables unfairness, workload, role ambiguity, mental and emotional demands would have an impeding effect on employee the dependent variable adaptive performance. Participants' gender has been used as a control variable. Hierarchical regression analysis (table 3) showed that distributive unfairness ( $\beta = -.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ) has a negative effect on adaptive performance. Workload ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $p = .024$ ) have a positive significant effect on Adaptive performance, what implies that Workload works as a facilitator rather than an impeder. The variable emotional demands has a significant (1-tailed) negative linear effect on adaptive performance ( $\beta = -.17$ ,  $p = .038$ ). The value of the R<sup>2</sup> in model 1 is .03, which indicates that the control variable can account for 3% of the variation of the dependent variable. The value of the R<sup>2</sup> in model 2 is .18, which indicates that the independent variables including the control variable can account for 18% of the variation of the dependent variable. To conclude, hypothesis 2 will be partially supported.

*Table 4 Regression Results of Facilitators Predicting Openness to Change*

Model	Variables	Openness to Change ( $\beta$ )
1	Control variable Education	.11
2	Control variable Education	.04
	Facilitators	
	Autonomy	.15
	Support Colleagues	.06
	Support Leadership	-.09
	Participation	<b>.40*</b>
	Multiple R	.44
	R <sup>2</sup>	.19
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.15

\* p &lt; .01 (2-tailed)

In hypothesis 3 it was expected that the independent variables participation, support from supervisors; support from colleagues and autonomy have a facilitating effect on the dependent variable employee openness to change. Employee educational level is used as a control variable. Hierarchical regression (table 4) showed that only participation has a strong positive effect on openness to change ( $\beta = .40$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 3 is partially supported, since one of the predictors has a significant effect on openness to change. The value of the R<sup>2</sup> in model 1 is .01, which indicates that the control variable can account for 1% of the variation of the dependent variable. The value of the R<sup>2</sup> in model 2 is .19, which indicates that the independent variables including the control variable can account for 19% of the variation of the dependent variable.

*Table 5 Regression Results of Facilitators Predicting Adaptive Performance*

Model	Variables	Openness to Change ( $\beta$ )
1	Control variable Gender	.18
2	Control variable Gender	<b>.18*</b>
	Facilitators	
	Autonomy	.11
	Support Colleagues	<b>.22*</b>
	Support Leadership	-.04
	Participation	<b>.21*</b>
	Multiple R	.42
	R <sup>2</sup>	.18
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.13

\* p &lt; .05 (2-tailed)

In hypothesis 4, it was anticipated that the independent variables participation, support from supervisors, support from colleagues and autonomy would have a facilitating effect on the dependent variable employee adaptive performance. Gender is used as a control variable. Concluding from hierarchical regression analyses, gender ( $\beta = .18$ ,  $p < .05$ ), colleague support ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and participation ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $p < .05$ ) have a positive effect on the dependent variable adaptive performance (table 5) thus Hypothesis 4 is partially accepted. The value of the  $R^2$  in model 1 is .01, which indicates that the control variable can account for 1% of the variation of the dependent variable. The value of the  $R^2$  in model 2 is .18, which indicates that the independent variables including the control variable can account for 18% of the variation of the dependent variable.

## **Discussion**

This study was performed in order to assess a model of organizational change based on the Job Demands-Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001). Five variables (unfairness, role ambiguity, workload, mental demands and emotional demands) were expected to have a negative effect on employee openness to change and adaptive performance. Participation, autonomy, support from colleagues and leaders were expected to positively influence employee openness to change and adaptive performance.

## **Implications**

Regression analysis of the impeding variables to openness to change and adaptive performance showed that hypothesis 1 and 2 are partially supported by the results. Looking at impeding variables individually, results show that distributive fairness plays an important role in employee openness to change and adaptive performance. The perception of fair (re)distribution of resources plays a crucial role in the attitude the employee has towards organizational change, consistent with literature (Brotheridge, 2003; Kim & Mauborgne, 1993; Vermunt & Steensma, 2001). It is notable that distributive fairness has a significant negative effect on adaptive performance, where procedural fairness did not (see Table 3). The employee seems to be rather result-driven when it comes to motivation for adaptive performance. What one gets in the end is probably more important than the processes that led to that redistribution.

Literature supports this vision: fairness judgments are often egoistic, i.e. higher outcomes for the self than for the other are perceived to be fair (Hertel, Aarts & Zeelenberg, 2002).

Workload was expected to play an impeding role, but regression analysis showed a positive influence to adaptive performance. Eventually, this does not completely come as a surprise. Regarding that organizational change brings along a lot of uncertainty for the employee, a high workload might raise some certainty. When workload is high, employees might get the feeling they are doing valuable work and therefore are indispensable for the organization. The reverse, less work to do, could be a sign that one's job is not necessary to the organization.

In line with previous research on participation in changing organizations (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; Miller & Monge, 1986; Dunphy & Stace, 1990; Korunka et al. 1995; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), this study again showed the importance of including the employee in the change process. Participation facilitates employee openness to change and adaptive performance. Therefore, hypothesis 3 and 4 are partially accepted.

Literature stated that, from an employee-perspective, organizational change is a stressful life-event surrounded by uncertainty (Begley, 1998; Callan, 1993). Given the unstable character of any change, and the varying way of perceiving it, makes the application of a model to understand the attitude an employee has towards change a challenge. Especially when trying to link factors that impede and facilitate his or her openness to change and adaptive performance. A rather black and white classification of what has a positive or negative effect could be a too simple measure for a too complicated matter as organizational change. The strength of the model is in its broad focus on organizational change. Where smaller details disappear by looking at the broad picture of employee attitude to change, the bigger lines become visible. This was certainly the case in this study. A clear role was found for unfairness perceptions as major impeder and participation as major facilitator for employee openness to change and adaptive performance.

## Limitations

This is also where the weakness of the model can be found. The model as a whole does not give a comprehensive overview of what precisely motivates the employee attitude one way or another. Therefore, some elements of the model are definitely worth studying more in depth. Interesting conclusions could be drawn when narrowing the focus of following research, which directly points the downside of the present study: its broadness. Interesting fields of study are, for example, via which mechanisms fairness adds to openness to change or participation leads to increased adaptive performance. By more closely defining concepts as openness to change or adaptive performance, relations could become more visual.

Improvement of this study could be made regarding the data collection. Respondents were contacted by email with a link to the questionnaire. In order to create more commitment, more explanation could be made available beforehand. Instead of that, the researcher deliberately chose to give no further information than necessary to minimize the possibility of confounding effects. Otherwise, commitment could be created by the departments' managers to send the invitation email with their full approval and support in the bottom line. Besides that, the timing of the research was not optimal seen the fact that data collection took place during the holiday season (July). This may have impacted the amount of employee's, as well as the diversity of the researched group.

## Conclusion

To conclude, the model (Figure 1) based on the Job Demands-Resources model, is partially supported by data analysis. The explanation given was that from the perspective of the employee, organizational change is a rather complex and stressful event, surrounded by uncertainty. Therefore the employee's attitude might not be influenced only by impeding and facilitating factors. Creating employee openness to change and boosting adaptive performance is not just the result of two forces where impeders exercise negative influence and facilitators exercise positive influence. The employee attitude to change is rather the result of a less black and white combination of external factors. However, that was not what the researchers attempted when designing this study. The goal of this model was to get an overview of what factors could work by which mechanisms (facilitating/impeding). In that regard, this study succeeded in finding a satisfying answer. When trying to answer the question of how

a favorable employee attitude to change can be promoted, this model should be redesigned more in depth. For example, individual characteristics might play an important role in creating an attitude to organizational change. An important role in employee attitude to change was found in fairness perceptions and participation, but the mechanisms by which they exert influence are possibly more sophisticated than negatively or positively stimulate. Therefore, in future research, focus should be on how employees create a perception of (un)fairness and participation.

The present research showed *what* factors could impede or facilitate attitude to change, following studies could focus on *how* these factors exert their influence. This would benefit the understanding of employees going through organizational change. Knowing what it is that influences employee attitude to change, and knowing how to get the employee in favor of the organizational change, will benefit both the organization and employee. By delivering a more *custom made* change program, the stressful experience and resistance to change will be minimized, boosting employee and organizational performance in times of change.

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